

Visual Grammar of Fear: Cinematic language in Rahul Sadasivan's Horror Cinema

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Abstract - This research paper examines the change in Malayalam horror film making how the making style has change in portraying fear and making the audience connect emotionally to the encounters of the protagonist. The research mainly focuses on "Grammar of Fear" in the cinema of Rahul Sadasivan, a prominent director in contemporary Malayalam horror. While traditional Indian horror films often rely on loud jump-scares, Sadasivan's work is focuses on using slow atmospheric dread, lighting, sound and small elements to build up the tension in viewers. This study provides an in-depth analysis of these elements in four movies of Rahul Sadasivan, "Red rain" (2013) a movie which blends sci-fi with horror elements, follows a young scientist investigating extraterrestrial life-form, "Bhoothakalam"(2022) a psychological- horror drama which focuses on a mother and son dealing with strained relationships, mental health, and grief, which manifest as haunting events in their home, "bramayugam"(2024) a black and white horror film set in 17th-century Kerala, it follows a singer who enters a mysterious mansion, becoming trapped by its powerful owner, and "Diés Iraé"(2025) slow-burn psychological horror focusing on a privileged architect affected by supernatural events in his home. The paper also traces the evolution of Sadasivan's direction style across four films, to identify his consistent creative vision, establishing him as a director with a distinct artistic identity and also the cinematic technique the director used to build up the fear. The research employs a qualitative visual analysis method to explore the techniques used in these films to build up the fear and horror element. The theoretical framework used in this research paper in Auteur Theory and the Semiotics of Horror. Auteur Theory is used to identify Sadasivan's consistent creative vision and recurring themes, establishing him as a director with a distinct and recognizable style. Semiotic analysis is applied to decode the visual and auditory signs such as shadows, textures, and silence that helps to make the element of fear among the audience on a subconscious level. Finally, by tracing his evolution across four films, the research establishes Sadasivan's clear auteur signature and introduction of his new film making style in contemporary Indian cinema.

Key words- Visual grammar, Semiotics of fear, Auteurism, Psychological horror, Acoustic horror

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema is often described as a language, and like any language, it follows a specific set of rules or "grammar." It has a power to make the viewers escape reality and be in another cinematic world. With the help of visual techniques, story and cinematography cinema actually create a visual treat to the audience. In the genre of horror, this grammar is usually designed to provoke a physical reaction, a scream, a jump, or a shiver. Horror movies are widely accepted by large number of audiences because of this exciting element of fear. Throughout the history of cinema, horror movies have been a large part in pulling audience to theatre. With the help of lighting and sound effects, unexpected scaring effects and also at time with the help of prosthetic makeup the cinema actually affect the audience in a psychological level as well.

However, contemporary cinema is witnessing a shift where directors are moving away from loud, visible threats toward a more silent, invisible form of terror. Building up tensions in viewers mind with the help of these elements contemporary horror films have become more popular among audiences. Especially in Indian cinema, there are many directors who opt for this kind of horror film making, At the forefront of this movement in Indian cinema is Rahul Sadasivan, a prominent director in Malayalam film industry, who have a signature style of creating horror movies. This paper examines framework of Sadasivan's Grammar of Fear defining how it blends technical and thematic elements.

The emergence of Rahul Sadasivan in contemporary Malayalam cinema marks as a significant turning point for the contemporary Indian horror genre. His

strategy lies in unique signature style of horror for new generation of film making and its exceptional representation of “auteur”, where he gives clear importance in representation of silence to build up the fear. In contrast to many traditional Indian horror directors who commonly use a lot of dialogue and exposition to elaborate the plot, Sadasivan makes use of the camera as the main narrator. His script, as a result, focuses more on mise-en-scene, dialogues, expressions which left to convey the emotions and psychological condition of the character.

The concept of the "Grammar of Fear" serves as Rahul Sadasivan's cinematic toolbox, giving proper structure to his way of filmmaking. This grammar of filmmaking includes using visuals, especially the manipulation of shadow, with the help of low lighting. Manipulation of shadow especially means showing the terror in a scene without actually showing the source of fear but using darkness to intensify the scene. Other than visuals, Sadasivan's movie uses sound as another objective to build up fear in a scene, especially using silence and ambient noises. Being an “auteur” who have his own signature style of film making Rahul Sadasivan's movies are widely accepted by the audiences, where his movies are horror and mysterious genre with an add of folklore and talking about extraterrestrial and supernatural. His movies are the case studies used in this research, starting from his debut movie “*Red rain*” which was released on 2013, which was a blend of science fiction with horror, unlike most of the movies related to this genre, which mostly shows “alien invasion”, Sadasivan focuses on isolation of the environment.

This movie can mark as a technical revolution of the industry as the director gave importance to the technical aspect of the movie making. The director worked with an international crew as in the movie had an international touch in its making process. The movie also experimented sync sound, that is, live sound recording, where director use the natural silence or raw sounds of the Kerala landscape to build up the tension. Following this, Sadasivan's next movie was “*Bhoothakalam*”, which was released in 2022, a psychological horror movie, which portrays a mother and son who experience mental health issue which the escalate to fear. Following the mental health issue, the characters experience horrific supernatural encounter in their house. The movie features almost no visual monsters,

instead the fear is built through invisible forces, where the architecture of the house shows the crumbling mental state of a mother and son dealing with inherited grief. Then “*Bramayugam*” which was released in 2024, which is a period folk-horror movie, which showcases monochromatic cinematography which portrayed the existential crisis faced by the protagonist who got trapped in a manor. This movie uses black and white semiotic tool to showcase a “dead world” which make the atmosphere feel ancient or decaying, also the feel of “stuck in time” Along with that the movies symbolised corruption of power. The setting of the story is happening in a decaying feudal manor, called as “mana” and has its own character as well where the director used vertical space to show forbidden attic, or restricted space that creates a sense of mystery, the architecture itself is a silent antagonist that traps the characters, where folklore act as a horror element. The story portrays the protagonist who got lost in the forest and find this ancient manor, which was owned by an old brahmin named “Kodumon Potty” whose identity was stolen by a “Chathan” which is a folklore character of devil

Then finally, “*dies irae*” which was released in 2025, which is a horror thriller, where the idea of ghost is symbol of moral drama genre. Compared to other movies the architectural element focuses on more Indo-American style. This movie represents a contemporary style of work, by using modern technique of making and deep emotions. The theme focuses on the protagonist's reflects strong sense of guilty and grief. as in the movie the horror takes over because of a stolen object, which was a “red hairclip” that acts as an anchor between the protagonist and the suicide of his classmate. The story portrays the protagonist as a wealthy architect who face horrific supernatural experience in his own house because of the stolen anchor. These movies show the making style of director Rahul Sadasivan, every movie represents his signature making style which makes him an “auteur”, where his movies denied all the conventional making style of horror movies, and proved that even modern minimal architecture or even a known environment like own home can create a sense of being trapped. These movies also have the element of showing psychology and mental health also is a horror of life.. This revolutionary movement of horror movie making style has started a trend in Indian cinema by moving away from cliché making style to more experimental style of presentation. As

we move into the following chapters, the focus will to visual analysis of the frames, sounds, and spaces that define Sadasivan's world. In conclusion, this research paper seeks to establish that Rahul Sadasivan has redefined the horror genre as an art form of cinema, which is not just about showing a “scary movie” but as an art form of horror filmmaking that can reach the audience in a correct way,

