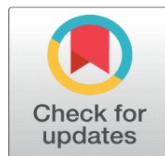
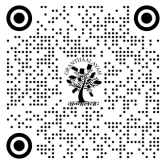


# DIRECTORS AS DJ: AN ANALYSIS ON THE USAGE OF OLD SONGS AS A NARRATIVE TO AUGMENT THE EMOTIONAL DEPTH IN LOKESH CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

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## ABSTRACT

Tamil film songs are always fresh and evergreen in the minds of the audience and always enjoy a separate fanbase. Famous Tamil film songs from previous films have been used in Tamil films for a quite long time; often in situations and scenes which are similar to the situations in which they had originally been sung. Interestingly, Lokesh Kanagaraj who is one of the well-known Tamil film directors in the Tamil film industry today, is very well known for re-using old Tamil film songs in his films which have become a recurring feature of his makings. However, unlike the other such instances, the old film songs have often been used in action scenes in his films which are totally unrelated to the contexts in which they had been written and sung originally. Thus, this style of re-using previous film songs in completely different contexts creates a new type of intertextuality for the audience and forces them to think about their association and nostalgia with these songs in a very different way and thus alters the personality of the sequence. This study will be analyzing this style of intertextuality in his films and also how Lokesh uses Tamil film songs in his films which constitute a part of the universe of the common characters in his film, Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU). It will also analyze the differences in the original contexts of such film songs in the films and the contexts of their placements in these respective films to understand how they have been used in the films. This study will adopt a methodology consisting of content analysis of the pre-existing songs in some selected films of Lokesh Kanagaraj along with their original video songs to understand and analyze their original context and situation and how they have been used in the films constituting a part of the Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU).

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Film music, Tamil Cinema, Lokesh Kanagaraj

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reusing or rehashing popular film songs is common in Tamil cinema. Unlike other directors who reuse these songs in similar circumstances in these films, the Tamil director Lokesh Kanagaraj is famous for using previous film songs from different decades in his films often in situations totally contradictory to the situations in which the songs had been composed and sang. This has piqued the interest of his fans, audiences and film critics and made them fascinated about this.

Director and writer Rathna Kumar, who has written for three of Lokesh's films, said that he has a penchant for using "old songs, heavy violence and hyperlink-style screenplay" like the famous American director Quentin Tarantino and added there

was some inspiration for Lokesh from Tarantino. Tarantino is also very well-known for using preexisting songs in his films.

Lokesh too in a recent interview to an online media organization Behindwoods, explained the reason behind using previous Tamil film songs: He liked the old film songs that he listened to and he uses them with a mood and tone contradictory to the nature of the scenes in his film such as the violent scenes. (Behindwoods Hits, 2023). This is due to the reason that using these songs in this manner would take a bit more time for the audiences to think about it. They would also be wondering if they should perceive this scene as serious or light-hearted after hearing previous film songs being used in the abovementioned manner and Lokesh wanted to give this mood to his viewers. (Behindwoods Hits, 2023).

This study aims to analyse this pattern of intertextuality employed by Lokesh Kanagaraj in his films by analyzing how he has re-used previous Tamil film songs in his films Kaithi, Vikram and Leo which constitute a part of his common universe which he has created for the characters in his films: Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU). It would also seek to understand the contrast in their usage in their original films and Lokesh's films and to understand the contribution of this technique to the development of the narratives in his films.

## **2. ANALYSIS ABOUT THE INTERTEXTUALITY AND USE OF PREVIOUS SONGS AND MUSIC IN FILMS AND OTHER MEDIA**

Bowell (2020) while studying about the concepts of parody and intertextuality in the television show The Simpsons, noted that there are five ways in which the creative team uses music in the show which are: "original songs, main theme end-variations, background instrumental music cues, quotations and allusions to existing music and guest voices of established musicians." (Bowell, 2020).

He also stated that the intertextual references and networking with famous personalities was decided and concerned the writers of the show, rather than the music composers of the show.

Summers (2020) in his study about the use of preexisting songs in the animated film Shrek, explained that one of the main functions of using popular music in film is the use of the lyrics of songs to comment on the scenes or events in the films, which was described by Jeff Smith as 'musical puns'.

He also noted that directors select certain songs not only for their musical quality but also due to the reason that the lyrics of the songs are relevant to the narratives of the films and also that the pre existing songs are used in the animated films produced by the Hollywood film company DreamWorks in two ways: as a reflection of the thoughts of the characters in their minds and in a funny way, as a contrast with the obstacles faced by the characters in the films.

He also notes that the difference of the non-diegetic songs used in the film Shrek 2 and emotions displayed by the character in the film in a particular scene adds more emotional depth to a sequence which would have been actually enjoyable and a very fun sequence in the film. Summers also quotes Altman saying that popular songs were capable of "serving a more specific narrational purpose" (Summers 2020).

Summers also quotes Garwood listing out three areas of choice which the film makers are able to influence regarding the usage of music in their films and they are the cultural resonance, obtrusiveness and distance from narrative events

respectively. He also noted that the meaning of a song has the ability to change drastically as when it is used in a diegetic way in the film.

He also explained that the approach of the show towards music and parody from the writers of the show was in “parody-related comedy”. He also quotes Noel Carroll saying the show provides “a two tiered structure of communication, allowing straightforward and esoteric meanings to emerge simultaneously.”

Research has been carried out about how Quentin Tarantino, the famous Hollywood film director uses previous songs in his films such as Michael Rennett’s study about the concept of Director as DJ, which would serve as the theoretical framework of the study.

