

**CINEMATIC LANGUAGE IN SELECT INDIAN HYPER NARRATIVES****DR SRUSHTI DODIA**Assistant Professor
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Alissa Quart in her review “Happy Endings: The Post Nuclear Family according to Don Ross” speaks about numerous techniques employed by Ross in his hyper narrative film. The term hyperlink cinema was itself coined by Alissa in her afore mentioned review with reference to Happy Endings thus making it a leading example of hyper narrative cinema. It is the style of film dealing with complex or multilinear narrative structures. Distinctive techniques assist to build and foreground the narrative. This paper will attempt to identify and examine the techniques employed by select Indian directors in their respective films. through multiple techniques of split screen, frame inside the frame, using locomotive as the symbol of connection, crossed roads, by means of making city as the binding agent and through some stock characters, one can analyse the formula. To generate a multilinear narrative becomes a comparatively easier task with such techniques at ones disposal. These directors provides us the direction of analysing and understanding the ways of a hyper narrative in a profound manner.

Alissa Quart in her review “Happy Endings: The Post Nuclear Family according to Don Ross” speaks about numerous techniques employed by Ross in his hyper narrative film. The term hyperlink cinema was itself coined by Alissa in her afore mentioned review with reference to *Happy Endings* thus making it a leading example of hyper narrative cinema. It is the style of film dealing with complex or multilinear narrative structures. Distinctive techniques assist to build and foreground the narrative. This paper will attempt to identify and examine the techniques employed by select Indian directors in their respective films.

One of the techniques identifies by Alissa in the beginning of the review is that of split screen along with a caption. Split screen is an extremely identifiable technique used by directors. It can be used by directors in multiple manners. For instance, to show same scene from different angels, or same character from different angles. ‘Phone Call’ is the standard example of split screen where two individuals talking to one another can be shown simultaneously. This is often called the classic of split screen. Directors in hyperlink cinema employ split screen in order to weave different plotlines into one. Anurag Basu extensively uses split screen in his *Ludo*. Title of film forms apt example, there are four stories in the film just like four pawns in a Ludo board. These stories have their highs and lows similar to the pawns, all based on sheer luck. As the title song also says ‘qismat ki hawa kabhi naram, kabhi

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garam, kabhi narm narm, kabhi garam garam, narm, gram naram garam’. Along with these similarities of a Ludo board, screen itself it splited by Basu like the Board.

Even the colours of a Ludo board- green, blue, red and yellow are coded in the different narrations. Yellow story has yellow clothing, yellow car, tone of the story is also yellowish chirpy. Similar colour coding applies to all the stories. The song ‘Life ke Lag Gaye Ludo’ is the ultimate example of Basu’s employment of split-screen. As both green and blue stories becomes conscious about the knock at the door, one by police and another by goons. The screen in splited by both of them looking through keyholes. Apart from *Ludo*, Basu’s earlier interlink narration *Life in a Metro* has a classic phone call split screen wherein two sisters, carrying umbrellas, protecting themselves from the Bombay.



Frame 1

Four stories are colour coded like a Ludo board through split screen. The screen itself divided like a Ludo board.



Frame 2

The frame is divided into three sections, thus the expression of different characters of Green story can be seen simultaneously.