1.3 Aim of the study

The first objective of this research paper is to analyze cinematographic techniques used to construct fear. The second objective is to understand how the director changes all the “loud” and “explicit” conventional horror movie making style and used new contemporary style of film making. The final objective looks at how Sadasivan's artistic signature has changed over time in his four major works which makes him an auteur, It shows how he gradually developed his film making style from depicting the “Red Rain” mystery coming from outer space, to Bhoothakalam's internalized trauma and Bramayugam's decay of the soul and in “Dies Irae” which shows the guilt and fear of one's life. This study of the evolution of a director discloses that Sadasivan, the one who initially focused on "fear of the unknown", has now turned to the "fear of self", "fear of history" and “fear of guilt” which are way more complicated.

Through the examination of these films as a single body of work, the study identifies Sadasivan as a unique artist whose technical grammar has developed into a highly sophisticated language of storytelling.

1.4 Significance of the study

This research is an important factor in discovering the changing face of Malayalam horror cinema of the contemporary era of “new wave” films, through the body of work of Rahul Sadasivan. The study performs a critical reading of “Red Rain”, “Bhoothakalam”, “Bramayugam”, and “Dies Irae” by Author Theory and semiotics. Hence, the paper extends the conversation to include horror not only as a trade genre but as a cinematic language. From academic viewpoint, the paper give a base to demonstrate how auteur theory can be integrated with qualitative analysis and semiotic interpretation in film studies. Also, it might act as a guide for prospective research on horror cinema, auteurs, psychological horror, and symbolic visual language in Indian and world cinema. The study has great importance as it shows

how Rahul Sadasivan become one among the auteur filmmakers who have a unique signature. By using repeated stylistic elements such as atmospheric narration, short dialogues, symbolic lighting, restrained sound production, and spatial tension, the thesis explains the way the filmmaker forms a distinguishable film personality through different movies. As a result, this research contributes to auteur-based studies in Indian cinema, particularly Malayalam film studies, where the genre of horror gets comparatively less scholarly attention. The study also contributes in understanding the evolution of horror films in the Malayalam industry. Traditionally, Indian horror films have used conventional film making style, however, Rahul Sadasivan's films shows a shift towards a minimal approach of horror film making. As this research helps in understanding the transitions in horror film aesthetics within regional cinema

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this research, the review of literature focus on understanding how horror movies in India have evolved over time and the making style and technology used to shoot these movies have changed. In the context of Indian cinema based research, most of the scholars focuses on how the socio-religious mentioning in this genre of movies. However, with the arrival of researchers the "Malayalam New Wave," the style of horror that is being talked about shifting in Favor of what critics call Elevated Horror, a kind of horror that puts more emphasis on creating a feeling of atmosphere and fear rather than ones that rely on jump scares. This review of the literature aims to explore the theoretical as well as the technical bases for this change in direction. To provide a comprehensive framework for this research, the review is organized into three core thematic areas where the research, first it uses auteur theory as a base and some of the review of literature helps to identify Rahul Sadasivan as an “auteur”. Second, it investigates the Semiotics of Space and Sound, looking at how academic literature defines the "uncanny" in domestic and historical settings. Finally it explore how the evolution of folk horror in South Asian context, how the movie making style transformed from mythological representation to more of a psychological characterization. The case studies that used in this research is four movies of the director, “Red rain” (2013), “Boothakalam” (2022), “Bramayugam” (2024), “Dies irae” (2025) which is

all movie based on horror and supernatural element. The review of literatures that used to complete this research are:

Sawsan Mohammed Ezzat Ibrahim Ammer, (2020), Content Analysis of Lighting and Colour in the Embodiment of Fear Concept in Horror Movies: A Semiotic Approach. This research paper generally argues that the fear expressed in the space of the film and in its characters is enabled by the technically advanced playing of diffused sources, various camera angles, and colour control. Using a descriptive analytical model, scholar maintain that the language of light for horror is in fact a semiotic system, whereby visual signs were imbued with a profound psychological meaning. While for a long time the genre was all about low-key lighting with high-contrast, technical innovations appeared when 'breaking these rules', showing that horror could be constructed through alternative optical meanings. And the visual meanings could be moved on both syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels thanks to the skill of the cinematographer.

Michelle Park, 2018, The Aesthetics and Psychology Behind Horror Films. This particular research paper is explains that the psychological basis for horror movies is the "paradox of fear." It's when a usually negative and upsetting emotion turns into a kind of beauty and happiness. Fear is a natural warning that there may be danger, and it makes us want to run away. But horror movies use a "safety frame" that lets our brain feel the very strong physical excitement like raised cortisol and adrenaline even though there is no real threat. Modern research in brain and mind shows that this "controlled terror" is like a desired adrenaline shot, where the body's fight-or-flight response is mentally seen as joy or relief. So, film directors do not want to disturb the audience

Xiangyi Fu, 2016, Horror movie aesthetics: How color, time, space and sound elicit fear in an audience. The history of cinema shows that fear is not just a story that makes us scared, but also our body reacts automatically to the moving image. This research paper talks about how first cinema screening of Lumiere brothers in 1895 when the audience at the cinema hall saw the train coming toward them. This caused a natural "flight" response in the audience. Ever since this, directors have figured out the "Grammar of Fear" and use different stylistic devices to evoke horror and distress both physically and mentally. Depend on culture and religion, horror films are different but the key elements that make

them frightening are four cinematographic factors: color/lighting, time/motion, spatial relationships, and sound.

Sawsan Mohammed Ezzat Ibrahim Amme, 2020, Content Analysis of Lighting and Color in the Embodiment of Fear Concept in Horror Movies: A Semiotic Approach. One way to look at lighting and color in films is that they are not only visual choices but they also shape the fear symbolically in the environment and the characters. Using a descriptiveAnalytical approach, it is shown that the "Lighting Language" of the horror genre is determined by the source angle contrast, and color control of the frame. As you may know, the common horror style uses mainly low-key lighting and high contrast to elicit fear however the new changes are usually from the "rulebreakers" - showing that the horror is still very much alive even in different lighting conditions. Besides this, the director of photography responds to his/her creative drive by changing the optical meanings at both syntagmatic (the order of the shots) and paradigmatic (choosing one visual element over another) levels.

