

Re-evaluation of Cultural, Traditional, and Superstitious Norms of Gender and Their Changes and Challenges in 21st Century South Indian Cinema: A Case Study on the Tamil Series *Ayali*

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Abstract:

In the 21st century, India's gender attitude is undergoing a transformation influenced by a diverse range of factors, including traditional values, socio-economic shifts, and global trends. According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report, India closed 64.1% of its gender gap in 2024, ranking 129th, marginally lower than last year (127). It predicts that it will take another 136 years for India to reach 100% gender parity. So, it is now imperative that the nation speeds up its efforts to reduce gender parity. This article aims to analyse how South Indian cinema portrays gender, cultural, traditional, and superstitious norms in the 21st century, with a particular focus on the Tamil series *Ayali*. The author conducts a thematic study and character analysis to uncover traditional gender roles, cultural expectations, and superstitious beliefs that impact gender roles by applying Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory: Attention, Retention, Motor Reproduction and Motivation. This article aims to break gender conventions by portraying strong female characters who strive for autonomy and equality, as well as defying preconceptions by depicting both men and women in roles traditionally held by society. A series of questions explore intergenerational perspectives, conflict, and change between older and younger generations, reflecting on the evolving attitudes towards gender and cultural shifts.

Key Words: Culture, Gender role, Society, Stereotype, Superstition, Tradition

Introduction

Gender roles in 21st-century India have evolved significantly compared to previous centuries, driven by a combination of social, economic, and superstitious changes. In previous centuries, women's education was limited. Traditional roles often confined women to the domestic sphere. But in the present time, there has been a notable increase in the

literacy rates of women. Programs such as *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* initiative aim to improve girls' education and empowerment. More women pursue higher education and enter diverse professional fields.

Culture, tradition, and superstition can significantly influence gender inequalities, often acting as restrictions to promote gender equality. Culture encompasses the ideas, customs, social behaviours, and norms of a particular society or group. Historically, many cultures have assigned specific roles to both men and women. Men are always viewed as providers and protectors, whereas women are viewed as caregivers and homemakers. These roles can limit women's access to education, employment, and leadership positions, thus reinforcing their economic and social dependence on men. Cultural norms dictate how boys and girls behave at a younger age. Boys may be encouraged to be assertive and competitive, whereas girls are taught to be nurturing and submissive. This socialization process can restrict individual potential, and perpetuate gender stereotypes.

Cultural language often reflects and reinforces gender biases. For example, terms like "mankind" or "fireman" implicitly prioritize male experiences and roles. Media and literature can perpetuate traditional gender roles by consistently portraying men as strong and decisive and women as emotional and passive. Tradition refers to beliefs or behaviours passed down within a society or group and often upheld over generations. When it comes to tradition, rituals and practices are sex-specific and can marginalize women. Examples include certain marriage customs, dowry practices, and inheritance laws that favour men. Traditions like female genital mutilation (FGM) are harmful practices rooted in controlling female sexuality and perpetuating gender inequality. Traditional family structures often place men as heads of households, making them primary decision-makers. Women may have limited authority over family matters, which can extend to broader social and economic limitations.

Thirdly, superstitions involve beliefs in supernatural causality, in which one event causes another without any natural process linking the two, and is often rooted in fear or ignorance. Superstitions can be used to control behaviour, particularly in women, by instilling fear of negative consequences. For example, beliefs that women during their menstruation are impure can lead to their exclusion from social, religious, and even educational activities. Superstitions often reinforce harmful stereotypes. For instance, the belief that a girl child brings bad luck leads to female foeticide. Such stereotypes perpetuate gender biases and discrimination. Superstitions can also be used to justify gender inequality. For example, the belief that men are inherently stronger or more rational can support unequal

treatment in areas such as employment and legal rights. These beliefs can hinder efforts to promote gender equality by projecting inequality as natural or inevitable.

Thus, culture, tradition, and superstition can collectively maintain and reinforce gender inequalities by embedding discriminatory practices and beliefs into the fabric of a society. Challenging these elements requires a nuanced approach that respects cultural contexts while advocating for change towards more equitable and inclusive norms and practices. This research focuses on the Tamil series "Ayali", examining it as a cultural artefact that reflects and influences evolving gender roles in contemporary society. The series serves as a lens through which the transformation of gender norms in the 21st century can be analyzed, particularly within the Tamil-speaking community. By exploring Ayali's narrative, character development, and thematic elements, this study aims to understand how cinema contributes to and mirrors societal changes in gender perceptions.