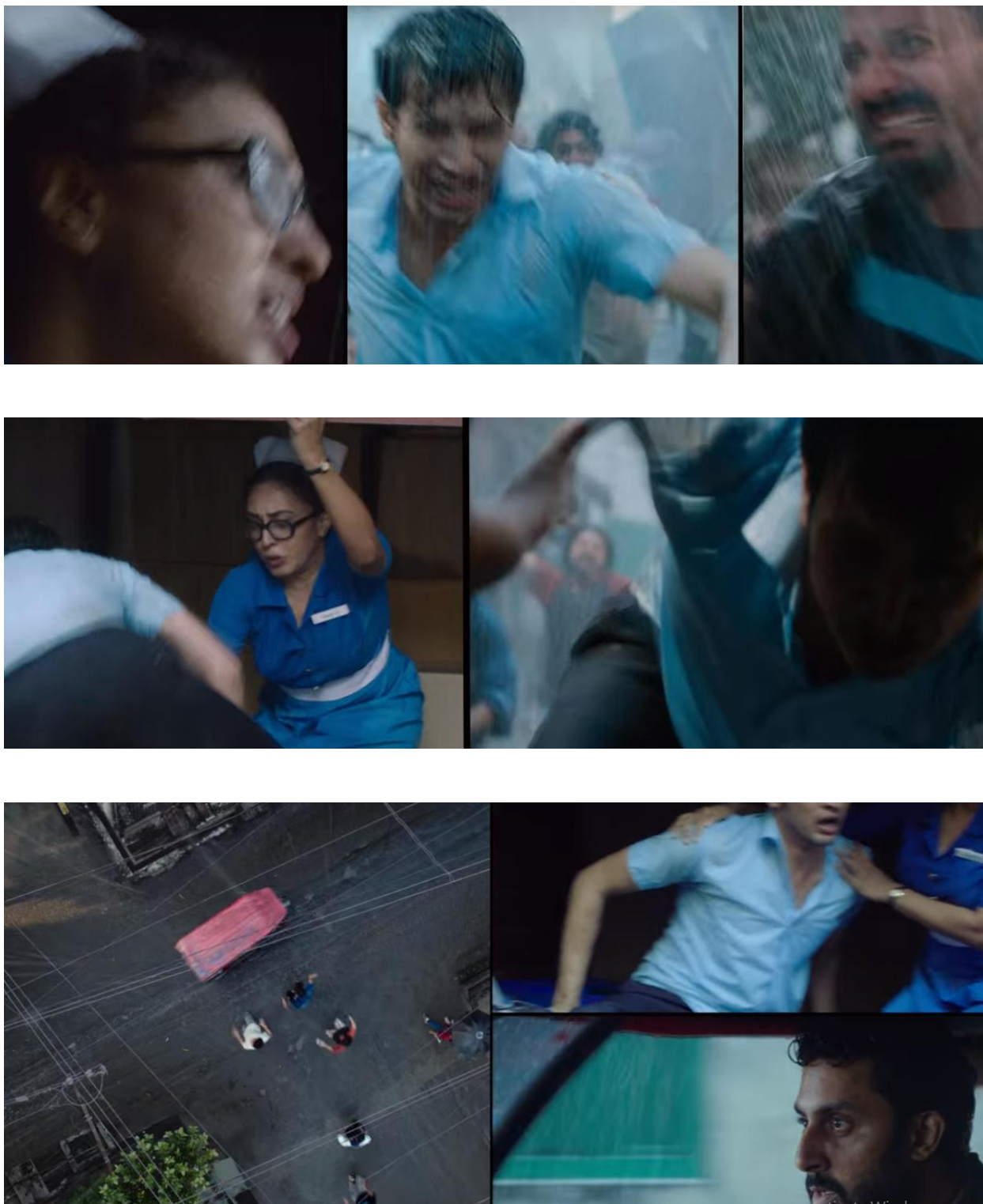
Frame 3 and 4

Two characters looking through the key hole, blue at the goon while goon of green at the police. Thus the stock characters of outsider-goon-police trio are combined in one frame, by splitting it into four.



Frame 5

Similar to frame 2, different expressions of the character of red story are captured within one frame. The split is used by director to convey the different expression.



Frame 6 and 7

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The chasing scene where blue as well as red stories are chased by police and goons respectively. The split screen shows the chasing of both stories simultaneously.



Frame 7 and 8

These frames are important to study with reference to spilt screen joining the narration. In both the frame the commonality is the splitting as well as multiple stories crossing the path. In frame 7, red-blue-green stories, criss-cross with one another, literally on cross roads. In frame 8, the screen is not as such in split but a truck splits the ways of two other locomotives. In the truck spilt frame blue and yellow stories cross each others path. Thus Common usage of ‘crossing the paths’ is used literally by the director.

