



# From Stereotypes to Archetypes: A Study of Thiagarajan Kumararaja's Super Deluxe Based on Jungian Psychoanalysis

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**ABSTRACT:** Once the Canadian director Anton Egoyan said that “the whole film is about being convinced that they can reduce themselves into archetypes”. Movies are not only an audio-visual symbolic narrative that explains the living reality of people but also watching movies often enables the spectator to delve deeper into themselves and to explore their hidden true selves. The film critic reads and interprets cinemas and finds the invisible meaning of the human psyche from the creative world of the director by using the method of psychoanalysis. Likewise, this thesis studies a film called Super Deluxe as a miniature of our society by using the method of analytical psychology by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung.

**KEYWORDS:** Archetypes, Identity crisis, Queer Consciousness, Consciousness and unconsciousness and symbolism

## I. INTRODUCTION

All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts”(Shakespeare). Carl Gustave Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and the father of analytical psychology emphasizes these legendary words of William Shakespeare from the play As You Like It, by his apocryphal innovation of Archetypes. And the fabulous Tamil film director Thyagarajan Kumaraja proves these words are exactly true in his surrealist neo-noir dark comedy film Super Deluxe.

Movies are a very complex form of symbolic content that communicates delicate and rich visual-audio information to the audiences by means of storytelling. Due to its special contextual setting of viewing a movie in a cinema, it offers not only visual-audio narratives, but also both a means and a space similar to psychotherapeutic sessions that enable the viewer to witness their psyche in projection. Which means that spectators are in a process of projecting the image of themselves in the movies and not just being an indifferent observer.

Moreover, it is also claimed that the cinema delivers a contemporary experience for the spectators to set apart from their physical life and engage their unconscious in a manner similar to hypnosis and dreaming. So rather than logical reasoning, the Jungian approach places more emphasis on associating, experiencing and focuses more specifically on the symbolic meaning of the archetypes in movies. The Phenomenon of using the examples of movies and other mass media in ordinary life, points to the existing internal psychological forces that allows people to connect with these commonly shared metaphors and analogies.

## II. CARL JUNG AND ARCHETYPES

Jung introduced a peculiar structure of the human psyche which was quite different from that of Sigmund Freud. He divides the mind into conscious and unconscious, but Jung further categorizes the unconscious into two: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. According to him the collective unconscious is formed by individual instincts that are psychologically inherited from our ancestors. Which stereotypically involves ourselves in the form of signs, patterns, images... etc.. Jung referred to it as the archetypes or the ‘patterns of instinctual behavior’. Which has the capability to create myth and symbols and these images are the same for all cultures, common for all the people of different ages and races. For Jung, archetypes are the corresponding to the psychologically conditioned part of human structure

The Self, The Persona, Anima, Animus, The Mother, The Father, The Child, The Wise Old Man, The Trickster, The Maiden, The Hero and The Syzygy are some important archetypes which get born from the insightful head of Jung. Archetypal events such as birth, death, separation and archetypal objects such as water, the sun, the moon and snakes are also derived from his inventions.



These images find expression in the psyche, in behaviors, in myth and especially in the collective unconscious. Archetypes have the capacity to determine human development; it should also include the law governing this development and which focuses on three levels that are: inside mental, interpersonal and the law relating to interpersonal relationship between the psyche and the external world.

All archetypes have both their negative and positive aspects. The Self is a central archetype; the archetype of order: totality of the personality. That depicts a unified unconscious and consciousness. Creating self occurs through the process called Individuation. The Shadow is an archetype consisting of sexual instinct and desire. It is composed of repressed ideas, weaknesses and shortcomings. It forms out of our attempt to adapt to cultural norms and expectations. The Persona represents the social mask which we wear in our interaction with others. The Anima denotes the feminine aspect of a man's soul and the Animus is the masculine aspect of a woman's soul. Every individual is constructed of a single gender by virtue of human physiology but according to Jung, the collective unconscious of the species consists of the sum total of all human experiences and it lies in the unconscious so it must contain the aspects of both sexes. The combination of the Anima and the Animus is called the Syzygy or the Divine Couple which denotes the wholeness.

