

Auteurship in Indian Cinema: A Study of Mani Ratnam Selected Films

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Abstract

Mani Ratnam considerably has a wide range of work in his career span of over four decades. He has worked in five languages, including Hindi. In Indian cinema, his work is acclaimed critically, in the context of his mark, symbolism, narrative, themes, and other structures. Whereas, Auteurship is related to the individuality mark of a filmmaker in his oeuvre. The Auteur theory of film criticism was propounded by film critic and theorist Andrew Sarris in the early 60s. This theory describes three premises that include Personal style, Interior meaning, and technical competence of a director. These dimensions can arguably assert the status of a director as an Auteur. In the study, the researchers attempt to explore Mani Ratnam's work within these three premises of auteur theory. While employing the case study method and narrative analysis approach, researchers have found the various signs and symbols of Mani Ratnam under every premise of the Auteur theory.

Keywords: Auteur; Hindi; Hindi cinema; Narrative; Tamil cinema.

Introduction

Indian cinema has a glorious history of over 100 years. Every era of cinema has seen magnificent films from silent to talkies. Likewise, with every golden film, the audience has witnessed a filmmaker's vision. In the making of every film, a director is considered to be the 'captain of the ship'. A film is a director's medium. It is a director who controls, shapes and orchestrates the efforts of an army of artists and technicians. From cameramen to decorators, everyone works to fulfill the vision of a filmmaker. (BD Garga, 2005). Cinema has witnessed legendary filmmakers/directors who have created classics of all time in their respective eras and specializations. Each director has his own style of visualization. Satyajit Ray, Adoor

Gopalakrishnan, Guru Dutt, V. Shantaram, Bimal Roy, Mani Kaul, Ritwik Ghatak, K. Balachandran, Shankar, Shyam Benegal, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Basu Chatterjee are the names to be remembered.

In the last four decades, filmmaker Mani Ratnam has emerged as one of the finest filmmakers in the Indian film industry. He has created more than 25 films in four different languages since the 1980s. He has been a screenwriter and producer along with a director. He graduated in finance from Jambhwal Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai. Mani Ratnam is a filmmaker who is credited with revolutionizing Tamil cinema, not only through his craft of filmmaking but the films he has created to date carrying both his style and substance. Be it his first few films which got flopped or *Nayakan*, which reshaped the landscape of Tamil cinema, Mani Ratnam has – decades of experience in the Film Industry.

Though he has made films in various languages including Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Hindi. Mani Ratnam was honoured with Padma Shri in 2002 and six national film awards, four filmfare awards, and various state awards.

In this paper, only Hindi films are taken under study. He debuted in Hindi cinema in 1998 with the film *Dil Se*. *Dil Se* is considered the last installment of a trilogy on terrorism after *Roja* (1992) and *Bombay* (1995).

Review of Literature

(Ts & Anbazhagan, 2020) in his paper has analyzed the work of Indian film director Vetrimaaran to evaluate his status as an auteur. After stating the basic theory, the researcher concluded a few individual stylistic traits that are common and unique to the Kollywood director's films. He based his stories on regional problems that have a huge psychological impact on the audience. His characters flawlessly depict life and that helps the young audience to identify with the mental and physical state of society. Such uniqueness in style and technical ability makes him an auteur.

(Lim, 2007) he investigates the ways in which Tsai Ming-liang's filmmaking practices – specifically intratextuality, intertextuality, and paratextuality – offer excellent material for the reconsideration of auteur theory in the study of Chinese cinemas and beyond. "author": [{"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Lim", "given": "Song Hwee", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], "container-title": "Journal of Chinese Cinemas", "id": "ITEM-1", "issue": "3", "issued": [{"date-parts": [{"2007"}]

"}}, "page": "223-245", "title": "Positioning auteur theory in Chinese cinema studies: intratextuality, intertextuality and paratextuality in the films of Tsai Ming-liang", "type": "article-journal", "volume": "1", "uris": ["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=7aac0a20-87d2-4613-a415-4374c84e6d12"}}, "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Lim, 2007 in this paper, the researcher took the auteur theory a step ahead in discussion as it talked about how intertextuality, intratextuality, and paratextuality correlate with the context given by Andrew Sarris in the theory. It tries to explore these concepts in Chinese cinema with special reference to filmmaker Tsai Ming-Liang. This paper also aimed to strategies the dialogue around cinema academically. It concluded that not only filmmaker is vital to the process, but also it provides some kind of ground to rethink the cinema of China in the 21st century and beyond.

(Vemireddy, 2011) In this paper, the researcher took Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma as an example and analyzed all his films visually and thematically. Ram Gopal Varma as a director primarily focused on strong male-oriented films, explored dark genres, low budget, and complex characters named a few certain consistent features in all his films. Despite all scripts, Ram GV still manages to maintain his impression throughout his films.

(Satyajit Ray, 1976) Veteran filmmaker Satyajit Ray said in the context of his craft of filmmaking, writing, and Auteurship that it is finally the director's idea of what is to be played on-screen even if the writer has written the story. A film is ultimately a filmmaker's vision. Undoubtedly, a film can never be called the sole savior. There is a certain element of commonality that runs throughout the filmography of a filmmaker.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How can we analyze the Hindi films of Mani Ratnam stylistically and thematically?

