



Guntur Kaaram

Guntur Kaaram (pronounced [ɡʊnt̪ʊːɾ kɑːɾɑm]; transl. Spice of Guntur), also known as ***Gunturu Kaaram: Highly Inflammable***,^[5] is a 2024 Indian Telugu-language action drama film^[6] written and directed by Trivikram Srinivas and produced by S. Radha Krishna through Haarika & Hassine Creations. It features Mahesh Babu in the lead role, alongside Sreeleela, Meenakshi Chaudhary, Prakash Raj, Ramya Krishna, Jayaram, Jagapathi Babu, Sunil and Rao Ramesh.

The film was officially announced in May 2021 under the tentative title *SSMB28*, as it is Babu's 28th film in the leading role, and the official title was announced in May 2023. Principal photography commenced in September 2022, predominantly shot in Hyderabad, and wrapped by late-December 2023. The film's score and soundtrack are composed by Thaman S, with cinematography handled by Manoj Paramahamsa and editing handled by Naveen Nooli.

Guntur Kaaram was released in theatres worldwide on 12 January 2024, coinciding with Sankranti. The film received negative reviews from critics for Trivikram's direction and screenplay, but Thaman's music and Babu's performance were praised.^[7] It eventually emerged as a box office bomb.^[4]

Plot

1998: In *Guntur*, brothers Dokka Marx Babu and Lenin Babu, two of the biggest hooligans in the city, burn down Bhogineni Satyam alias "Royal" Satyam's mirchi factory. Satyam, seeing this, approaches Marx and Lenin to question them, while the factory is burning. In the process, Satyam's brother-in-law, Rangam, accidentally kills Lenin, but Satyam takes the blame for the murder, being sentenced to jail for 12 years. His son, Veera Venkata Ramana "Ramana", partially loses his vision in his left eye during the explosion of the factory. Soon afterward, Satyam's wife and Ramana's mother, Vasundhara, decides to leave and moves back in with her politician father, Vyra Venkata Swamy, in Hyderabad, eventually marrying her paternal cousin, Pakka Rajagopal Narayana "Narayana".



Guntur Kaaram



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Trivikram Srinivas
Written by	Trivikram Srinivas
Produced by	S. Radha Krishna
Starring	<div>Mahesh Babu<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Sreeleela<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Meenakshi Chaudhary<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Prakash Raj<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Ramya Krishna<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Jayaram<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Jagapathi Babu<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Sunil<div><div></div></div></div> <div>Rao Ramesh<div><div></div></div></div>
Cinematography	Manoj Paramahamsa
Edited by	Naveen Nooli
Music by	Thaman S

2023: Vyra Venkata Swamy makes Vasundhara the Minister of Law from his political party, but faces opposition from Kata Madhu, a subordinate and member of his political party, "Jana Dalam Party", who threatens to expose the fact that Ramana is Vasundhara's son. To combat this, Venkata Swamy decides to make Ramana sign a legal document stating that he will not publicly use his connection to Vasundhara or the Vyra family, in return for which he will receive money. Ramana refuses to do so if he cannot see or talk to his mother. There is a back-and-forth involving Venkata Swamy's lawyer, Basavaraju Sarangapaani "Paani", his daughter, Basavaraju Aamukta "Ammu" Malyada, and his assistant, Balasubramanyam "Balu", trying to get Ramana to sign the bond. Venkata Swamy, growing frustrated, decides to have Paani register a false FIR against Ramana in Jubilee Hills, stating that he destroyed valuables in his house and attacked his security guards in order to force him to sign the document. Balu is empathetic towards Ramana and opposes Paani by obtaining a bail order for Ramana. Ramana goes to Venkata Swamy's house and recreates exactly what was stated in the FIR.

