

Karmic Deconstruction of The Man: A Study on The Male Ego in Samy's Mirugam (2007)

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the 2007 Tamil film, *Mirugam* through the lens of Biopolitics and Stigma by Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman. The protagonist, Ayyanar, is portrayed as a hyper-masculine character instilling fear among the villagers with his body and sexual desires but soon loses it by being affected by HIV/AIDS. It studies the trajectory of the protagonist from being a 'predator' to 'pariah'. The plot structure uses Ayyanar's 'diseased body' as a site of Poetic Justice. Ultimately, this research argues that the male ego represented in the beginning of the movie is deconstructed by the climax, symbolizing the full circle of life, breaking the male ego, shifting the image and power dynamic of the protagonist from being an 'oppressor' to 'oppressed'.

KEYWORDS:

Male Ego, *Mirugam*, Power Dynamics, Karma, Deconstruction of Power, Predator, Hyper Masculinity.

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1. Introduction

Mirugam (translated as *Animal*) is a movie directed by Mr. Samy starring Aadhi Pinisetty and Padmapriya Janakiraman as Ayyanar and Alagamma, was released in the year 2007. Ayyanar, the protagonist, is introduced as a hyper-masculine character who has had a physical relationship with every other woman in his village and is proud of it. He is married to a tomboyish woman, Alagamma, whom he rapes ruthlessly. None in the village could tame or bring Ayyanar under control. Although he goes to the brothel, he refuses to pay the prostitutes. He is put behind bars for

his previous atrocities. There they begin using drugs and share the same syringes to get intoxicated. He rapes the inmate imagining him to be Alagamma and gets infected with HIV/AIDS. Since there were no medicines to treat him, he gradually loses his hyper-masculinity which was his strength. It was Alagamma who was there to support him and help him with his basic needs until his death. He was treated as an alien in his village because of his illness. His male ego was completely shattered and deconstructed which proved that he is no longer superior in the village.

The movie clearly blends both the extreme characteristics of the protagonist well, portraying that nothing is permanent.

2. Objectives

- To trace out the trajectory of the character Ayyanar from his highs and lows.
- To bring out the reason for his fall and his condition.
- To represent and highlight the silent suffering of women namely Alagamma, Ayyanar's wife and his mom.

3. Review of Literature

Table 1: Scholarly contributions on Masculinity, Prostitution and Silent Sufferings of women.

Scholar & Year	Core Theme	Contribution Summary
S. Theodore Baskaran (1996)	Social History of Tamil Film	Explores how Tamil cinema uses folk archetypes and rural settings to construct identities of power and morality.
M.S.S. Pandian (2008)	Masculinity and Caste	Analyzes how the "Hyper-masculine" Tamil hero is constructed through violence and dominance over women and the land.

R. Srivatsan (2000)	Health and Representation	Investigates how Indian cinema uses disease (like HIV/AIDS) as a "moralizing" tool to punish "deviant" characters.
V. Geetha (1998)	Silent Suffering and Patriarchy	Examines the "Dravidian" woman in film as a site of sacrifice, enduring male ego to maintain family honor.
K. Kalpana (2012)	Prostitution and Agency	Discusses the trope of the "fallen woman" taking revenge or finding agency outside the traditional marriage structure.
Selvaraj Velayutham (2008)	Tamil Cinema Identity	Provides a framework for understanding "Poetic Justice" in rural dramas where the protagonist's body reflects their moral failures.
Stalin Rajangam (2010)	The "Madurai" Formula	Deconstructs the "Aruva" (machete) culture in films where male ego is tied to violence and a tragic end.

These aforementioned texts show that there are individual studies on Hyper-masculinity, silent sufferings of women, moral failures of the protagonist and their disease as the punishments, prostitutes breaking free from the traditional marriage structure; however, they have fallen short on expanding on deconstructing the male ego and masculinity in the movie *Mirugam*. This paper aims to explore more on the existing frameworks by providing a comprehensive analysis.

4. Methodology: Qualitative Content Analysis

This study aims to analyse the film *Mirugam* (2007) by Samy through qualitative content analysis which involves a close reading of the plot structure, character arcs, and visual symbolism to uncover the hyper-masculinity, fall of the protagonist, silent

sufferings of women especially Alagamma and Ayyanar's mother and revenge by one of the prostitutes, Savithri.