Other examples of such research include Romanov (2006) explaining about how Quentin Tarantino uses pre existing film songs in his films such as Reservoir Dogs and Pulp Fiction and Raines (2009) had explained about how Quentin Tarantino has pre-existing film songs in his films while analyzing about how could the terms, auteur and melomane(a music loving director) could be applied to the films of Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez.

Bell(2011) has also explained about how Quentin Tarantino has used pre-existing songs in his films Jackie Brown while analysing about his work with regards to the concept of pastiche.

Bigalondo (2015) has also explained about the usage of pre existing songs in the film Django Unchained and Viitanen (2020) has explained about the intertextual music in Quentin Tarantino’s films such as Inglorious Basterds.

Research has been carried out about how other Hollywood directors have used pre-existing songs in their films. While Grant (2020) has explained about how the Hollywood film DOPE (2015) has used pre- existing songs while analysing the “combination of music scores” in the film, Hrycaj (2013) has explained about how the Hollywood director Wes Anderson has used previous film songs in his films such as Bottle Rocket, Rushmore and The Darjeeling Limited.

In addition to this, Gerzic (2008) who has carried out research about the aspects of music in the film adaptations of the plays written by William Shakespeare and Maciel (20008) who has studied about also about the intersection of the cinematic, musical and televisual aspects of the shantytown and arid backlands in Brazilian independent and commercial films have also focused upon the usage of previous songs from operas or from a wide variety of sources.

However, such a type of research study has not been carried out in Indian cinema or Tamil cinema which involves analyzing the previous film songs used in the films, although interestingly this aspect is being used in Tamil films recently.

Many Tamil film directors including Lokesh Kanagaraj, such as Prem Kumar and Nelson Dilipkumar have started to use previous film songs in their films regularly for different reasons and purposes. (Sowmya Rajendran, 2023).

This technique has been used in Tamil films for long time for a variety of reasons such as irony, nostalgia and humour, although it has not been discussed in academia and research.

Interestingly since Lokesh Kanagaraj gained attention and popularity for reusing previous Tamil film songs in his films, this phenomenon has started to be noticed and discussed with avid interest amongst the general public with speculation about reasons about the usage of such songs in his films and also about the original situation and context of the previous Tamil film songs.

This paper would help to providing the research impetus and heft to the phenomenon of intertextuality observed in the films of Lokesh Kanagaraj and serve as a foundation and also stimulate further studies and research in these fields of intertextuality of previous film songs in Tamil films and also in Indian films in general.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will adopt the concept of “Director as DJ” as the theoretical framework, which was introduced and elucidated by Michael Rennett in his paper “Quentin Tarantino and the Director as DJ”, to analyze and study how Lokesh Kanagaraj, as a Director as DJ has been reusing previous Tamil film songs in his films belonging to the Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU) .

The term “Directors as DJ” defines two personalities in the field of music and film, directors and Disco Jockeys and it also indicates shared characteristics between the director and DJ using the word “as” in the phrase. Film directors always supervise and oversee the dramatic and creative aspects of their films although this tends to differ depending on the production of the films and their producers. While some directors always tend to exert greater control over all the aspects of the film, other directors will delegate these responsibilities to the other members in their production team.

However, the term “Director as DJ” indicates a higher status for the director since there are no mentions about the other people involved in the production of the film such as the scriptwriter, editor and music director. The other word “DJ” in the term is considered as the vital person in the hip hop world and he or she “creates and mixes the music for a hip hop song”. Several hip-hop groups which were established initially were known for their DJs who were seldom also the leader of these groups such as “the Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Afrika Bambaataa and Soul Sonic Force and Eric B. and Rakim.” (Rennett, 2012).

Rennett (2012) also explained about how Miller had said it was possible for the DJs to get lost while in the process of mixing of their songs by using a lot of citation and insufficient synthesis. Thus, he had also explained that the references by the DJs and Director as DJs to previous music or songs should create a conversation to create the synthesis of music.

The aspect of synthesis is vital to the director when he is performing the role of the DJ since the various references to other films and types of media which he is employing in his film must create a product which is understandable for the audience and it should also provide a means of “rational dialogue”. (Rennett, 2012; Bradshaw 2014; Toth, 2021).

Due to the nature of the film making medium, the directors as DJs can create various references through the visual, narrative and aural aspects of their films. (Bradshaw, 2014; Schaefer, 2016; Toth, 2021). Various references can be made through the pictures of the scene such as the production design such as the B-movie posters at Jack Rabbit Slim’s in the film Pulp Fiction, which was directed by Quentin Tarantino (Toth, 2011), and cinematography such as the usage of shock zoom shots to pay homage to the Hong Kong martial arts films in films such as Kill Bill. (Rennett, 2012). Zoom shots and split screen methods were also used in the film Kill Bill to pay tribute to the famous martial artists like Bruce Lee and their films. (Toomey, 2024)

Another interesting aspect of the concept of “Director as DJ” is in addition to the roles of radio and club DJs as presenters, directors also place a lot of importance

regarding the usage of famous songs in their films, through the background music and score played by the characters in his films. (Rennett, 2012 ; Krasselt, 2015; Chen, 2016; Brogan 2017). Directors as DJs can recycle and use previous types of songs in his films such as previous film songs, background music scores, “original songs and cover songs” from previous films. (Rennett, 2012; Krasselt, 2015; Chen, 2016; Shiver, 2021)

Rennett (2012) explained that the intertextual connections can be established between the chosen music and the scenes in which it is used and sometimes these songs would also be ironical and contradictory to the nature and mood of the scenes in the film. (Chen, 2012; Krasselt, 2015; Jacobs, 2017; Morrow, 2018). However, there are also some differences between the ways in which the directors and the DJs use pre-existing music, dialogues and elements of narratives in their works.

