IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature (IMPACT: IJRHAL)
ISSN (P): 2347–4564; ISSN (E): 2321–8878
Vol. 14, Issue 7, Jul 2026, 1–10
© Impact Journals

SILENT EMERGENCIES: MATERNAL FEAR, LOVE, AND INVISIBLE LABOUR IN *NOORU SAAMI* AND *MOTHA RATHREE*

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Received: 08 Jul 2026 **Accepted: 20 Jul 2026** **Published: 22 Jul 2026**

ABSTRACT

Silent suffering has long been a defining motif in literature, where women are portrayed as enduring pain invisibly, their sacrifices sanctified but rarely acknowledged. From Sita's exile in the Ramayana to Gandhari's self-imposed blindness in the Mahabharata, female figures embody resilience while their voices remain unheard. This literary continuum establishes the paradox of reverence and erasure: women are elevated as symbols of strength, yet their suffering is silenced under cultural expectation.

Extending this tradition into cinema, Nooru Saamy and Motha Rathree dramatize the invisible emergencies mothers endure. In Nooru Saamy, the mother herself is the Saamy — a living god whose divinity lies not in miraculous intervention but in continuous, unseen labour. "Nooru" signifies multiplicity, countless mothers whose sacrifices sustain families, while "Saamy" sanctifies her role as protector and life-giver. Yet, this sanctification denies her vulnerability, forcing her to cope silently. In Motha Rathree, maternal love takes the form of preventive protection, where fear of external dangers leads to restrictions that the daughter interprets as mistrust.

Together, the films illuminate the maternal paradox: protection versus control, divinity versus humanity, silence versus survival. By situating these narratives within feminist film theory and literary archetypes, the study reframes mothers as "silent architects" of stability, echoing the cultural refrain, "Nooru saamigal irundhaalum / amma unai pol aagiduma" ("Even if there are a hundred gods, can any match a mother?"). Ultimately, the films invite us to rethink motherhood not as duty or divinity, but as a complex human experience deserving recognition, empathy, and structural support.

KEYWORDS: *Motherhood in Indian Cinema, Feminist Film Theory, Emotional Labour, Maternal Fear, Cultural Expectations, Strong Woman Paradox, Invisible Emergencies, Nooru Saami, Motha Rathree, Maternal Divinity.*