

## Transgenders play 'female' leads, create celluloid history

Karpaka and Revathi, who are transgenders in real life, will rewrite cinema history by playing 'female' leads in the forthcoming Tamil films 'Paal' and 'Thenavattu'.

While Karpaka features as the central character in 'Paal', Revathi will be seen in 'Thenavattu'. A transgender is a person who attempts to take on the identity of the opposite sex.

'Karpaka needed a lot of convincing to play a very complex role opposite choreographer Kadhal Kandas, who is the male lead,' said Shiva Kumar, director of 'Paal'.

'The project is the result of meticulous study in [Mumbai](#) amidst the community for over two months in the company of Vidya, the transgender author of the book 'Living Smile' who underwent a sex-change operation in real life,' added Kumar.

Kumar's film shows the realistic side of the transgender activist Vidya assisting him in the film.

'A transgender is always depicted as a beggar or denigrated as sub-human caricature in every film. Vidya, an activist and leading light of the community's association in Tamil Nadu, not only provided inputs but is also assisting in the making of 'Paal' - all about a person torn between an absent sexual identity and an emotional turmoil over a love affair with a man,' Kumar added.

Kumar is tight-lipped about the rest of the storyline. His film is due for an August release.

V.V. Kathir, who is directing 'Thenavattu', describes his venture as another bold film in the making, featuring transgender Revathi in a role strong enough to change the world's perception of a transsexual.

'My movie will result in a new generation of 'normal' people treating a transgender as 'brother,' 'sister' or more importantly, as a friend,' Kathir opined.

'Thenavattu' featuring Jeeva in the main lead have to wait for the Indian Premier League cricket fever to subside to augment its financial viability through additional funds for its completion, Kathir added.

Recently, another celluloid account of a transgender, 'Achchupizhai', directed by Vignesh, was shown at a transgender film festival in Madurai.

It was a tragic tale of a rustic youth's biological change from man to woman, followed by a marriage. The film climaxed in the main character being lynched by the inhabitants of a village who did not understand the relationship.

As expected, it is yet to find takers for commercial release.

Celebrated cinematographer-cum-director Santosh Sivan's award winning essay 'Navarasa' and a television show anchored by transsexual Rose in Tamil Nadu have established a niche for such subjects.

Sivan's film told the story of a 13-year-old girl's journey to Koovagam, a holy place for transgenders in Villupuram district, to witness the transformation of her uncle into a woman.

Annually, Koovagam witnesses rituals of transgender re-enacting an event in the life of Hindu god Krishna's female avatar and local deity Koothandavar at the Sri Koothandavar temple.

Despite social stigma surrounding transgenders, the fact that the Koovagam ritual is featured prominently in several local and foreign satellite television channels annually is a sign of the 'normal' world's coming to terms with this misunderstood section of humanity.

Now movies too seem to be following suit.

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