

Exploring Redemption and Acceptance: Cinematic Metaphors in Peranbu and Super Deluxe

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Abstract: Tamil cinema's contemporary auteurs, Ram and Thiagarajan Kumararaja, explore marginal lives with different yet thematically connected cinematic styles. This paper investigates cinematic metaphors and symbolism in Ram's Peranbu and Kumararaja's Super Deluxe, focusing on how both films frame the stranger, the disabled, the transgender and the morally judged as they move toward self-realization and belonging. Peranbu structures its narrative with nature using motifs such as sunrise, mist, water, silence and a naturalistic colour palette as emotional mirrors for a father's painful yet healing journey with his disabled daughter. In contrast, Super deluxe employs a saturated neon palette, religious symbols, semiotic elements, alien concepts and intersecting narratives to confront social double standards, compassion and the reshaping of marginalized identities. Using auteur theory and visual semiotics, the study compares these two directors using visual signifiers such as restriction, screens, windows, transformation, nature and ideas of morality, such as faith vs chaos, to build an emotional and empathetic narrative. Though visually different, both films explore love, care and human connection. Together, the filmmakers present new ways of showing empathy and belonging. This study shows how Tamil auteurs add to global cinema discussions on compassion and morality through symbolic and visual storytelling

Keywords: Visual Metaphors, Symbolism, Visual semiotics, Auteur theory, Cinema.

Introduction

Cinema is a visual art form that uses images, sound and stories to convey meaning. It does not depend only on dialogues, but also on symbolism and metaphor to express deeper ideas. In Tamil cinema, mythology and spirituality are deeply connected in everyday social life. Often filmmakers use visual symbols and images to shape characters, create emotions and make audiences reflect on life and society. Important themes commonly seen in Tamil films are redemption and acceptance. Redemption is nothing but a change that the audience finds hard to accept, and, in that way, is portrayed as a gradual journey of self-change. Acceptance is shown through a form of peace and freedom, where characters learn to let go of emotional suffering, social expectations and feelings of guilt. Visual metaphors play an important role in presenting themes simply yet powerfully by allowing the audience to connect emotionally

In the movie Peranbu, director Ram uses nature to represent life and the journey toward acceptance. visual elements like lakes, strong winds reflect the serene journey of the main character,.

and he slowly learns to accept his chaotic life with a differently abled daughter. The film has multiple changing natural surroundings that reflect his feelings, emotions, struggles and personal growth. Those visuals convey that life has both pain and beauty, and the true change happens when we learn to accept both. Repeated images of sunrise and sunset symbolize that every ending has a new beginning with hope, even at difficult times. Super deluxe movie, Thiagaraja Kumararaja connects in several ways to challenge the ideologies of right and wrong. Film also conveys the acceptance of people with unconventional lifestyles. By using bright colours, especially red and green are repeatedly used to show emotions like love, disgrace, and danger. Also, the usage of lights and shadows makes the characters appear complex, instead of good or bad. These visual choices encourage the audience to understand empathy and avoid judging.

Peranbu and Super Deluxe movies have general moral ideas and judgment. The film encourages the audience to understand and accept human flaws with empathy and redemption through love. This study applies semiotic theories of Roland Barthes and psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud. Cinematic techniques of the film communicate deep emotional ideas about human life through personal transformation with compassion and acceptance. Tamil cinema combines mythology and modern narratives

Research Question

1. How do directors employ cinematic metaphors and visual grammar to construct the themes?
2. How does the auteur style differ between the two directors by use of visual language to communicate emotional and social meaning?
3. In what ways do the visual and semiotics challenge moral boundaries and empathy towards the disabled and transgender?
4. What does the film reveal about contemporary Tamil cinema's participation in global conversations on human identity and belonging?

Research Objective

1. To examine the cinematic metaphors and visual grammar used in Peranbu and Super deluxe movies.
2. To analyse visual symbolism in these films shows ideas of empathy, belonging and acceptance.
3. To analyze the selected films through auteur theory and visual semiotics.
4. To explore how the directors use elements like images, symbols and colours to express meaning beyond dialogue and storyline.