Literature review – Gender in Culture and Tradition.

The article Gender Biased Portrayal on Media Form in Society by Souraya El Badaoui aims to explore how the traditional media develops attitudes towards gender roles in television series. The author says that people have a strong influence on gender roles through exposure to the patriarchal female characters in traditional media.

Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender by Julia T. Wood talks about three main issues. First, women are misrepresented in cultural stands. She says women are always invisible and underrepresented. Secondly, men and women are stereotyped in society, giving people a false image of the genders and their roles. Thirdly, how men and women are portrayed in the media to highlight traditional roles and normalize violence against women.

In her book Gender and Culture, Paola Giuliano examines how historical situation can be a reason in the beginning of gender differences, and how gender norms tend to be normal or change over time through social learning. Finally, the author examines the role of different forms of cultural transmission as a reason for gender differences like the role of family, the role of peers and the role of teachers or role models.

Culture, Traditions and Customs of Indigenous People in South Africa by MJ Maluleke talks about the significance of observing custom, culture and tradition as part of being a South African. She is of the opinion that cultural actions should be grounded on respect for human rights, democracy and gender equality.

Gender Culture in Hinduism, Traditionalist and Modernization Issues by I. O. Svyatnenko analyzes the connections between the traditional and modernized gender dimensions within Hindu culture. The progression of females' social status has caused many significant alterations relating to a range of issues such as education, health measures, rural

and industrial social security schemes, early marriage problems, wearing burqa, widowhood status, voting rights for women and women representation in government among others.

The Status of Women in the National Indian Tradition by Sh.Y. Kanafyeva and A.S. Turar aims above all to present a historicizing account of Indian modernity from a gender perspective and offers a feminist critique of the public/private divide that forms the theoretical core of the modernization framework. It draws attention to the central role of gender in the political, developmental and cultural politics of the nation-state and to recent shifts in contemporary globalized India.

Culture, Gender and Resistance: Perspectives from India by Shraddha Kapoor highlights the relevance of gender. People's making sense of social interactions is shown in the resultant positions and counter-positions that can be taken. This demonstrates that people are not merely recipients of culture but they have an active role to play in their lives where they strategically choose, resist or renew the adaptation process. Some women's stories also serve as examples of instances where some individuals do not follow traditional family life patterns; sometimes they go against such systems while at other times they stay within its boundaries.

Indian Women in Leadership: Engaging with the Terrain of Constraints Rooted in Religion and Traditions by Venkatesh Murthy & Sangeeta Roy, showcase the components of different religious practices seen in India in connection with women and their leadership roles. In this article, the author has examined in detail the predominant Indian religions such as Hinduism and Islam. Gender and Family Roles: A Survey in Urban India by Tanya Chugh attempts to understand the stereotypes, gender roles and family roles currently associated with certain genders by conducting a survey in urban India.

Traditional-Modern Polarities and Women's Human Rights: Tracking Judicial Responses in India by Prof. Shashikala Gulpur and Dr. Shashikant Hajare looks at the 1991 judgement of the Kerala High Court in the case of S. Mahendran vs. Secretary of Travancore Devaswom (the Sabarimala case), which the authors propose to look at the legal and constitutional dimensions of gender discrimination in the context of religious customs in India. The case revolves around the legal and constitutional validity of a custom that prohibits women in the age group of 10 to 50 years from entering the very famous Hindu temple. Moreover, the case is contrasted with subsequent divergent judicial responses to the issues involved.

The main focus of Harmful Traditional Practices and Socio-Cultural Status of Women in India by A. Ravi is on the primordial status of women and how they suffer from various forms and social evils in nations, especially in India.

Amal Krishna Saha in *Social, Cultural and Religious Barriers of Women: How it Affects their Progress in India* seeks to identify the attitudes of young women regarding social norms, cultural traditions and religious teachings that became a major reason for their discrimination in the family, workplace and society at large.

The Cultural Construct of Problems with Boys in India by Aparajita Chowdhury highlights the gender issues in 21st century India. It says a child learns gender identity through various rituals, ceremonies, kinship terms and socialization practices. With this cultural overview, boys develop their attitudes and beliefs. The number of restrictions is minimum for boys and maximum for girls. Boys have all the freedom and no restrictions at every stage of their lives. Boys are overprotected in the family, and at the same time treated completely independently. The immediate result is immaturity, dependency and learned helplessness in boys, which leads to multiple problems for themselves, their families and society in general.

