



Metaphors of Resistance: An Auteur and Subaltern Reading of “Maamannan” (2023) and “Vaazhai” (2024)

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Abstract

Tamil cinema has played an important role in highlighting the issues and caste violence against the marginalized communities. In this way, Director Mari Selvaraj's films present the voice and problems of the marginalised people in front of society. *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai*, directed by Mari Selvaraj, are realistic about the struggle for fundamental rights of the Dalits, land labourers, and the rural poor everywhere, whether in power or among the commoners. This paper examines the expression in visual language and through symbols from the point of view of Auteur Theory and **Subaltern Studies**. *Mamannan* highlights the struggle of a politician facing caste oppression, and *Vaazhai* represents the systemic exploitation of a child labourer and the human cost of capitalist negligence. This study explores the problems of people oppressed by caste, the bourgeoisie, divisions, and their resistance by examining the narrative structure, portrayal of characters, and visual symbolism. This study examines how Mari Selvaraj's films, as the voice of an advocate, not only represent the voice of the oppressed but also use Tamil cinema to express the resistance of the marginalised and for social change.

Keywords: #Tamilcinema #SubalternStudies #VisualMetaphors #MarginalizedCommunities #SocialInequality

1. Introduction:

Many Tamil films have emphasized the issues of caste oppression, social justice, and the problems and struggles of the marginalized. However, in recent times, young creators have been able to express the problems of the oppressed people, the injustice meted out to them, and their resistance against oppression more deeply, directly, and with a different script. In this way, director Mari Selvaraj has made a mark for himself in Tamil cinema by highlighting the problems of the marginalised people in his films.

The credits of directors like Pa. Ranjith, Vetrimaaran, and Mari Selvaraj have not only told the story of the oppressed, Dalit, and landless labourers, but also opened a new chapter in Tamil cinema. In particular, Mari Selvaraj's films reveal deeply the social and political marginalization of oppressed people. His first film, *Pariyerum Perumal*, expressed the pain of the oppressed through peaceful protest and symbolism. In *Mamannan* and *Vaazhai*, Mari Selvaraj exposes casteist, political, and bourgeois oppression.

This study seeks to analyse *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai* through the combined frameworks of Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies. Auteur Theory positions the filmmaker as a creative voice whose stylistic and

thematic choices consistently shape the meaning of their films. In this sense, Mari Selvaraj can be seen as an auteur whose recurring motifs, animal imagery, rural landscapes, the politics of the body, and the poetics of silence articulate a unique political vision. Subaltern Studies, on the other hand, used to understand how his films give space to marginalized voices historically excluded from mainstream cinema and broader social discourse..

The central research question is, how has Mari Selvaraj built the resistance of the marginalised in his films? How do the films *Mamannan* and *Vaazhai* reflect the voice of the subaltern? Moreover, how does his auteurship reshape Tamil cinema’s engagement with caste, labour, and social inequality?. These research questions can be addressed by analysing narrative structures, character development, and symbolic visual elements through author theory and subaltern studies.

In dramatizing caste politics, systemic exploitation, and the struggle for dignity, *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai* transform cinematic space into an arena of resistance. They also exemplify how an auteur can use personal vision and style to serve collective histories of oppression and agency. Ultimately, this study situates Mari Selvaraj as both an auteur and a chronicler of subaltern experience. Through this exploration, the paper underscores the evolving role of Tamil cinema in articulating resistance and shaping discourses of social change in contemporary India.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Tamil Cinema and Social Representation

The movie universe can be bigger than life, depicting the daily grind or the heartbreaking tales of society's marginalized and mistreated segments (Asha Priya Thangavelu, 2020). Cinema glorifying caste is not a new thing to many Tamil cinema viewers. The Third wave of Tamil cinema is mainly about the violence, miscreants, and antagonistic values and practices (Amutha Manavalan & Shailashree B, 2018). Tamil films are a powerful medium for public discourse and environmental education, encouraging individual and group efforts to live sustainably (V.Gowri Rajan & V.Jayalakshmi, 2025).