While DJs use the exact source material which they are using in their music or songs, the directors while using references from pre-existing films or songs “must recreate the mis-en-scene” of the original references to “preserve the narrative flow of the new film” and the impact of the intertextual references made by the director emerges from “its connections with its source”. (Rennett, 2012; Krasselt, 2015; Jacobs, 2017; Morris; 2017).

However, except a couple of research papers such as the analysis of auteur music in the films of Wes Anderson by Hrycaj (2018) which mentions about this concept and an online article written by Baer(2002), not much has been written about this concept nor has research been carried out about this topic

This topic aims to contribute to the research about this concept about Directors as DJ in the Indian and international academic sphere by considering Lokesh Kanagaraj as Director as DJ and how he has used previous Tamil film songs in his films.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are:

- To study and understand about how Lokesh Kanagaraj re-uses previous Tamil film songs in his films.
- To study and analyze about the previous Tamil film songs being used by Lokesh Kanagaraj in his films.
- To analyze about how are the previous Tamil film songs being re-used by Lokesh Kanagaraj are different from or similar to their original contexts.
- To understand how re-using previous Tamil film songs assists in the development and progress of the plots or narratives of the films.

#### **5. METHODOLOGY**

The researchers adopted a methodology of qualitative content analysis of the previous Tamil film songs used in Lokesh Kanagaraj’s films. The researchers had selected the films of Lokesh Kanagaraj belonging to the common universe created by Lokesh Kanagaraj for the characters from his films, Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LUC) till date: Kaithi(2019), Vikram (2022) and Leo (2023) for this study. These films have been selected through the non-probability method of judgmental sampling.



These films have been selected as not only do they belong to a common universe envisioned and created by Lokesh Kanagaraj and these three films also are linked and related to each other through an interconnected timeline of events between the films.

Thus, analyzing these films about how they had used previous Tamil film songs would be suitable as they would provide insights about how Lokesh Kanagaraj has used previous Tamil film songs in these films which form a part of the LCU and also study the similarities and differences between the ways in which they have been used in these films.

First, the researchers watched all the films and noted the scenes in which previous Tamil film songs have been used in the films. Then they also noted the previous Tamil film songs which were used in the films and they searched the internet and watched the original videos of these songs online to understand their original contexts. Then they again watched the movies and the scenes which these songs had appeared, to study about how they had been used in the films.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

It was observed during the process of analysis of the previous film songs in the films that 11 Tamil previous film songs were used in the films and the results of the content analysis are:

### **Kaithi (2019)**

- 1) Ola Ola Kudisayila from Joker (2016)- This song was written by the lyricist Yugabharathi and was composed by Sean Roldan. This song is played during the beginning of the film which introduces the children's home in which the daughter of the protagonist Dhilli (Karthi) is staying. This usage of this song indicates the orphanage is like the hut of the protagonists in Joker, that it is simple and does not have the facilities for the children living there. It is played for a duration from 00 : 01 : 40 to 00 : 02 : 23 in the film. (Kanagaraj, 2019, 1:40).

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUWd6XmRCMU//>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.tamil2lyrics.com/lyrics/ola-ola-kudisayila-song-lyrics//>

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Picture from the song Ola Ola Kudisayila

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUWd6XmRCMU//>

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2** The song playing in a television in the children's home

**Source** Disney + Hotstar

- 1) Puthu Rootulathan from Meera (1992)-This song is written by the lyricist Vaali and composed by Ilaiyaraja. This song is played when Dhilli is driving the lorry and Kamatchi, the young boy who is the owner of the lorry and Inspector Bejoy are sitting behind him and beside him respectively, to drop Bejoy at the Commissioner's office.

Dhilli gives Kamatchi his phone and tells him to play a song from the folder titled "Jesudas Songs". Kamatchi also takes his phone and then starts playing a song. Then the song Pudhu Routtulan gets played while the truck enters a dark path in a forest and then into a poorly built sand path. It is played for a duration of 00 : 47 : 05 to 00 : 48 : 32. (Kanagaraj, 2019, 47: 05).

Thus the situation is ironic while also reflecting the situation in Kaithi: Although in both of the films the song is used on road trips, in its original context it is a very happy and joyful song sung by the hero to tease his heroine, while in Kaithi it is used to actually make fun of the poor state and condition of the roads that the three people are travelling.

Through the two lines of the song, it is also being implicitly referred to the fact in a humorous way that Dhilli and Bejoy are outsiders while Kamatchi is a native of the city and they are travelling in the night time which is the same time in the original song. Although the original song is a happy song, the context in Kaithi in which it is played is a tense and nervous condition.

