

INTERWOVEN REALITIES: HYPERLINK NARRATIVE AND POSTMODERN AESTHETICS IN SUPER DELUXE

Jayakrishnan J.S.¹ & Dhanuja S. Mohan²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mother Theresa College, Nellikad, Kattakada, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

²B.Ed English, Christ Nagar College of Education, Chavarapuram, Thiruvallam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18782337>

ABSTRACT:

Thiagarajan Kumararaja's Super Deluxe is a remarkable example of narrative experimentation in contemporary South Indian cinema. These include the emotional journey of Shilpa who returns as a transgender woman, the tense and chaotic situation faced by Vaambu and Mugilan after an unexpected death, the curiosity and mischief of a group of teenage boys, and the crisis of faith experienced by Arputham. No single character is treated as the central hero. All narratives exist side by side, creating a web of events connected through chance, coincidence, and shared themes rather than through direct interaction.

The film also reflects major ideas of postmodern cinema. It mixes different genres such as comedy, melodrama, crime, philosophy, and surreal elements. It uses intertextual references and self-aware moments that question traditional storytelling. This blending of styles creates a sense of unpredictability and emphasizes that reality is always shifting and open to interpretation. The film challenges established ideas about gender, morality, desire, and belief, encouraging viewers to question accepted truths. This paper examines how Super Deluxe uses a hyperlink narrative structure to create a network of interconnected stories that represent the fragmented nature of contemporary life.

KEYWORDS:

Super Deluxe, Hyperlink Narrative, Thiagarajan Kumararaja, Postmodern Aesthetics, Fragmented Reality.

Findings and Discussions

Thiagarajan Kumararaja's film *Super Deluxe* occupies a unique and powerful space in contemporary Indian cinema. It is a work that boldly refuses conventional storytelling methods and embraces a highly complex narrative design deeply rooted in the principles of hyperlink cinema and postmodern aesthetics. Through its intertwined stories, abrupt tonal shifts, philosophical questions, and deliberate fragmentation, the film portrays a world that mirrors the fractured nature of modern life. *Super Deluxe* challenges the traditional expectations of a singular protagonist, a continuous plot, or a unified moral resolution. Instead, it presents a collection of parallel stories that resonate thematically rather than intersect through direct plot events. The film is not merely a cinematic text but a commentary on reality, identity, culture, and human experience in a world shaped by coincidence, chaos, and constant shifts in meaning. This makes it an important film to analyze in terms of hyperlink narrative and postmodern structure, particularly for its ability to break boundaries, destabilize norms, and reflect the contradictory nature of contemporary society.

Hyperlink cinema is a narrative style in which multiple storylines unfold simultaneously, often without direct interaction among characters. *Super Deluxe* fits into this category through its four distinct narrative threads. The first is Shilpa's story, a deeply emotional and socially charged tale of a transwoman who returns to the family she left behind. The second revolves around Vaambu and Mugilan and their darkly comedic struggle to hide an unexpected death. The third follows four teenage boys who become entangled in trouble due to their obsession with adult cinema. The fourth narrates Arputham's crisis of faith after what he perceives as a miraculous event. Though these stories differ drastically in tone and content, they are constructed to run side by side, reflecting the simultaneity of human existence. This multiplicity echoes the idea that life is not a single line but a complex web of parallel experiences. The stories do not intersect in the traditional sense, yet they resonate

deeply with one another through shared thematic concerns such as accidentality, morality, sexuality, belief, and fate.

One of the defining aspects of hyperlink cinema present in *Super Deluxe* is the absence of direct interaction among characters from different narrative strands. Shilpa never meets the teenage boys. Vaambu does not encounter Arputham. The stories are almost completely isolated in terms of plot. Still, their experiences echo across narrative spaces, creating a sense of connection without physical contact. This method challenges the classical Hollywood model where stories are expected to converge dramatically. Instead, *Super Deluxe* shows that human lives can mirror each other through parallel struggles, hidden desires, shared moral dilemmas, and collective encounters with unpredictability. The viewer becomes aware of these connections not through plot but through thematic patterns. This technique positions the audience as an active interpreter who constructs meaning from the simultaneous unfolding of independent lives. It reflects the broader reality of society, where countless lives occur at once, intersecting only in abstract ways that are often invisible on the surface.

Parallel editing plays a significant role in reinforcing this hyperlink structure. The film frequently jumps from one storyline to another at moments of emotional intensity, suspense, or revelation. These transitions are not accidental. By juxtaposing scenes, the film creates a web of meaning that goes beyond direct narrative linkages. For instance, a moment of fear in one story may be followed by a moment of confusion in another, suggesting that the emotional tones of different lives resonate in unspoken ways. This structure communicates the idea that human experiences across society, despite differences in age, gender, class, or circumstance, share underlying emotional truths. By constantly switching between stories, the film forces the audience to hold multiple realities simultaneously. It breaks the illusion of a single narrative flow and replaces it with a more realistic depiction of the chaotic, fragmented nature of contemporary life.