Literature review – Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory

The Theory of Social Learning was developed by Albert Bandura, an educational psychologist who studied at Stanford University, USA. This theory was developed to understand how kids learn behaviours through observation. Bandura believes that observation plays a major role in behaviour development and models like parents, teachers, peer group and media, which motivate and reinforce the developed behaviour.

When Enact Learning Went Missing, Vicarious Learning Became a Must by Reg Legg discusses the strategies teachers can use to teach or re-teach basic skills and behaviours through conversational modelling, observation, and setting expectations.

Learned Violence: Bandura's Theory of Social Learning in Edward Bond's *The Children* by Ajad Bastan and Ahemt Dulek talks about the ideas of observing, modelling and imitating. The play *The Children* is about Joe, a teenager who lives with his abusive mother, becomes increasingly violent over time and sets fire to a building, killing a child. Bond's play shows how violence is learned, paralleling Bandura's theory.

According to Joseph Zajda in the book titled *Social Cognitive Theories for Improving Engagement and Motivation*, one could understand the impact of Bandura's social learning theory and social cognitive theories and their impact on students' self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-regulation, engagement, and motivation. The chapter speaks of how motivation is a major concept that is always a key to the future regarding social learning and social cognitive learning.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory in the Teaching Process at SMA Methodist Berastagi by Kabupaten Karo states that social learning theory can shape the personality of an individual that affects the development of good character, because social learning theory is a type of observational learning that states observation is the key part for the formation of one's emotions, empathy, respect and multiculturalism.

Gender studies is a vast area and one of the sensitive topics that people are focusing on research a lot. Many studies are happening in the field of Gender studies, women's and men's equalities and injustice. The above articles have talked about the importance of culture and superstition and how it affects gender parity. This study, discusses the cultural, traditional and superstitious aspects of gender and society through the lens of the Tamil series Ayali. It focuses on how a cultural, traditional and superstitious artifact reflects and influences evolving gender roles in contemporary society, and how the media effectively project the changing gender roles to the audience. To project how superstitious elements in tradition and culture become a gender parity, the researcher will investigate the portrayal of male and female characters in Ayali, focusing on their roles, behaviour, and development throughout the series and identify and analyse key themes related to gender roles, such as patriarchy, empowerment, and resistance, and how it is connected with culture, tradition and superstition. The researcher also applies Bandura's social learning theory to identify how the characters learn behaviour from society. The key aspects which the study focuses on are the major four steps of Bandura's social learning: Attention, Retention, Reproduction and Motivation. In previous studies, Bandura's four steps have not yet been addressed; so, the current study aims to explore these four stages through an analysis of the movie.

Representation of Gender Cultural, Traditional, and Superstitions in Ayali

Ayali, a Tamil series released in 2023, comprises eight episodes, each lasting approximately 30 minutes, delving into the concept of the manipulation of God by humans to assert power, particularly affecting individuals in lower societal strata based on factors like caste, creed, religion, and gender. "The narrative underscores the significant role of faith in perpetuating the oppression of marginalized groups, shedding light on a pertinent issue through a unique storyline", as articulated by Bhuvanesh Chandar. Ayali serves as a notable illustration of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that the majority of human learning unfolds within a social context, with individuals acquiring knowledge, norms, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes by observing others. Through the observation of models, individuals assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of behaviours, subsequently shaping their actions based on self-efficacy, beliefs and anticipated outcomes. Moreover, the series portrays how gender roles are internalized through observational learning, particularly influenced by cultural, traditional, and superstitious practices.

The narrative commences in the 14th century, in a village called Panaiyur, inhabited by worshippers of the virgin goddess Ayali, where men are forbidden from entering the temple premises, and only prepubescent girls are permitted to enter and offer prayers. The village thrives until a girl elopes with a suitor from a neighbouring village, triggering a series of calamities, including crop failures, livestock deaths, and a widespread outbreak of chicken pox, leading the villagers to attribute these misfortunes to the goddess's wrath. These scenarios pave the path to superstitious belief. The villagers blamed that the problems started only when the girl eloped with the boy. They believed the goddess was angry with them. This is an example of how the old generation shrouds the problems they face in superstitious belief, irrespective of scientific reason, and make others believe the same.

Finally, the villages move to another village named Veerapanna and feel that the goddess is calm and she wants them to settle there. The villagers decide to build a temple for Ayali. After this scene, the audience can experience how superstitious beliefs control the gender role. The leader from the village announces, "Our deity was angered by a girl's act and it must not repeat. Marry off the girls once they attain puberty" (Epi 1). Eventually, it turned into a tradition and the girls vowed not to break the tradition at any cost.