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbFQ29pRVMs//>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.tamil2lyrics.com/lyrics/pudhu-routeladan-song-lyrics/>

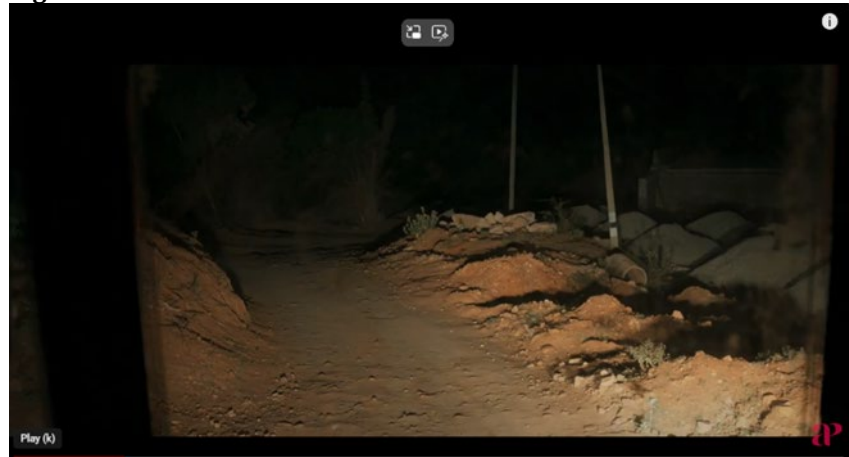
**Figure 3**



**Figure 3** Picture from the song Puthu Rootulathan

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbFQ29pRVMs//>

**Figure 4**



**Figure 4** The poor road in which Dhilli, Kamatchi and Inspector Bejoy are travelling in Kaithi are travelling when the song Pudhu Routeladan is being played

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2n3g5CD4IE//>

- 1) Chithirai Nilavu from Vandicholai Chinnarasu (1994)- This song was written by the lyricist Vairamuthu and was composed by A.R.Rahman. This song is played as a ringtone in a henchman from the antagonist Anbu's gang when they have heated arguments with another group from Anbu's gang regarding about who should kill Dhilli and his associates when they are trapped in a forest by the former group and after this tune is played, they try to negotiate with each other about how many people should each gang kill.

It is played for a very short time of three seconds from 1 : 04 : 24 to 1 : 04 : 27 in the film (Kanagaraj, 2019, 1: 04 : 24) and the first line of the song is played which is "Chithirai nilavu selayil Vandhathu munnae ". This happy and romantic song is played from the movie as a contrast to the intense scene and also adds a comic touch in the tense situation as two groups of henchmen are arguing over about who should kill the hero and his associates while a happy romantic number plays as a caller tune in the phone of a henchman, creating an ironic situation.

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75l9QQxKdGY//>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.tamil2lyrics.com/lyrics/chithirai-nilavu-song-lyrics/>

**Figure 5**



**Figure 5** Picture from the song Chithirai Nilavu

**Source** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_FJ6AqZ3Sc//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_FJ6AqZ3Sc//)



**Figure 6**



**Figure 6** The song playing as a ringtone in the man who is covering his face and who is standing second from the left hand side in Kaithi

**Source** Disney + Hotstar

# 1) Jumbalakka Jumbalakka from En Swasa Kaatre (1999)-

This song was written by the lyricist Vairamuthu and was composed by A.R.Rahman. This song is played in the film when the college students in who are held back in the Commissioner's office for a case of drunken driving, see Adaikalam shouting to his brother Anbu and his associates that they should break the iron door in the cell where the latter is jailed to enter into the office, the students deliberately use astereo player and play the abovementioned song to make sure that Anbu and his henchmen should not hear what Adaikalam is saying. It is played from the duration of 1: 29 : 53 to 1: 31 : 41 in the film. (Kanagaraj, 2019, 1 : 29 : 53)

Although the situation of playing of the song is built up in the plot, the song interestingly is ironic and contradictory to the atmosphere and situation in the film; an angry villain is shouting at the college students to switch off the stereo player while a happy dance song is being played on the stereo player by the students to prevent him from telling his gang about how to break into the office, thus creating an irony in this tense situation. Thus, it also injects humour into this scene and makes it funny.

Link of the song: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OC9neMwIpE//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OC9neMwIpE//)

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.tamil2lyrics.com/lyrics/jumbalakka-jumbalakka-song-lyrics/>

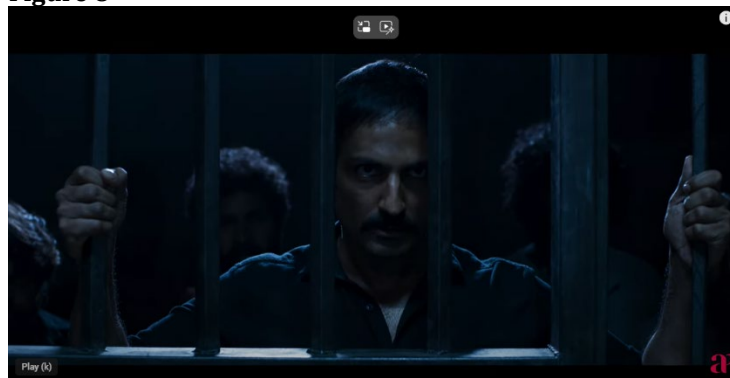
**Figure 7**



**Figure 7** Picture from the Jumbalakaa Jumbalakaa song

**Source** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OC9neMwIpE//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OC9neMwIpE//)

**Figure 8**



**Figure 8** The villain Adaikalam in the jail when the song is being played

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlNji4pcR8M//>

- 1) Metro Channel from Indhu (1994)- This happy dance song is written by the lyricist Vaali and was composed by Deva. This happy song is also played from the stereo player of the college students during a situation in the film after the Jumbalakaa Jumbalakaa song, when Anbu is climbing up to a tree and gets into the office to rescue his brother and his associates. This song is played in the film from the time duration of 1:32:55 to 1:37:01 during the duration of the film. (Kanagaraj, 2019, 1 : 32 : 55)

When the initial line of the song “Metro Channel Munna Paaru” (Metro Channel Look forward at the Metro Channel), the camera focuses on Anbu who is staring at the tree which is the way forward for him to get into the Commissioner’s office to rescue his brother and associates and thus the lyrics of the song fits the situation. However, this happy dance song at the same time, interestingly serves as a contrast to the situation in Kaithi as a happy dance song is played during a tense and key moment in the film where a villain is staring at a tree, to break into the Commissioner’s office and rescue his brother. Thus, it also creates humour in the scene.