Sethulakshmi Subhash, 2025, Representations of Gothic and Spectral Identities in the Global South: A Study of Manichitrathazhu and its Adaptation. Although the Gothic genre began in Europe, its version in the Indian subcontinent has been deeply influenced by colonial experiences and the later interactions between the supernatural and the "rational." Some studies indicate that Indian cinema has developed an "Alternate Gothic," a type that takes European elements such as the haunted mansion and the uncanny and transforms them to correspond with the local linguistic, ritualistic, and social patterns of the regional places. One of the more successful portrayal of this process is the Malayalam film Manichithrathazhu (1993) and its various remakes in different languages. The film shows cultural connected as the local mythologies and ancient society.

Valentina Vitali, 2016, The Hindi horror films of the Ramsay brothers. The history of Indian horror is intimately intertwined with the political circumstances of the 1980s and 90s, and the enormous productivity of the Ramsay Brothers' K Movies (1970s-1990s). Develop came about within a context where Hindu fundamentalism was growing and the state economy was always under tight

regulation, developments that created an aesthetic market that functioned like "short term speculative capital" in the informal governance of the film industry. While dismissed by many as the budget horror schtick of cricket cult iconography, these films established a crucible of "cultural bricolage", snatching iconographies from Hindu mythology and Christian liturgy to staging a knowingly secular, even optimistic, type of Indian directedness

Arya Aiyappan, Johnys P. Stephen, 2021, *Yakshi at the Crossroads: Gendering Horror and Trauma in Malayalam Horror-Comedies*. Malayalam horror cinema exploits a perfect "suspension of doubt" due to the distance it affords in the safely mediated space of the cinema screen. Studies on the horror film have shown that though cinema might diminish the trauma of witnessing violence, it also has a concealed capacity to "reboot and reproduce" repressed anxieties. Malayalam film horror includes different levels of re-imagining of horror turned into a "Freudian understanding of the uncanny". The Feminine form of horror epitomized by the emergence of the *Yakshi* is thus able to triangulate the horror-comedy-drama triptych and embody archetypes that explore gendered fears of normalcy, sanity and social identity. The genre makes visible the "uncanny" latent in everyday life by representing narratives that allow images of the shape-shifting you, the 'repressed' trauma of everyday gendered domesticity within.

Meraj Ahamed Mubarki, 2012, *Mapping the Hindi Horror Genre: Ghosts in the Service of Ideology*. It is generally understood that the mainstream Indian cinema is a site of "writing the nation", but the genre of horror remains an under explored site for imagining the intricacies of nationalist politics. Emerging from an embittered ground of nascent patriotism, Indian horror has become a genre historically instilled in the present-tense of "writing the nation" - the state radio and television combine and the Indian adventure serials that circulated at the time. One of the outcomes of the post-independence wars and post-separatism, Indian horror movies have elaborated narrative strategies that serve as portals for myths and competing ideologies. Further closer scrutiny suggests that three distinct strands of these horror movies emerged. Each of the strands traces a different imagination of the Indian state which was well rooted in the history of post-colonial India, and which can

Smoliar, 2025, *Cinematography of horror: a multimodal analysis of fear in screen adaptation of Stephen King's novel "The Mist"*. The work on horror cinema's cinematic discourse is a highly complex, multimodal one that cannot be simply approached through narrative alone, but through a UMDA approach, through the use of the film semiotics of theorists like Metz and Eco, research shows that fear is a 'shared meaning-making' process of the director and viewer that depends on a combined use of verbal, visual, and sound. Then, we see how low angle (birds-eye) shots, over-the-shoulder shots, and camera cuts are tools for building emotion. One of the most important discoveries in this field is the use of the soundscape or the combination of diegetic loud, ambient noise with extra-diegetic music to evoke sensory uncertainty. Finally, what one learns is that horror cinema is a layered emotional experience that must be represented by all its modes, from lighting to neoclassical guilt dynamically to construction of fear.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this research paper is based on two theories, the first one which is employed in this study is "Auteur theory", in which mainly director is viewed as the main creative force of a film. auteurism originated in French film criticism of the late 1940s, and derives from the critical approach of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc, whereas American critic Andrew Sarris in 1962 called it auteur theory. By using this theory, the research is trying to prove that Rahul Sadasivan is an auteur, as he has his own signature style and film making. As a director Sadasivan not just follows the script but add his own aesthetics to the script. Throughout his four movies "Red rain"(2013), "Bhoothakalam" (2022), *Bramayugam* (2024) and "Dies irae"(2025), a signature style of his own can be seen in the way he handles the camera as well as setting the entire mood of that particular film. The director is using his own imagination to create a new identity to horror movies and breaking the cliché film making style. The second framework used is the Semiotic of horror, Semiotics" means the study of signs and symbols. Here, technical elements, such as dark shadows, low-frequency sounds, and slow camera movements, have been considered as "signs". For instance, a deep shadow is not merely the absence of light but rather a symbol that our minds associate with "the unknown". Throughout his four movies

these technical element has been used as a symbolism or connection towards fear. Light, shadow, sound and mise en scene has its own character and element to connect to certain psychological or horror factor. By using qualitative visual analysis each film is analysed whether it reach the parameters and the director has its own style of film making to mark as his own film.

Finally, this framework relies on the director's individual style (Auteur Theory) along with the symbolic language of cinema (Semiotics). It enables the study to go a little further than mere narration of film stories. What it does is giving insight on the "Grammar of Fear" the unique technical "language" that Sadasivan employs to convert cultural folklore and psychological trauma into a compelling film medium.

2.3 Research gap

Although Malayalam cinema has gained academic attention in recent years for its realism, content, regional identity and narrative experimentation, there is less scholarly attention on contemporary Malayalam horror cinema, particularly from the perspective of Auteur theory and semiotic analysis. Existing studies on Indian horror films largely focus on mainstream production, folklore based narratives or general conventional-style movies, leaving recent Malayalam horror films underexplored in an academic perspective. There is very limited research available on the films of Rahul Sadasivan although he is becoming one of the prominent director in modern Indian horror cinema. Even though movies like "Bhoothakalam" and "Bramayugam" received academic appreciation, the studies that thoroughly analyse the director's recurring style, the themes he focuses on, and his language of cinema throughout his works are still missing. Another major gap exists in the study of the semiotics of fear system in Malayalam cinema. Most analyses focus on discussion of horror primarily through narrative or genre based, while there is limited focus on lighting, sound, framing, silence and spatial composition which acts as a medium to construct fear. The role of visual and auditory symbolism in shaping psychological and philosophical experiences of horror has been studied in limited studies.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 Semiotic Analysis Table - Red rain (2013)

Time stamp	Scene /content	Lighting	Sound	Cinematography	Semiotic
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The methodology of this research paper is based on qualitative visual analysis, which systematically deconstructs the "grammar of fear", that is shown in Rahul Sadasivan's movies. He uses light, in which he not only uses dark as a tool to convey fear but also uses bright lights, houses with natural light by breaking the law, where he defines fear can be constructed in most normal atmospheres. Sound also played an important role where ambient sounds such as water dropping from a tap, light flickering or even a sound of a hair clip is used as an objective to convey the fear.