Since then, around 500 years Veerapannai villagers haven't changed the tradition and nobody dared to break or question this tradition. This is interconnected with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, where he says that observation was the first stage in social learning process.

After the leader's announcement, both girls and boys start to pay attention to tradition. The young kids observe the actions of elders in the following ways:

1. Men are not allowed to enter the temple.
2. Only girls who haven't attained puberty can touch and pray.
3. Girls should marry once they attain puberty.
4. Either boys or girls aren't allowed to go to the city and study.
5. Either boys or girls should marry only within the village.
6. Man is responsible for taking care of the family and satisfying the basic needs, and woman is responsible for taking care of her husband and kids and fulfilling their needs.
7. Women don't have a right to make decisions.
8. If a family rebels against the villager's culture and tradition, the family man is responsible.

After observing these actions, they start to retain the ideas. Later they perform or reproduce the same action. If they do well, they get rewards from the parents and village and if they

don't, they have to undergo punishment. Mostly the kids are motivated by the village leader, parents and peer group.

For example, a girl should be mindful of the dress she wears, if not the community will criticize her mother for having raised her so carelessly. "Behave like a girl and walk with some composure! Get used to looking down when you walk" (Conversation between a mother and a daughter, Epi 1).

When a girl is about to be married says "I am scared Aunty", her aunty gives motivation by saying "What are you scared about now? My niece can prepare rice and gravy without her mother's help, you are already good at taking care of a home. You can even tend cattle. What else do you need?" (Epi 1). The villagers motivate the girls and boys to live under their culture and tradition. Similarly, the villagers stop boys to go for higher studies and insist them to either work in the field or do nothing. A boy's duty is to get married to a girl from the village and get kids. A man should be the family head and decision maker and if anything goes wrong, he is punishable.

People blindly follow the culture and tradition laid down by the villagers and don't complain about the gender trouble they face. But one girl from the village, Tamilselvi, decided to challenge and change the gender parity. She questioned the norms and gave gender education to the community. She tried to bring back the life they had lived 500 years ago. She questions the socially constructed rules and roles to save the villagers.

Tamilselvi, a young, intelligent girl observes the people but gets a different perspective. She learns the sad plight of girls when she talks to her friend who is in puberty (peer education). "We thought attaining puberty is fun, but that's only for a few days. Now they kill me by saying, you are an adult, you have to move to your in-law's house soon. They are afraid of everything and torture me to death. Every day is a battle to survive. Everybody at home hates me nowadays. I must not speak, I must not laugh loud, I am unable even to sit in a place where I am in their sight. My legs are aching from walking continuously. I do chores throughout the day, but at night I struggle to sleep. It's been days since I slept well". Then she shows her bra and says "Look at this. I keep saying that this brassiere is too tight and it hurts me, but my mom insists me on wearing this. Look at this bruise. My heart feels heavy when I think about my school life." She penetratingly looked into Tamilselvi's eyes and said "You don't have much time left. I am warning you; this is our fate." (Epi 1)

"Attention process is crucial because mere exposure to a model doesn't ensure that observers will pay attention" (Bandura, 1972). The thought-provoking words make Tamilselvi rethink about her life. Adding to this, Tamilselvi's headmistress motivated her by keeping an

achievers board in school. She says to Tamilselvi, "If you study well and secure 1st rank in 10th grade, then I will write your name with paint on this board." (Epi 1).

The first episode is an example of observational learning. When others observe the models like parents, siblings, and villagers, Tamilselvi observes her teacher and pays attention to her peer's words. Thus, she unlearned many concepts. The following episodes show how she reproduces and motivates the learned behaviour to fight against the cultural, traditional and superstitious gender roles.

"Motor reproduction process uses internal symbolic images of observed behaviour to guided actions (Bandura 1972)". "An observer initially replicates a behaviour using these symbols as a reference even if it's not externally shown." (Manz & Sims,1981). Through observational learning, Tamilselvi concludes that Puberty is the problem and requests Ayali to save her from puberty. Unfortunately, her requests go vain. One day at school, she gets her first periods and to hide that she pours red ink on her. Even after many days no one identifies her secret and she decides to hide her puberty from her family. Since she was a religious girl, she goes to Ayali temple and requests mercy, "You are my strength and support. I didn't enter the temple intentionally; I don't have any other option. Didn't I ask you not to bless me with puberty? If I hadn't come inside everyone will start doubting me, then they wouldn't let me study further. I want to become a doctor. If you think I have made a mistake, you may punish me." (Epi 3). The god did not punish her for entering the temple after puberty. This action makes her realize that the belief they have is superstitious. From here, the main character learns how superstitious beliefs turn into a part of culture and tradition and how they control both genders.