The Hero is an archetypal motif based on overcoming obstacles and achieving certain goals, they go through the quest of life either deliberately or by fate and gain a new mature perspective. Psychologically heroes are metaphors for one's own unique potential. The Mother archetype is the most influential with maternal solitude and sympathy. It is the epitome of wisdom, spiritual exaltation, organic emotionality, image of fertility, rejuvenation and the mysteries of nature. The Father archetype is a figure of original authority and strength. They suggest law, order, discipline, rationality and inspiration. The negative aspects of which involve rigidity, control and a cold intellectual way of relating. This leads to ego and intellectual inflation and a state of hubris.

The Child always represents itself as a symbol of potentiality. It has a wholeness which embraces the very depth of nature and this carries a strong ineluctable urge to realize itself. The negative faces of Child give the absence of hope and the denial of potential futurity. The Maiden or the Kore often carries an overlap of mystery. They characterize innocence, beauty, curiosity and

solicitude, but it can also be associated with less positive traits such as helplessness and frivolity. The Wise Old Man is a guide for the soul, a force which exists to help others to attain enlightenment. This archetype draws transcendental knowledge. The Trickster is an illusionary prankster whose representation is sometimes benevolent, sometimes malevolent and sometimes the combination of both. But it always carries with them the power to shatter the boundaries of everyday experience and bring into reality a greater cosmological existence.

### III. PORTRAYAL OF ARCHETYPES IN SUPER DELUXE

Super Deluxe is an Indian Tamil feature film directed by Thiagarajan Kumararaja, it cannot fit under a particular genre, even though we can call it a surrealist-neo-noir-dark comedy. Which employs Carl Jung's concept of archetypal-prototypical characters. Especially, all the characters of the movie are enhanced by more than one archetype during its development. There are four interwoven stories shown in parallel in this cinema. The first story is about an unhappily married woman named Vaambu. She invites her boyfriend Kannan while her husband Mugil is in an acting class. But Kannan dies accidentally when they are having sex. After, the story focuses on how the husband reacts to her adultery, how the couples get rid of the dead body and what will be their fate in the corrupted, bureaucratic public which includes persons such as Inspector Berlin.

The second narrative tells the life of five adolescent boys; Gaaji, Soori, Mohan, Vasanth and Thuyavan. They skip the classes and go to watch a porn movie called the Mallu Uncut at Thuyavan's home. While watching the movie, Soori breaks the TV because they find out that the prone star is his own mother and he screamingly runs towards his home to kill his mom. From this movement the plot goes into many zigzag ways which portrays Soori's accident, life of his devout father Danasekaran alias Arputham, journey of boys in search of money to buy a new TV and meeting with an alien... etc.. The last tale is about Jyothi and her son Raaskutty. They are awaiting Manickam who had fled to Mumbai seven years before. He arrives there as Shilpa, a trans woman. From here the director introduces the question of queer identity and consciousness; each scene from Raaskutty's school, from the police station and from the home displays it well. The child character of Rasukutty is an epitome of the director's hope for the new bonjour. These four subplots of the



cinema are hyperlinked to each other and merge into a single plot.

The first scene of the film Super Deluxe opens with a screaming sound and at that exact moment the camera focuses on an orange painted wall. It depicts a drawing of a tsunami. In Jungian perspective it is a myth or an archetype. The archetype of flood may have emerged from the myths. A flood myth or deluge myth is a myth in which a great flood is usually sent by a deity or deities to destroy a civilization. Which is often believed as an act of divine retribution, sometimes as a measure for the cleansing of humanity, in preparation for rebirth. For example the flood during the time of Noah (Nuh in Quran) in the Bible. According to hindu mythology, there was a period called Satya Yuga and it was about to end and a great flood was to come and destroy all life on earth to start afresh for the next Yuga. Poseidon, also known as "God of Sea" or "Earth-Shaker", was one of the Olympian's Gods in Greek mythology. It was a common belief that Poseidon shows his rage by tsunamis and earthquakes. Here the picture of the flood can be taken as an archetype. Through the picture of the great wave, the director clearly emphasizes his aim. That is his focus is to give a rejuvenation to his spectators' thoughts and feelings. And the film aims to indoctrinate the audiences' psyche in an extreme possible level.

