

Film Review**G P Ramachandran*****Super Deluxe: Repossessions/ Re-positions
in Tamil Cinema****Super Deluxe*

Thiagarajan Kumararaja's film *Super Deluxe* (2019/ Tamil/ India) is intense with several threads, a presumption that they will join together once, anxiety and basic viscosities based on the moral justice. The detailed political stands that this innovative film adapts are really significant at present scenario. Famous and proved otherwise directors Mysskin, Nalan Kumarasamy, and Neelan K Sekar have written the screenplay and dialogues along with Thiagarajan Kumararaja. Their creativity, conceptual ability, fictional narratives, experiences and feelings have been used independently in the movie and then, Kumararaja blends all these together to make an alliance of art. The evolution of this movie as a really unique mixture is wonderful to observe and think later. Usually, a master film craftsman makes his/her own movie out of the best performances from the actors. Similarly, Kumararaja accepts the writings from three genius filmmakers and saves the essence of the writings by avoiding the personal influences on the writing by the writer. Film Companion streams an interview done by famous critic Baradwaj Rangan with these four genius film

makers, in YouTube. Thiagarajan Kumararaja says that when he made a different and innovative trailer for this film, he aimed at the people who are really attracted to the movie and at the same time, it shouldn't be a loss in terms of money and time for the people who accidentally come to the theatre. What will I do if a tiger captures me when I am alone? He tries to escape from the tiger when it seizes him partially ('I' changes into 'he' and 'him' eventually). The tiger still follows him. He climbs up the hill. There is a tree on that hill. He saves himself by falling down through the branches and leaves of that tree.... This must-watch trailer presents the 'simple' complex theme of Super Deluxe like explained below, in a chilled and feminine tone of Vijay Sethupathy. Kumararaja's transparent and honest communication with a respect to his audience makes this cinematic experience wonderful when the stardom and fandom forcefully pushes you into a theatre on the other side of cinema industry. Mysskin opines that Super Deluxe has the best and brilliant trailer over the past decade.

There are many previously discussed movie themes randomly occur in Super Deluxe. But those themes are treated with a different perception and an independent attitude by Super Deluxe. Super Deluxe is a complicated artistic mixture of love, sex, family, law and order, science fiction, politics, cinema, underworld, gender violations, beliefs, rituals, God, spiritual leaders, childhood, teenage, youth, old age, death, morality, and so on. The director deploys his meticulous political debates and criticisms through the detailing of plenty and divided storylines of the movie. The audience will take time to think, rethink and understand the narrowed political alerts.

During the shooting period, this movie was named as Aneethi Kadhaigal (Tales of Injustice). Later, the movie named as Super Deluxe, which has a mystic pleasure within it. The title appears when the camera travels through a window of an apartment, then a verandah and an internal patio. The title appears on a television in an apartment and it has shown through a window. Television has a significance throughout the movie but the symbolism that house brings is not clear though. It is also discussing the basic human behavior of peeping through the window to the next house to see what is happening there! Even, the audience has to find how relevant the title Super Deluxe is for this movie. An ice cream brand named Super Deluxe has randomly showed in the movie as well. When Mugil (Fahad Fazil) angrily speaks to reduce stress, Vaambu (Samantha) comes out of car and spends some time with herself. At that scene, a

vehicle which sells Super Deluxe ice cream passes by her. In another moment, when the alien girl makes a twin from one of the three boys and comes to a terrace to chat with the twin boy. A big metallic billboard of Super Deluxe is the background in that frame. Some of the critics (Schzylan and Baradwaj Rangan) observe that the randomly shown Super Deluxe advertisements are indicating the edition of Nirodh Condoms, which primarily introduced by Hindustan Latex.



Since sex and the related moral viscosities are the main idea of this movie, Condom has its own significant role in the movie. The movie released during a chaotic election season -2019 March 29- when India was being an experimental house for Democracy versus Fascism. The title of the movie is questioning the act of a people's representative who went to Jawaharlal Nehru University and alleged that the university is a center of sex and drugs where over 3,000 used condoms and 2,000 liquor bottles are found daily. The title is significant because this immature allegation was such an anti-culture, indecent, and uncivilised towards the students or younger generation who shows a gesture of defiance.