2.2 Caste and Cinema in Tamil Nadu

Cinema influences film at many stages, from the creation of a storyline to the selection of the main characters to the way the movie is promoted and received by viewers (Abiya Moses D. and R. Pugalendhi, 2021). A lot of new directors and artists have emerged through the years with the constant support of directors, actors, and producers who value the true issues and problems of the Dalit community. The people from that community believe that their voices are finally being heard (D Saaru Sri & Bhargavi D. Hemmige, 2022).

2.3 Auteur Theory and Political Filmmaking

Directors like Pa Ranjith and Vetrimaaran deserve a lot of the credit for the contemporary interest in anti-caste cinema, primarily because they demonstrated that it is feasible to produce financially successful movies with megastars who openly portray Dalits (Karthick Ram Manoharan, 2023). In his films, director Pa. Rajit discusses the difficulties that lower cast members confront in surviving their daily lives. In order to empower the populace toward advanced living conditions, he presents Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy (J. D. Koduthor, 2022). Ram's films depict real-life events and situations that are mirrored in society. Since his films depict the truth of the modern world, the audience that prefers equation-based and idealistic films does not approve of them (Arivuselvan, S, & Aasita Bali, 2018).

2.4 Subaltern Studies and Cultural Expression

By making anti-caste films more widely known, Mari Selvaraj's films show a comparable effort to reach a wider audience (Priya Jaikumar and Darshana Sreedhar Mini, 2025). The ultimate goal of Dalit cinema should be to create a new form of socially conscious film that somehow combines elements of art and commercial cinema and, consequently, contributes to an empowering new mainstream film culture. Committed art has always had the right to interact and resist, and as a result, its potential and possibilities are limitless (Dolores Herrero, 2021). The violent and horrible reality that is the "cinema of disgust" is not about the aesthetics of the auteur; it is, after all, the real world of the subaltern margins (Sreeram Gopalkrishnan, 2019).

2.5 Mari Selvaraj and Contemporary Scholarship

Mari Selvaraj's work challenges conventional depictions and ignites discussions about caste and identity. In his film *Karnan*, Mari Selvaraj depicts a community's journey from oppression to resistance using symbols, Realistic characters, and signaling a change in oppositional politics (Jeeva V, Padmanabhan T, Sunesh K S, & Poovarasana, 2024). Mari Selvaraj employs a donkey to symbolize a change in power in the Dalit community's way of life in his movie *Karnan*. Without education or due to a lack of awareness about their own rights, the marginalized people will become defenseless. *Karnan* liberated the donkey as soon as he started to protest the upper caste people (Anulakshmi, K, Kavya Purushothaman, 2023).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Auteur Theory

American film critic and theorist Andrew Sarris is credited with developing auteur theory. The English translation of the French word "auteur" is "an author." It claims that a filmmaker employs cinematic language to convey a story, just as an author uses grammar to write anything. This one is among the earliest theories of cinema critique. As a result, the Auteur theory offers a method of cinema analysis that considers the filmmaker. In his paper "Notes on Auteur Theory," published in 1962, Andrew Sarris expounded on three tenets determining a director's status as an auteur. These three concepts are as follows:

- The first one concerns the individual's signature or personal style that they use in their work.
- Interior meaning is the second premise. The process of shaping the film's structure to convey the notion is known as interior meaning. Subtext and symbolism contain the inner meaning.
- 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

In Tamil cinema, auteurship is often recognized in the works of Satyajit Ray, Mani Ratnam, Bala, Pa. Ranjith, and, more recently, Mari Selvaraj. His interior meaning emerges as a consistent critique of caste oppression, systemic inequality, and the human cost of social hierarchies. For this reason, Mari Selvaraj can be considered an auteur whose personal style is inseparable from his political commitments.

3.2 Subaltern Studies

Subaltern Studies originated in South Asian historiography in the 1980s, led by Ranajit Guha, to recover the voices of marginalized groups, who were strike out from nationalist narratives. The concept of the “subaltern” indicates those situated outside structures of power and representation. Within cultural studies, subaltern theory has been applied to literature, theatre, and cinema to analyze how cultural texts mediate marginalized voices.