Additional to the spilt screen, Kumararaja in *Super Deluxe* employs the frame inside the frame technique. Through this technique director provides depth to the shot as well as draws our attention. Similar to a Chinese box, which are the set boxes of graduated size, each fitting inside the next lager box. Small parts inside the whole. Theme of a hyper narrative presented by Kumararaja through frame within frame camera technique, is analogous in a manner that different individual narrations fits into the bigger narrative as a whole.



Frame 9

Kumararaja uses the frames in a brilliant manner, the boys are not just framed inside a window frame but further inside the window frame is the framing of window bars.



Frame 10

Most of his frames are inside out, the audiences are made to feel inhibiting inside and looking outside. While in reality the audiences are outside looking inside the movie frame. Thus the relationship between audiences and the frame is also inverted by this method, as viewers are unconsciously made aware about their viewer position. Here the frame suggests the estranged husband-wife's relationship communicating for the first time through a dead body.



Frame 11

Again a inside out framing, audiences are kept at distance. Father and mother, again an entangled couple trying to save their son through different means, one being practical while other emotional, blinded by superstitions.



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Frame 12

Again the viewer is made to sit with the dead body while the characters are framed by car. In frame 4 inside of the car frames the character while in frame 5, even when they are outside the car, again they are framed by the window frame.



Frame 13

Shipa and her son framed by door.

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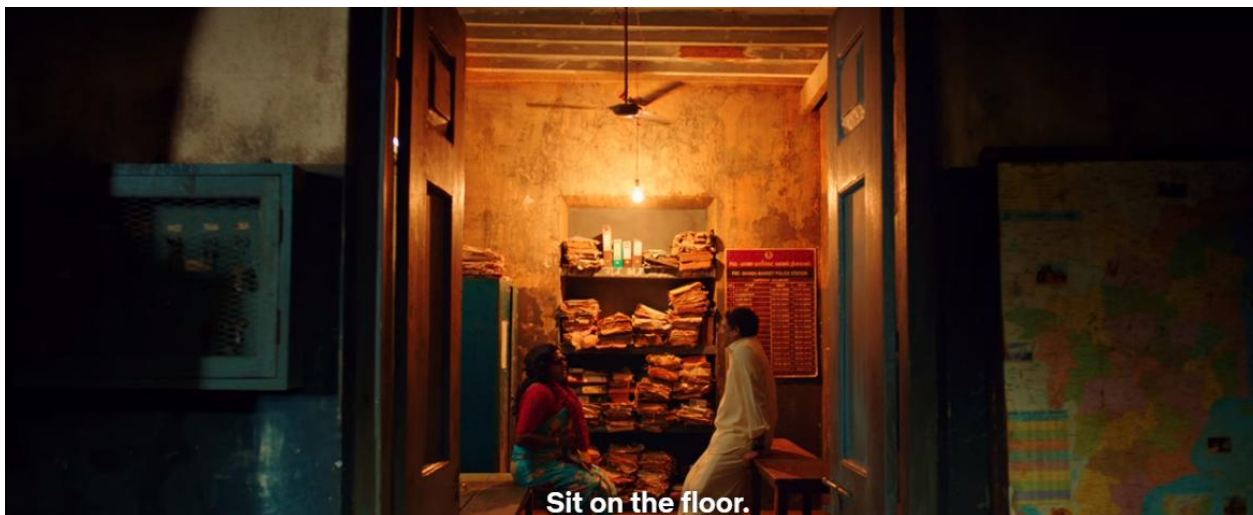
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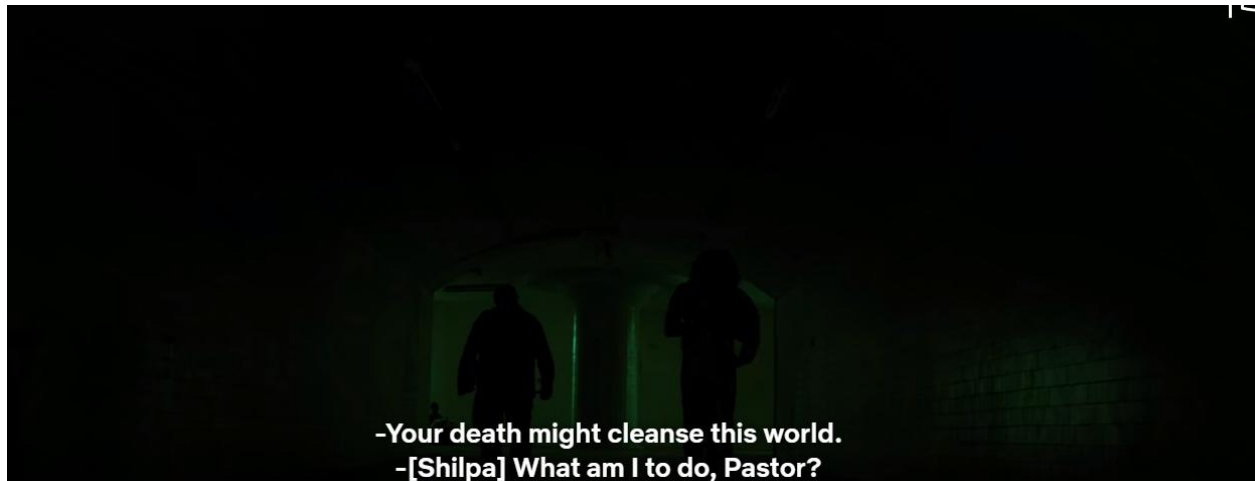
Frame 14