The theoretical framework used in this research is rooted in Auteur theory, which helps to identify the signature style of film making, particularly to the director Rahul Sadasivan, who is a new wave contemporary director focusing to horror and supernatural movies. The second theory used is the Semiotics of Horror to analyse how specific visual elements function as symbols of terror. Both of the theories support Rahul Sadasivan's movies, where he clearly has a signature style and aesthetics of making style. This research paper mostly focuses on the technical aspect of the story and how these techniques are used, and also the law of making horror movies has been broken in most movies. This research uses time codes to show the exact time where the technical trick happened, for example, a sudden silence or a change of the lighting, which acts as a semiotic of fear. Time-stamps make the study "replicable," so any other researcher is, in theory, able to access the same point in the recording and verify the visual or auditory elements, thus converting the analysis into a "scientific" one rather than a purely subjective interpretation.

3.1 Qualitative Visual Analysis

This study employs qualitative visual analysis of frame by frame, scene by scene approach to understand the techniques used in the movies "Red rain" (2013), "Bhoothakalam" (2022), "Bramayugam" (2024) and "Dies irae" (2025), directed by Rahul Sadasivan. These movies employed different making techniques to convey the plot as well as the fear to the audience as compared to other horror movie making style these movies has different approach to instil fear to the audience.

					meaning (fear and symbolism)
03:30 – 05:41	2001 setting, pre-incident atmosphere	Dim, warm, old-toned lighting)	ambient rural sounds,	Static / slow establishing shots	Establishes a safe world
11:13-12:20	Introduction of the scientist as a problem-solving force	Naturalistic soft lighting, rational world	Minimal sound, dialogue-focused, logic vs mystery	Medium close-up, human curiosity	Contrast: science vs irrational fear

31:22 - 33:12	Discovery of strange occurrence	Low, cool blue light	Build up music and minimal dialogues	Medium close-ups and close-ups to show the intensity	Fear of unknown occurrence
1: 31:40-1:35:50	Aftermath	Muted/dim lighting, ambiguity, unresolved tension	Fading sound, emptiness	Static wide shots, isolation	Open-ended fear - lingering uncertainty

3.1.2 Semiotic Analysis Table – Bhoothakalam (2022)

Time stamp	Scene description	Lighting	Sound	cinematography	Symbolism / Fear Construction
00:03:09-00:07:22	Opening domestic space, unwell grandmother, mother and son	Natural dim lighting, muted tones, realism, emotional heaviness	Ambient household silence, rain in background, loneliness, trapped	Static frames, medium shots- confinement	Home which is a psychological space, not safety
00:11:39-00:13:05	Death in the family (trigger event)	Slight desaturation -emotional void, grief	Silence punctuated by subtle sound - shock, numbness	Slow pacing, minimal cuts - emotional weight	Death which is the entry point of psychological horro
00:45:22-00:50:37	Strating of night-time disturbances.	Darkness dominates, low light-unknown threat	Sudden creaks, distant sounds -	Long takes - sustained tension	Night - unconscious mind/ repressed trauma
01:32:51-01:40:50	Peak psychological breakdown, horrific encounter	Dark, almost monochrome lighting – despair, shadow figures	Loud, chaotic sound and music - loss of control	Rapid cuts + extreme close ups - suffocation	Fear - internal collapse

3.1.3 Semiotic Analysis Table – Bramayugam

Time Stamp	Scene Description	Lighting	Sound	Cinematography	Symbolism / Fear Construction
00:01:23-00:06:45	Opening forest / escape (17th century setting)	Dark night light with minimal fire light	Ambient forest sounds - isolation, vulnerability	Wide shots - human insignificance	Nature - uncontrollable force, fear of survival
00:11:09-	Entry into	Stark contrast	Sound dampens-	Framing through	Mansion - liminal

00:12:10	mansion	(dark interiors vs outside light) - threshold crossing	enclosed, trapped feeling	gate - transition space	space between worlds
00:12:21-00:13:41	First interaction with inhabitants in the manor	Dim, directional lighting - ambiguity of characters	Minimal dialogue, silence - unease	Static compositions - power imbalance	Characters, symbolic archetypes of master/slave
00:31:50-00:36:16	Signs of supernatural control	Flickering fire, dark tone-instability, unseen power	Low-frequency drones-subconscious fear, sound of chain-	Slow tracking shots - surveillance feeling	Invisible authority / domination
00:36:53-00:43:50	Power dynamics intensify	High contrast lighting-dominance vs submission	Voice echoes - authority amplified, intensifying background score	wide-angle shots of master sitting slave standing in front-power dynamic control	Feudal power - horror mechanism

3.1.4 Semiotic Analysis table – Dies Irae

Time Stamp	Scene Description	Lighting	Sound	Cinematography	Symbolism / Fear Construction
00:00:50-00:02:27	Opening scene-construction site. Daily life getting interrupted with bad news.	Clean but dim natural lighting	Sound of machine and escalating background score	Symmetrical framing - order, control	Interruption of daily life with horrific news
00:06:28-00:08:08	Character introduction	Dim saturated lights	Background party music, people talking-character establishment	Tracking shots across the house, characters interaction with friends.	Showing that the character led a normal life. House that is not interrupted by any force.
00:25:21-00:27:56	Character paranoia develops	Dark light and artificial light .	Repetitive sound motifs, mental loop,	Close-ups → psychological invasion	Mind begins to distort reality

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Visual representation and technical analysis
 Each movies have its own character and way of storytelling. Techniques used in each movie has been evolved as the growth of director. More experimental themes and visual grammar have been used in each movie. As a science fictional movie as well as the first movie of the director, it is considered as a learning or

first step to the world of cinema, and along with that there were challenges as well as limitations to the movie and its making. While the movie was showing its potential as a good story, it could have had more technical development. Even though it was the director's first movie, the movie has an exceptional way of making style of its own. The director mostly used low lights or warm lights to set the fear and scene of anxiousness to know the mystery, especially

in this movie, the reason for certain occurrence has not directly shown in the beginning, but by building up the story to the point.

4.1.1 Red Rain- 2013

The main plot of the movie “Red rain” (2013) is about the main character of the movie who is a young scientist who, after following various clues, such as sudden cattle deaths and unfamiliar illuminations in the sky, comes to the conclusion that it is caused by some extraterrestrial life. The story unfolds in two ways simultaneously: on one investigative logic of science fiction, on the other hand there is fear of the unknown, the two elements bringing the story to an intriguing generic tension that could serve well for your semiotic interpretation.