5. Theoretical Framework

From the ancient "right of the sword" to the contemporary administration of biological life, Michel Foucault examines the development of power. This change offers a thorough framework for examining Ayyanar's demise in *Mirugam* as a change from a Sovereign to a Biopolitical Pariah through his text, *Society Must Be Defended*.

"The death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer." (Foucault, 1997/2003, p. 255)

Ayyanar in *Mirugam* has what Goffman refers to as a "Blemish of Individual Character." The villagers no longer see "Ayyanar the man" after learning that he has HIV; instead, they see "Ayyanar the contagion." The "social death" that takes place long before his physical demise is explained by Goffman through his text, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963).

"The perceived presence of an individual who possesses a stigma may lead others to withdraw from him, or to find it impossible to behave toward him in a normal way." (p. 13)

6. Significance of the Title "Mirugam"

Ayyanar acts in accordance with what Foucault (1976/1990) refers to as the "right of the sword", the sovereign authority to take life or let it live, during the first part of the movie. He views the women in his life and his livestock as interchangeable biological resources. According to Ayyanar, his spouse is a "yoked" animal designed for hard work and quiet perseverance. The "active/male and passive/female" binary outlined in Feminist Film Theory is reflected in this (Mulvey, 1975). As a bearer of the family's honour, the wife turns into a "silent image" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 834) who

is powerless to resist Ayyanar's animalistic whims. He views his masculinity as a "performance of the beast," equating natural dominance with his sexual predatory tendencies.

6.1. Silent Sufferings of Alagamma

The tragic focal point of *Mirugam* is Alagamma's character arc, which shows how a patriarchal ego systematically crushes a vibrant spirit. Her early scenes highlight her independence, physical agility, and a defiance that verges on the masculine, making her a formidable figure in her rural setting. She is introduced as a high-spirited "tomboy." But after she marries Ayyanar, this agency is methodically destroyed. What V. Geetha (1998) refers to as the "silent suffering" present in rural patriarchal structures is viscerally represented by her transformation from a free-willed woman to a victim of domesticity. Despite being subjected to constant physical and psychological trauma, Alagamma continues to be the household's moral compass. Her perseverance is a "stoic resilience" that emphasises Ayyanar's monstrous nature rather than a sign of weakness; she becomes the "bearer of meaning" (Mulvey, 1975) for family honour while suffering in a domestic prison that treats her with less respect than the animals her husband looks after. As the emotional witness to Ayyanar's biopolitical decline and ultimate social death, her arc is ultimately characterised by a terrifying transition from the "unbound" girl to the "bound" wife.

6.2. Language and Tone of Ayyanar in *Mirugam*

In *Mirugam*, Ayyanar's identity is constructed through a weaponized system of language and authoritarianism that establishes him as a sovereign "beast" within a rural feudal hierarchy. Utilizing what V. Geetha (1998) identifies as the "heroic" masculine vernacular, Ayyanar employs dehumanizing labels and a staccato, aggressive tone to subjugate his environment, effectively silencing his wife Alagamma's former autonomy through auditory and physical intimidation. This performative brutality functions as a technology of Sovereign Power (Foucault, 1975/2003), where his commands

replace the law and his body serves as the ultimate site of territorial dominance. But when he is diagnosed with HIV, this linguistic and behavioural hegemony collapses; his identity is “spoilt” (Goffman, 1963), his once-feared voice is rendered ineffective, and he is transformed from a predator who “takes life” to a biological pariah whom society methodically “lets die” to maintain its own collective purity.

6.3. The Prostitute’s Revenge

Savithri’s retaliation in Mirugam is a biological revelation and psychological dismantling rather than a biological infection. Her intervention is prompted by Ayyanar’s typical conceit; when he treats her with dehumanising entitlement and refuses to pay her for her services, he believes his “sovereign right” to exploit others is uncontested. Savithri’s determination to destroy the one thing Ayyanar values more than his physical prowess, his sense of “ownership” over his household life, is strengthened by this particular act of financial and personal disrespect.

She skilfully uses a strategy, brainwashing Ayyanar into believing that his wife, Alagamma, is having an affair with her uncle. Savithri is aware that for a man like Ayyanar, the idea of his “property” (his wife) being “shared” is more agonising than the virus itself, so this is a clever subversion of the patriarchal gaze. Savithri makes sure his “spoilt identity” is complete, as suggested by Erving Goffman (1963). In his own mind, he is a “cuckolded” man rather than merely a dying man. She effectively transforms from a marginalised victim to the mastermind behind his mental breakdown, making sure that her lies devour his soul while the virus devours his body.

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