The boys searching for the TV are again framed by a door.



Frame 15

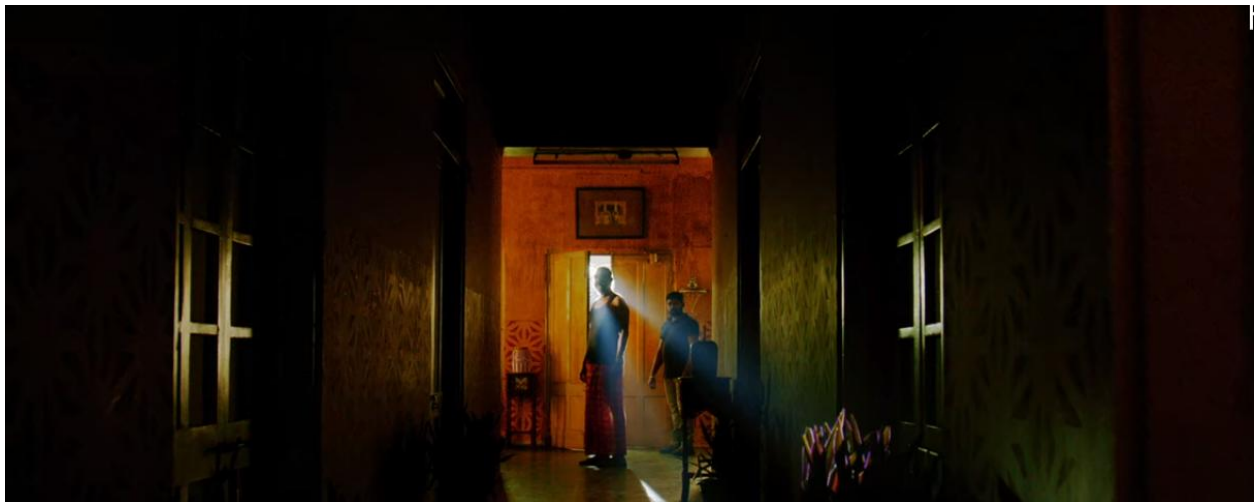
Again the door frame repeats itself, but poignantly in the frame. Refreshingly the frame is outside in as we assume the ‘real’ viewer position. We are the onlookers of Shilpa’s abuse. Along with other police constables watching from outside, posts us in questioning our own conscious. Are we merely the onlookers of abuse?



-Your death might cleanse this world.
-[Shilpa] What am I to do, Pastor?