Throughout the movie, warm, dim lights were used to convey the fear or the unknown element of the plot. Encounter with any unknown element or confusing

element is shown in this way The movie has some surprising element that people facing some extraterrestrial occurrence. The fear is shown through extreme closeups to get the emotion connected to the audience. The low lighting and natural lighting is also used to show the rural landscape of Kerala countryside.

Rather than using artificial horror lighting conventions ,sharp backlighting, coloured gels, dramatic shadows were used to show the fear. The horror appears to belong to the real world rather than a stylised genre space. The pitch-black jungle sequence marks the film's most radically formal move, in a way.(figure 02) It was shot in darkness, only the actors, the cameraman and the sound operator were present , it is not just that the sequence does not sufficiently light the monster or the space, it is that it actually entirely leaves them out.



When it comes to sound designing, sync sound recording was used, which is recording audio live on location rather than dubbing in post-production which was an unusual and experimental choice in Malayalam film field at that time period. As a result, So, when it comes the sound texture of the environment , jungle sounds rain wind, the noises of rural Kerala , is a part of the film's fabric and not just an artificial add-on. In horror semiotics, ambient sound is one of the foremost means by which the ordinary world is made strange. By keeping the actual sound environment of the places, Sadasivan makes sure that the fear is linked to real-world sounds and

not clearly fake ones.

For the film's extraterrestrial elements, 3D animation was provided, Adding CGI to a film that is otherwise shot in a naturalistic way results in a deliberate visual break - the alien is visually marked as other, coming from a different type of image-making than the rest of the film. This is semiotically quite interesting: the alien is not frightening in the same way as darkness or the landscape. It is the recognizable monster, while the film's greatest horror is the unrecognizable - the sounds without sources, the lights without explanation, the deaths without a visible cause.



4.1.2 Bhoothakalam- 2022

Rahul Sadasivan's second movie "Bhoothakalam" is a psychological horror thriller, which talks about the story of a mother and son going through mental health issues which led to facing horrific supernatural encounters at their own house. The director has used the eerie-looking house as a metaphor for the minds of

its inhabitants. Although it frames itself as horror, the story is really a metaphor for grief, trauma, clinical depression, and the gradual madness of the main characters. It combines psychological disorder and horror fantasy, revealing psychosis as a terrifying and disturbing alteration of reality.



'Compared to the director's first movie, in this, they used natural low-key lighting. The interior of the house is dimly lit, not in the exaggerated, theatrical manner of conventional horror cinematography, but in the way a real middle-class rented home in Kerala might actually look like. This form of realism is shown in the movie where the unknown force can be seen in most normal places. Some parts of the frame are completely black, where nothing can be seen. Such dark areas act semiotically as a sign of possible danger, the attraction moves towards them. The style

of Sadasivan, who always presents such an image of the threat as mysterious, is here achieved through the introduction of unknown negative space into the domestic setting. Throughout the films, the camera always remains perfectly still or moves very slowly: a signature choice of the director, when talking about traditional horror, a roaming shot is often a threat; it showcases the searching eye. Here, perfectly still, the camera suggests that the threat is still, lurking and emerging right there in the domestic space itself.



When it comes to sound the movie uses an acoustic

environment sound of a house, wood creaking, rain

and distant traffic. The sounds are carefully placed on top of each other to get to an acoustic texture that is very present like an over-sensitive version of everyday sounds that show that something is wrong even if nothing is visible. Silence was also used as a weapon, the kind of silence that is uncommon in an inhabitant house, which the kind of silence that feels unnatural in an inhabited house ,create an anticipatory dread that the image track alone cannot produce.

4.1.3 Bhramayugam (2024)

Following “bhoothakalam”, Sadasivan’s third movie is “Bramayugam”, which translates as The Age of Madness, was released on 2025, apart from other two movies, this one has slight changes in making style. The movie is period folk horror thriller which was taken in black and white, monochrome style. The movie used light and mise en scene as its primary way of showing the unknown fear as well sound played an important role as supporting these elements.

The film is in black-and-white format from the outset because it is set in the 17th century. But the monochrome is far more than a period signifier. Semiotically, it performs several operations simultaneously. The black and white colour helps in highlighting certain textures in the film, and more of

giving support to the setting as well. It eliminates the distracting specificity of colour in costumes, vegetation, and skin tones, forcing attention onto form, texture, light, and shadow. The film was shot in anamorphic widescreen, where the wide frame gives the mansion and its surrounding landscape a monumental, oppressive scale.

Without colour, the film’s entire palette is black and white. The corridors of the mana, the attic, the granary chamber - these are all spaces characterized by the light not being able to reach them. The monochrome scheme is used very skilfully here, resulting in a chilling and atmospheric visual language where abrupt contrast and shadows bring an additional layer of meaning to the story, intensifying the feelings of loneliness, feeling of being trapped and fear.

The camera constructs repeated shots of various spots in and around the mansion like the traditional facade, the messy kitchen, Potti’s dining and recreational areas, the overgrown weeds, and unexplored spaces where the repetition of shots in compositional strategy is a visually grammatical means of establishing familiarity which eventually gets dismantled as the story discloses the real contents of each space. The house is at first the subject of camera mapping and later becomes that of camera un-mapping.



When it comes to sound designs used elements borrowed from Kerala’s ritual music traditions, percussion patterns used in theyyam , traditional melodic modes, work semiotically to place the horror within the cultural body of Kerala instead of introducing generic Western horror conventions. The horror is not foreign; it is native ancestral coming from the same soil as the mythology that narrates the story. The sound played as an element to construct

fear, where throughout the story there was an element of mystery which was hidden in the attic, to show presence of the unknown sound of chain, as in the entity is locked in the attic. Sound from the attic sounds differently from that in the kitchen. The house’s sound element is just as important as its visual setup. The film uses Dolby Atmos, a step forward from Bhoothakaalam, letting audio float through space instead of staying flat.



4.1.4 Dies irae (2025)

The most recent and last movie of Rahul Sadasivan is *Dies irae*, which is a horror thriller, compared to other of his films this is based on contemporary setting. "*Dies Irae*" is the Latin translation of the title, and it is a nod to the medieval hymn that is traditionally linked with Judgment Day. The production team claims that the narrative is an adaptation of true events. Rooting the narrative in the actual, just as *Red Rain* was inspired by the Kerala red rain incident, has been a recurring director's signature style in

Sadasivan's films, where the supernatural elements are tied to the reality that is either known or testified in order to intensify their strange effect. This narrative ending is the most explicitly universe-building gesture Sadasivan has made, connecting "*Diés Irae*" to "*Bhoothakaalam*" through the characters present in the film. Where "*Bramayugam*" located horror in the feudal past and "*Bhoothakaalam*" in a depressed lower-middle-class present, *Diés Iraé* places the supernatural within the life of a contemporary, affluent and globally.