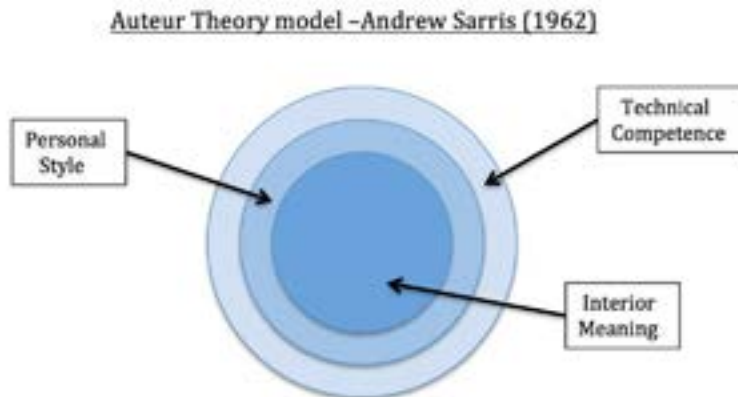
RQ 2: Based on the analysis of his films, can he be called an auteur considering the three premises of auteur theory in mind given by American Film critic, and film theorist Andrew Sarris?

RQ 3: How do we understand the perspective of Mani Ratnam as a Filmmaker and his behavioral impression on his films?

Theoretical Framework

Auteur theory is propounded by Andrew Sarris, an American film critic, and theorist. Auteur is a French word whose English translation means an author. It states that the way an author uses grammar to write anything, likewise a film director uses cinematic language to tell a narrative. This theory is one of the oldest theories of film criticism. Hence, the Auteur theory suggests a way to analyze films through the director. In 1962, Andrew Sarris wrote an article 'Notes on Auteur Theory' in which he elaborated on three premises on which a director is analyzed to understand whether he is an auteur or not. Those three premises are as follows:

- The first premise is about the **personal style** or personal signature that he or she puts in his or her work.
- The second premise is **interior meaning**. Interior meaning is the way to mold the structure of the film form to communicate the idea. The interior meaning comes in symbolism and subtext.
- The Premise that one should look for is the **technical competence** of a director whether he knows his craft and is technically proficient or not.



Diagrammatic representation of auteur theory

Research Methodology

The case study method of research is deployed for the study. The case study method is a form of qualitative analysis wherein a careful and complete observation of an individual a situation or an institution is done, efforts are made to study every aspect of the unit in detail and then from case data, inferences and generalizations are drawn. This paper will analyze the Hindi films of Mani Ratnam and evaluate his status within the theoretical framework of auteur theory. The researchers have taken only Hindi language films on account of the language barrier.

Mani Ratnam directed four films that are:

1. *Dil Se* (1998)
2. *Yuva* (2004)
3. *Guru* (2007)
4. *Raavan* (2010)

All these films are taken under study as samples. The three premises of auteur theory are elaborated further in various variables and analysis is done based on the same. This research has studied his work thematically and visually by extracting the meaning of the cinematic language.

Mani Ratnam's films are primary sources of data collection and his interviews are available in a different medium, the interviews of cast and crews who worked with him, and the articles published by the director are part of the secondary source of data collection.

Narrative Analysis

Film	Year of release	Genre	Duration	Theme	Setting
<i>Dil Se</i>	1998	Romantic-Thriller	165 min	Journey through seven shades of love	Insurgency of Assam
<i>Yuva</i>	2004	Political-Action	162 min	Corruption & hooliganism in politics	Bengal Violent politics
<i>Guru</i>	2007	Romantic-Drama	162 min	Dream big and follow the passion	Post independent India
<i>Raavan</i>	2010	Action-Drama	131 min	Indian mythological epic- Ramayana	Contemporary Naxal movement

Dil Se (1998): Dil Se is Mani Ratnam's debut in Hindi cinema. Though it is the first Hindi film, it is considered the last installment of the trilogy. The other two films are Roja (1992) and Bombay (1995). All three films are love stories established on the backdrop of terrorism and regional disturbances. Dil Se is a love story set in the environment of insurgency in Assam. Amarkant Verma (Shahrukh Khan), a reporter for All India Radio went to the northeast to analyze the views of locals on Independent India on the occasion of 50th Independence Day.

On the route, he meets Meghna (Manisha Koirala) and falls in love. The least that he knew was that Meghna belonged to the liberationist group. In the next few sequences, he follows Meghna desperately and almost forces her to accept his love and reciprocate. The desperation of the center in the northern part of India can be metaphorically understood as how the privileged class of society wants to believe and comment that they want to help the marginalized without even asking for their thoughts and experiences.

The film leads back to New Delhi where Meghna and her mates tried to plant a terrorist attack on the Republic Day parade. Just before Amarkant came to know Meghna's reality, it was told that she was a suicide bomber. In the scene where she was getting ready to be a bomber, the scene depicts how a bride gets ready for vows, symbolizing that she is taking this terrorist attack as pious as marriage and rituals. Because she believes that her state is suppressed by the Indian Government and this is the right thing to do. At the climax, both confronted each other and died in the blast. Dil Se most talked about showing the seven shades of love from attraction to death. (Nadeem Ahmed, n.d.) In the Mani Ratnam universe, songs are used as a new layer altogether. It might appear abruptly in the narrative, but it carries the story forward and makes sense.