Most flood myths also contain a culture hero, who represents the human craving for life. A culture hero is a mythological hero specific to some cultural, ethnic, religious group who changes the world through invention or discovery. Here we can consider the character Shilpa as a cultural hero. Both Arputham and Manickam are rescued from the great waves of the Tsunami. They both held on to a statue to save themselves from the tsunami. Later Manikyam started worshiping it as the God. And Shilpa went to Mumbai in search of her identity. Then the story progresses and they two meet in a tunnel while shilpa says to Dhanasekaran, now known as Arputham, that is just a stone Swami. These words of shilpa push Arputham into a state of mental anguish. Later the accident of his son Soori proves Shilpa's words are true. Even though the character Arputham abandones the question about the existence of an Almighty power in the mind of spectators. Because Arputham gets the treasure when he collapses the statue. So we can't both accept or reject the existence of a divine power. However, both Arputham and Shilpa prove that there is no need to worship the rocks as if the Gods

and if there exist any omnipotent force then we can worship that in our supreme mandir, that is our mind. In Jung's view, the truth about God is complex because God is a mystery whose nature is beyond human comprehension. In trying to understand God, we each create our own image of him and the image is never accurate. Jung writes in The Red Book "Man doesn't only grow from within himself for he is

also creative from within himself The God becomes revealed in him. Human nature is little skilled in divinity; and therefore man fluctuates between too much and too little" (253).

The word Hero has connotations with adversity, challenges, honor, strength and victory. It is the duty or responsibility of the hero to make the wrong things right and make his world into a utopian paradise. The character Mukil performed by Fahad Fasil, is the hero archetype identified in the movie Super Deluxe. The character Kannan is also a hero when we consider him as the Key of Life in between Vaambu and Mukil. In the initial portrayal of Mukil, we can notice his conversation with his neighbour. He asks permission to admit his wife's family members in Mukil's apartment. He admits them without any hesitation and also says to Vaambu to honor them. It can be considered one of the great qualities of the hero archetype. Telemachus, the focus of the first four books of The Odyssey, provides an early example of good hospitality as both a host and a guest. Like, here Mukil is both a host and guest. The man asks when he will be seen on the big screen. But he says that he just started his acting courses and there is plenty of time to do that. This shows heros' dedication and his goal in life. In any scene of the movie the director did not directly mention both the hero's profession and passion. Usually all household duties are mentioned for women but Mukil doesn't wait for Vembu to make the tea for guests. Instead of that he suddenly starts to make the tea himself. This can be taken as a good quality of hero. A hero should be ready for everything. There is no margin of genders in that scene. Mukil suddenly gets upset when he sees the dead body of Kannan in the refrigerator. But he behaves normally like any heroes trying to do in their circumstances. Like any hero, he likes his heroine so much. That he says to the dead body when they were in the jeep and he is doing his best to protect her from everything.