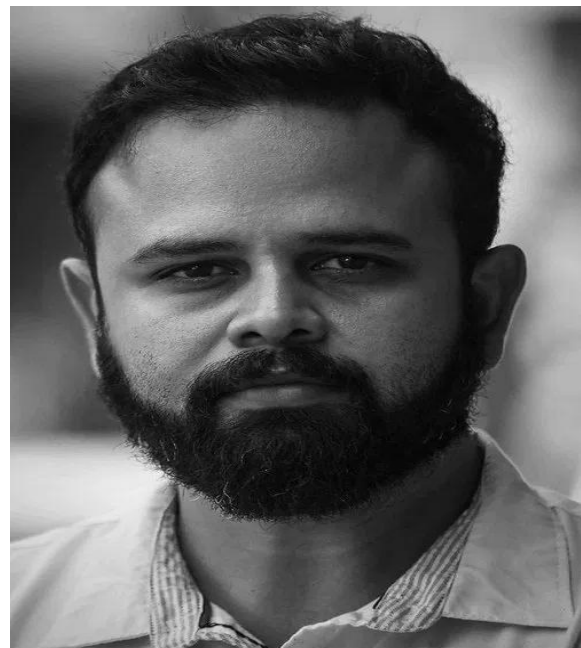
After the full monochrome commitment of *Bramayugam*, *Diés Iraé* returns to colour — but not to the naturalistic, low-key palette. The film uses cooler and more controlled tones in the protagonist's contemporary world, where it blends with dark tones as well which show the supernatural occurrences.

The story is constructed in more clean, well lit, spatially wide and comfortable environment which again shows even a known place can turn into horror. The opposite of the enclosure that has driven Sadasivan's horror grammar in previous films.



When it comes to sound used as a semiotic, the voice of the chilanka, the traditional ankle bells worn by Bharatanatyam dancers, is the film's central sonic motif. It does exactly what a horror semiotician would anticipate: a sound, one which is typically linked to beauty, art, and the human body, is gradually made strange by the new context to the point that it is only a sign of threat. Each time the chilanka rings, it has the added weight of all the previous times it was heard; its meaning changes from cultural to supernatural to terrifying through the film. The sound comes before and is more than the visual, which fits perfectly with his whole philosophy of horror. The movie used a more of indirect way of showing the unknown entity throughout the film, but when it comes to a point where the entity haunting was revealed, the director used darkness and extreme close-up shots to show the fear in the face of the protagonist. To show the entity, the technique was to show it in a wide-angle shot with the help of darkness. After revealing the entity, the second half of the story moved into more of an investigative thriller, where the protagonist wanted to find out the reason behind the hauntings, and the story takes the audience with it, which creates an anticipatory element to know the reason and real identity of the entity.

4.2 Auteur Identification and Signature Style Analysis



Rahul Sadasivan, as a film maker, has contributed four films to the contemporary Indian horror film genre, in which every single movie has its own style and uses different techniques of filmmaking. Even though it employs many different techniques, Sadasivan's signature style can be seen in every movie. The director employed his own style and idea of filmmaking, which makes him an auteur. The filmmaker redefined every conventional style of horror filmmaking, converting his own film into a part of the "new wave". Rather than using heavy prosthetics and lighting, the usual jump scares and loud noises, what makes Sadasivan's movie scary is the atmosphere, the fear and the way it make the audience feels the same. Throughout his four, Sadasivan used silhouettes, minimal lighting, shadows and sound. Silence and darkness also used as the most recurring elements to construct fear and analyse it as a symbol, to express its psychological effects on the audience. This way, from an auteurist

perspective, Sadasivan's movies show a consistent signature of using techniques to create fear. Across the selected four films, a clear progression of fear can be seen. From external and cosmic to psychological to cultural, philosophical and to domestic fear. Even as film styles and technical styles have changed over time, one main fear stays the same: fear towards something that comes out of the unknown. Important signature of an auteur is how they turn space into a system of signs. In these four films, the settings, wide landscapes, comfortable rooms, or mansions, act like characters and has its own identity that change the feeling of fear. In all three films, house and tight rooms symbolize the mind. The haunting emerges both from outside threats and from inside the minds of characters.

Red Rain (2013) is the debut film of Rahul Sadasivan, which is a significant example of his auteur signature that can be seen in its earlier form. While the film works inside the limited space of science fiction and cosmic horror, it already shows several key artistic and thematic traits that later grow into the trademark of his filmmaking. The story is based on the red rain phenomenon that happened in Kerala, and it unfolds when a young scientist uncovers supernatural occurrences happening in the town, which follows unnatural animal deaths and supernatural occurrences across the town. The scientist and his acquaintance went to investigate the bizarre occurrences. Where the group got trapped inside the forest and had an encounter with a supernatural being.

One of the most important elements of this film is how fear is built through mood and how the setting is done, instead of loud displays. In this movie, the presence of aliens and a meteor shower is not shown in a big and dramatic way, but rather in quite and steady pace. The film uses low light, soft, eerie sounds, and calm, watchful camera work to let the audience see and notice every minute detail shown in the film. This careful rise of unease shows Sadasivan's choice to give a hint about danger rather than show it fully. The wide rural fields and natural places were not only backgrounds they act like stages where odd events come into ordinary life. This way of using the land and nature places were also found in his later work, where rooms and homes change into forces that push the characters into horrific situations.

Following "Red Rain", the second movie directed by Rahul Sadasivan is "Bhoothakalam" (2022), which shows clear and bold improvement in Rahul

Sadasivan's film work, where the early style hints seen in Red Rain grow sharper and form a true director's voice. "Red Rain" placed terror in wide, outer forces and strange cosmic events; "Bhoothakalam" brings that same dread inside, making it live in a person's mind, feelings, and private thoughts.

The story of the movie is about a mother and son who face psychological distress, as the mother is facing clinical depression, which some traits started to show in the son's mental health, also leading to a horrific encounter in their own house. The story begins with the death of a family member, which makes the character's mental health even worse, especially that of the mother. After the death, supernatural occurrences started to slowly occur. The family of two try to get help from outside, where the story starts to unfold by talking about the death of the previous owners of the house, which was the reason behind the paranormal activities. Where the relationship between the mother and son went from more rebellious to support to each other. The story ends by escaping the encounters and facing the reality of life as well as the improvement in their relationship and mental health.