Yuva (2004): is a political-action drama, is a multi-track film telling stories of three characters, differently, while forming a link between all of them. Lallan Singh (Abhishek Bachchan) tries to assassinate Michael (Ajay Devgan) over a bridge, whereas, Arjun (Vivek Oberoi) became the witness of the whole incident, who took a lift from Michael, a scene before. The incident transforms each of their lives. Michale who is ideological and already a popular student leader decides to join mainstream politics after the attack, Arjun, who is portrayed as a self-centered, cool-chilled guy, about to leave for America to pursue his dreams, supports Michael, while leaving his dreams aside, whereas Lallan Singh, a goon, becomes more barbaric and ambitious, in the process abandon his loving wife, kills his brother and close friend. Further, the female leads, Shashi (Rani Mukherjee) wife

of Lallan, Radhika (Esha Deol) girlfriend of Michael, and Meera (Kareena Kapoor) lover of Arjun, are presented as meager part of the love life of all male characters, but with their own set of aspirations and confrontations.

The film is set in Bengal politics, which has a history of kidnappings and violence specifically corruption in general terms. In light of such events, the local minister, played by Om Puri, uses every means to destabilize Michael and hires Lallan to kill Michael and get Arjun, Vishnu, and Trilok kidnapped during election campaigning.

Guru (2007): Guru is a romantic drama, portraying the journey of a couple from rags to riches. The film is set in the era of the late 70s and early 80s. Gurukant Desai (Abhishek Bachchan), is a son of a school teacher in the small village of Gujrat. He started a polyester business in Mumbai. He grew very fast and started a company called 'Shakti Corporations'. He got married to Sujata (Aishwarya Rai) mainly for the dowry she brings with her. Eventually, Sujata becomes his strength. Guru is a love story between two different people implicitly. In every scene, where the Guru is taking any important decisions, Sujata is shown standing with him even if she has nothing to say that establishes her importance in Guru's life.

He met Manek Dasgupta (Mithun Chakraborty) and his relationship with him is father-son. When Manek Dasgupta found out that Guru was involved in corrupt activities, he started publishing news against him in his newspaper 'Swatantra'. This led to chaos in Guru's life and his family. Toward the end of the film, Guru collapsed into a stroke and paralyzed his right side. He fought his case in the court of law and the judgment was partially in his favor. He walked free after paying a fine. This film is fiction as said by Mani Ratnam himself in his interviews. This story is about the middle class chasing their dreams and fighting with the system as and when needed.

Raavan (2010): is an Action-Drama, inspired by the Indian epic Ramayana. The film's female lead, Ragini, (Aishwarya Bachchan), was abducted by Beera (Abhishek Bachchan), who is seeking retribution for his sister Jamuniya's (Priyamani) death at the hands of the police while defending the rights of his community and opposing the atrocities of the upper cast and local police administration. On her wedding day, Jamuniya was gang raped by police personnel. On the verge of getting his retribution, Beera kidnaps Ragini, the wife of the superintendent of police Dev Pratap (Vikram), and holds her captive for 14 days till her husband Dev rescues her. Even the movie's name, "Ravana," alludes to the Ramayan's original

story. Dev, Ragini, Beera, and Jamuniya, set the characters of Ram, Sita, Ravan, and Surpnakaha.

Further, the other supporting actors and circumstances are also highlighted in light of Ramayana. For example, Hemant, a subordinate of Dev (Nikhil Dwivedi) portrays Luxman and Sanjeevani (Govinda) forest guard who helps Dev to reach Beera, similar to Hanuman. Though the plot is inspired by the epic Ramayana but entrenched in contemporary issues of Naxalism. The confrontation between the residents, the tribal depicted in the movie, and the government, notably the police administration, serves as the backdrop for the story. Although the terms "Lal salam" or "Naxalism" are not explicitly stated, the film's setting in woodland ranges, the village name of "Lal Maati," and other symbols easily reinforce the similarity between the film and the Naxalism; nonetheless, the film's director disagrees with this idea. (Rangan, 2013)

Raavan is a tale that depicts the harsh and negative traits of "Dev's character, who was modeled after "Ram but against the established notation," whereas "Beera" took on a more positive outlook even in Ragini's eyes, unlike Ramayana. Further, other supporting actors and circumstances are also highlighted in light of Ramayana, but the characters have been assigned the portrayal with the director's reading of Beera, the dus sir waala rakshas, 'Raavan' from his point of view, bad experiences, angst, anxiety, problems he and his whole community are facing from the upper caste.

Stylistic and Thematic analysis within the framework of Auteurship

1. Personal Style

The personal style of a director denotes a distinguishable personality as a criterion value. This is the first premise of the auteur theory. Over the work, the filmmaker developed his signature technique which is recurrent in the visual treatment of the director in his oeuvre. The visual and physical elements of a movie ought to reflect the emotions and thoughts of the director. Instead of using the material's literary content to represent who he is, the filmmaker in this case uses the material's visual treatment to do so. In this section, the personal style is explored through exclusivity present in elements like characterization, nature images, properties, songs & lyrics, and music & background score, which researchers have found in all the movies under study.