Mukil's character is also the best example of the Shadow and the Persona archetypes. I already said in chapter I that the shadow forms out of our



attempts to adapt to cultural norms and expectations. It is this archetype that contains all of the things that are unacceptable not only to society, but also to one's own personal morals and values. Likewise Mukil is very anxious about the society in his every circumstance. When Vaembu committed the crime of murder, at the very moment he thinks about the society's reaction for the crime of adultery of his wife, he thinks about the shame on both him and his parents. He says everything including his fate, future and life is worthless. He accuses his father who found Vempu as his life partner. A monstrous face of Mukil emerges from himself and it tries to protect his public image. This all happens due to his persona. Because they are very ideal couples in front of society. To ensure his public image he is trying to ruin the dead body in any way. That causes the emergence of shadow in him. For example he tells Vaembu to search in google or chops the dead body into pieces like a butcher. Where a demon image of the Mukil is clearly depicted by the director. Mukil himself says that he is not such an angel both in her words and deeds. He using the word fuck which is actually society considering a bad one that we can understand from words of his gust. When he continuously uses that word, an old lady asks her husband what the meaning is and her husband says it is a bad thing. He also says that he is aiming to become engaged with politics in his future. For Mukil acting as well as politics is not a service to people rather it is a way of huge profits.

The maiden archetype, also known as the Damsel in Distress, is one of the most famous stock characters, represented by a young, powerless female character in need of rescuing, usually by a male hero. The maiden character both creates conflict, moving the plot along, and represents the hero's desires and motivation. Like any Maiden character, the Veambu played by Samantha Ruth Prabhu in Super Deluxe, is a young wife. She became helpless and powerless due to the death of her former lover. She is Imprisoned or captured by Inspector Berlin from the railroad tracks. She possesses an uncorrupted and ever innocent. But doesn't possess a virginal quality like a Maiden. However, she is pure in both heart and mind. She never tries to escape from the crime that she has committed. From the first scene itself we can witness that she is trying to confess her sin to her husband. Mukil tells her to choap the dead body into pieces but she is unable to do so. The Maiden is a sensitive, emotional being who is in touch with their feelings. That's why Vembu invites her former lover to her house in his pathetic situation. The opening

phone call is proof of this. She also says about her guilty feelings about Kannan to her husband. She represents innocent playfulness and fun when they become friendly.

Maidens do not enjoy silence or loneliness, preferring the company of other people and being far more at ease in the company of others. This is also a cause which persuaded Vembu to invite her lover to her home. When the movie progresses we can clearly read that, there was not existed neither a natural bond nor a friendship between Vaembu and Mukil. During the jeep journey they are trying to explore each other. Mukil asks to Vaembu to tell about his negatives but she hesitates, later she opens her mind as a result of his provocation. The character Vaembu never deliberately gives pain to anyone. Even in front of the Inspector she told the truth. She also tells her husband that she is ready to accept any punishment for her crime of adultery but she was forced from her inner self to rescue her husband from defamation. So she became powerless or helpless in front of the inspector. The death of Kannan can be taken as a result of Veambu's instant satisfaction with her shadow. She knew that extra marital affairs are considered as sin in our society. But her guilty feeling led her to do that. For her sake she invited Kannan when her husband was out of the house. She threatened the young boy with a butcher knife on his neck when he saw them with the dead body. This is also caused by her shadow which shows her demon face in front of that boy. When we compare Vaembu with Mukil, Veambu is not trapped by her persona. Because she broke all the social restrictions and she willfully explained in front of everyone without any regret. She never afraids society so that she could attain her true self and Individuation.

Working of the Shadow or the Freudian Id and Persona or the ego illustrated very well in the story of four boys including Kaaji, Soorya Thuyavan and Vasanth. They are going to watch a pron movie called Mallu Uncut. For that, each of them cleverly deceives their parents. It is due to the working of Persona archetype because our society considers not only porn movies but also an open talk about the sex itself a crime. Everyone leaves home in school uniform and gathers in the house of Thuyavan. Even one of the innocent characters in the movie, Kaaji steals the money from his father's pocket to satisfy his shadow. Soori starts to scream like a monster when he realizes that it's protagonist is his mother. He could not accept it. That is how our society shaped us. Suddenly he collapses the



television and he runs aimlessly like a madman. He feels disgusting and nauseating and he decides to kill his mom. Meanwhile the other friends go to buy a new TV for Thuyavan. Then they approach a goon named Idi Amin to get money to buy a TV. They were ready to do any job, even to kill someone for the money they required. But suddenly they come out of their shadow so that they try to save the life of a man. But they decide to steal money from the house of a Sett. On the way Kaaji tells Vasanth that he loves his sister and that leads to a clash. Meanwhile Thooyavan asks them if it is a big crime to love a friend's sister. The Character Idi Amin is also an example of shadow working. His TV broke down due to his own aggression.