Frame 16

In the darkened frame, stories of two characters are connected and corrected. As *Ludo* has one of the symbol as crossroads for connecting the characters, under bridge becomes the symbol of connecting Arputha's and Shilpa's story. The meetings of characters become significant in *Super Deluxe* as compared to *Ludo*. In *Ludo* the characters meet by chance, like in frames 7 and 8, but these meetings doesn't effect the narrative majorly. While the meeting of characters in *Super Deluxe* changes the narrative entirely. For instance the above frame changes Arputha entire belief system.



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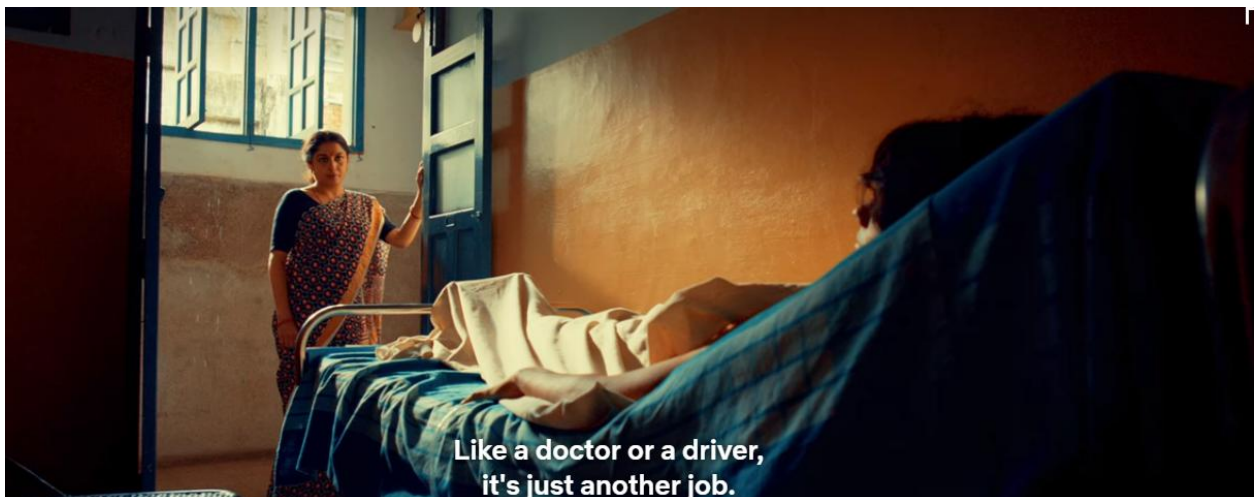
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Frame 17 and 18

This frames also becomes unique in a manner that the boys are outside while the goon is inside. Thus the inside and outside frames are communicating through the characters inside and outside the frames.



Frame 19

After the gap of whole movie in which mother is continuously trying to save the son, this is their first meeting. The confrontation places the viewers with the son judging his mother, while the mother gives her viewpoints.

Other than split screen, train becomes the symbol of connection in may of these hyper-linked stories. Trains are the symbols of connection, they connect people from all over, despite their differences their stories are connected through this locomotive. In LIM most of the characters are connected either through personal relationships or professional. Shruti, Shikha and Ranjeet are related personally, as Shikha and Shruti are sisters and Shikha and Ranjeet are the estranged married couple. On the other hand Ranjeet, Neha and Rahul works in a multinational, in which Ranjeet is physically linked with Neha while Rahul emotionally.

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Ranjeet is the common element in both the spheres. These worlds collide as Neha is Shruti's roommate. Older generation love portrayed through Anmol and Rucha doesn't affect the narrative.

Thus the only accidental meeting is of the characters of Shikha and Aakash. Multiple meeting between the two happens in the setting of a locomotive (train or a bus). It is the paramount setting for the strangers to meet. The last scene of the movie also happens to be on the railway platform. As transport can be the symbol of meeting, on the other hand it can also become the means of departure. As it brings the individuals together it can also be instrumental for separation. For instance, on one hand Neha is stopping Rahul to board the train and thus move away from his city of dreams, similarly Monty is stooping Shruti. On the other hand Shikha comes to the platform to meet Aakash, but is unable to stop him and returns back to her abusive marriage. Thus LIM provides examples of train as both medium of joining and separating characters.