1.1 Characterization: It is the technique by which an artist tells the audi-

ence about a character. It may be done explicitly by appearance or occupation or covertly through actions, dialogues, or thoughts of the character.

Mani Ratnam has created movies with a variety of settings and genres. Regardless of the gender of the main protagonist, the characters in Mani Ratnam movies have been allotted the proper arc, whether it be for an action, drama, or love story, especially women characters, even if they are not the protagonist, they are shown as having a brave and confident attitude.

In the study, the films selected, *Dil Se*, *Guru*, *Yuva*, and *Raavan*, the story revolves around the title characters of the films and thus male-oriented but the female characters leave their independent impact. For example, in *Dil Se*, Meghna is a strong woman fighting for the rights of her region. The character of Preeti is short in length, but she is shown as a free-spirited, and outgoing girl. Even the characters of Mita Vashisht, Sheeba Chaddha, and Zohra Sehgal are shown to have voices of their own. In this particular film, no other female character is written at any length.

In *Raavan*, Ragini is projected as a strong, fearless woman who never gets frightened even in captivity of Beera, similarly supporting female characters of *Jamuniya*, also highlighted as fearless. In *Guru*, Sujata is not an ornament. Her presence is always there in every single turning point of the film.

It is established that in *Guru*'s life, her acceptance is very important. In an Interview, Actor Abhishek Bachchan, who played *Guru* in the film said "For me, *Guru* is not a journey of man, he sees it as a beautiful love story between two people who can't do anything without each other." Towards the end when *Guru* is paralysed, Sujata sits with him in the courtroom. When the judge questioned her presence in the courtroom she replied "Mei Shakti ki pehli promoter aur 50 percent partner bhi". And *Guru* looked at her with pride. This scene shows her importance, self-respect, and confidence in *Guru*'s life. In *Yuva*, Meera is displayed as a modern new-age confident woman who has no qualms about dating a guy, even being engaged or in live-in relationships, whereas, Radhika, as a blunt and straightforward girl, Shashi character, though a devoted wife, but put her wishes and decisions assertively to her pugnacious goon husband.

Whereas, Male central characters are portrayed as impassioned, vigorous, fervor, and heartfelt on the other side. In *Raavan*, *Dev*, and *Beera*'s characters exchange their roles as protagonist and antagonist with equal shades of passion and fervor. Supporting actors like Sanjeevani and Mangal share

the same shades, whilst aiding their leaders. In Yuva, the three central male characters, Lallan as barbaric, Michael as passionate and ideological even under threat to his life fight elections to change the state politics, and Arjun supports Michael, even equally threatened for his life. All three characters, however, remain unfeigned towards their love partners. Table 1 will elaborate more on characterization.

Table 1:

Characters	Trait	Characterization
Ragini	Undaunted	Struggle with captors jump from the cliff. Constant stare at Beera. Action sequence with Beera. Dialogue- 'aur mera jo apman ho raha hai, aurat ke sath aisa bartav.' 'main kamzor nahi hun, mujhe kamzor mat banao.'
Jamuniya	Fearless	Dating upper cast man, called fiancé at hey house on the wedding day. Dialogue- 'Badi tez thi, apne liye jhud hi ladka dhundh liya.' Sarkari kutton ki naal bahut tez hoti hai na, khud hi soongh lo..hmmm'
Meera	Nonchalant	Dance in pub with Arjun on the first strange meeting. Seaside hangout with Arjun, helped Arjun in saving Michael. Dialgue- 'Main apni coffee ke liye khud pay karungi.' 'hamari apni-apni life hai, unnecessary complicate karne ki jarurat nahi hai'.
Shashi	Assertive	Abort her baby on her own, argument with husband for leaving his profession. She left the city without her husband. Dialogue- 'Lallan ko uski tarah gunda nahi banana.' 'Lallan tum kahin nahi jaoge' 'tum sab mard logo ki zaat hi ek jaisi hoti hai' 'tum sab saale kutte ho, kutte'

Meghna	Determined and Strong	Pushed Amarkant back every time he chased her. Committed to her group and region
Sujata	Strong, Patience and Decision-maker	Always stood by her husband. In a courtroom when her presence was questioned. She said, 'mei shakti ki pehli promoter hu aur 50 percent partner bhi'
Dev	Passionate, fierce, barbaric	To get information, repeatedly pressed his brother-in-law's severed hand. Use Ragini as a scapegoat to capture Beera. Dialogue- 'aur is Raavan ko main hi maarunga.' 'tu marega aaj, upar waale ko yaad kar le'
Beera	Passionate, fierce, heartfelt, barbaric	Kidnap wife of SP. Cut his brother-in-law's hand. Dialogue- 'chak...chak....chak'
Guru	Passionate and determined	Guru told Mathura Das in fierceness, 'Das sahab theek apke sath khade hoke dandha karunga, aur ap jaise pacchis hazar ki chutti kar dunga.' 'mera babu kehta tha, bade sapne mat dekh, par maine sapne dekha bhi aur use poora bhi kiya.'
Michael	Passionate and ideological	'meri ladayi tumse nahi hai. Tumhari beiman rajniti se hai aur use hum badal denge'
Lallan	Aggressive, heartfelt, extreme emotions	'beti chahiye huein, bilkul tumhari tarah. Kills his brother and friend.
Arjun	Self-centered	Kissing his girlfriend on the train. 'College ka romance, college mei khatam.' 'Main ek simple sadharan selfish aadmi hu. Wahin karta hu jo mujhe lagta hai'