Link of the song: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7aqXGTBsJA//](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7aqXGTBsJA//)

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.friendlysms.com/tamil-lyrics/indhu/metro-channel-517559.html>

**Figure 9**



**Figure 9** Picture from the Metro Channel Song

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KohdKiGXvZM//>

**Figure 10**



**Figure 10** Anbu climbing up the tree while the song is being played

**Source** Disney + Hotstar

- 1) Aasai Athigam Vachu from Marupadiyum (1993)- This song is written by Ravi Bharathi and was composed by Ilaiyaraja. This happy dance song performed by the heroine within a film in the film Marupadiyum is interestingly played after the Metro Channel song in the stereo player, when Anbu comes down from the top of the Commissioner's office to the place below where the constable Napoleon and the college students are, inhales drugs and still continues playing when Anbu, Napoleon and the students enter into a physical confrontation and when Napoleon tells Tamizh, one of the college students to go to the top of the Commissioner's office.

Then Tamizh also goes upstairs and when she sees a henchman trying to enter the building, she takes out her hairpin and makes him fall by pricking his hands. This song is played in the film from 1:37 : 02 to 1:39: 50 during the duration of the film. (Kanagaraj, 2019, 1: 37 : 02).

Interestingly, unlike the other songs discussed above, this song is played for quite a while during this extended sequence in Kaithi. It serves two purposes; during the initial lines of the song which are "Aasai Athigam Vachu" and "Manasa adakki vekkalaamaa" which translate into English as, stating that having a lot of desire and also about questioning if the mind should be controlled after having a lot of desire, serves as the perfect irony to the situation in which the villain is on a high after consuming drugs.

Secondly, it also thus also adds black humour to these scenes which Anbu is inhaling drugs and is on a high and even also after he is engaged in a fight with the constable Napoleon and the college students, as a happy dance song in a film within the original film Marupadiyum is played during such an intense scene in Kaithi.

Later, when Tamizh goes upstairs and makes the henchman to fall down, the song continues to play and through the lines of the song which are "Chinna ponnu naan oru sendhoorappoo naan" which refer to the heroine of the previous film as "a small girl " and "a flower" makes an excellent and subtle reference to Tamizh's act in the film; thus emphasizing about the of the character of Tamizh in the film.

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJSTeB-qfew//>

Link of the lyrics of the song : <https://www.jiosaavn.com/lyrics/aasai-athigam-lyrics/EQE5RCt-ZEQ>

**Figure 11**



**Figure 11** Picture from the Asai Athigam Vachu Song

Source <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJSTeB-qfew//>

**Figure 12**



**Figure 12** Antagonist Anbu after consuming drug while the song is being played

Source [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kiFwJL\\_xrE//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kiFwJL_xrE//)

### Vikram (2022)

There are two previous Tamil film songs re-used in the film and they are:

- 1) Chakku Chakku Vathikuchi from Asuran (1995) –This peppy dance song was written by the lyricist Piraisoodan and it was scored by the music director Adhityan. Interestingly, this song is used in two scenes in the film Vikram which was directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj and they are:

(a) In the scene in early in Vikram (2022), after a drunk Karnan (Kamal Hassan) rams his car accidentally in a tree after consuming alcohol and falls on the wheel of his car, two policemen sent by the police commissioner Jose to follow Karnan and monitor his whereabouts, see him lying unconscious on the car and the car slammed into the tree. After a tense and unexpected scene where the protagonist slams his car into the tree and he becomes injured and falls unconscious, what would happen to him next and the aftermath is unknown.

In such a tense and nervous moment in the film, after Karnan slams his car into the tree, this video song version of this song is played on the phone and the two policemen who follow Karnan and his whereabouts are listening to this song until one of them receives a call from Commissioner Jose. It is played for a very short



duration of 43 seconds from the duration of 06:16 to 06:39 during the duration of the film. (Kanagaraj, 2022, 06: 16)

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkJkkyVFX8E>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://lyricsraaga.com/tamil/chakku-chakku-vaththikuchi-lyrics//>

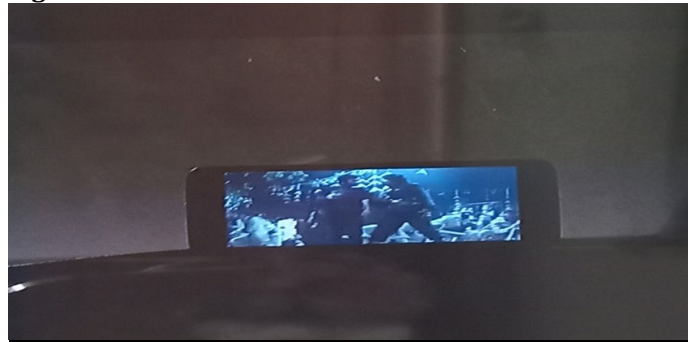
**Figure 13**



**Figure 13** Picture from the Chakku Chakku Song

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fh5XrLxKBXI//>

**Figure 14**



**Figure 14** The video version of the song which the police officers who were following Karnan were listening to

**Source** Disney + Hotstar

Then one of the policemen points to the young person who dances along with Mansoor Ali Khan, who features in Asuran and who also starts dancing in the song Chakku Chakku Vaththikuchi, remarks to his friend that “Hey, he has started dancing alone by himself!” and then the other policeman also observes that in the song.