In *Ludo* trains are not used in literal manner but they are used as the background. Bittu's character happens to stay near the railway tracks, it is under the railway bridge that his character meets Mini. Some portion of blue story also happens near the tracks. *Maanagaram* is another hyper-link film using the transport system at its best. Stories of characters played by Sudeep Kishan and Sri happens to collide in a bus. Sri is travelling in the bus to get to his office while Sudeep wants to take revenge by throwing acid on some goon character. In this scenario, Sri becomes the mediator in passing the acid bottle. This collision in the locomotive becomes the starting point of the movie to link multiple narratives.

Taxi driver's character is also introduced in *Maanagram* in a novel manner. Through Charle, playing the character of a cab driver story is weaved into whole. His night drive through the metro connects almost all the stories in a wonderful manner. This reminds one of Virginia Woolf's cab symbol, introducing the concept of androgyny. Cab or the public transport in similar manner becomes the symbol of inter-connection in hyper-link cinema.

Super Deluxe, another important specimen of hyper-link cinema, likewise has an estranged married couple of LIM. But unlike LIM this estrangement is resolved by the end of the movie through a jeep. Both the characters are forced to remain in the same jeep along with dead body of wife's ex. In order to dispose the dead body, and searching for the untraceable means of doing it, both of them come close to one another. The compact space provides the means of communication and letting out of the pent up feelings. Locomotive thus becoming means to connect the disconnected in most peculiar manner.

City becomes the primary element while talking about the setting of these movies. As Kiran Rao in context of her hyper narrative *Dhobi Ghat* says in one of the interviews:

Actually, I wanted to make something on Mumbai. It's about the city and how it makes its way into people's lives. It's a personal tribute to my city. It's a story of Mumbai that might have remained untold to you. It's as real and authentic as I could make it. Films on Mumbai have always dealt with any one aspect of it at a time. I have tried to show all the facets of the city.

Metro and *Maanagaram*, the title itself suggests the stories about a mega city. How the city seeps into the lives of people. *Maanagaram* particularly makes city the character in the narrative. How it accepts the new-comer, how it changes every minute and in the process changes the inhabitants too, how it becomes instrumental in growth of the character, and thus how it becomes part of you and you of it. Sri and Charli have arrived in the city to make their mark and in the course of the narrative we see the massive growth in their character arc. Others character had considered them as outsiders in the beginning, questioning their as existence as infiltration on their city, but gradually everyone is welcome in *Maanagaram*.

Rahul of LIM and Rahul of *Ludo*, sharing the same name shares the character traits too. They are again the ‘outsiders’ wanting make their mark in the city. They use the city’s tactics on the city itself. It becomes extremely difficult to find your place in a metro, both symbolically and as well as literally. Rahul of LIM uses his flat to earn extra income, by renting it to people on hourly basis. By this extra income he wants to make his own bungalow in the city, fulfilling his father’s unfinished dream. Using the place to acquire one, with the context of a metro is the motive used by Anurag in an excellent manner.

Another stock character, apart from the outsider is the relationship between chor and police shown in the narratives. The good and the evil forces in the society are portrayed through these elements. *Ludo* brilliantly use these stock characters to show the merging boundaries of evil and good, the central theme of the movie. Here the police is helpless while goon is all powerful yet kind, helping the outsider. In *Super Deluxe* as well as *Maanagram* the roles are inverted police in spite of protecting the civilians abuses them. On the other hand, the goon is portrayed in comic manner and in the hand helping the outsider.

In conclusion, through multiple techniques of split screen, frame inside the frame, using locomotive as the symbol of connection, crossed roads, by means of making city as the binding agent and through some stock characters, one can analyse the formula. To generate a multilinear narrative becomes a comparatively easier task with such techniques at ones disposal. These directors provides us the direction of analysing and understanding the ways of a hyper narrative in a profound manner.

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