1.2: Relationship of Nature images and Human: Positioning of natural images in Mani Ratnam's film has been extensive. In fact in many frames he portrayed trees, water, landscapes, clouds and sky quite beautifully. It is interesting to note that at certain places, these images are used as a

prop to extend the meaning of the narrative. In *Dil Se*, the song 'satrang-
gi re' has used each image to depict the emotions of the characters and
their gradual love for each other. In *Yuva*, the use of water in the form of
rain and sea is employed in different contextual frameworks ranging from
fights and love between couples to romance alongside the beaches to the
election campaigns, thus depicting different shades of rain or water while
subjecting different layers of human emotions. The same pattern can be
traced in *Guru* as well where rain is shown in every important stage of
the film. The introduction of the female protagonist is done through rain,
establishing her as a free-spirited, happy, and sensitive girl. Later, rain
and water are used to depict chaos, love, and separation. In *Raavan*, water
is manoeuvred extravagantly, naturally while reaping the benefits of the
forest setting.



Again, in this movie, the director expresses various human emotions from
anger, conflict, happiness, and jealousy, decisions, either in the rain or
floating waters of the river. The forest setting though is the main backdrop
of the story, but it's the director's instrumental image of using not only the
historical ruin of a statue in the deep of the forest, during a conversation
between Ragini and Beera, where both share their deep thoughts not only
to each other but form a relation with the silence of nature.



In another scene, Ragini, lying in the lap of Mother Earth surrounded with green cover in captivity forms a deep connection between mother and daughter. Hence, the water in any form whether in the rain, sea beaches, waterfalls, and ponds has been a constant feature in Mani-Ratnam's films.

1.3. Displacement and Utilization of Train: In Mani Ratnam's films, a train or railway station is always used as an important element where either the story goes forward or ends. Hence, it is staged with a commonality factor of Farewell between the characters. In *Dil Se*, the film starts at the Railway station and this is where Amarkant first sees Meghna and falls in love. Although he considered it as their first and last meeting, thinking she had gone forever. That is why he said 'ye duniya ki sabse choti love story hogi'. After that Amarkant Verma is shown on a train in the song 'Chaiyya Chaiyya'. This marked the arrival of the privileged section to the marginalized population.



In *Raavan*, Dev asks his wife Ragini for a Lie detector test, while correlating with *Agnipariksha* of Sita in *Ramayana*, this has two

Meanings for two characters filmed in the scene. Though for Ragini it was a new start to her life after being in captivity, for Dev, Ragini was used strategically as a source to reach Beera which he successfully achieved, a path which Dev chose to fix his final destination. Likewise in the film *Guru*, Guru and Sujata met on the train for the first time. Later, when Sujata came to know that Guru married her because of the dowry. She left him.

Similarly, in *Yuva*, there are two train sequences stated here. The first scene establishes Vivek Oberoi's character as a next-gen cool youth, not serious towards any relationship while romancing his girlfriend, and the second with Rani Mukherjee, leaving Bengal and moving to her village. Both the characters choose their destination to the kind of lives they want to live while ad-dieu their existing relationships, however with different emotional angles. Primarily, the train showcases the displacement of the characters at different points of time in the narratives.

1.4 Nature and Props: Mani Ratnam has extensively used nature and property in his films. The use of water, train, and railway stations is quite interesting. It has not only been used as a part of connotation but also depicted different meanings in different situations. Hence their presence as props and even in the background is not deniable. Table 2 will elaborate it further with its presence and its undertone.

Table 2:

Movie	Style	Portrayal	Relationship
Dil Se	Nature/Water		
	Amarkant & Meghna first meet	Rain	Love
	Satangi Re (song)	Pond, Rain	Separation and Togetherness
	Dil Se (song)	River	Assimilation
	Scene between Meghna and Mita	Rain	Regressions
	Train		
	Amarkant travels to the east of India	Roof of train	Entry of privilege in the life of marginalized
	Meghna leaves the station	Train compartment	Separation

Yuva	Nature/Water		
	Shashi-Lallan romancing	Rain	Romance
	Shashi-Lallan fighting	Rain	Imbroglio
	Arjun-Meera dating	Sea-side, high tides, beaches	Carefree romance
	Michael election campaign	Rain	Stubbornness, willpower
	Train		
	Arjun kissed his girlfriend and decided to leave her	Train bath-room	New start
Shashi leaves her husband and leaves for the village	Train compartment	Au-revoir	
Guru	Nature/ Water		
	Sujata dancing in the rain	Rain, rivers ponds	Establishing a character
	Guru met Manik	Beaches	First meeting
	Guru win over Menon	Rain	Win over system
	Guru's Mill's first Bhoomi pooja	Rain	New start
	Guru's conflict with contractor	Rain	Start of a conflict
	Scene between Meena and Kumar	Rain and beaches	Acceptance of love
	Guru's meeting with shareholders	Rain	Distrust
	Train		
	Sujata eloped with lover, but he didn't come	Railway station and train compartment	Frustration and farewell
	Sujata first time met Guru	Train compartment	Introduction
Guru leaving for Mumbai	Railway station	Acceptance of love	