Then both of them start listening to it. Interestingly, only the first line of the song is used in this situation when the song is played on the phone of the policeman and the policemen listening to this song in a scene succeeding the scene of Karnan falling unconscious, establishes a contrast to the tense and nervous mood of the previous scene in Vikram and also in the overall film as the fate of Karnan is still unknown.

This is due to the reason that the policemen are listening to a happy dance number in such an intense and important scene in the film whereas they have been sent to monitor and follow the protagonist, by the Commissioner. Thus, the usage of this song also establishes the character of the policemen who are listening and watching it while being sent to spy on and follow Karnan that they are very casual



and cool policemen who might not their work seriously and instead they are listening to this song.

(b) The song is again used in *Vikram* but interestingly in the second half of the film where the true identity of the protagonist Karnan (he was the commander of the Black Ops squad Vikram Kumar) is revealed and Vikram arrives at the old office of the police commissioner of Trichy (where the antagonist Adaikalam was imprisoned in Kaithi) to rescue his associate Bejoy (who had also featured in *Kaithi* as well).

After Vikram successfully gags the policeman who is in charge of the control room and ties him to a chair, he takes the phone of the policeman. When he sees the song *Chakku Chakku Vathikuchi* in the list of the recently played songs in the policeman's mobile phone, he sarcastically tells the policeman that since he would have to give a signal to his fellow police officers, he would do that and starts playing the video song version of the song. (thus implying that he would alert them of the predicament of the police officer).

The song is played during the duration of 1: 37: 58 to 1: 39 : 15 (Kanagaraj, 2022, 1 : 37 : 58) and then again for a very short moment from 1: 41: 45 to 1: 41: 49 (Kanagaraj, 2022, 1: 41 : 45) in the film, when the narrative switches back to the story of Vikram rescuing his associates from the jail from Sandhanam leaving his lab and house with his family after learning that it might be bombed.

Thus, this scene (through the use of the video song version in the mobile phone of the policeman) very nicely establishes that this song was played in the early scene in the movie (when the two policemen sent to monitor Vikram, were listening to this song). This subtle but indirect reference to the earlier usage of the song is also enhanced by the fact that one of the policeman who was sent to monitor Vikram was the one who had now been gagged up and tied up by Vikram, the man whom he had been monitoring and following earlier in the film!

Thus, the usage of the song in this scene and its connection with the earlier usage of the song in *Vikram* illustrates that the tables have turned in the film and is also funny. The song starts playing for quite some time as Vikram enters the prison cells where his teammates have been imprisoned and fights with the police officers until he frees his teammates and his teammates rejoin him at the centre of the prison after leaving the prison cells in which they have been imprisoned.

Interestingly, after Vikram has played the song on the phone, Bejoy who is imprisoned in the prison cell laughs after hearing the music of the song and thus this indicates that he knows that their leader Vikram has arrived to free him and his other teammates.

Additionally, as some more police officers come to fight Vikram, the two verses from the song *Chakku Chakku Vaththikuchi* play into the background and they are "Naal Parthu Odivaa "and Naan Kanaa Aadivaa" which translate into English as "Come and live with me after having finalized the wedding date" and "Come dancing towards me as I see you" respectively.

These verses, although they are ironical to the nature of the violent fight scenes film, perfectly match the existing intense fight scenes in *Vikram* where the police officers come running towards him and try to assault to prevent the protagonist Vikram from rescuing his teammates, but the police officers are not successful as Vikram successfully manages them and beats them up.

This happy dance number provides a contrast to the intense and violent fight sequence in *Vikram* and it also lends a poetic quality to the intense fight sequence in *Vikram* as it is about a couple going to get engaged in the original film is being played in such a crucial and tense moment in *Vikram*! Thus, the usage of this song in

Vikram lightens the mood of the violent fight sequence in the film and also reduces its impact.

**Figure 15**



**Figure 15** Vikram entering into the jail to rescue his associates while the song is played

**Source** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StFRPd-A\\_I0//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StFRPd-A_I0//)

Kaviya Selvama Veerama from *Saraswathi Sabetha* (1966)-This song was written by the lyricist Kannadasan and was composed by K.V.Mahadevan. Interestingly this song is played during a parallel storyline in *Vikram*.

While Vikram has been fighting the police officers to free his teammates who have been imprisoned in the commissioner's office in Trichy. After Vikram assaults two police officers who come to assault and punches them and they land on the window of the prison, the scene suddenly cuts and shifts to another track in the narrative of *Vikram*.

Commissioner Jose (who is revealed to be an aide of the antagonist Sandhanam) speaks with Sandhanam on the phone and tells him that the leader of the Black Ops squad, Amar has realized the truth about them and including the lab in which Sandhanam and his gang have been preparing their drugs.

Then, he also cautions Sandhanam to be careful not only does Amar know the truth about his lab, but also that a huge pile of the substance RDX was missing from his (the police's) inventory. He further tells a shocked Sandhanam that he should not touch anything in his lab and take his family and evacuate from his house due to the possibility of it being bombed by Amar. A shocked Sandhanam consumes his usual drug to gain his superstrength and becomes hyperactive. Then he tells his family members who have been working in the lab, not to touch anything and to leave from the lab and house and follow him. They also follow suit and leave with him.

The thought-provoking and philosophical song *Kalviya Selvama Veerama* is interestingly played on a radio and the host of the programme also announces that this amazing song from the film *Saraswathi Sabatham* would be played by them next, when Sandhanam and his family leave from the lab and their house. It is played from the duration of 1: 40: 55 to 1: 41: 44 in the film. (Kanagaraj, 2022, 1 : 40 : 55 ).