Sex is one of the major theme discussed in the movie. On the opening scene, Vaambu is seen consoling her lover during her college days. The lover is really disappointed and it is not because of the broken relationship with Vaambu. Financial problems are struggling him. Vaambu tells him to come over to her place and will talk to find a solution. He enquires about her husband and she

tells he has gone to an acting class in Koothu Pattarai (street/folk theatre form of Tamil Nadu) which will take two hours to be back home. He comes home and she consoles him which eventually leads to sex. During the intercourse, Vaambu sits on her lover in a cowgirl-position and he dies eventually. In several societies, it is believed that sex will lead to death. Here, it is portrayed as an extramarital sex. It is an unacceptable culture for traditional and orthodox society as well. Vaambu justifies herself for leading the talk into sex as 'he is not a small kid to cherish and cuddle' and she talks it as a normal gesture.

Vaambu and Mugil are married for six months and there are no signs of a sexual relationship between them. When they talk, some hints are visible which proves that they haven't been into a sexual relationship yet. They ask each other that why they couldn't shape their life together and settle into a marriage life. Disposing the lover's dead body turns out to be an unfortunate miserable problem for them. Eventually, this dead body becomes a counsellor who modifies the marital relationship of Vaambu and Mugil. He didn't get killed, he didn't kill himself and his death was not an accident. As in the language of law, it was not an unnatural death. It is a premature death. Means, he was really young to die. On top of that, he died when he was participating in an extramarital sex. He died in a house where he was not supposed to be seen, either on day or night. It is questionable and doubtful even the body is not undergoing an autopsy. It is a murder done by the moral police. Having intercourse with Mugil's wife when he is not there in his (her) house in his own (her own) bed is considered as unacceptable not only to the Tamil culture, but to the Indian tradition itself it is disagreeable. If they are getting caught by someone, no one will justify their act. In villages, couples who got caught during extramarital sex have even got murdered. It is possible to view that the script writers and directors killed the paramour in order to satisfy the morally responsible audience. In short, this murder of the paramour character is to mock at the moral standards of audience. As Baradwaj Rangan said, Super Deluxe deposits few seeds which will fume the inner self and ego of audience. That fume creates a fire inside the audience which will burn from toe to head. That burn kills this paramour character in this movie. Since we, the audience killed that paramour, we are only responsible to dispose the 'paramour corpse'. The script writer and the director handover the authorship to the audience through this murder, which is actually not a murder!

The paramour gets killed when he was participating in an extramarital intercourse which is completely accidental. Moral Purists would say about people who dies ivy drinking counterfeit alcohol; Why did they drink that? Similarly, the purists will definitely ask that why did they have sex. Vaambu doesn't fear or care about this question but Mugil is. He is not accepting the idea of Vaambu to surrender to police for the murder is due to his fear for questions. If she is accepting the guilt she committed, it is not possible to accuse or punish her. That means she is safe with her life. She also suggests a divorce to her husband. She doesn't demand or beg to live with her for a lifetime since she has cheated on him. Mugil worries that if she pleads guilty for having sex with her lover and his death, and then she divorces and leaving from his life, then how will he face others and live in his future.



He portrays himself as a man who cannot take care or control his wife. His wife had sex with another guy when he was not there. He feels hopeless about him and he decides to dispose the corpse illegally to save his face. Vaambu searches the ways to dispose a corpse in Google and suggesting some to him. But, he is not accepting any of them. They decide to cut the corpse into pieces with a cleaver knife and dispose in different spots. But both of fails to do so (It can be assumed that the black plastic covers, which bought for the idea of chopping and disposing, are the same when the beautiful alien girl meets the boys in an apartment. The covers are kept as upside down and the alien girl discloses her identity, these covers go up in the atmosphere and become normal). Vaambu and Mugil decide to take the corpse in the car by dressing it up with a black sunglass. On the way, the perverted police sub inspector (Bhagavathy Perumal)

shoots a footage of them and blackmails them. He wants Vaambu to sleep with him. He justifies himself by telling why can't she sleep with me because she lost her chastity through cheating her own husband. Even Mugil accepts this offer to escape from the situation on the first thought. It seems he unloads his duty of a husband at that certain point of life. In short, the common sense and notions of having sex with a woman's body are unveiling here. This portrayal of this scene in the movie shows us how much humiliating the public mindset is. Even though, the audience cannot support the brutal sexual harassment of sub inspector since Vaambu and Mugil have become completely helpless. Sub inspector brings Vaambu and Mugil into an abandoned factory, which is a cliché spot for villains to have fun in Tamil cinema, and puts handcuffs on Mugil and ties with a car. When sub inspector moves towards Vaambu, a television falls on him from up and he dies.