"Motivation and reinforcement refer to the perceived favourable or unfavourable consequences of mimicking the model's actions that are likely to increase or decrease the likelihood of imitation." (Bandura, 1972). Tamilselvi continues her education by hiding her puberty, and decides to rewrite the future of the village kids. She starts to educate the girls and boys who don't support the system. For example, when Tamilselvi's friend Kayal tries to find a way to stop her wedding, Tamilselvi advises Kayal to go to the temple because after puberty if a girl enters the temple, her hair will be cut off and she should live single forever. Kayal asks "What if the villagers learned that I entered the temple? Yes, the marriage will be stopped. Will they let me continue my education?" Tamilselvi replies, "Think carefully, when do they stop us from going to school? Right when they stop us from entering the temple. So, if we want to go to school here, then we must enter the temple first." (Epi 6) Tamilselvi, the brilliant young girl uses the same weapon to fight back for their freedom.

The Dictionnaire de l'Académie française of 1798 (5th edition) defines superstition as a "false idea of a certain practice of religion, to which one is attached with too much fear or confidence." It adds by way of example "Women have a great penchant for superstition." The central character proved to the community that believing God is good, but it should not control anyone's life. Towards the end, Kayal enters the temple free from the social rules and the other girls start dreaming the same. But the villagers couldn't accept it. They again bring the concept of puberty and goddess wrath to control the women. To motivate the girls and save the women from the evils, Tamilselvi discloses her secret. She says "The villagers are fooling us. Men fabricated the myth around Ayali for their convenience. Will the deity get angry if we women set foot in the temple? A true deity will never discriminate people. I'm sure that Ayali will never punish anyone for anything. Someone else has created the stories." (Epi 7) She looks at the women and says "You still don't understand? Shall I be clearer? It has been two years since I attained puberty and I am not punished by Ayali." (Epi 7) The crowd is astonished and men become furious. After her confession, Tamilselvi's father arranges wedding for her and to escape from the wedding she goes to the temple. This time she is not alone; women from the village and even the young boys come together to fight for their rights. The boys learn the truth that the society has been controlling them in the name of God. In the name of culture and tradition, the society had been controlling their education, their profession as well as the life they wished to live.

To save the village, the young boys, girls and women from the village gather at Ayali temple where men are restricted from entering, and raise their voices for justice. As expected, the men's team comes to the temple with a sword. "Are we going to let these women talk?" commented a man from the crowd. "That's the man, then why have you placed the village honour on women? I see a lot of proud men here, go and save your village and honour yourself. Why the hell are you searching your village's honour in women?"(Epi 8), responded a woman.

To pacify the angry mob, Tamilselvi comes forward and talks to her father. The conversation gives the audience a better understanding of how men are also manipulated by the belief. Tamilselvi's father says, "We are living a dignified life in this village. Are you planning to ruin it? Do you want me to die with dishonour?" (Epi.8). Immediately, Tamilselvi's mother replies, "To save your honour you either kill yourself or kill your daughter. You men know nothing else. Many fathers in this village have killed their daughters in the name of honour, but when some of your sons ruined the life of other girls, did any of you fathers kill them in the name of honour? Justice should be fair for both the sides." (Epi.8) Tamilselvi's father replies, "Don't talk to me like I am one of them. Was I like all other men? I love my daughter more than my life. Do you think that my love for her

is not true?" (Epi.8) A firm voice appears from nowhere. It is Tamilselvi. She responds, "My mom has put her life in danger to stand up for me. but you are here with a weapon to kill me. You talk about love all the time, but it is not love. You gave birth to me for your honour, you accumulated wealth for me and bragged about it to everyone for your honour. Now you are holding a sickle to kill me for your honour. Tell me, where is your love amidst all this dad?" (Epi. 8). Her powerful words make him speechless, and he walks out of the place. This scene is a perfect example of how a man is trapped in a superstitious society. The men are not aware of how society is controlling them. After the incident, he realizes his behaviour and makes necessary changes. He becomes motivated by Tamilselvi, his own daughter. He takes everyone to the school and points to the board and says, "The Achievers board has a lot of empty spaces, and I see a lot of kids here. All your names should appear on the board" (Epi. 8). This emphasises the role of a model which influences one's behaviour. The paper wishes the young minds to choose a wise model to learn behaviour. It only happens when the parents and teachers, as social models, guide them wisely.

