



5 women directors who made it big in Kollywood

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

By Srivatsan

Lately, women directors in Kollywood are making it big. In a male-chauvinistic industry such as Kollywood, women directors have never ceased to amaze the audience with a solid content. While filmmakers like Reema Kagti, Zoya Akhtar, Gauri Shinde and Kiran Rao have carved a niche for themselves in Bollywood, women taking over the reins of direction is still a norm in Tamil cinema. However, we too have some maverick female filmmakers who left an imperishable mark among the audience.

Despite being a terrific actor, Suhasini Mani Ratnam is a great screenwriter. Suhasini made her directorial debut with *Indira*, which is probably the most underrated film and was a box-office disaster upon release. However, it received a cult status for its modern theme. The protagonist of the film is a woman who single-handedly strives to overcome the caste system in her village, and one has to give it to Suhasini Maniratnam for having carved an innocent but an impactful character in *Indira*. Apart from *Indira*, Suhasini has worked in Mani Ratnam's *Raavanam/ Raavan* (2010). According to Mani Ratnam, it was Suhasini who wrote half of the former's anthology political drama *Aayutha Ezhuthu/ Yuva* (2004).

Bankrolled by ace-filmmaker Gautham Menon, *Veppam* narrates a set of events from the slum areas of Chennai, showcasing characters and their struggles. *Veppam*, on many levels, is an unusual subject which one wouldn't expect from a woman, especially in this genre (gritty thriller). *Veppam* had everything to hold the audience's eyes- romance, drama and violence. However, the film failed to create the impact that of Selvaraghavan's *Pudhupettai* (2006) or Thiagarajan Kumararaja's *Aaranya Kaandam* (2010). Be it the screenplay or the dialogues, Anjana Ali Khan has to be credited for the amount of detailing that went unnoticed.

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Suhasini Mani Ratnam's *Indira* (1995)

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Anjana Ali Khan's *Veppam* (2011)

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Aishwaryaa's *3* (2011) and Soundarya's *Kochadaiyaan* (2014)

After working as an erstwhile assistant director to Selvaraghavan, Aishwaryaa R ventured into direction. Her first feature film *3*, which had her husband Dhanush playing the lead role, opened to mixed reviews from the audience. However, the song "Why This Kolaveri Di" was a rage upon release.

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Soundarya too didn't have a rock solid debut. Despite working with superstar Rajinikanth in *Kochadaiyaan*, the film failed to create the Rajini magic at the box office. Now, both Aishwaryaa and *Soundarya* are working on their respective feature films.

Lakshmy Ramkrishnan's *Aarohanam* (2012) and Ammani (2016)

After making her acting debut in the Malayalam industry, Lakshmy Ramakrishnan proved her mettle in director Mysskin's *Yudham Sei* (2011). *Aarohanam* was her first directorial venture which tells the story of Nirmala, the breadwinner of the family who goes missing just two days before her daughter's wedding. *Aarohanam* was widely lauded for the director's treatment of the characters and Viji Chandrasekhar's performance. Lakshmy Ramakrishnan's recent film *Ammani* too opened to rave reviews from the critics.

Sudha Kongara's Irudhi Suttru/ Saala Khadoos (2016)

Sudha Kongara, who associate director for seven years with Mani Ratnam, made her directorial debut with the Tamil film *Drohi* (2010). However, it was R Madhavan's *Irudhi Suttru* which gave Sudha the much-needed breakthrough in the industry. *Irudhi Suttru* tells the story of Prabhu Selvaraj (Madhavan), a boxer, is ignored by the boxing association. He tries to accomplish his dream by training Madhi, a fish-seller and an amateur fighter. As the film also marked the return of Madhavan, *Irudhi Suttru* was an instant hit and the film has now been selected to premiere at the Tokyo International Film Festival.

Also, the list becomes incomplete without Gayathri, whose dark comedy *Va Quarter Cutting* (2010) has earned a cult among the fans of neo-noir genre.

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HOLLYWOODGLEE, LLC
1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |<https://hollywoodglee.com> Larry@HollywoodGlee.com

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Author

hollywoodglee