The film moves from shock to quiet, slow fear, using small acts, tight spaces, and close looks to show how fear acts as a mood and theme of the entire movie. Characters are shown in their daily routines, but under those simple scenes and environment, there is a strong sense of grief, guilt, and pain that decides what they see and fear. Cinematic tools like minimal colour, careful framing, and silence increase the sense that the real threat is not outside the house but inside the mind. In this way, "Bhoothakalam" shows the themes of the last movie while also turning them hidden, showing a more personal study of how trauma, loss, and anxieties can become the reason behind horror. Compared to his first movies, a key change shows in how

space is shaped and used. In Red Rain, the setting acts like an element, where something unknown breaks into everyday life and what changes the life of people

When it comes to the technical aspect of the story, including light and sound, the director has a slight change in applying the technical elements to the story. Use of light in this movie is more minimal,

without getting the attentions towards it but to create the mood of the fear. Instead of the bold color cues that used in Red Rain, this film uses dim, low-key lighting and deep shadow to build doubt and fear of unknown. Light became a tool in shaping the story's psychological terror. Similarly, sound design in this film gradually built a character of itself. The background score slowly turns into a more delicate instrument to create fear. The third movie by Rahul Sadasivan is "Bramayugam", a period folklore mystery-horror movie based on Kerala folklore elements such as "chathan", a goblin mentioned in folklore, and "yakshi", a female vampire. This movie is the most iconic and expensive expression of the director's auteur signature. The movie breaks all conventional horror movie styles and portrays fear as a system that connects to power, control and slavery. The story portrays a slave who escaped from slavery and oppression faced for years, who got lost in a forest. After losing his friend, he wandered around the forest where he found a mansion or manor. He finds shelter in the mansion, which is owned by a Chathan disguised as "Koduman Potty". The protagonist eventually got trapped in the manor, where he became the slave of the antagonist. He finds comfort in a fellow inhabitant in the mansion, who, in the end, came to save both of them from the oppression of the Chathan or the goblin. The story ends with a transfer in power system and power dynamic, which shows oppression and power will always be there in human society.

One of the most striking signatures of the director in Bramayugam is how space itself feels like a tool of control. Instead of the wide-open fields of Red Rain or the comfortable rooms showed in Bhoothakaalam, the mansion here acts as world that keeps people trapped inside. Every hall and corridor looks narrow, making the house feel smaller and the air heavier. The building's layout and details work like signs, pointing to hidden dynamics of power. In this way, the architecture does more than as a mise en scenes, it acts as domination, fear, and the slow fading of personal freedom. The film's black-and-white visual strongly supports Sadasivan's signature style. By using monochrome colour palette the director highlights texture and shadow, thereby making an ambience that is both timeless and unsettling. In fact, darkness is not just as a mood or setting; it acts as a symbol for power, ethical complexity, and slavery and also the feeling of trapped inside. This shows the director's minimal use of lighting as the main storytelling and signifying

device. Throughout the story, he used minimal lighting to create a trapped feeling, which the audience can connect with the character's mind in the mansion.

The sound design of Bramayugam is another reflection of the auteur's signature cinematic language. The film mainly uses silence, echoes, and low-frequency ambient sounds, creating tension by the absence of sound. The minimal soundscape increases the audience's understanding of space and to feel the tension and trappedness of the character, thus showing the suffocating mood of the story. When it comes to cinematography, the film uses static compositions, long takes, and arranged framing to bring a feeling of abandonment, fear, unavoidability and imprisonment. The characters are often shown inside close up frames, which visually shows their absence of freedom. Such a controlled visual style shows Sadasivan's interest in using film techniques to express psychological and philosophical conditions. It shows the director's signature style he used in his other films also. In terms of auteur theory, Bramayugam acts as the important movie of Rahul Sadasivan's to show the cinematic identity. The movie combines the tension of Red Rain and the depth of Bhoothakaalam in a philosophical more visual format. The narrative and symbolic style and an investigation into the two kinds of fear, mind and society, the film not only brings the director's signature style but also marks him as a auteur in modern Indian horror film-making.

The latest movies of the director is "Dies Irae", which is a combination of the atmospheric minimalism of "Red Rain", the psychological depth of "Bhoothakaalam", and the philosophical undertones of "Bramayugam". Dies Irae not only carries on and cultivates Rahul Sadasivan's auteur signature but also turns all these elements into a contemporary domestic horror narrative. The film shows the director's persistent fascination with using fear as a psychological and existential experience alongside the supernatural one.

The story of "Dies Irae" begins with a young architect whose life was changed by the news of his classmate. At the funeral, an object he took from her house invites not only one but two entities to haunt the house, where he encounters horrific supernatural power. During the investigation, with the help of a friend, he found the reason behind the hauntings. The story took an unexpected turn when the truth was revealed the true horror. The story talks about guilt and what it will do to human minds along with the idea

of love turning into an obsession and as the title says which means “The Day of Wrath”, which refers to a traditional hymn about final judgment, where in the film it means the unavoidable consequences the guilt faced by the character. The movie is ended with an open ending event of unknown and scare.

Sadasivan's signature style of working with minimal lighting and using shadows for composition can also be seen in this film. Dark settings, only minimal lighting, and changes between light and darkness create a visual environment full of suspense and uncertainty. Dark is used to show the concept of unknown, where the presence of light being very limited shows for the truth in the story that are scattered around which needs to be found out by the character. The director's continuous use of lighting as a narrative technique to show what the character is going through. Sound design is still the main element in building fear in the movie. Rather than using a lot of background music, the sound elements of silence that is waiting for something to happen, make the viewers in the position of the characters whose emotions are changing so fast. The minimal sound usage is the director's way of using a style of deeply engaging and thrilling the audience through horror. By using slow camera movements, tight compositions, and long takes, the movie visually showcases a feeling of being watched and trapped. The characters are seen as isolated within the frame, which symbolises the theme of separation and lack of intimacy.

Another important director's signature in “Dies Irae” is the mystery to know if the supernatural elements shown are real or just caused by psychological disorders. Instead of giving a true answer, the movie purposely keeps the viewers in a state of suspense as to the nature of the horror is shown both as a threat from the outside world and as a symbol of inner feelings of anxiety, guilt, and trauma. As the part of auteur theory, “Dies Irae” acts as both a continuation and a new part of Rahul Sadasivan's cinematic style. The film shows many of his signature choices, minimal mise-en-scene, slow building up fear, use of light as a symbol, and portrayal of signs that make the fear indirectly conveyed to the audience. It also shows those styles merge into today's world, showcasing modern themes and moods so the movie feels like it is part of the contemporary cinema. By using these technical style and using them more in the films, helps identifying Sadasivan's role as an

auteur whose films became a singular, changing style of horror. Rahul Sadasivan also added some of the elements of her past movies in the new movie one, for example, in “Dies Irae”, the characters in “Bhoothakalam” and “Bramayugam” were also mentioned, and portrayed as a connection to other films, which makes his movies a cinematic universe. Along with all the technical aspects used in his movies has a style that shows the director's idea and creativity in a way that it acts as a mark in the industry. In a genre where loud noises and heavy lighting, and fast cuts, Rahul Sadasivan is making his own style of conveying and connecting fear as well as psychological dread with the audiences which clearly makes him an “auteur”.