In cinema, subaltern studies help to interrogate who is represented, how they are represented, and what silences remain. Mari Selvaraj’s films can thus be read as cultural texts that document and reimagine subaltern experience. His narratives foreground Dalit, rural, and child-labour subjects not as background figures but as central protagonists, destabilizing the conventions of mainstream Tamil cinema

3.3 Intersection of Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies

This research combines Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies to create a composite lens for analyzing *Maamannan* (2023) and *Vaazhai* (2024). Auteur Theory allows us to trace Selvaraj’s distinctive cinematic grammar—his recurring motifs, metaphors, and stylistic choices—while Subaltern Studies helps to situate these stylistic choices within a politics of representation. These frameworks explore how Mari Selvaraj’s auteurship is not merely aesthetic but deeply political, shaping a cinema that amplifies marginalized voices while contesting dominant power structures.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

Qualitative textual analysis is adopted for this study, focusing on two films directed by Mari Selvaraj - *Maamannan* (2023) and *Vaazhai* (2024). This method privileges the film text, treating it as a cultural artifact that encodes social realities and ideological tensions. This approach is particularly suited to auteur studies, where the director's stylistic signatures and recurring motifs are analyzed across multiple works.

4.2 Units of Analysis

1. **Narrative Structure** – Narration that exposes caste, class, and subaltern struggles.
2. **Character Portrayals** – how protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures embody structures of power, oppression, and resistance.
3. **Visual Metaphors and Symbolism** – recurring imagery such as animals, landscapes, silences, and bodily representation that encode deeper political meanings.

These units were chosen because they reveal Selvaraj’s auteurist style (through form and imagery) and his subaltern commitments (through content and representation).

4.3 Theoretical Integration

The methodology integrates Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies as interpretive frameworks. Auteur Theory identifies Mari Selvaraj’s thematic consistencies across the two films. Subaltern Studies provides a critical lens for understanding how marginalized voices are represented, silenced, or reimaged. Together, they ensure that the analysis goes beyond aesthetics to situate Selvaraj’s artistic vision within the politics of caste and labour in Tamil Nadu.

4.4 Data Sources

Tamil movie *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai*, directed by Mari Selvaraj, were taken as primary sources. The secondary sources are academic writings, reviews, interviews, and scholarly works on Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies.

4.5 Scope and Limitations

This study's focus is restricted to two movies, which might not adequately represent the range of Mari Selvaraj's developing cinematic aesthetic. Furthermore, the study does not purport to reflect how various audiences view the films because it concentrates on textual analysis rather than audience reaction.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 *Maamannan* (The Emperor, 2023)

5.1.1 Narrative Structure

Maamannan situates its story within the world of Tamil Nadu's caste-based politics. The film follows Maamannan, a Dalit MLA, whose decades of loyalty to a dominant-caste leader are continually undermined by everyday humiliation. The narrative arc juxtaposes Maamannan's internalized silence with his son Adhiveeran's radical defiance, dramatizing generational differences in the negotiation of caste oppression. The political stage is not presented as neutral but as a deeply caste-marked arena where power is mediated through social hierarchy. From an auteurist perspective, Mari Selvaraj's choice to set the narrative within legislative politics reflects his consistent interest in showing how systemic structures reproduce caste dominance. From a subaltern perspective, the story foregrounds the struggle for dignity and representation—transforming political participation itself into a metaphor of resistance. In order to challenge the repressive power systems and promote social change, the film honors the strength of grassroots mobilization and solidarity. As a result, the film shows the hardships and defiance of oppression and discrimination based on caste that marginalized populations, especially Dalits, face. Through its narrative and characters, it illuminates the everyday realities of Dalits and questions prevailing narratives that are frequently stereotyped or marginalized by mainstream media.

5.1.2 Character Portrayals

- **Maamannan (Vadivelu):** A Dalit MLA elected to the state assembly from his reserved seat, is the film's protagonist. Maamannan is polite and unassuming, but he is deeply committed to protecting the rights of his people. He represents the inconsistencies of representation and is a symbol of subaltern compromise. Even though he has a position of political authority, his obedient demeanor and silence highlight the restrictions placed on Dalit voices by robust party systems. His transformation from humiliation to symbolic assertiveness illustrates the agonizing process of regaining one's honor.
- **Adhiveeran (Udhayanidhi Stalin):** A young man passionate about martial arts and pigs. Adhiveeran is also a staunch critic of caste discrimination, and he often clashes with his father over his methods of activism. His assertiveness, particularly in challenging caste insult, aligns with the subaltern agency envisioned by contemporary Dalit movements.
- **Rathnavelu (Fahadh Faasil):** The antagonist embodies political entitlement and caste haughtiness. His compulsive need to degrade Dalits serves as an example of how caste identification and political power are inextricably linked in Tamil Nadu.