On a parallel story, the trajectory of the same television which killed the sub inspector has explained. Five boys who just stepped into teenage era from the innocence try to watch a porn movie and the drop of television is a result of this action of boys. They are friends from the same apartment complex who are hailing from middle class families. Their names are Balaji (Gaaji), Vasanth (Mutta puffs means egg puffs), Mohan, Thuyavan and Soori. These names are really special in several ways and have inner meanings as well. They pretend as going to school and meeting at Thuyavan's ground floor apartment to watch a 3-D porn film. Balaji, Vasanth, Mohan and Soori go to a CD shop to buy a CD of a porn film. One of the boys provides an intellectual proclamation in order to get the CD from the CD shop. He says they all are adults and above 18 years. They study biology and zoology. They know everything but they want to study everything thoroughly. They describe to the middle-aged woman shop keeper like this even though she didn't ask anything to them. They ask for two Hollywood film CDs formally before asking for a porn film CD. The woman goes to take the porn film CD and suddenly they demand for a 'mallu uncut' version which is a famous keyword in Google. She hides her smile and gives them the CD. She advises them not to be afraid although it is good but don't be shy.

When these five boys start to watch the movie, Soori understands that is his mother who has acted as an important character in that porn movie. He feels disgust and due to the anger he throws everything he sees there. He destroys the television as well. This is the same television which kills Sub Inspector Berlin

when these boys try to dispose it from the terrace. Normally, a television doesn't have life but here, it commits two moral homicides. Usually, a television will have manipulated news from Government, falsely portrayed news hour discussions, satirical programmes which are actually ridicule politics, dirty and polluted soap opera, and wonderfully mesmerising advertisements. At the same time, the young generation (Television doesn't have any partiality towards young generation. Whatever it doesn't have artificial intelligence. It plays for all) who secretly wants to fulfil their hid desires put the CD inside the CD player connected to TV and the television turns into a screen which showcases a blue film. In short, a television doesn't have any sense to show partiality towards its viewers. Unfortunately, this television shows a porn film which Soori's mother acted naked with lust. This television becomes a victim of the vengeance of Soori on the disgusting act of Soori's mother and the whole society which secretly celebrated her body. Its moral responsibility doesn't end there. It kills the perverted Sub Inspector Berlin who blackmails Vaambu and tries to rape her.

Soori's anger doesn't end by smashing the television. He gets injured on the chest by a screwdriver when he runs to attack his mother with the same screwdriver. His mother runs and rushes to save her son who tried to kill her. By that time, his father, Arputham, has become a spiritual leader. Mysskin, one of the script writers of Super Deluxe, acts as Arputham aka Dhanasekar in the movie. The odious mannerisms of Arputham has been executed by Mysskin in a satirical way. Cinema has a weird tradition of glorifying the situations which are bad and incorrect values. But, Super Deluxe has discarded that way of portraying issues. Audience may feel boredom and irritation while watching Arputham on the screen. Super Deluxe is not trying to entertain and please its audience in any manner and thus, it doesn't fall under the commercial movie ideas of cinema industry.

Soori smashes the television and tries to stab his mother Leela (Ramya Krishnan) because she has acted in a porn film. He stabs himself and becomes hospitalised. Leela thinks she hasn't done anything wrong. She justifies her act of working in a porn film. She says people are interested in watching such movies and they are not blamed to watch such movies, but I am the one who gets the blame to act in a movie which actually pleases people. She adds that she has also acted in an Indian mythological movie as goddess and that character also entertained people. It is not clear whether Arputham tries to

commit suicide since Leela has acted in a Porn film. Arputham tries to commit suicide by walking towards the sea but the tide was ebbing. This was a miracle for Arputham and he couldn't drown in water and die. He saves himself by holding a rock but at the same time, hundreds of people die in the waves on the same day. After that incident, Arputham starts to believe that there is a part of God lives with him since God decided to kill so many innocent lives who didn't want to die but saved Arputham even though he wanted to kill himself. Thus, he becomes a spiritual leader.

