

= Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei =

Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei (English : The King of Torture , Pulikecei the 23rd) is a 2006 Indian Tamil language historical @-@ comedy film written and directed by Chimbu Deven . The film stars Vadivelu in his debut as a lead actor . Monica and Tejashree play the female leads , while Manorama , Nassar , Ilavarasu , Sreeman and Nagesh play supporting roles . Sabesh @-@ Murali composed the soundtrack album and background score . S. Shankar produced and distributed the film under his production banner S Pictures .

Set in the late 18th century during the early stages of the British Raj , the film tells the story of twin brothers separated at birth . Pulikecei XXIII , the foolish elder brother , becomes a puppet of his uncle , the Chief Minister , while Ukraputhan , the wise younger brother , becomes a patriot intent on saving his land and his brother .

Principal photography began in November 2005 at Prasad Studios . Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei was released on 8 July 2006 , and was the first historical Tamil film released since Madhuraiyai Meetta Sundharapandiyan (1978) . The film received positive reviews , with critics praising the screenplay , the performances , and the dialogues . A box office success , the film won two Tamil Nadu State Film Awards and one Filmfare Award . The film was dubbed into Telugu as Himsinche 23 Va Raju Pulikesi .

= = Plot = =

In the South Indian kingdom of Cholapuram Paalayam in the year 1771 , Raja Mokkaiyappar and his queen , Rajamatha Bhavani Ammaiya are desperate for a child , as all their previous twenty @-@ two children have died at birth . Unknown to them , Bhavani 's brother , Sangilimayan , who is also the Rajaguru (Chief Minister) , is responsible for the death of their children . Sangilimayan is shocked to see that his sister has given birth to twins . Before informing the king about the birth , he calls the palace astrologer , Chinnavadayaan , who predicts that the elder twin will be incapable of making decisions on his own while the younger one will be smarter . Sangilimayan orders the palace doctor , Kailasakaruppan , to kill the younger one , but Chinnavadayaan tells Sangilimayan that his actions would not be good for the kingdom . Instead , Sangilimayan orders the palace doctor to abandon the child in a nearby river . The elder child is named Pulikecei XXIII . Maragathavalli , Kailasakaruppan 's childless wife , rescues the abandoned child from the river , and the couple decides to raise him as their own , naming him Ukraputhan .

Twenty @-@ five years pass , and Pulikecei is now the king of Cholapuram Paalayam . As foretold , he is foolish as well as lecherous . He is a puppet in the hands of Sangilimayan , who collaborates with the British for his own personal gain and does not attend to the needs of the people of his kingdom . Pulikecei also tortures his subjects . He creates an outdoor stadium for different castes to fight against each other and punishes his palace guards even when they make the slightest of mistakes ; he also uses his guards as targets for shooting practice . Ukraputhan , now an educated revolutionary , collaborates with his friends to overthrow the British . Ukraputhan falls in love with Vasantha Sundari , who reciprocates his feelings . When Ukraputhan tries to kill Pulikecei , he is shocked to see that they look alike .

Ukraputhan then learns about his birth from his foster @-@ parents . To save the land from Sangilimayan and the British , Ukraputhan captures Pulikecei and trades places with him as the king whilst sending Pulikecei to prison in his place . As the king , Ukraputhan joins Agandamuthu , the commander @-@ in @-@ chief , and helps bring about new reforms . He converts the palace harem into a playground and helps fund and provide for the education of children ; to grow crops , he creates fertile land for tilling the soil . In a break with past policies of the kingdom , Ukraputhan refuses to pay tributes and taxes demanded by the British . Bhavani Ammaiya praises Ukraputhan 's reforms , unaware that Ukraputhan is disguised as Pulikecei . In jail , Pulikecei is taken care of by Soolayini , who provides refreshments to the soldiers . Eventually , the two fall in love .