By foregrounding these character arcs, Mari Selvaraj dramatizes caste politics and redefines political subjectivity. The Dalit is not merely a vote-bank but a thinking, resisting subject whose humanity cannot be erased.

5.1.3 Visual Metaphors and Symbolism

As an auteur, Mari Selvaraj narrates the plot using rich symbolic language throughout *Maamannan*.

- **Dogs and Pigs:** Dogs are shown as symbols of loyalty and domestication, while pigs, often stigmatized as “dirty,” become an emblem of resistance. The famous scene where pigs overpower hunting dogs encapsulates Dalit assertion against systemic domination.
- **Blood and Soil:** The spilling of blood in violent clashes is juxtaposed with rural soil, suggesting how the land itself is inscribed with histories of caste conflict.
- **Legislative Assembly as Theatre:** The political stage functions as a symbolic battlefield, where caste hierarchies are rehearsed, contested, and sometimes overturned.

Selvaraj moves beyond realist representation through these metaphors to encode caste conflict into visual poetics. This auteurist trait also connects to his debut *Pariyerum Perumal*, where dogs symbolized violence and companionship.

5.1.4 Subaltern Reading

Maamannan reveals the challenge of "speaking" within systems intended to silence from a subaltern viewpoint. Adhiveeran's defiance demonstrates an arising subaltern voice rejecting mediation by dominating groups, while Maamannan's silence in the face of humiliation reflects whether the subaltern can speak. Thus, the film creates a dialectic between speech and quiet, defiance and capitulation, and resistance and compromise.

5.1.5 Summary

In *Maamannan*, Mari Selvaraj fuses auteurist symbolism with subaltern politics to expose the fragility of Dalit political representation. The film explores complex socioeconomic dynamics, such as power dynamics within the caste hierarchy and the tenacity and unity of disadvantaged castes. The film represents marginalized voices and fosters social change. It positions Dalit agency not at the margins but at the center of Tamil cinema, marking Mari Selvaraj as a filmmaker whose auteurship is inseparable from his commitment to subaltern struggles.

5.2 *Vaazhai* (A Banana Plant, 2024)

5.2.1 Narrative Structure

Unlike *Maamannan*, which engages directly with the world of electoral politics, *Vaazhai* shifts its focus to the everyday lives of rural poor and the vulnerability of children caught in cycles of exploitation. The movie centers on Sivanandan, a teenage boy whose rural Tamil Nadu existence resembles many adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mari Selvaraj presents an unapologetic portrayal of a culture in which work precedes education, entangling kids like Sivanandan in cycles of adversity and limited opportunities. *Vaazhai* highlights the effects of feudal labor systems on young, aspiring minds by examining the familial relationships and social forces that sustain this cycle against the backdrop of rural life.

The narrative centers on child labour in banana plantations and factories, illustrating how systemic neglect perpetuates poverty across generations. The title, "banana plant," signals both nourishment and fragility, evoking the precarious existence of those whose lives are tethered to agricultural and industrial labour. Mari Selvaraj structures the film as a slow-burning chronicle, where individual suffering is linked to larger

social and economic forces. From an auteurist lens, the narrative reflects his continued investment in rural spaces as sites of struggle; from a subaltern perspective, it amplifies children's voices—perhaps the most silenced of all social actors. Selvaraj portrays child labor with empathy rather than sensationalism, the film's strongest point. Sivanandan conveys a raw, eerie realism through his silent pain and yearning for a blissful childhood.

5.2.2 Character Portrayals

- **Child Protagonists:** The central figures are children forced into labour. Their innocence contrasts sharply with the harshness of their environment, making exploitation visible without sensationalism. These characters embody subaltern silence—rarely vocal but deeply expressive through gestures and gazes.
- **Parents and Guardians:** Often depicted as powerless bystanders, parents embody the intergenerational cycle of poverty and dispossession. They neither fully resist nor fully comply, symbolizing the structural bind of survival.
- **Factory Owners / Middlemen:** Function as the antagonistic forces of capitalism, exploiting child labour for profit. Their lack of individual depth suggests that exploitation is systemic rather than personal.

