

# இரத்தம்

(blood)





# இரத்தம் RATTHUM (BLOOD)

*Shanti finds blood in her underwear at the worst possible time. Against the backdrop of a Tamil coming-of-age ceremony where fertility is celebrated, menstruation is shunned and infertility is silenced, Shanti struggles to keep a secret.*

*In Tamil the word பண்ணி (ponni) means girl, it also means young woman of marriageable age. It is a constant reminder of the path chosen for us. One of the most important markers on this journey in Tamil culture is the coming of age ceremony that is celebrated once a girl gets her first period. This film is part of our current debate in society of what it means to be a woman, a mother and a person of colour in our changing world.*

Directed by Suga Suppiah and supported by the BFI Network, Ratthum has been officially selected for Tribeca, London Film Festival, North East film festival, This is England and St Johns' International Women's Festival.



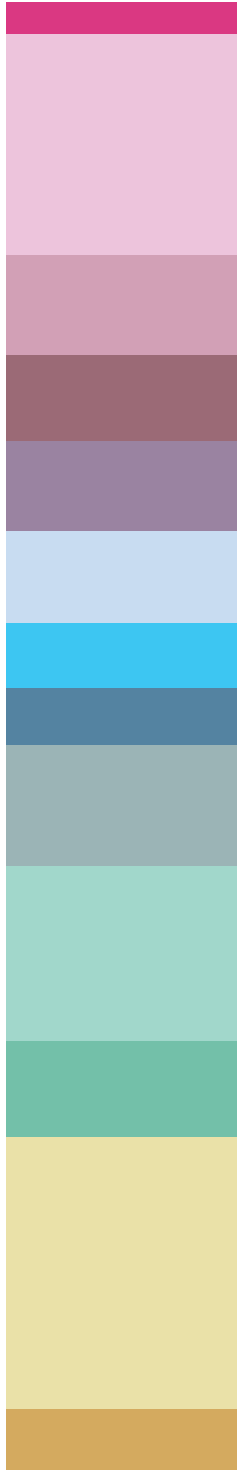








Bedroom Moodboard



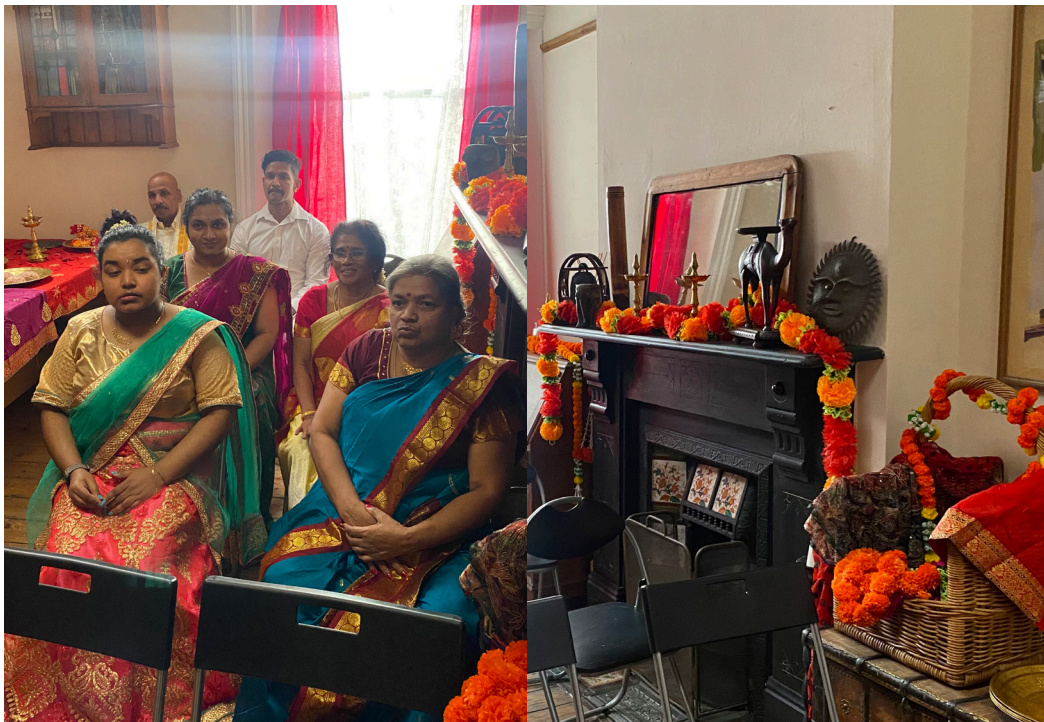




Ratthum is set in a Tamil family home in modern day London. We were tasked with transforming an empty Victorian terraced house in North London into a lived-in home in the Tamil community. Our Art Department budget for everything was £150, including dressing, props and home ec. With a quick bit of research into the cost of certain Tamil decorations, including hiring a traditional Manavarai Arch, which often costs between £400-3000, I knew I would need to be clever with how we approached the design.

I wanted to keep the look of this feel as authentic to the world as possible. To get a sense of the energy of the day coupled with Shanthi's anxiety of her situation, I made a decision to keep both colour palettes bright and colourful. The ceremony scene concentrated on reds, oranges and yellows, jewel tones that are synonymous with Tamil culture, especially in the ceremonies. The design of the bedroom reflected the girls 'real life', using contrasting pastel colours to that of the ceremony, that reflected her young age. In the bathroom set, I used a lot of reds to represent the theme of fertility and miscarriage.

Working with the Costume designer, we decided to put the lead in a contrasting pastel colour; she's not in traditional dress, she's in costume.



One of the biggest challenges was researching and recreating the ceremony, not only the decorations but also the food are very specific to this ceremony, and took days to prepare. I had to learn how to make multiple different ceremonial dishes, including candles made from bananas, which are then used to mark the girls face.

Sourcing the props on such a tight budget meant a lot of phone calls and running around London begging different places to let us hire things for very little or even free. I had made the Manavarai Arch using old saris and decorations a South Asian Shop hired to us for free. I was worried it couldn't be correct, but by the end of the shoot, cast members had approached me asking if they could borrow it for their upcoming ceremony! A lot of the dressing for the bedroom was again found for free, bags of toys and girls clothes were picked up from all around London, and I hand made most of the props, including two wall hangings, again made from old saris.



This project was of great importance to me and a lot of the crew. It delves into themes of fertility and the widespread silence that often shrouds the challenging aspects of this subject. It explored how a woman's worth and value are often tied to her ability to conceive, something society expects her to want. I found it particularly interesting to approach from the South Asian perspective. Director Suga Suppiah said "I just wanted to write a story, using my culture as the structure, for a wider comment on society and women in society."