Literature Review

Film Semiotics and Visual Language

Roland Barthes (1997) argued that cinematic images communicate both denotative and connotative levels, with cultural myths embedded in seemingly neutral imagery. The concept of rhetoric of the image says that the signs are ideological meaning. Christian Metz (1974), in *Film Language*, a semiotics of the cinema, develops a grammar of cinema, arguing that films function as a language of signs. The study of film metaphor from a semiotic perspective, showing how editing, mise-en-scene and camera placement communicate meaning beyond surface narrative.

Bordwell and Thompson (2023), in film art, offer a systematic framework for analyzing the properties of cinema, including cinematography, editing and narrative structure. The concept of parametric narration and visual style is relevant to the study's comparative analysis of Ram's natural aesthetics and Kumararaja's colourful patterns.

Auteur Theory

This theory was developed by Andrew Sarris (1968) in American cinema, which proposed that a director's personal style, recurring thematic elements, and technical competence. Both the directors exemplify auteur filmmakers within Tamil cinema; Ram's commitment to observational realism, silence and Kumararaja's experimental colours, and philosophical context rely on their individual creative signatures.

Representation of Disability in Indian Cinema

Deb (2022), in a study published in the British Journal of learning disabilities, examined how mainstream Hindi cinema has historically represented intellectual disability through stereotyping, while also tracing a shift toward more nuanced portrayals in recent decades. Debs' analysis of the tension between social model and medical model approaches to disability is relevant to Peranbu's treatment of paapa.

Similarly, Mukherjee (2022) has shown that differently abled characters are subjects of empathy rather than pity or comic relief.

Ravindar (2018) noted in the study of transgender portrayal in Tamil cinema that marginalized identities defined by disability, gender or sexuality are constructed through specific visual and narrative codes that either challenge dominant social norms.

Transgender Representation in Tamil cinema

Thavamani and Varatharajulu (2019) examined Tamil films that have historically maintained a derogatory or marginalizing stance toward the transgender community. Only a recent study has identified a progressive turn in films like Peranbu and Super Deluxe, where transgender characters are given complexity and dignity.

Sengupta and Syiem (2022), in voicing the voiceless representation of the excluded transgender community in Tamil cinema, argue that dignified and empathetic representation of trans characters in these films has the potential to shift public perception.

Tamil cinema as a site of social critique

A new wave of Tamil filmmakers, including Ram, Kumararaja, Pa. Ranjith, and Mari Selvaraj, have consciously used cinematic form to challenge hegemonic narratives and give visibility to marginalized communities. Analysis of Shageel (2020) of the super deluxe film is identified with a multi-layered narrative as a sustained commentary on social hypocrisy and moral double standards.

Nandakumar and Jenitha (2023) further showed how Kumararaja's film explores identity, desire and freedom within a philosophy that questions, including religion, medicine and the family. These studies confirm that both films under analysis are not merely entertainment but participate in a broader cultural and moral conversation.

The present study applies a comparative semiotic and auteur analysis to these two selected films, with particular attention to the visual and symbols, which are constructed through redemption and acceptance.

Theoretical Framework

Research is guided by two theoretical approaches,

Auteur Theory - By using this theory, we can understand the directorial creative signatures of Ram and Kumararaja. Understanding cinema as an expression of a filmmaker's personal vision and style. It is useful in this study because both the directors have highly distinctive storytelling styles and recurring thematic concerns.

Visual Semiotics - is applied to study signs, myth and cultural meaning. This framework provides tools for reading cinematic images. It allows us to understand how images communicate within a specific cultural and emotional context.

A comparative approach throughout the study to identify both the stylistic divergences and the shared thematic concerns that connect these two different films.

