

ART AS A HEALING FEAST

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BROKEN MINDS, BROKEN NARRATIVES: Mental Health Stereotypes in Tamil Cinema

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Abstract

This article investigates the historical progression of mental health representation in Tamil cinema, evaluating how Kollywood's depictions have influenced public perceptions, perpetuated detrimental stereotypes, and exacerbated mental health stigma in South India and the global Tamil diaspora.

Method: The study examines the historical evolution of mental health representations, from early caricatures to modern depictions, by analyzing particular films and psychiatric disorders, while referencing the documented experiences of mental health professionals with patients impacted by cinematic misrepresentation. The analysis integrates research findings from studies on Tamil films spanning four decades, professional insights from psychiatrists and psychologists, and recorded instances of treatment disruption due to cinema representations.

Results: Tamil cinema's portrayal of mental health has changed over three distinct periods: the comic relief period (characters used for mockery), the