Raavan	Nature/Water		
	Ragini kidnap from the boat	River & heavy downpour	Resistance and Victory
	Beera-Ragini Conversation in front of the statue of lord Vishnu	Deep jungle, river stream, rain	Intra-conflict True emotions
	Ragini lying on the stone in captivity	Wellhole with green cover	Sorrow, pain
	Train		
	Dev asks Ragini for a lie	Moving train entrance door	Doubt
	Detector test Ragini leaves Dev	Rail tracks	farewell

1.5 Placements of songs and significance of Lyrics: -



In all four films of Mani Ratnam, songs appeared abruptly, even when the audience didn't expect a song in the situation. Despite this fact, the significance of songs and lyrics is used either to talk about the character or the situation in the narrative. For example: the song Satrangi Re seems to come in between a conflict but sets the tones for the film. Words like uns, arzoo, aanch, sargoshi, satrangi, Junoon show the stages of love. Likewise, the title track of Dil Se showcases the theme of the film that it is a love story set in the backdrop of attack and terror and the protagonist is playing with fire to be in love with her. Similarly in Guru song signify the characteristics of the character. 'Doob ke chali mei o paar chali' showcases the carefree approach of Sujata in her introduction.

“Jaage hai der tak humein, kuch der sone do, thodi si raat aur hai, subah
to hone do

Aadhe-adhure khwaab jo, poore na ho sake, ek baar fir se neend mei, vo
khwaab bone do”

This line tells about the character of Gurukant Desai, his passion, dedication, and hunger for more success.

‘Behne de mujhe behne de, pani ki tarah bahne de’ informs the heartfelt side of Beera’s character, who immediately falls in love with Ragini his captive. Whereas, in another song from the film *‘thok de gilli’* narrates the setting of the story. Though the song is placed as a celebration song, the lyrics depict the pain and atrocities of the upper cast on backward communities, with which Beera belongs too, in a sense the song not only backflash the complete story of the film but with its sarcastic lyrics, put the governments in the dock politically too.

‘Thok de gilli..thok de gilli, ke durr nahi hai chalega delhi’.....

Jhuthi sachie sah li, tumhari kajari jo bhi kah li,...

Pichde pichde kah ke humko khub udaye khilli delhi’....

Yuva’s *Anjaana..Anjaani* song illustrates the carefree approach and modern uncommitted relationship between young generation, whereas, *‘kabhi neem neem..kabhi shahad shahad..kabhi narm-narm kabhi sakht sakht.. mora piya, mora piya..mora piya aaa’*, delineates extremes characteristics of Lallan.

1.6 Music and Background Score: The music and background scores of all four films under study have been given by AR Rahman. The music set the tone and mood of the respective films. The thumping sound in the background with the lyrics *‘guru bhai guru bhai aa gayo che dhum dhamaka hoi gyo che’* arouses certain emotions and urges to feel victorious with the protagonist. Likewise in *Dil se*, his music enhanced the characterization of the circumstances.

The music has been an integral part of Mani Ratnam’s films. In an interview he himself said that he giva brief to Rahman about the situation and what he wants, and Rahman gives him the exact chord.

2. Interior Meaning

Interior meaning is the way to mould the structure of the film form to com-

municate the idea. The interior meaning comes in symbolism and subtext. The visualisation of a director can add layers of meaning to the narrative.

In each of the films being examined, the plot carries some internal sub-themes that seem apt at once, but raise doubts in the audience's minds regarding the relationship between scene visualization and its concealed subtext. In *Dil Se*, the setting and lyrics of romantic 'Satrangi song' is terrorism and violence, Amarkant's forceful imposition of his love to Meghna during Meghna's attempt for suicide attack, major decision taken over domestic activities in *Yuva*, strategically color coding of three male leads in *Yuva*, Ragini & Beera's conversation in front of Vishnu statue etc are few scenes where researchers have found the presence of interior meaning with sagious and clever use of symbolic objects. Table 3 will elaborate on this premise even further explaining the symbol and its representations in the respective films.

Table 3:

Movie	Sub-theme/ Text	Director's visualiza- tion	Interpretation
<i>Dil Se</i>	Seven shades of love.	The song 'Satrangi re' has very beautifully enacted the shades of love using water, colours, lights, lyrics, music, dance and costumes. The mise-en-scene of the complete songs is done in layers.	Journey of a person has been depicted that goes through the seven stages from attraction to death.
	Obsession of privilege with marginalised people.	Film shows how Amarkant falls for Meghna with even understanding her side and almost stalking her. He also forcefully tried to force his love on her.	This obsession of Amar can be interpreted as the obsession of centre towards the north-east. Almost forced centre positioning on the North-east side of India.
	The struggles of liberalists are pious for them as for them, they are fighting to save their land.	In the climax meghna gets ready for the attack as suicide bomber.	The scene depicts as she was getting ready for pious things as vows. Hence, she was shown as a bride getting ready.