Another critical feature of hyperlink cinema evident in *Super Deluxe* is the concept of indirect influence. While characters do not meet, events in one storyline subtly affect the psychological or thematic direction of another. An example is the adult film disc that the teenage boys watch. This disc also happens to be linked to Arputham's spiritual crisis, showing how trivial objects can travel across the narrative world and trigger unexpected chains of meaning. Similarly, the alien that appears at the end of the film serves as a symbolic thread connecting all stories, not through literal interaction but through a shared sense of wonder, confusion, and the disruption of reality. This method reflects the postmodern scepticism toward linear cause and effect. Events do not have a neat explanation. They ripple unpredictably across the lives of unrelated individuals. The film suggests that life itself functions in this complex manner, where minor incidents can have far-reaching consequences beyond our perception.

Super Deluxe also deviates from traditional narrative expectations by refusing to offer a unified moral resolution. Each of the four stories concludes independently, with its own emotional tone and philosophical outcome. There is no attempt to draw all characters into a grand finale, nor is there a single moral message imposed on the audience. This decentralization aligns with the postmodern rejection of absolute truths and fixed interpretations. The film invites viewers to reflect on each story separately and derive personal meanings. Shilpa's story ends with empowerment and acceptance, Vaembu and Mugilan's story ends with survival and resilience, the boys' story ends with an unexpected confrontation with fear and responsibility, and Arputham's story ends with a renewed sense of faith that remains ambiguous. The absence of a central resolution emphasizes the fragmentation of human experience and the impossibility of imposing a single truth on diverse realities. This structure encourages the viewer to enter the film as an active participant rather than a passive receiver of meaning.

The hyperlink narrative of *Super Deluxe* blends seamlessly

with its postmodern aesthetic. Postmodern cinema is characterized by elements such as genre mixing, pastiche, self-reflexivity, fragmentation, and hyperreality, all of which are strongly present in the film. One of the most striking features is the fearless blending of genres. *Super Deluxe* does not fit neatly into any one category. It is simultaneously a family drama, a dark comedy, a crime thriller, a philosophical exploration, and a speculative science fiction narrative. This genre fluidity is an example of pastiche, a postmodern strategy that borrows from multiple styles and tonal registers without attempting to unify them under a single aesthetic. For instance, Shilpa's story carries weighty emotional drama and social commentary, while Vaembu and Mugilan's storyline resembles a darkly comic thriller filled with absurd situations. The boys' storyline is shaped like a mischievous adventure tale intertwined with moral lessons about desire, shame, and peer pressure. Meanwhile, Arputham's storyline touches on philosophical satire, exploring belief systems and religious devotion. The film moves between these tonal worlds with ease, refusing to justify the transitions. This freedom from genre confinement makes *Super Deluxe* a distinctly postmodern text.

Self-reflexivity, another postmodern trait, is also strongly evident in the film. *Super Deluxe* frequently draws attention to the constructed nature of cinema itself. The plotline involving the boys and their fascination with adult cinema serves as a mirror for audience behaviour and the broader cultural obsession with visual media. By portraying the boys watching exaggerated or unrealistic fantasies, the film invites viewers to question their own consumption of cinematic spectacle. The television news debates shown in the film act as a satire of sensational media, mocking the ways in which news channels construct reality through exaggeration and spectacle. The alien that appears at the end is a deliberate nod to old science fiction movies, intentionally looking artificial to emphasize cinema as an imaginative construct rather than a truth-telling medium. This self-awareness disrupts audience immersion and encourages critical

distance. The viewer is constantly reminded that cinema is not transparent reality but a mediated expression of culture, ideology, and human imagination.

The collapse of the distinction between high culture and low culture is another hallmark of postmodernism that *Super Deluxe* embodies. In classical art, high culture refers to intellectual or refined works, while low culture refers to popular entertainment such as adult cinema or sensational media. *Super Deluxe* rejects these distinctions entirely. An adult film actress becomes one of the most sympathetic and morally grounded characters in the film. Philosophical debates occur not in academic spaces but in cramped homes filled with domestic chaos and fear. The blending of adult film aesthetics, science fiction tropes, emotional melodrama, and spiritual meditation illustrates that all forms of culture are valid sources of meaning. This dismantling of hierarchical culture reflects a postmodern understanding of society as a space where no single perspective dominates. Every cultural form contributes to the construction of social reality.

Identity and morality, key concerns of postmodern theory, are critically explored in *Super Deluxe* as well. Shilpa's story challenges fixed gender norms by portraying gender as fluid, evolving, and socially constructed. Her journey exposes the violence and prejudice embedded in rigid ideas of identity. By centering the emotional depth of her struggle, the film breaks away from stereotypes and presents gender as a complex and deeply personal experience. Vaambu's story complicates moral binaries. While society might judge her actions harshly, the film adopts a perspective that emphasizes context, suffering, and intention rather than rigid moral judgement. Arputham's philosophical dilemmas raise questions about the nature of faith, the concept of miracles, and the thin boundary between rationality and belief. Together, these storylines reveal the instability of identity and morality in a world shaped by cultural expectations, personal trauma, and accidental events.