Methodology

By using a qualitative method to study the selected films to understand how *Peranbu* and *Super Deluxe* engage with themes of redemption, acceptance and human connection. Using purposive scene selection and textual analysis as its primary method. The analysis pays attention to both visual and verbal elements, including metaphors, use of colour, character development, dialogue patterns and symbolic images.

Data Selection

Primary texts are the films selected from two different directors (Ram - *Peranbu*, 2019; Thiagaraja Kumararaja - *Super Deluxe*, 2019). Scenes were chosen to represent a range of the film's visual strategies, including nature, colour, framing and body language.

Role of Metaphor in Modern Cinema

Film scholars like Roland Barthes (1964) and Christian Metz (1974) have long described movies as a 'language of signs. They argue that everything we see on screen communicates a message that goes deeper than just the surface image. Barthes noted that filmmakers use cultural symbols effectively; they tap into ancient myths and shared meanings that resonate with the audience on a profound level.

A cinematic metaphor is not an ornament. It is a device through which an object, setting, a colour or a gesture is charged with meaning beyond its immediate function in the narrative. When Ram places Amudhavan and Paapa in a mist, fog is not merely weather; it becomes a figure for their situation. When Kumararaja frames a character behind glass, the barrier is not architectural; it is social, moral and psychological.

Visual storytelling in Tamil cinema

Tamil Cinema has developed a sophisticated visual vocabulary over decades of practice. It is more serious that directors' understanding of an image in the film is not subsidiary to the story; it is, in many cases, the story itself. Ram and Kumararaja both work within this tradition, though they inhabit it very differently.

Ram cinema is characterized by a kind of observational patience. He uses the natural world, specifically water and shifting landscapes, to represent the unpredictability of life. These elements mirror the father's emotional journey as he learns to accept and care for his daughter, who has cerebral palsy. Besides, the super deluxe visual world is constructed through contrast between vivid and the sacred, using motifs like neon lights, religious icons that symbolize and represent concepts like fate and the

harsh judgment of society.

Analysis

Peranbu - Director Ram uses nature as a metaphorical canvas for the protagonist's journey toward acceptance and redemption.

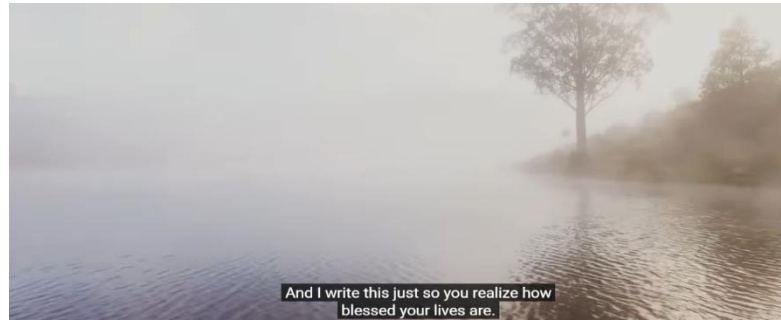


Figure 1 : Introduction scene of Amudhavan and Paapa moving to a new place.

Scene Analysis – Amudhavan brings Paapa to the hill station. Father and daughter move through a landscape thick with fog, and the fog does a great deal of work. Ram's lyrical pacing reflects inner states. The mist and fog represent uncertainty, and the wide aerial shot symbolizes a detached bird's perspective, suggesting fate looking over them.



Figure 2 : Paapa cries over a wounded bird.

Scene Analysis – The bird becomes a symbol of Paapa's feelings, showing the emotions she cannot express in words. The bird functions as a proxy for what Paapa cannot say; its broken wing echoes her own physical condition.

This scene shows that pain and suffering are not only human experiences. Also, the scene reflects social suffering. The neighbours who watch and judge from a distance transform and become figures of the society. Framing the scene, tight and enclosed, marks the space feel like a cage. Paapa's distress is not simply personal; it is also a protest against a world that does not know how to hold her.



Figure 3 : Paapa suppressed sexuality and her attempt to claim womanhood.