Thus, the previous film song is being referenced to by the radio which is played in *Vikram* in a meta way, which contributes to its effectiveness as it also informs the audience that it is an amazing song by labelling it as such while announcing that it would be played.

This philosophical song is also actually sung after a key moment in *Saraswathi Sabatham* as all of the three Goddesses, Goddess Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Parvathi challenging that they would prove that only education, wealth and valour (which corresponds to them respectively) is the best by imparting it to the people who lack them in the Earth after Sage Narada instigates them and starts a conflict between them. Then, the song starts playing when Sage Narada repeats the three words- Education, wealth and bravery and this song is sung by him who is asking which is great, education, wealth or bravery.

This philosophical song while played in such a tense and nervous moment in *Vikram* adds the element of irony into this scene as this song seems to be an out of the box choice to be played in a such a tense moment in the film as the nature and meaning of the song is totally opposite to the scene in *Vikram* and thus it also makes the situation funny for the audience.

Playing this song also brings out black humour in the scene by making fun of the predicament of the antagonist in the film as he and his family has to leave behind the lab, in which they have been making drugs and earning their livelihood to save their lives and also brings out the element of black comedy in this scene by questioning if wealth is really so great in a situation of grave danger for the antagonist and his family. The initial few lines of *Kalviya Selvama Veerama* are used in this scene in *Vikram* which are “*Kalviya Selvama Veerama*

Annaiya thanthaiya deviam  
 Kalviya Selvama Veerama  
 Annaiya thanthaiya deviam  
 Ondrillamal matrondru uruvaguma  
 Idhil uyarendrum thazhvendum pirivaguma  
 Ondrillamal matrondru uruvaguma  
 Idhil uyarendrum thazhvendum pirivaguma  
 Kalviya Selvama Veerama “

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgT9qiNjNS0//>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.tamil2lyrics.com/lyrics/kalviya-selvama-veerama-song-lyrics//>

**Figure 16**



**Figure 16** Picture from the *Kalviya Selvama Veerama* Song

Source <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xudr0a>

**Figure 17**



**Figure 17** Sandhanam leaving from his lab with his family while the song is being played on the radio

**Source** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StFRPd-A\\_I0//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StFRPd-A_I0//)

### Leo (2023)

The previous Tamil film songs used in the film are:

- 1) Karu Karu Karupayi from Eazhaiyin Sirripil (2000)- (2000)-This song is written by the Tamil film director K.Subhash and was composed by Deva. This song is played in the film when the daughter of the protagonist Parthiban (Vijay) tells him in his restaurant that it is his turn (saying implicitly that he should dance to a song). Parthiban also obliges and turns on the gramophone player.

This song is played for quite some time from the entry of a person from the gang of the robber Shanmugam, into the bakery and also demands chocolate coffee. Then he drags Shruti (an employee at Parthiban's restaurant ) when she is about to leave from the restaurant to her home forcefully, and drags her and makes her to sit besides him in the table. He indirectly threatens Parthiban by placing his gun on the table with Shruti crying and shouting at him to leave her(the henchman implying that he will shoot and kill Shruti unless he is served chocolate coffee). The song continues to play during these intense scenes in the film till when Shanmugam and his other gang members also barge into the restaurant and see his henchman there and then upon listening to his henchman who is threatening Shruti with a gun, Shanmugam orders his other henchmen to delete the CCTV footage in the restaurant as it has captured him and his gang and the henchmen also proceed to do so.

The song is played from the duration of 0:30: 11 to 0:34:56 in the film. This romantic song is played as a contrast to the intense and nervous situation in Leo especially after the robber from Shanmugam's gang enters into the bakery and threatens to kill Shruti and it also adds a comedic touch to the sequence of scenes in the film as such a romantic song being played in an intense scene in which a robber threatens to hurt a woman, which makes using the song seem be an out of the box choice for this situation.

However, interestingly, a portion of the music from the original song, which is the sound of a horse, is used to amplify the tension in the scene by superimposing it with the scene in which Shanmugam's gang enters into the bakery.

Link of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpRR1BrYliI//>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.jiosaavn.com/lyrics/karu-karu-karupayi-lyrics/BgwqRwVYYFI>

**Figure 18**



**Figure 10** Picture from the Karu Karu Karupayi Song

Source <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpRR1BrYliI/>

**Figure 19**



**Figure 19** Robber Shanmugam at Parthiban's restaurant with his gang while the song is being played

Source <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDh58mFU5M4/>

- 1) Thamarai Poovukum from Pasumpon (1995)- This song is written by the lyricist Vairamuthu and was composed by Vidyasagar. Interestingly, after the song Karu Karu Karupayi is played from the gramophone player in Leo, this song is played from the gramophone player, when the henchman who had demanded chocolate coffee (actor Sandy) places his gun at Shruti's face. Then the song plays throughout the fight sequence that occurs between Parthiban and Shanmugam and his gang until Shanmugam drags Shruti, beneath the counter in Parthiban's restaurant from where she and Parthiban's daughter are hiding safely from Shanmugam and his gang. Shanmugam then threatens Parthiban to leave his henchman (who had placed his gun at Shruti's throat) or else he would stab and kill Shruti. The song is played from the duration of 0:35:04 to 0:38:41.

Interestingly, the romantic song also serves as a contrast to the intense fight sequence in Leo and also helps to lighten the serious and violent mood of the sequence as the original context and situation of the song is totally in opposite to the current situation in Leo and thus when it is used in such a situation, it makes the audience to take the situation lightly and not to be too worried and serious about it.