Super Deluxe also embodies the postmodern concept of hyperreality, a term popularized by Jean Baudrillard to describe a state where the boundary between reality and simulation collapses. In the film, media images, religious interpretations, and imaginative fantasies shape characters' perceptions more strongly than actual events. The boys' understanding of sexuality is formed by the artificial world of adult cinema rather than real-life experiences. Arputham interprets a random event as a divine miracle, creating a version of reality that may be more powerful emotionally than the literal truth. The alien sequence pushes hyperreality to its limit. It is both obviously unreal and emotionally impactful. By presenting such exaggerated and astonishing images, the film blurs the line between the real and the imaginary. It shows how contemporary human experience is shaped by layers of mediated reality.

Fragmentation is another essential postmodern feature that defines the structure of Super Deluxe. The film does not follow a traditional narrative arc. Instead, it moves back and forth among stories, creating an episodic rhythm that mirrors the fractured nature of contemporary life. This fragmentation invites the audience to assemble meaning from pieces rather than depend on a linear plot. Each story has its own climax and resolution, and there is no attempt to impose a final unified conclusion. This structural fragmentation challenges the classical narrative assumption that stories must be coherent, centered, and sequential. It opens a space for multiple meanings and interpretations to coexist. The audience is encouraged to view each narrative strand as a standalone reflection on life while also recognizing the shared themes that unite them.

This fragmented structure also raises questions about the nature of causality and human agency. In traditional narratives, events follow logically, and characters shape their destiny through clear actions. In Super Deluxe, however, characters often face situations driven by accident, randomness, or forces beyond human control. A corpse appears unexpectedly. A husband returns at the wrong time. A miracle occurs without explanation. An alien appears

among ordinary people. These disruptions challenge the classical idea that life is governed by rational order. They reflect a universe shaped by chaos, unpredictability, and absurdity. Yet the film does not present this chaos as entirely negative. Rather, it shows that meaning, survival, and transformation can emerge in unexpected ways. Characters learn, adapt, or grow not because life is orderly but because they navigate disorder with courage, resilience, or desperation. This view of human existence aligns with postmodern philosophy, which rejects fixed structures in favor of fluid, nonlinear understandings of life.

The emotional, thematic, and narrative complexity of *Super Deluxe* marks it as a landmark film in Indian cinema. Its hyperlink narrative demonstrates how multiple lives can exist side by side, connected not by direct interactions but by shared experiences, emotions, and dilemmas. Its postmodern aesthetic challenges conventional notions of genre, identity, morality, and reality. It portrays a world where meaning is constructed from fragments, where truth is unstable, and where chaos shapes human experience. By combining hyperlink narrative techniques with postmodern philosophy, the film creates a cinematic universe that reflects the contradictions, tensions, and absurdities of contemporary life.

In conclusion, *Super Deluxe* is more than a film. It is a multi-layered meditation on the nature of storytelling, identity, culture, and existence. Through its innovative narrative design and its bold engagement with postmodern ideas, it challenges viewers to reflect on the complexities of the modern world. It refuses simple explanations, definitive morals, or linear clarity. Instead, it embraces ambiguity, simultaneity, contradiction, and chaos. It invites the audience to experience life as a series of interconnected fragments, each offering its own insight into the human condition. *Super Deluxe* proves that cinema can transcend traditional boundaries and become a powerful medium for exploring the uncertain, multifaceted reality of contemporary life. It stands as a testament to the creative power of cinema to reimagine narrative form and offer profound

reflections on the world we inhabit.

References:

1. Hyperlink Cinema and the Prevalence of Intertwining Stories, 18 January 2017, <https://the-artifice.com/hyperlink-cinema-stories/>, Accessed on 13 January 2026.
2. Super Deluxe. Directed by Thiagarajan Kumararaja, Performance by Vijay Sethupathi, Ramya Krishnan, Fahadh Faasil, Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Mysskin, Tyler Durden and Kino Fist, Alchemy Vision Works, East West Dream Work Entertainment, 2019.
3. Hyperreality in Film – Definition & Detailed Explanation – Film Theory Glossary Terms, 24 December 2025, <https://chaplinfilmfestival.com/film-theory-glossary/hyperreality-in-film/>, Accessed on 10 January 2026.
4. Explainer: Breaking down system of hyperlink cinema – process, examples, 05 February 2024, <https://www.newsbytesapp.com/news/entertainment/explainer-breaking-down-hyperlink-cinema/story>, Accessed on 11 January 2026.
5. Baudrillard’s Concept of Hyperreality, 03 April 2016, <https://literariness.org/2016/04/03/ baudrillards-concept-of-hyperreality/>, Accessed on 11 January 2026.