Mari Selvaraj highlights ordinary, unglamorous lives by eschewing star-driven performances, reinforcing his auteurist commitment to realism and authenticity.

5.2.3 Visual Metaphors and Symbolism

As in *Maamannan*, symbolism plays a central role in *Vaazhai*:

- **The Banana Plant (*Vaazhai*):** Represents both sustenance and fragility. Its withering under harsh conditions becomes a metaphor for children deprived of childhood and growth.
- **Industrial Machinery:** Looming machines symbolize capitalist exploitation—extensive, mechanical, and indifferent to human suffering. Their relentless motion contrasts with the children's vulnerability.
- **Silences and Shadows:** Long silences and dimly lit interiors embody invisibility, echoing Spivak's claim that the subaltern cannot easily “speak” in dominant discourse.
- **Play vs. Labour:** Occasional moments where children attempt to play in workspaces highlight the tension between lost innocence and imposed exploitation.
- **Images:** Photographs of Dr Ambedkar on school textbooks and on a poster beside the school gate reflect the profound influence of his legacy on marginalized communities, especially in their education.

5.2.4 Subaltern Reading

Vaazhai is an example of how a filmmaker's narrative arc may be influenced by personal experience, with Mari Selvaraj's socially conscious storytelling enhancing the film's themes. Through the lens of Subaltern Studies, *Vaazhai* foregrounds perhaps the most silenced community, children of the rural poor, whose exploitation is normalized and rarely represented in cinema. This genre highlights marginalized communities' voices and experiences, which is a potent vehicle for self-representation and resistance.

5.2.5 Summary

The film is fundamental to Dalit cinema because it uses its gaze to immerse viewers in the complicated reality of marginalized communities. The voices and experiences of oppressed communities are highlighted in this genre, which serves as a powerful medium for resistance and self-representation. *Vaazhai* continues this legacy by portraying caste-based oppression and the perseverance of Dalit life profoundly and authentically. Themes of love, compassion, and strength in the face of Dalits' mistreatment are examined in *Vaazhai*. With this intricate drama, Selvaraj keeps broadening the appeal of Tamil cinema by firmly establishing his narrative on the actual experiences of marginalized communities.

5.3 Comparative Reading: *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai*

5.3.1 Narrative Trajectories

Both *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai* foreground the structural oppression of marginalized communities, but they differ in scope and emphasis. *Maamannan* situates caste oppression within formal politics, dramatizing the struggle for dignity inside representation systems. In contrast, *Vaazhai* explores systemic exploitation outside political institutions, focusing on child labour and intergenerational poverty. The two films demonstrate Selvaraj's auteurist commitment to representing subaltern lives across multiple domains: politics, labour, and everyday survival.

5.3.2 Characterization and Agency

Different approaches to subaltern agency are also revealed in the films. Adhiveeran's defiance of caste arrogance indicates an unwillingness to remain silent, demonstrating how resistance manifests itself in *Maamannan* through loud confrontation. However, in *Vaazhai*, resistance is more subdued and manifested in the silent perseverance of kids whose survival serves as a testament. This distinction implies Selvaraj's understanding that subaltern voices take on distinct forms based on historical and material settings, alternating between silent endurance and political assertion.

5.3.3 Symbolic Continuities

Mari Selvaraj's symbolic language ties the two films together. In *Maamannan*, animal imagery—pigs versus dogs serves as a metaphor for caste hierarchies and their overturning. In *Vaazhai*, the banana plant and industrial machinery embody fragility and exploitation. Despite these different registers, both films share an auteurist tendency to encode politics into visual metaphors rather than rely solely on dialogue. Silence, landscapes, and the body as a site of suffering are recurring motifs across both works, consolidating Selvaraj's auteur identity.

5.3.4 Subaltern Perspectives

Viewed through Subaltern Studies, the films offer complementary perspectives on marginalization. *Maamannan* dramatizes the paradox of representation: even when the subaltern enters institutions of power, their voice remains constrained. *Vaazhai* exposes those who cannot even aspire to representation children, rural labourers whose existence is erased by both state and society. Together, the films trace the continuum of subalternity, from muted political participation to complete invisibility within economic exploitation.