The younger generation, which had suffered from the rules and roles constructed by the villagers, now became free of the gender specific roles and rules. They came to the realization that it is important to have limitations on what they take. If someone takes more than they should, it could have harmful effects, similar to poison. Even though a man wants to bring changes in his own family, society stands as an obstacle and holds back in the name of culture and tradition to control them. Through Tamilselvi's motivation, the village kids had a transformation in their behaviour through "observation, imitation and modelling." (Bandura SLT).

The series ends by showcasing the cultural switch by depicting how the village in the 21st century has changed in superstitious beliefs in the following ways:

1. Ayali temple is open to everyone.
2. Both men and women are allowed to go for higher studies.
3. Other villagers are allowed to take proposals.
4. Men and women go for professional jobs and lead a happy life.

The villagers hold their beliefs strong and leave the superstitious beliefs behind. Veerapanna villagers' bond to their culture and tradition no more harms any gender to achieve their dream.

Discussion

The series *Ayali* delves into the incorporation of superstitious beliefs into culture and tradition, by exploring its implications on gender dynamics. A thematic study and character analysis shows the influence of traditional gender roles, cultural expectations, and superstitious beliefs on gender constructs utilizing Bandura's Social Learning Theory encompassing Attention, Retention, Motor Reproduction, and Motivation. It is clear that

culture and tradition should not harm society; the incorporation of malicious superstitious beliefs requires a review of our cultural practices. Even with these progressive ideas, we must recognize that superstitions about gender, although less impactful on gender roles, are still existent even now more than in the past. Future studies could delve deeper by analysing the traditional and cultural transformations by conducting an in-depth comparison between old and new traditions, and how education can play an important role in bringing gender awareness.

Conclusion

The Tamil series *Ayali* serves as an intriguing case study for examining how contemporary media addresses and challenges traditional gender roles, cultural practices, and superstitions. This study explores the depiction of these themes in *Ayali*, by analysing the changes and challenges presented in the context of 21st-century South Indian society. *Ayali* is a perfect example of how patriarchal society controls both women and men under superstitious beliefs and traditions. *Ayali* challenges these conventions by depicting strong female characters who defy traditional role and also illustrates the tension between maintaining cultural heritage and embracing modern values. *Ayali* addresses these superstitions head-on, showcasing characters who question and resist these outdated beliefs. This narrative encourages viewers to critically evaluate the role of superstition in perpetuating gender inequality.

Through this study, it is apparent that a trivial incident could be turned into a superstitious idea, and how it becomes a part of tradition and culture, leading to gender trouble. Holding beliefs is fine but it should not become a barrier to pursuing one's goal. From the evidence, it is clear that 21st century is progressing, but still has a long way to traverse to become completely progressive. Compared to the older generations, indeed at present there is a cultural shift. The society is more broad-minded and treats its problems more scientifically. But still, one part of the society still embraces superstitious beliefs and never leaves the thread. South Indian Culture and Tradition always help people to grow, but when superstitious ideas affect them negatively, people become regressive. The current paper is an overview of how superstitious beliefs have become different now than before. Earlier, the term 'gender' defined traditional gender roles, Patriarchal structure, and cultural and religious practice with limited educational and professional opportunities. Now the term 'gender' has switched its shape by increasingly accepting women in workforce, and men participating in household duties. Though patriarchy still exists, there is a growing awareness and activism against gender inequality with more educational and career opportunities for women.

The major reasons for the changes are - increased access to education, a significant factor in reducing superstition and promoting gender equality, and Media. Media, especially social media, plays a crucial role in challenging old beliefs and spreading new ideas and laws and policies supporting gender equality and rational thinking.

In conclusion, the series *Ayali* proves that though superstitions and traditional gender roles persist in India, there is a clear trend towards rationality and gender equality, driven by education, media, legal reforms, and activism. The pace of change varies across different regions and communities, but the overall trajectory is towards a more progressive society. This paper aims to show how the media comes up with topics which motivate and inspire the society to bring gender unity. The analysis projects that if Gender Studies is implemented as a new subject in the post – primary school’s curriculum connecting with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, education will become the key to open young minds.

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