<i>Yuva</i>	Colour coding of Lallan, Michel and Arjun	Lallan costume colored in Red, Michael in Green, Arjun in Blue or light shades.	Symbolically red means violence, aggression, Green means change and blue a coolness. Characters provided with these shades, draws parallel to their temperament.
	Thematic use of Rain	Rain during kabaddi game in jail by lallan & inmates which lost, Rain in romance between lallan & Shashi, Rain in violent argument between Shashi & Lallan, Rain in Michael winning result,	Enthralling uses of rain have been made pivotal moments in the movie, while absorbing the scene.
	major decisions during domestic activities	Shashi-Gopal argues over Lallan's whereabouts over lunch, Lallan decides to open a gas agency over dinner, Ompuri, taking steam, instructs Lallan to kill Arjun.	A good meal makes people make good decisions. Gopal was hungry during the argument scene with Shashi, hence he could not make peace with Shashi. Lallan's wife and friends were having dinner, when Lallan decided to open a gas agency.
<i>Guru</i>	Rain shown as prop	Introduction of Sujata, conflict between contractor and Guru, romantic scene between meenakshi and shyam, speech of Guru when shareholders of his company were angry, the bhoomi poojan of Guru's first mill.	The intensity of rain has interestingly used in Guru to show at every turning point of the film.
	Climax scene. Use of a camera to show the psychological situation of each character.	Guru defended himself in the court.	The whole sequence is depicted in a way arousing the emotion of anxiety, chaos using the camera and editing techniques.
	Passing of train between Sujata and Guru	Sujata believed that Guru married her because she once tried to elope with her ex-lover and everyone in the village knew about it. So nobody else will marry her, but when Sujata came to know that Guru married her because of dowry. She felt cheated and left him.	In the scene, they both stand across the roads and a train passes between them. Depicting that they fell apart. Remember, train is earlier used where they first met and the scene where they realised their love for each other were also on train.

<i>Raavan</i>	Beera confession of his love to Ragini	Beera & Ragini conversing deep thoughts in front of a huge Vishnu statue, which is set deep in the jungle.	A sort of love triangle expected to be developed. Where the Vishnu statue represents Dev.
	Dev, burning photos in a newspaper	With lit cigarette, Dev burns the heads of Beera and 9 other men standing in semi-circle with Ragini, their captive in centre, one by one.	The ten heads represent 10 heads of Raavan, like mentioned in Ramayan. Hence, Dev, plans to Beera in this way.
	Ragini lying on a stone inside a well like structure, crying and imagining her husband to rescue her.	Ragini is thinking of her spouse Dev while she is incarcerated and sharing her emotions with him, asks him to rescue her. All of this has been demonstrated through Ragini's thought process. Long shot in the bottom up way., dark light Close shot of Ragini with expressions of weakness and request.	Ragini, as daughter of earth sharing her thoughts to it, as she is laid down on the floor like a foetus inside a womb.
	Sanjeevani misgivings to Dev	'Aankhein hain toh dekh le. Nahi khulega gate'... 'Humne aapko roka jarur hai lekin rokne ke liye nahi roka, raaste dikhane ke liye roka hai'. (sanjeevani- intercepting Dev for first time) 'aur madam, ei toh 8 ghante raha unke paas, madam toh 8 din se hai'. (sanjeevani-on Hemant return in lethargic condition) Bas kijiye daroga ji. Yahi toh hum kah rahe hain. Jor jabardasti se nahi soch samajh kar..samajhdari se..	The character is shown as mischievous. Might help Beera rather Dev. at various levels though it's not the case.
	Ragini falls from a cliff to save herself from Beera.	Slow motion falls into placid water along with branches of the tree. Ragini fainted, her yellow suit flowing in the air, giving the impression of fire.	Fire flames are not even extinguished in water.

3. Technical competence

The third premise is the technical competence of a director as a criterion of value. If a director does not have any elementary flair for the cinema,

then he is automatically out of the pantheon of directors. Hence, this section will attempt to explore all the films on the technical aspects of the respective films.

Mani Ratnam's climax scenes are edited with special effects that add more tension, urgency, and intensity to the scene. In movies selected in the study, every film whether *Dil se*, *Yuva*, *Guru*, or *Raavan*, either the subjects in the frame or the backgrounds are edited with a montage effect along with a whip pan that gives the impressions of shakiness and jitteriness to the scene. Sequences of shots are assembled in juxtaposition with one another to create an emotional impact or condense a story. The experiment with editing and camera movements which is used gives a powerful impact in totality. (fig 3)

The use of chiaroscuro has been prominently used showing the inner conflicts of the characters. (fig1) The use of light has been extensively used to add meaning to the scene and arouse emotions.

In all films, colors and costumes are used to depict the significance of the character's psychological status and enhance their personality. For example, in the first scene of *Dil Se*, the red jacket of Amarkant shows passion, and energy whereas Meghna is wrapped in a block shawl, hardly showing her face depicting her urge to hide herself in darkness. (Fig 2)



Fig 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Mani Ratnam is popular for its extensive use of climate and weather. He not only compliments his scenes with climate or weather conditions but also makes use of such conditions to express human emotions. Raavan is known as a beautifully cinematographed film. Leveraging the benefits of local climatic conditions, most of the film is shot with a mix of angles and shots of prevailing climate conditions like Rain or dew, or blowing air,

forest, or human subjects with profound use of editing and natural sound and related effects. His love for Rain can be seen in all of the selected films.