5.3.5 Auteurship as Resistance

Maamannan and *Vaazhai* underscore Mari Selvaraj’s evolution as a “subaltern auteur.” His stylistic consistency, symbolism, realism, silence, and rural landscapes demonstrate auteurist continuity, while his thematic expansion from caste politics to labour exploitation reveals a widening political horizon. By choosing to narrate lives that mainstream Tamil cinema often ignores or marginalizes, Selvaraj transforms cinema into a medium of resistance. His films articulate the pain of oppression and the possibility of dignity and transformation, positioning Tamil cinema as a counter-hegemonic force within India’s cultural politics.

6. Discussion

Mari Selvaraj’s cinema explores how the frameworks of Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies can intersect to illuminate the politics of representation in Tamil cinema. His auteurship is inseparable from his politics, marking him as a distinct figure in contemporary Tamil cinema. From the perspective of Subaltern Studies, both *Maamannan* and *Vaazhai* foreground those silenced by dominant social structures. *Maamannan* dramatizes the struggle for recognition within formal politics, where caste hierarchies persist despite democratic institutions. *Vaazhai*, by contrast, turns attention to children and labourers who cannot even claim visibility in the political domain. Together, they extend Gayatri Spivak’s provocative question, “Can the subaltern speak?” Selvaraj’s answer is not a simple “yes” or “no”; his films show that subaltern voices emerge in fragments through silence, metaphor, and embodied resistance challenging mainstream spectators to engage differently.

These films also expose the layered nature of oppression. In *Maamannan*, caste and politics intersect, demonstrating how symbolic humiliation (e.g., being denied dignity) reinforces material inequality. In *Vaazhai*, economic exploitation intersects with age and rural dispossession, showing that capitalism and caste together perpetuate cycles of marginalization. This aligns with Subaltern Studies’ insistence on analyzing structures of power that operate beyond the state, extending into the cultural and economic realms.

Another significant contribution of Selvaraj’s work is its redefinition of Tamil cinema as a vehicle for resistance. Historically, mainstream Tamil films often celebrated upper-caste heroism or diluted caste critique into generic melodrama. Selvaraj disrupts this tradition by crafting narratives where marginalized communities are central, not peripheral. His use of non-star casts (especially in *Vaazhai*), authentic rural landscapes, and everyday language contributes to a counter-cinema that contests hegemonic norms.

Finally, Selvaraj’s films reveal how visual metaphors function as tools of resistance. The pig, dog, banana plant, and machine are not incidental symbols but political signifiers that reframe how audiences perceive caste and class hierarchies. In doing so, Selvaraj develops a cinematic vocabulary that is both artistically compelling and politically subversive, enabling Tamil cinema to participate in broader struggles for social justice.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined Mari Selvaraj’s *Maamannan* (2023) and *Vaazhai* (2024) through the intersecting lenses of Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies. By analyzing narrative structures, character portrayals, and visual metaphors, it has demonstrated how Selvaraj’s cinema consistently foregrounds marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, landless labourers, and exploited children. His auteur signature lies in recurring stylistic devices—realist settings, symbolic imagery, silences—and his unwavering political commitment to the subaltern.

The comparative reading revealed how *Maamannan* dramatizes caste hierarchies within political institutions, while *Vaazhai* illuminates economic exploitation and child labour outside them. Together, they reveal the continuum of subaltern experiences: from constrained political participation to absolute invisibility under capitalism. By situating these narratives in rural Tamil Nadu, Selvaraj resists the urban-centric focus of mainstream cinema, making the rural poor central to cultural discourse.

The study concludes that Mari Selvaraj can be understood as a “subaltern auteur,” whose films embody cinema as resistance. His work demonstrates the possibility of reimagining Tamil cinema not as entertainment alone, but as a counter-hegemonic force that interrogates caste, class, and systemic inequality. Future research could extend this analysis by exploring audience reception, comparing Selvaraj’s films with other politically engaged directors, or situating his cinema within global traditions of resistance filmmaking.

In representing those who are silenced, Selvaraj’s films remind us that cinema is not merely a reflection of society but also a tool to reshape it. His oeuvre expands both Auteur Theory and Subaltern Studies, showing how artistic vision and social justice can converge in the language of cinema.

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