Inspector Berlin played by Bagavathi Perumal is another example of Shadow in humans. Berlin is a womanizer so that he followed Veambu and Mukil like a shadow. The opening conversation between the couple in the movie itself proves it without the presence of him. Veambu tells Mukil that she didn't like the way he looked at her. He misuses the circumstances of both Veambu and Shilpa. Shilpa was forced to fellate Berlin. Also he asks Veambu to surrender herself to him for the crime they committed. He is ready to do whatever to satisfy his Id. Berlin hides his shadow behind his persona. He cunningly avoids the presents of Raasukutty by offering tea and coconut biscuits to him. He speaks to Raasukutty so lovely. He compares him with a bunny but he acts like a hyena. Even we can't compare his cruelties with Don Juan or Casanova because they are mere womanizers and Berlin is a womanizer and also a cheating wolf like Iago. Berlin is actually wearing a mask of a protector of virtue in front of people but he has no devotion to Dhana and Dharma.

Understanding the fundamental laws of the universe is the core desire of the Trickster Archetype. The Trickster character in the film is the role of Alien, played by Mrinalini Ravi. She appears in front of three boys in the Sett's house. She uses magic on those who try to go back after the theft. She splits Kaaji into two that a normal human cannot. She is able to communicate with them via thoughts. She talks about the sense which is higher than sixth sense. We can see an alien figure when she removes her frock. She is not sure who her ancestors are. Even he says various philosophies and it is a difficult task to understand to normal humans. Like, she says there is no need to mourn death which is a part of life. However, help them like any good trickster and at last she gives the money in

their urgent situation. The character of Alien, boys called her Sett Madam, is a person without a persona. She never wears a mask in front of them, instead she openly conveys her messages. So we can conclude that she is a person who traveled through the process of Individuation and attained true Self.

The character of Vijay Sethupathi, called Shilpa is the best example of Anima and Animus archetype. The combined anima and animus is known as the syzygy or the divine couple. The syzygy represents completion, unification, and wholeness. So the character shilpa represents the powerful Ardhanareeswara concept. She gives death curses to inspector Berlin. Shilpa was born as a male genetically and she is called Manickam before he leaves the house. He elopes to Mumbai, from there he undergoes surgeries and gains his true identity as a female. When we analyze the Anima in Shilpa he shows the quality of an enormous father. As well as he processes the female quality like as if a mother of Raskutty due to his Animus. Jyothi tells shilpa that she doesn't know what is harder, a past without a futuristic or a future with one like him. She replies to Jyothi that as a woman she understands her plight. When he changed into shilpa he knew how a woman will suffer the loss of her husband and the questions of society. In the case of a transgender, they show the mixed quality of both Anima and Animus. So it is very difficult for them to survive in a society like ours which is very orthodox. The lady who sells flowers in front of school, says to Shilpa that reasoning is one thing, reality is another! Maanickam could go through the process of individuation. So that he could break the mask of persona and attain his true self. That is why he changed into shilpa. Shilpa says to Raskutty that live exactly how the world wants him, don't think originally, don't be unique, blend with crowd, uniqueness is feared by crowd, fear leads to hatred, and the world will not let him be. This will happen exactly when a Man shows the domination of Animus in him or a woman shows the domination of Anima in her. Society never allows a person to unmask his persona and to attain true self. Due to this, Shilpa's self never allows Raasukutti to attain his true self, instead she tells his son to grasp the persona from the society.