Production company	Haarika & Hassine Creations
Release date	12 January 2024
Running time	159 minutes [[]
Country	India
Language	Telugu
Budget	₹200 crore ^{[2][3]}
Box office	₹172 crore ^[4]



Vasundhara, who hears and witnesses the commotion inside the house, confronts and slaps him, which makes him sign the document. Back in Guntur, Kata Madhu tries to get him to side with him and the faction of the politicians opposing Venkata Swamy and Vasundhara, but he thrashes him. However, Kata is able to steal his wallet and reveals to the media that he is indeed Vasundhara's son, showing a family photo as evidence. Venkata Swamy seeing this tries to get Ramana arrested again but fails to do so. Satyam then reveals to Ramana and his family that Vasundhara immediately wanted to have Ramana's eye operated on after the burning of their factory and fought with him, who thought saving Rangam was his priority. She also wanted to take Ramana with her back to Venkata Swamy's house, but Bujji, Satyam's sister, shut the doors of the house on her, as per Satyam's orders. During the trial of Lenin's murder, Vasundhara inquired with Bujji about Ramana's eye, to which, she told her that his eye would never recover to normalcy. An enraged Vasundhara testified that Satyam murdered Lenin, instead of Rangam. Ramana, learning of this, becomes depressed. "Gelatin" Babji, a blind contract killer, and his men kidnap him and Balu to kill them.

Babji reveals to them that it was Venkata Swamy who gave him the contract to kill him, but upon confronting him, it is revealed that Narayana hired Babji and his men to kill Ramana, under Venkata Swamy's "orders". Elsewhere, Vasundhara is struck by a lorry and is hospitalised. Ramana rushes to see her; Venkata Swamy reveals to him that Hari Das, a rowdy, and Kata Madhu planned to murder Vasundhara under the guise of the accident. He convinces Ramana to kill them to prove that he is Vasundhara's son. In the process, he also reveals to Paani that he orchestrated the attack on Satyam's factory in 1998 to bring his daughter back, as he lost the elections then due to Vasundhara marrying Satyam, who was from another caste.

When Ramana goes to kill Hari Das, he reveals that he never planned the murder with Kata, but his vengeance is towards Venkata Swamy, with whom he set up a business 25 years ago and was eventually backstabbed by him. At the event to make Raja Gopal, Vasundhara's son with Narayana, an MP, Narayana also reveals to Venkata Swamy that Gopal is not their biological son but was merely adopted by Vasundhara to fool her father so that Ramana can be saved from harm. Even though they

are married, they never consummated and sleep separately in their bedroom. It is revealed that Venkata Swamy orchestrated the accident on Vasundhara so that he could win another term as CM from the sympathy of her injuries. When Ramana learns of this, he becomes enraged at his grandfather, but Vasundhara stops him and they both go back to Guntur, along with Balu and Ammu, where she reunites with Satyam and Bujji. In the end credits scene, a desperate Venkata Swamy unsuccessfully ponders with Narayana about engaging with Ramana to bring him into the political party, but Narayana laughs at him.