Scene Analysis – When Paapa paints the doll's chest with green nail polish, the gesture is simple, and the meaning is not. Green nail polish carries the associations of the natural world, growth and something that belongs to the living. Paapa is asserting her desires, her sense of her own body and her emerging sense of self are natural. The father-daughter emotional gap is also beautifully crafted in this scene.



Figure 4 : Happiness in letting go of the bird.

Scene Analysis– Paapa wants to let the bird free from the four side-locked doors and windows which got stuck inside. When she asks her father to open the door for the bird, she symbolically pleads for freedom, acceptance and dignity not just for herself, but for anyone whom society has locked in. The birds' release becomes an act of solidarity locked inside definitions they did not choose.



Figure 5 : Amudhavans social belief vs meeras compassion.

Scene Analysis – This scene stages one of the film's central moral arguments. It denotes the clash between society's judgment and compassion. The protagonist suspects Meera of Meera. His suspicion is wrong, and the film knows it is wrong and makes it visible through the spatial and visual arrangement of the scene. Meera's compassion is evident in her care. Amudhavan, who is diminished by his assumptions. Real peranbu comes only when we let go of social expectations and embrace compassion without conditions.



Figure 6 : Climax shot of the divided path.

Exploring Redemption and Acceptance: Cinematic Metaphors in Peranbu and Super Deluxe

Scene Analysis – The divided path that divides, with Paapa and Meera moving toward the greener side, is a visual metaphor for choice, liberation and hope. The path signifies Paapa and Meera's conscious movement toward life, toward growth, acceptance and flourishing. What they leave behind is everything that was trying to hold them. The path does not promise arrival, but it is hopeful.

Super Deluxe - Directors' visual perspective and symbolic ideologies explore societal expectations versus the hard truth to accept. The entire universe operates on a similar pattern; the director follows a pattern in the narration.



Figure 1 : Ice cream used as a metaphor to define life

Scene Analysis - The film's title is itself a metaphor. Super Deluxe is the name of an ice cream company whose tagline is "pleasure until the last drop". The movie's theme also revolves around and matches that of the ice cream company's ad poster. There will be hurdles in life; handle them and accept them. The ice cream acts as a sweet conclusion, signifying the acceptance of chaos. It is a characteristically kumaraja gesture, serious thinking wearing a playful disguise.

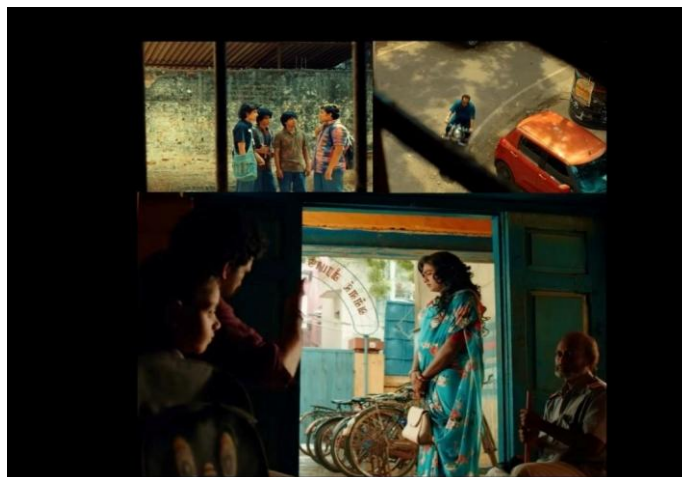


Figure 2 : The art of framing characters within a frame.

Scene Analysis - The director's use of frames within frames, windows, doorways, and barriers of various kinds is one of the visual strategies. These shots resemble cages, signifying how individuals are

trapped by social norms, moral judgment and fate. Windows create a sense of looking in and out of the society, watching the individual watching society, but genuine contact remains difficult. Even though storylines connect, the idea that no matter how chaotic and interconnected life is, each person is still framed, judged and confined within their own box of existence.