All of this happens while Sangilimayan is away on a business trip visiting British officers in Chennaipattinam . When he learns of the new reforms , he confronts Ukraputhan . Later , Pulikecei

escapes from prison and overhears a conversation between Uraputhan , Agandamuthu and Chinnavadayaan . Pulikecei learns the truth about his birth and confronts the trio . He joins forces with Uraputhan to reform the kingdom , but is beaten by one of Sangilimayan 's men and is locked up in the palace . However , he escapes with the help of Kollan , the palace blacksmith . Believing that Agandamuthu was responsible for Pulikecei 's change of mind , Sangilimayan arrests him and Uraputhan . After escaping , Pulikecei appears before Sangilimayan as Uraputhan but is recognised by his minister , Mangunipandiyan . A fight between Uraputhan , Pulikecei , Sangilimayan and the British follows ; Sangilimayan is overpowered by the twins and is about to be killed when Bhavani Ammaiya intervenes . Feeling guilty for betraying his kingdom , Sangilimayan has a change of heart and apologises to his sister ; she forgives him . The kingdom attains independence from British rule and Pulikecei and Uraputhan get married to their respective lovers , Soolayini and Vasantha Sundari .

= = Cast = =

Note : Vadivelu 's name features in the opening credits , while the rest of the cast members are listed as per the closing credits .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Chimbu Deven worked as a cartoonist in the Tamil magazine Ananda Vikatan before venturing into mainstream cinema as an associate to director Cheran in three of his films , Vetri Kodi Kattu (2000) , Pandavar Bhoomi (2001) and Autograph (2004) . Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei draws inspiration from a cartoon created by Deven , which originally appeared in Ananda Vikatan . Deven , who wrote the script , showed it to director S. Shankar . Shankar was impressed with the script as soon as he read it , and offered to produce and distribute the film under his production company S Pictures , making the film his third as producer after Mudhalvan (1999) and Kaadhal (2004) .

As a former comic strip illustrator , Deven used the storyboard technique to develop the film . Cinematography was handled by Arthur A. Wilson and editing by G. Sasikumar . P. Krishnamoorthy was signed up as the film 's art director . S. Naveen , who later directed Moodar Koodam (2013) , worked as an assistant director in the film . The dialogues for the film were written in chaste Tamil . Research was conducted at the Roja Muthiah Research Library .

= = = Casting = = =

Deven approached Vadivelu in October 2005 and offered him the lead roles . Vadivelu was initially hesitant to accept the offer as he felt that the audience would not want to see him as the central character , but after Vadivelu read the script , he took the role . Regarding the selection of Vadivelu for the roles , Deven noted that one of the royal characters from his comic book strip in Ananda Vikatan closely resembled Vadivelu , including his complexion and nativity .

Both Swarnamalya and actress Nagma were considered for the female leads , but Monica and Tejashree eventually got the parts . Director @-@ actor Ilavarasu played the role of Pulikecei 's minister , Mangunipandiyan . Actress M. N. Rajam played Uraputhan 's mother .

= = = Filming = = =

Principal photography began at Prasad Studios on 16 November 2005 , under the working title of Imsai Mannan 23am Pulikesi . It was the first historical film made in Tamil cinema since Madhuraiyai Meetta Sundharapandiyan (1978) almost three decades previously . To accurately capture the historical period , palaces , gardens and war scenes were shot on large sets spread across 30 acres

. Shooting also took place at AVM Studios . The second schedule of the film was held in Prasad Studios .

The song " Aah Adivaa " was shot at Prasad Studios and choreographed by Sivasankar . Due to poor weather , the outdoor portions of the song were shot indoors . A total of eleven sets were created for all of the filming schedules . Filming also took place in Chengalpattu , Tiruvannamalai and Pondicherry . Spoofs on Sivaji Ganesan , M. G. Ramachandran and Avvaiyar are seen in the film . Wipes and split screen transitions are commonly used . Principal photography was completed in 55 ? 61 days .

= = Themes and influences = =

Although Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei is a historical film set in the late 18th century AD , most of the issues it raises are contemporary . Topics discussed include child labour , globalisation , the bureaucratic inefficiency of government , pesticide usage in soft drinks , and divisions in the caste system .

In their 2010 book , Cinemas of South India : Culture , Resistance , Ideology under the section Dualities and Negotiation 23rd Imsai Arasan Pulikesi , Sowmya Dechamma C. C. , Elavarthi Sathya Prakash and Jananie Kalyanaraman , the soft drinks that are satirised include Coca @-@ Cola and Pepsi . The two are called Akka Mala and Gup @-@ C respectively . They also note that Pulikecei and Ukraputhan have contrasting differences with respect to attitude towards women , education , governance , and demonstration of both skill in weaponry and physical prowess . Kalyanaraman compares Vadivelu 's balancing of both his comic and heroic abilities through the roles of Pulikecei and Ukraputhan to Nagesh 's roles in Server Sundaram (1964) and Ethir Neechal (1968) , where Nagesh plays more serious roles .