Song: Bahne de mujhe bahne de.... slow motion effect to Ragini falling from a dried tree into river water, the slow fall with flowing yellow kurta gives the impression of Ragini dressed, as flames of fire.

Wet Ragini lying on a stone placed in a big hole in fetal form. The dark light, and wide-low to high-angle circular shots.

Exchange of thoughts between Beera and Ragini in deep jungles in front of Vishnu statue, under rain.

Ragini and Dev conversation in train- when Dev questions her integrity, the background light becomes dark, suggesting the negative side of a positively depicted character in the form of Dev.



Ragini falling from tree, effect of slow motion and low to high and high to low angle shots



Foetal shape of ragini, lying on a stone a a well like structure



Use of dark-light background in train scene in 'Raavan'



Mix angle-shots of sea in Anjana Anjani song in 'Yuva'

Song: dedicated to elongated sea side, beaches and water shots with mix angles, creating an impression of high energy rhythm while drawing parallel to the contextual frame of the song, in Yuva.

Findings of the Study

- Mani Ratnam has acquired a certain style of telling a story over a period of time. He made 4 films in Hindi language with Hindi film actors over a period of 12 years. He himself belongs to the southern part of India. Hence, his mode of communication is English with the cast and crew. The socio-cultural difference in northern and southern India cannot be sensed as a barrier in his films. His films intact the nuanced of the depicted settings.
- The prominence of certain elements of mise-en-scene, the visualisation, the blocking and staging of a frame depict significant similarity in all his work. His work with many elements of mise-en-scene can draw parallels in all four films in terms of the framing. The frame looks beautiful and captures the nature around and also establishes something or the other in the narrative.
- The use of colour, costume and makeup plays an important role to signify the subtext of the story and magnify the plot and conflict of the story.
- Mani Ratnam is an experimental auteur filmmaker who has innovated new ideas to depict the narrative and presented the scenes in a different way. For example- the climax is never shown in a conventional manner, instead he presented it distinctively by using the camera movement and editing techniques. His actor talked about it in their respective interviews.
- The commonality in terms of characterization, use of nature images, human relationship, the lyrics and musical part of the film is evident. He uses nature and objects both as properties in the narrative. Mani Ratnam has worked with prominent lens men, editors and other technical experts of the film industry in his films. From P.C.sriram, Santosh sivan, Rajeev menon to Ravi.K.chandran and Jeeva, to A.S.prasad, Suresh urs, etc. There is no single shot or angle that can be said specifically used by Mani Ratnam in his films but his own style of treatment to visuals stand out him as an auteur. The use of dark and dim lights, various angles in cinematography, editing effects specifically in climax scenes, proves his own prowess and stands him as an author of the film.
- The music and background scores of his films are very well knitted with the story of the films. It gives an enhancement not only

to the situation, but also to the characterization.

- The films have subtext quite considerably. Subtext is used depicting the deeper meaning of the theme and philosophy that the director wants to state in his films. It also adds layers to the thematic perspective. The subtext is used through lyrics of the song, props, lights, colour-coding, natural images and blocking of a frame.
- The characterization of Mani Ratnam's films also has commonality especially to the female characters which are strong, fearless, patient, and opinionated and so on.
- The songs appear abruptly at the first place, but then it is again very well synced with the narrative. Mani Ratnam said in his interviews that songs in a story should not only complement the narrative, but should stand out as a different piece of art. Likewise, in all four films the songs and lyrics of the songs explains the plot of the story or tells about the backstory of the character or depict his emotions in that situation in that story.

Conclusion: Auteur theory defines a director as an author of the film. Though all premises of auteur theory are interdependent with each other, the director's signature to each premise makes him an auteur, which the researchers have found in this study on films of Mani Ratnam. Through the analysis, researchers have been able to draw parallels in this work in terms of themes, cinematography, philosophies, presentation, use of mise-en-scene and so on and so forth. Mani Ratnam is seen as a flamboyant auteur filmmaker, who experiments with every aspect in his filmmaking craft which in-turn engrave the commonality factor in his films. For example in his characterization, he maintains the presence of key traits like strong, passionate, fierce, and confident. To depict emotions, nature is used as key element, mix angles in cinematography, key jittery editing effect to climax, quick exchange of light according to characters transfusions, lyrics of songs and their placement, makes Mani Ratnam as an auteur who combine elements of art and commercial cinematic elements. He also used the train as an important part of the story to show displacement and transformation either in the characters or in the circumstance. In short it can be concluded that in his style of storytelling props also become a character and express certain emotions with the character on screen and hence the value of the scene to a large extent.

Limitation of the study: The foremost drawback identified by researchers is the exclusion of regional language films, where Mani Ratnam has sig-

nificantly influenced Indian cinema. And secondly, because of time and word limit constraints, it was not possible to elaborately analyse other components, such as mirrors and bridges used as property, songs and the prominent use of light, sound & music and colour in his films. However, this also creates opportunities for other studies to focus on these particular aspects of filmmaking.

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