Cast

- Mahesh Babu as Bhogineni Veera Venkata Ramana alias "Rowdy" Ramana, Satyam and Vasundhara's son
- Ramya Krishna as Law Minister Vyra Vasundhara, Venkata Swamy's daughter; Ramana's mother and Gopal's adoptive mother; Bhogineni Satyam's ex-wife and Raja Gopal Narayana's wife
- Jayaram as Bhogineni Satyanarayana alias "Royal" Satyam, Vasundhara's first husband and Ramana's father (voice dubbed by P. Ravi Shankar)
- Prakash Raj as Vyra Venkata Swamy, Vasundhara's father and Ramana's grandfather
- Jagapathi Babu as Dokka Marx Babu, Lenin's brother and Satyam's rival
- Sunil as Dokka Lenin Babu, Marx's elder brother
- Rao Ramesh as Pakka Rajagopal "Gopal" Narayana, Vasundhara's second husband; Ramana's stepfather and Gopal's adoptive father
- Murali Sharma as Adv. Basavaraju Sarangapaani "Paani", Ammu's father and Venkata Swamy's attorney
- Sreeleela as Basavaraju Aamukta Malyada "Ammu", Paani's daughter and Ramana's love interest
- Meenakshi Chaudhary as Raji, Ramana's cousin
- Rahul Ravindran as Vyra Raja Gopal, Vasundhara and Narayana's adopted son and Ramana's adoptive half-brother
- Ajay as Gelatin Babji, blind contract killer
- Vennela Kishore as Balasubramanyam "Balu", Paani's assistant
- Easwari Rao as Bujji, Satyam's sister; Rangam's wife; Samba and Raji's mother; Ramana's aunt
- Ajay Ghosh as Hari Das
- P. Ravi Shankar as Kata Madhu, Venkata Swamy's rival, opposition leader
- Brahmaji as CI Aadhinarayana
- Raghu Babu as Rangam, Bujji's husband; Satyam's brother-in-law and Ramana's uncle
- Madhusudhan Rao as fake Hari Das
- Pammi Sai as Yakob
- Teja Kakumanu as Samba, Rangam and Bujji's son; Raji's brother and Ramana's cousin
- Mahesh Achanta as Lenin's son and Marx's nephew
- Gopiraju Vijay
- Surabhi Prabhavathi
- Manik Reddy
- Vamsi Chaganti
- Chammak Chandra as Constable Mohammed, Rajagopal's assistant
- Kadambari Kiran Kumar
- Shamna Kasim in a special appearance as Ramola in the song "Kurchi Madathapetti"

Production

Development



In early April 2021, it was reported that Trivikram Srinivas, who had successful collaborations both Mahesh Babu and Pooja Hegde after working with the former in *Athadu* (2005) and *Khaleja* (2010); the latter in *Aravinda Sametha Veera Raghava* (2018) and *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo* (2020), would collaborate with both Babu and Hegde for his next directorial before his venture with N. T. Rama Rao Jr. He reportedly had narrated the script before the final script works which impressed the actor and actress and made them agree to work on the venture, in their third respective collaboration with the director.^[8] On 1 May, the collaboration of Babu and Trivikram was officially announced, under the tentative title *SSMB28*.^[9] Production was set to begin in November 2021 as Babu reportedly finishes filming by then for *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* (2022). Cinematographer P. S. Vinod, editor Naveen Nooli, music composer Thaman S and art director A. S. Prakash were finalised in the technical crew. The project is funded by S. Radha Krishna under Haarika & Hassine Creations.^{[10][11]}

A muhurtam pooja ceremony was held on 3 February 2022 at Ramanaidu Studios in Hyderabad with the film's cast and crew.^[12] The film was initially promoted as an action thriller. However, after the completion of the first schedule, reports surfaced about conflicts among crew members and the cast. Subsequently, the production of the film was paused, and the script was reworked. After several months of delay, Trivikram presented a new modified script that transformed the film into a family entertainer, departing from the original narrative as an action thriller. The sequences filmed during the first schedule were intended to be discarded. The shooting recommenced with action sequences as per the modifications done to the script.^{[13][14]}

Casting

Pooja Hegde was initially cast as the lead actress, paired opposite Babu for the second time after *Maharshi* (2019) as well as in her third collaboration with director, however due to her schedule conflicts, she opted out from the venture and was subsequently replaced by Sreeleela.^{[15][16]} The latter was initially signed on to play the second actress role before Hegde opted out, however after that, Sreeleela took over the lead actress role and the second role was replaced by Meenakshi Chaudhary.^{[17][18]} In February 2023, Ramya Krishna was selected to play a key role in the film.^[19] In March, Prakash Raj joined the cast to play Mahesh Babu's grandfather in the film.^[20] Later Jayaram joined the cast.^[21] In April, Jagapathi Babu was reported to play "a very endearing yet scary" character.^[22]