The moustache sported by Vadivelu is inspired and modelled after moustaches worn by the Spanish Catalan surrealist painter , Salvador Dali and Tamil poet , Subramania Bharati . Historical references in the film include places like Nalanda University , which was active around the 2nd century AD , and people like Veerapandiya Kattabomman , Robert Clive , and Ettappan .

G. Dhananjayan , S. Theodore Baskaran and Malathi Rangarajan called the film a parody of Uthama Puthiran (1958) . Malathi Rangarajan said that the sequences in the song " Aah Aadivaa " are reminiscent of scenes from the song " Yaaradi Nee Mohini " from Uthama Puthiran . Theodore Baskaran also compared the film to M. G. Ramachandran films like Malaikkallan (1954) and Nadodi Mannan (1958) . Saraswathy Srinivas of Rediff compared the film to Alexandre Dumas 's novel , The Man in the Iron Mask .

= = Music = =

Sabesh @-@ Murali composed both the film 's soundtrack album and background score . The soundtrack album features five songs with lyrics written by Pulamaipithan . The songs were rendered in a style authentic to the film 's period setting . The soundtrack album was released on 10 May 2006 .

The album was received positively by critics . G. Dhananjayan , in his book Best of Tamil Cinema , said the songs contributed to the film 's success and were popular during its theatrical run . Praises were directed mainly towards the musicians , the melodious interludes of " Aah Aadivaa " and the fusion of modern western and traditional Indian music in " Vaanam Namakul " .

= = Release = =

The satellite rights of the film were sold to Kalaigarnar TV . The film was originally scheduled for release on 19 May 2006 . However , the film 's release was delayed due to its use of animals without prior approval from the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) . According to a rule issued in 2001 , film producers must obtain prior approval from the AWBI to use animals in a film . Further , scenes with animals must be filmed with a veterinary physician on the set . Crucial to the film 's story

, the scenes were not re-edited. In an interview, Deven stated that the elephants and horses in the film were not subjected to any cruelty.

When Shankar approached the AWBI for a No Objection Certificate (NOC), he was denied. On 18 May, the Madras High Court requested that the AWBI issue the necessary certificate, but the organisation refused and said that it was the responsibility of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). In response, the CBFC cited a rule issued by the Bombay High Court, noting that it was mandatory for the AWBI to provide an NOC to films which used animals. This led to the initial postponement of the film's release until 9 June. On 13 June, the Madras High Court ordered that the film be given a censorship certificate by 19 June, along with the NOC from the AWBI. Because of this sequence of events, the film's release date was further postponed.

Shankar and Vadivelu requested the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi, to intervene. A week before the release date, and with the help of Karunanidhi, Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei was cleared by the Central Government. The film received an NOC, and was subsequently given a 'U' (Universal) certificate without any cuts by the certification board. After months of delay, the film's release finally occurred on 8 July in 135 screens across Tamil Nadu. R. B. Choudary's Mega Super Good Films purchased the theatrical rights of the Telugu dubbed version.

The film was banned in Karnataka as the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce objected to a spoof film with Pulikecei's name in the title being released in their state. Pulakesi II was a famous king who belonged to the Western Chalukyan Dynasty and ruled the Karnataka region in the seventh century. Vadivelu's voice was dubbed by Brahmanandam in the Telugu version, which was released with the title, Himsinche 23 Va Raju Pulikesi.

Post-release, vendors sold unauthorised copies of the film on VCD in many areas of Tamil Nadu, especially in Chennai, where CDs were sold for ₹ 35 to 40, and Madurai and Dindigul, where CDs were sold at ₹ 45 to 50. Police conducted raids in the Avadi and Ambattur areas of Chennai where they seized 6636 VCDs. Although infringement helped increase the film's popularity, its theatrical run at the box office was still a financial success.