4.3 DISCUSSION

This study examined the selected film of Rahul Sadasivan, one of the contemporary movie maker of Indian cinema, the four films that were studied is “Red Rain” (2013). “Bhoothakalam” (2022), “Bramayugam” (2024) and “Dies Irae” (2025). These films were analysed through two theories, where one is the Semiotics of fear, which helps in examining the “grammar of fear” employed in these movies with the help of technical aspects such as light, sound and cinematography, and the second theory used is the Auteur theory, which helped in finding the signature style of the director, which make him an auteur. The qualitative visual analysis helps identify the thematic and cinematic patterns that show the director's identity in filmmaking. Across all four films, dread grows slowly through careful use of light, subtle sound design, measured pacing and the way shots are framed and spaces are on the screen. This method is used in each movie, making a clear, recognisable style that is the signature of the director.

The director is appearing as the main creative force shaping the film's tone and meaning. Taken together, all these patterns give support in making the director an auteur. The major patterns that can be seen in all four movies are the use of space as a semiotic to convey fear to the audience. In “Red Rain” an open landscape was used, which became a site for extra-terrestrial occurrence and uncertainty. Where in “Bhoothakalam” it was the domestic interior which converted into a psychological tension, grief and isolation, which gives a sense of trapped feeling. “Bramayugam” improved the idea of using space as a semiotic by presenting the mansion as a symbol of

power, hierarchy and entrapment. In “Dies Irae”, the modern domestic space becomes a hub of horrific encounters which associates the house with paranoia and instability. Through this technique, the director converts physical settings into a carrier of fear.

Lighting and sound emerge as another major auteur signature. The analysis shows a pattern of using dim light, shadows, monochrome tones and limited illumination across selected film, where in some places he broke the conventional rule of horror filmmaking by using a space with good natural lighting. Rather than only functioning as an aesthetic element, the lights acts semiotically to show uncertainty and the unknown in many places. The transition from the natural lighting of “Red Rain” to the monochromatic visuals of “Bramayugam” shows the evolution of the director’s visual language.

Sound design also played a crucial role in constructing fear, as the study analysed how silent, ambient noise, low-frequency noise, and echoes become a semiotic to construct the fear. These style of sound designs create psychological tension and anticipation to know what is going to happen next without knowing the reason behind those sounds. The minimal use of background music further showcase the atmosphere of fear.

4.4 conclusion

Indian cinema, especially Malayalam cinema, has evolved in a better way, as the “new wave” contemporary film-making style has been widely accepted by audiences across every industry. This evolution or improvement in filmmaking style is evident in every genre of movies, as the makers now give importance to content rather than commercialising the movie. By using fewer exaggerations and giving more importance to the aesthetics and identity of the particular film, the directors and filmmakers set a new style of filmmaking. Each film became

the director's idea and identity as well, where the makers started to add a signature element in every movie they made. One of those kinds of directors who makes the movie his own artistic creation is Rahul Sadasivan, one of the most prominent horror film makers in the Malayalam industry. This particular study examines the films of Rahul Sadasivan, “Red Rain” (2013), “Bhoothakaalam”(2022), “Bramayugam” (2024), and “Dies Irae” (2025) through the framework of

Auteur theory and semiotics of fear. By using qualitative visual analysis, the research study about how the director constructs fear through cinematic language and repeating style patterns shows his authorial identity. The study found the director’s consistent usage of atmosphere, minimalism, ambiguity and symbolic visual storytelling as a main feature of his filmmaking style. Across all the films, fear is narrated not only through narrative events but through lighting, cinematography, spatial design and silence. Sadasivan’s movies are a reflection of the change in cinematic language and way of filmmaking. Besides showing only horror as the main element, socio-cultural discussions, psychological and mental issues, and contemporary society are all themes in Sadasivan’s story, which makes it different from other conventional horror film styles. The stories talk about slavery, power, identity, family dynamics, psychological stress and anxiety, all of which are basic themes in his movies. Talking about these elements is important in contemporary society, where people can connect with those emotional elements, while some of topic is considered taboo to talk about. These movies are a reflection of local culture and the dynamics of the society, which add more credibility and support to his stories.

To sum up, this paper argues that the films of Rahul Sadasivan are not merely isolated genre-film pieces, but rather interconnected cinematic texts revealing one single artistic vision. The use of recurring symbolic images, deliberate sound design, visual simplicity, and open-ended narrative leading to different interpretations, all of these factors together consolidate the position of Rahul Sadasivan as a rising auteur in Indian cinema whose works makes a remarkable contribution to the advancement of contemporary horror film making.

5.1 Limitation

The major limitation of the study research work covers films by the director Rahul Sadasivan, such as Red Rain, Bhoothakaalam, Bramayugam, and Dies Irae. Hence, the result of this study is specific to these films, and it cannot be said that the entire Malayalam horror cinema or Indian horror cinema is covered through these alone. The work mainly uses qualitative methods and interpretive ones as well. It is inspired by Auteur Theory and semiotic analysis. Hence, the interpretations given in the paper are to some extent personal and reflect the researcher's

understanding of cinematic signs, symbols, and stylistic patterns. Other researchers may have different interpretations of the same visual and auditory elements. Besides, a further drawback of this work is the scarcity of related scholarly literature on Rahul Sadasivan and the motivational film industry of the Malayalam language. As it is quite a recent work of the director, it is difficult to find academic sources, critical essays, and theoretical studies for reference and comparison. In addition, the study mainly concentrates on film components like lighting, sound, cinematography, space, and symbolic elements. Other factors like audience response, revenue from ticket sales, industry context, production studies, and cultural reception have not been explored comprehensively.

.5.2 Scope of the study

This study has done a qualitative visual analysis on four films directed by Rahul Sadasivan, "Red Rain" (2013), "Bhoothakalam" (2022), "Bramayugam" (2024), "Dies Irae" (2025). The research here aims to make an analysis of the ways how the director establishes a distinct auteur signature through cinematic technique and how he uses semiotics to construct fear in these films. The scope of the study includes the qualitative and visual analysis of cinematic elements such as lighting, sound, cinematography, symbolism and atmosphere. The study also explores the evolution of the director's filmmaking style across all of his films. It traces the progression of his career and the techniques used in each movie. Through this analysis, the research provides continuity and development of the director's cinematic identity. Another important scope of the study is its contribution to Malayalam horror cinema studies, by examining how these films redefine conventional horror filmmaking styles and emphasise symbolic storytelling. In doing so, the study includes the director's work within the discussion of contemporary Indian auteur cinema. his study is a text-based and interpretative film analysis and excludes audience reception studies and mainly focuses on film languages, director's style and semiotic creation of fear. In general, the research scope discovers how the director's film taken as a group generates a unique and progressive cinematic language of horror, thus making a contribution to auteur studies, semiotic film analysis and contemporary Malayalam film research

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