Filming

Principal photography commenced on 12 September 2022 with an action sequence in Annapurna Studios, Hyderabad.^[23] The first schedule, involving high-octane stunts choreographed by Anbariv duo,^[24] was later completed in the same month.^[25] However it was later confirmed by the producers that the fight was scrapped.^[26] The second schedule was planned to commence after Dussehra

festivities in Ramoji Film City with Hegde joining the sets.^[23] The shooting was then halted with Trivikram making modifications to the script and converted the action thriller film into a "family entertainer".^[24]

The second schedule started on 18 January 2023 in Sarathi Studios, Hyderabad.^[27] Hegde joined the sets with filming taking place in Hyderabad.^[28] In February, team constructed a house set spent ₹10 crore at Shankarpalli, Telangana in Hyderabad.^[29] In March, Jayaram joined the sets.^[30] The second schedule was wrapped on 6 April.^[31] After shooting more than 50% of the film, the cinematographer of the film, P. S. Vinod, left, owing to creative differences. Following this development, Manoj Paramahansa was announced as his replacement for the film. The third schedule began on 24 June.^[32] Principal photography wrapped on 28 December 2023.^[33]

Music

Thaman S. composed the soundtrack album and background score for the film, in his fifth collaboration with Babu after Dookudu (2011), Businessman (2012), Aagadu (2014), and Sarkaru Vaari Paata (2022); third collaboration with Trivikram after Aravinda Sametha Veera Raghava (2018) and Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo (2020).^[34]

Release

Theatrical

Guntur Kaaram was released worldwide in theatres on 12 January 2024. Originally intended for a theatrical release on 28 April 2023, the film's launch was first deferred to 11 August 2023, and then to 13 January 2024, coinciding with Sankranti. Eventually, the release date was advanced to 12 January 2024.

Marketing

On 31 May 2023, first glimpse was released, on the occasion of Babu's father Krishna's 80th birth anniversary, which was attached with Mosagallaku Mosagadu 4K re-release in theatres.^[35] The film's official trailer was released on 7 January 2024.^[36]

Home media

The film digital distribution rights were acquired by Netflix and premiered from 9 February 2024 in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi.^[37]

Reception



Critical reception

The film received generally negative reviews from critics criticising its direction, screenplay, plot, background score and soundtrack, but Babu's performance was praised.^[38]

Anandu Suresh of *The Indian Express* gave 2/5 stars and wrote "Mahesh Babu, in top-notch form, is the sole redeeming factor in Trivikram's unnecessarily prolonged film, preventing it from becoming a tedious watch."^[39] BVS Prakash from *Deccan Chronicle* gave 2/5 stars and wrote "director Trivikram Srinivas fails to come up with a solid script to justify the larger-than-life image of Mahesh Babu."^[40] Abhilasha Cherukuri of *Cinema Express* gave 2/5 stars and wrote "the film was a two-and-half hour-long advertisement for the Vijayawada-Hyderabad expressway. Not to mention additional brand placements for Greater Hyderabad's outer ring road. Outside of an expansive B-roll displaying well-maintained roads in not one but two Telugu states, the rest of Guntur Kaaram is mere filler."^[41]


Neeshita Nyayapati of *Hindustan Times* called it a "bland film" and wrote "Guntur Kaaram feels like a wasted opportunity. The film could've either been a tearjerker or a commercial masala film, but the way it is now, it just hangs in an unsatisfactory limbo. And that's a shame because Mahesh gives the film his all. If only Trivikram could break out of the box he seems to have created for himself."^[42] Reviewing the film, Sangeetha Devi Dundoo of *The Hindu* wrote "Director Trivikram Srinivas and Mahesh Babu's 'Guntur Kaaram' is a stale rehash of old stories".^[43]

Box office

Guntur Kaaram collected a gross of ₹142 crore (US\$17 million) in India^[4] and ₹47 crore worldwide on its opening day.^{[44][45][46]} It's estimated total end worldwide gross is ₹172 crore against a production budget of ₹200 crore (US\$24 million), becoming a box-office bomb.^{[4][2][3]}

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