



A colourful change of scene

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
DECCAN CHRONICLE

At a time when mindless mass masala themes occupy Tamil screens, here comes *Varnam* (colour) with a whiff of fresh air. *Varnam* denotes human society divided by caste system, romance, deceit and friendship narrated in a classy manner by debutant filmmaker S.M. Raju. It is the story of a schoolboy, Mani (Giri), who encounters numerous hardships in life. Hailing from a small village in Tamil Nadu, he loses his father at a young age in pathetic caste-related violence. His mother, unable to put up with him any more, sends him to his uncle, Durai (Sampath Raj), a rich coffee estate owner and womaniser, during the later years of his schooling, at the age of 17. Haunted by memories of his dead father, Mani, rebellious and with bloodlust written all over his face, is looking for revenge. The killer, Velu (Aadish), now as Anwar and Durai's driver, is unknown to him. Mani soon gets to learn his uncle's coffee business. Along with his partner Rathnam (Muthukumar), their network runs on the basis of exploitation of the illiterate lower caste people. Mani, in all his ignorance, is delighted to 'work' under his uncle. Durai seeks to marry Kavitha (Monica), who also happens to be Rathnam's sister and Mani's teacher in school.

Mani falls in love with his

Varnam

CAST: Monica, Sampath, Giri, Muthukumar, Vijay

DIRECTOR: S. M. Raju

RATING: ★★★

classmate Thangam (Aswatha), a poor girl from a lower caste whose brother (Vijay) falls prey to Durai's vengeance when he seeks a higher price for his coffee. Eventually, Thangam also becomes the victim of Durai's lust. Now, Mani is in rude shock. In the meantime, Durai gets engaged to Kavitha, who is actually in love with his driver Anwar and elopes with him, which leads to a riveting climax.

The film's major plus is its apt casting. Newcomer Giri, in whose viewpoint the story moves, fits the role to a 'T'. Given a good role, Monica always scores. Muthukumar as the comic villain is highly impressive. Aadish and Vijay do their part well. It is Sampath who is clearly the show-stealer. With his menacing looks and venom-spitting dialogues, he is an absolute treat to watch.

The small twists and turns help to maintain the suspense factor intact, especially when Monica's love episode is revealed. Though slow-paced, Raju's narration is impressive. Isaac Thomas' soothing music and Prem Kumar's brilliant cinematography, especially in the lush green estates, deserve appreciation. *Varnam* is worth a watch.