In addition to this, the nature and mood of the song also lends it a soft mood and poetic quality to the fight sequence and reduces the impact of the violence. Interestingly, the first two lines of the song, which are “Thamarai Poovukkum Thanikkum ennikkum Sandaiyae vandhadhilla “ translates into English that water and lotus are perfectly compatible is played during a scene when the henchman places his gun on Shruti’s throat, thus bringing out the perfect irony to the line as Shruthi is being held by the henchman against her wishes and the latter is also pointing a gun at her throat. This also effectively builds up the tension in the scene.

Link of the song : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27yGAMGAXjE//>

Link of the lyrics of the song: <https://www.jiosaavn.com/lyrics/thamarai-poovukum-lyrics/QTEIUhBeZAE>

**Figure 20**



**Figure 20** Picture from the Thamarai Poovukkum Song

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WThI42PvbSY//>

**Figure 21**



**Figure 21** Parthiban during a fight scene with a henchman from Shanmugam’s gang in his bakery while the song is being played

**Source** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGmQvURQ2aw>

- 1) Naan Pollathavan from Polladhavan (1980)- This song is written by the lyricist Kannadasan and was composed by M.S.Viswanathan. This song is played in the ending of the film when the truth about Parthiban is revealed. However, although his son knows it, his wife and daughter do not know it. He is seated with his children at his table and eating his food while his wife

Sathya is serving them food. His daughter asks him about the injuries on his face but Sathya asked her to keep quiet and asks her son to switch on the television. Then the song is being played on television and as the song is being played, Parthiban who was about to eat something, listens to the song and stares at his son.

Playing this song during this scene is a subtle and direct reference to the character, indicating that he is a bad guy (when the lines “Naan Pollathavan Naan Poi Sollathavan” is played ) as he is actually the son of a drug dealer and has killed his father and associates and burned the factory down, which is only known to the Leo’s son and the audience. Playing this song during this scene also makes it ironical and funny when Parthiban stares at his son while listening to this song as it actually reveals about the true nature of his character. This song is played for a very short duration from 02 : 37 : 05 to 02: 37: 28.

However, playing the song is also ironic and adds a comic touch to the scene as although the lyric of the song says that I am a person who does not lie, the situation is not such in Leo as Leo has been continuously been denying and lying to his family (excluding his son who knows the truth) and the society that he is Parthiban and not Leo Das, the son of the smuggler Antony Das (Sanjay Dutt).

The situation and context of the original song is also different as compared to the film as in the original film, the protagonist laughs and openly admits that he is a “Pollathavan “(bad guy) when he is questioned by the caretaker of his daughter and then happily starts singing this song and elucidates this further. However, this is not the case is Leo as Parthiban does not wish to tell the truth about himself in the film.

The lines of the song which are played in the television in the final scene are

“Naan pollaadhavan

Poi sollaadhavan

Naan pollaadhavan

Poi sollaadhavan

En nenjathil vanjangal illadhavan “

Link of the song: [https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwloE6uXHnw//](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwloE6uXHnw//)

Link of the lyrics of the song : <https://gaana.com/lyrics/naan-pollathavan>

**Figure 22**



**Figure 22** Picture from Naan Pollathavan Song

Source <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30CH41sgME8//>

**Figure 23**



**Figure 23** Vijay staring at his son while the song Naan Polladhavan is played in the television in Leo

**Source** Tamilblasters website

## 7. CONCLUSION

The aim of the analysis of this study was to analyze how the Tamil film director Lokesh Kanagaraj as DJ, had re-used previous Tamil film songs in his films which constitute a part of the Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU). It was found out during the study that the use of these songs was always through some media such as mobile phone, radio and the television in the films. Thus, the nature of playing such songs were diegetic in nature and a part of the films themselves.

It was also found out that using such types of songs served multiple intertextual functions in the films; to give a poetic touch to intense fight scenes and to reduce the impact of the violence, to depict the situations and emotions of characters in the films and to act as a contrast to intense scenes and add a comic touch.

Although most of the instances where the previous film songs were used did not contribute to the development of the plots or narratives of the films, it was found out interestingly sometimes playing these songs were used to move the story forward or to introduce key twists in the film such as the use of the song Kalviya Selvama Veerama in Vikram and Jumbalakka Jumbalakka in Kaithi.

Interestingly, except for a few instances in the three films, only the starting line or initial lines of the previous songs are used in Lokesh's films. Further research can focus about why he frequently uses only the first few lines of the previous Tamil film songs in his films. It was also observed that Lokesh had used previous film songs in different ways such as during parallel storylines through cut shots in Vikram and one song after the other in Kaithi and Leo. Further research can focus about why Lokesh uses these songs in different ways in his films as compared to their use in other films.

It was also observed during Lokesh had used only previous Tamil film songs which were happy in nature from various decades and they were composed by a plethora of diverse music directors and lyricists such as M.S.Viswanathan, Ilayaraja, Adhityan, Kannadasan, Vaali and director K.Subash etc. It was also observed that Lokesh has used mostly reused previous Tamil film songs from the 1990s in his films (7 out of 11 film songs) and further research can focus about why Lokesh frequently uses previous Tamil film songs from this decade in his films.

The limitations of this study are the small sample size of films and considering only the films and the films directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj for the purpose of analysis

and study. Further research in this field could focus on the re-usage of previous Tamil film songs, music, dialogues and other narrative elements in the films of Lokesh Kanagaraj and other Indian film directors.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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