Porn films are actually present everywhere by entertaining people even though it is legally and morally prohibited but Super Deluxe doesn't try to caption porn film as dirty or unacceptable. Pedro Almodóvar's Talk to Her portrays a male nurse who is bringing a woman back to life from coma by talking and taking care of her. He explains about a porn film in the movie. Few scenes of that black and white film are visible on the background when he talks. In fact, there is no such movie and it is a movie which Almodóvar shot himself. In Super Deluxe, when the movie ends, three boys from the teenage boys group watch a cinema called Vazhvin Rahasiyam (The secret of life). It is unclear to understand whether it is an actual soft porn film or not.

Apart from all these plots, there is an important story unveils parallels in this film. Also, this plot is more interesting than any other stories in the film. It is a story of Shilpa (Vijay Sethupathy), who turned as a transgender. He has a wife and a son when he went to Mumbai to undergo the sex reassignment surgery. He comes back after seven years as Shilpa. Vijay Sethupathy portrays 'neither a man nor a woman' character where he actually has the masculinity and strong fan-base in the industry of cinema. Manickam goes to Mumbai by leaving his wife, son and his scared family to accomplish the identity and body he wanted. Manickam comes back as Shilpa. He/she faces an identity crisis which forces him to decide between his body and his wife, son, family, and the society. Recently, several court orders and parliamentary laws are implemented in order to support the third gender and other minor communities. This societal changes and other several factors have changed the common treatment towards transgenders into a better state with humanity. But, Super Deluxe tells us these changes are temporary and superficial. When Shilpa enters the school compound with her son, Rasukutty, the head master brutally chases them away. This scene accuses the whole society or the whole world. They chase Shilpa away literally in the same way people treat a stray dog or other animals. The

way Shilpa walks back to road gives disappointment and shock to human beings with a heart.



The politics of Super Deluxe is deeply conceived and executed. On the way to dispose the parlour's corpse, Vaambu laves to buy some food when Mugil was waiting in a commercial building's parking slot. When she becomes late, he asks why and she answers that the ATM was not having cash. He criticises the bank service charges and some current situations in the economy passively. He asks when the customer doesn't have balance in the account, bank will enforce a fine so then, when the ATM doesn't have cash, why they don't pay a fine to us. Similarly when a citizen crosses a road without seeing signal, he/she has to pay a fine. But, when the signal doesn't work, why don't we get any compensation? Vaambu asks him what happened since he has started to talk like an immature bragging manner. Mugil answers that once he steps out from Koothu Pattarai and grows himself as big actor, he has to enter politics, add Puratchi (Revolution) as a prefix to his name and at that time he has to be prepared to talk such critical points and observations. Mugil also says that he married Vaambu by listening to his parents when the horoscope and caste was matching and that should not have happened. The modern Vaambu angrily asks him about the caste and he answers that if we have to give importance to language, country, culture, and religion, why not caste? India and its people are facing the narrowed nationality and extreme forms of nationality and in fact, these questions are supposed to ask ourselves.

Super Deluxe proves that the society, religions, politics, patriarchy, education, health, police and all other systems are in a rotten state. Sub Inspector comes with a flower garland to the police station. He rapes woman/ women inside the police station by marrying them temporarily with the garland. Also, he rapes Shilpa in the same way. When she comes back to the police station to report the missing of her son, he again brutally harasses, assaults, and chases her away from the station. Shilpa resists all other police personnel's force and pushes Berlin. When the audience expect Shilpa to attack him back, she curses him to die by keeping hands on his forehead.

The director portrays such a crucial situation cunningly in a satirical way. The movie compares the forced sexual intercourse with the Police Sub Inspector with urinating and defecating in a public wash room. This simile is different from all the critical comparisons on the grounds of sexual morality.

The production company of Thiagarajan Kumararaja is named as Kino Fist. Kino is a German word which means cinema. Baradwaj Rangan documents that this is the name Sergei Eisenstein gave for intellectual montage. Thiagarajan Kumararaja joins several levels of popular-commercial cinema tradition and philosophy based on history and morality through this movie. Jafar Panahi's The Circle, Pedro Almodóvar's Talk to Her, Volver, All About My Mother and many other films, Alejandro González Iñárritu's Amoresperros, films of Gaspar Noé, and many main stream/off-beat Tamil movies have become references and inspiration for making Super Deluxe. It will be an exaggeration if this movie is compared to the reinvention of cinema by Godard, but Thiagaraja Kumararaja has released the Tamil cinema from its history and traditions by making it to dissolve into Tamil and world culture.

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(Translated from Malayalam by Medha Akam)