Figure 3 : Mirror as self-reflection vs society's reflection.

Scene Analysis - The mirror is one of cinema's oldest metaphors for self-knowledge, and the director uses it with full awareness of this tradition. For Shilpa, it's self-acceptance; for Vembu and mugil its guilt and hypocrisy, the mirror reflects what they would rather not see. The mirror is in each scene, staging the distance between self-perception and social perception between who one is and who one is permitted to be. It symbolizes the journey from shame to acceptance and pride in one's identity.

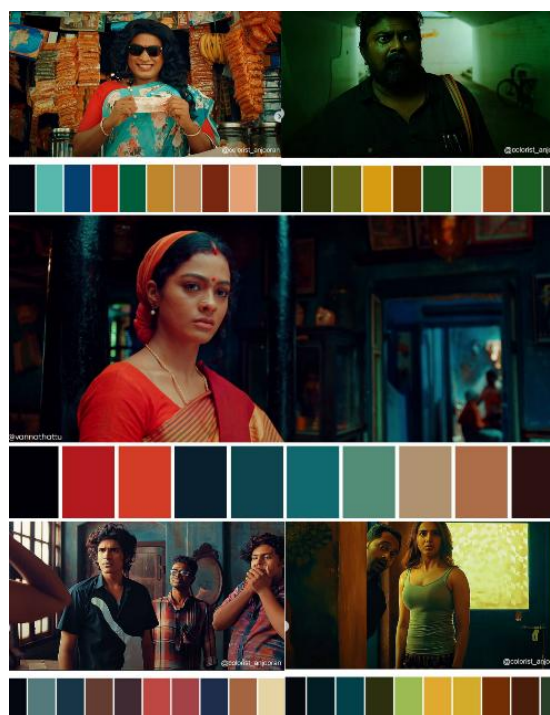


Figure 4 : semiotics of colour.

Scene Analysis - Using colour design is one of its most striking formal achievements. The film employs vibrant, surreal colours, particularly during scenes that reflect fantasy and emotions. Film uses desaturated tones to depict everyday life, enhancing the contrast between mundane reality and the extraordinary events the characters experience. The colour palette keeps this tension alive throughout. Bright colour signals not just beauty but intensity, risk and transformation.

Comparative Analysis

Both films are organized around the same fundamental moral concern. They use different visual methods, but both finally ask the audience to look at people with empathy and understanding, especially those who are often ignored, judged or pushed aside by society. Both films use their own cinematic language to say something similar that people who are treated as different deserve not pity or rejection, but understanding, dignity and love.

Result and Discussion

Even though Peranbu and Super Deluxe are very different in style, both films share the same moral and emotional concerns. Both films strongly highlight values such as compassion, empathy and the need to question strict social and moral rules. Peranbu, the differently abled child, becomes the centre of the film's emotional and human message, asking the audience to look at her with care, love and understanding. In Super Deluxe, the transgender woman is given a similar important position, where her life and struggles also become a way to create empathy and acceptance. The film refuses to allow comfortable moral positioning; it keeps pulling the ground out from under any simple judgment.

Both films demonstrate that Tamil cinema is capable of sophisticated engagement with questions of identity, morality and social belonging.

Conclusion

Peranbu and Super Deluxe are films that matter not only within Tamil cinema but within any broader account of contemporary world cinema's engagement with questions of human dignity and belonging. Ram's quiet, naturalistic approach and Kumaraja's energetic, chromatic excess are not simply different aesthetic preferences; they represent different theories of how cinema can move an audience toward greater understanding. Together, they suggest the breadth of what Tamil cinema can do when its directors are committed not just to entertainment but to genuine engagement with the complexity of human experience.

By grounding their stories in local cultural specificity the social textures of Tamil life, its mythologies and moral vocabularies, while reaching toward universal questions of empathy, care and identity. Peranbu and Super Deluxe demonstrate that Tamil cinema has the resources to participate meaningfully in global conversations about what it means to be human

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