Sri Lankan Cricketer Muttiah Muralitharan watched the film in Kamala Theatres in Chennai with his family on 11 July 2006. He praised the film's innovative story, further saying that Vadivelu had developed a huge fan following in Sri Lanka through this film. To further promote the film, 50 children who watched it were given "Pulikesi moustaches". [sic] The moustache became quite popular with children and further boosted the film's popularity. Deven said that the moustache would become as popular as Superman's outfit and Spider-Man's mask.

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Critics responded positively to Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei, noting the quality of its story, Vadivelu's performance, its highlighting of contemporary political and social concerns, and the film's art direction, cinematography, and music. Malathi Rangarajan of The Hindu approved of the way Deven presented comedy, saying that it came in "the most unexpected situations." Film historian Sundararaj Theodore Baskaran described Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei as "a parody with healthy concerns".

Both Bijoy Bharathan of The Times of India and Sudhish Kamath of The Hindu applauded Vadivelu's comic timing. Ananda Vikatan, in its original review of the film, lauded Vadivelu's performance. S. Sudha also said that Vadivelu was the strength of the film.

S. Sudha credited the film's art direction and cinematography as one of its major highlights. Art director Krishnamoorthy performed intense research to create the costumes for the characters and to design the palace sets. According to Theodore Baskaran, Arthur A. Wilson's cinematography "creates a series of arresting images" which helps facilitate the directorial narrative. However, Sify criticised the inclusion of songs in the film post-release interval, stating that they "mar the film's

tempo " .

== Box office ==

Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei was a box office success . The film opened to full houses in theatres across Chennai , Coimbatore and Madurai . At the Mayajaal Multiplex centre in Chennai , the film grossed ? 301 @, @ 000 in its first week and a total of ? 427 @, @ 000 by the end of the second week of its theatrical run . Tickets were sold in black at the Devi Cineplex in Chennai for ? 150 against the original theatre price of ? 50 .

The film completed a theatrical run of 100 days at the box office . The film 's 100th day celebration function was held on 14 October 2006 at the Kalaivanar Arangam located in the Chepauk district of Chennai . Rajinikanth , Vijay , Vivek , Sathyaraj , Prabhu Ganesan , Abirami Ramanathan and directors Lingusamy and Balaji Sakthivel attended the function . Rajinikanth presented Vadivelu with a trophy for his performance in the film . Technicians who were involved with the film were also honoured .

According to G. Dhananjayan , the film is estimated to have collected ? 200 million worldwide , whereas T. V. Mahalingam of Business Today states that the film grossed a worldwide box office collection of ? 150 million .

== Accolades ==

The film won two Tamil Nadu State Film Awards . Vadivelu won the Best Comedian award while P. Krishnamoorthy won the Best Art Director award . Vadivelu also won the Filmfare Award for Best Comedian for his performance in the film .

== Legacy ==

Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei became an important film in Vadivelu 's career . The film continued a trend of films with different themes that focused on social issues . K. Jeshi of The Hindu placed the film in a category of films that discuss social issues along with other films like Sethu ... (1999) , Kaadhal (2004) , Veyil (2006) , Mozhi (2007) and Paruthiveeran (2007) . Another critic from The Hindu , Sumit Bhattacharjee , put the film in league with other period films like The Ten Commandments (1956) Ben @-@ Hur (1959) Titanic (1997) , Gladiator (2000) , 300 (2007) and Jodhaa Akbar (2008) .

J. Mahendran included Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei in his list of all @-@ time favourite films . H. Murali , who produced the film Jaganmohini (2009) , in an interview with Malathi Rangarajan of The Hindu , says the success of Imsai Arasan 23rd Pulikecei inspired him to make Jaganmohini . Subha J. Rao and K. Jeshi of The Hindu placed the film in league with other successful comedy films like Kadhalikka Neramillai (1964) , Thillu Mullu (1981) and Michael Madana Kama Rajan (1990) .

Behindwoods included the " Pulikesi moustache " in its list of " Best accessories used in Tamil Cinema " . It also included " Pulikesi 's costume " in its list of Halloween costumes . A dialogue spoken by Vadivelu in the film , " Ka Ka Ka Po " , which expands into Karuththukkalai Katchithamaaga Kavvikkondir Pongal (English : You have understood what I am saying) , became a very popular meme used on social networking sites . Behindwoods included this dialogue in its list of Vadivelu memes . The website , in its list named " Tamil Superstars ' tyrst with facial hair " , called Pulikecei 's moustache " Quirky " .