The Mother archetypes in the movie are identical with the character Jyothi played by Gayathri and Leela played by Ramya Krishnan. Jyothi behaves like the Sita in Ramayana. Seeing the returning son, Shilpa's mother asks Jyothi that couldn't marry someone else and run away, but she



doesn't respond to that. Jyothi seems gloomy and hopeless like a classical woman who lost her husband. Even though she gives a hopeful reply and special attention to her son Raasukutty. He asks permission to take his father to his school immediately. She grants the permission and says that she will talk to him later. Jyothi and Raasukutty are the last ones who could come outside of the house to invite Manickam. The grandmother of Raasukutty tells him not to go to school with shilpa while Jyothi tells her to let them go for the happiness of Raasukutty. She devoted her entire life for her son without the presents of her husband.

Leela acts like a mother to the entire humanity. Because her words are the ray of rethinking and rejuvenation. Soori runs towards his mother Leela to kill her after watching the Mallu Uncut but unfortunately he falls down from the stairs and the screwdriver in his hand pierces his stomach accidentally. Leela takes him to hospital with Meenal. She protects him from his father and from death itself. She begs doctors to do Soori's surgery. She gives the light of self revelation to both her husband and son. She says soori that it is not a crime to act in prone movies, it is also a job like being a doctor, driver...ect. She acted in that movie of her own free will. She says there are a million people who watch these kinds of films. But the world is okay with them, they shame only the actors. She asks Dhanasekar if it is a hospital or a place to spread religion. He became a christian when he was caught in a Christ-like statue. If it was a bear toy, then what would be his reaction? This is not only a question to Dhanasekar but also to each of us. Leela gives the way of individuation to Soori and Dhanasekar because she already gains it and she is now in her true self. Both father and son ask the questions of morality due to their persona which they gain from society but she helps them to remove it and to win over the obstacles of society.

The role of Raasukutti played by Ashwanth Ashokkumar is the Child archetype in the movie Super Deluxe. Raasukutti, like his mother, eagerly waits to meet his father. Every family member blames Manickam when he arrived as a trans woman. But Raasukutty was ready to accept his father in any form. He takes his father to school with him but his friends, teachers, even the visitors of school were not ready to accept Shilpa as his father. He asks his friends why can't the father be like the mother! It is a rhetorical question to all of us. Because of a child's innocence he was ready to accept his father in any form. He is not restricted or

not aware of social taboos. So he can easily accept his father. For example, he asks, while his father decides to go Mumbai again, that everybody is mocking him, so that he wants to run away, but mom and he accept him just the way he is. At last we see him enjoying an ice cream with his father and mother. For him life is not a big complex but it is just like an ice cream. Like Infant Jesus, he gives a new way of thinking to us.

### III. CONCLUSION

Super Deluxe is a film about life, death, love, lust, politics, marriage, motherhood, relationships, conflicts, morality, fate, absurdity, frustration, existentialism, atheism, man nature relationship and what not? So, it is a very good foil for both a film critic and a literary critic to do the experiment with the psychoanalysis as well as with the archetypes. The movie conveys the idea of Carpe Diem philosophy, which says: life is like an ice cream, enjoy before it melts. However, this research aims to critically analyze, interpret and study the psyche of characters from the cinema as a representation of the entire human using the Jungian archetypes and to prove that the archetype are not merely the stereotypes but which is an unavoidable ever existing element of human race in its internal surface. For this study different clips are taken from the cinema to represent our essential archetypes. Human psyche is very complex in its present state. It is not only due to the individual conflict but the entire world forces him to jump into the world of conflicts. Because by the time periods the world has decided how a human being should be in society. As a result, the several Archetypes formed and developed in mankind. And which always exists in every form of art, culture and in everything. Which is clearly depicted in the film Super Deluxe by Thyagarajan Kumaraja. Here the director clearly conveys his idea to break the conventional archetypes and give a new perspective to that and make it new for the benefit of ourselves. Moreover, we can make life simple and the present beautiful. So, archetypes are not mere stereotypes rather which are multifaceted in humans and are still surviving within us from our all above investigations.

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