

= Keechaka Vadham =

Keechaka Vadham ( English : The Extermination of Keechaka ) alternatively spelt as Keechaka Vatham , is an Indian silent film produced , directed , filmed and edited by R. Nataraja Mudaliar . The film is based on an episode from the Hindu epic Mahabharata focusing on the characters Kichaka and Draupadi ; it stars Raju Mudaliar as Keechaka and Jeevarathnam as Draupadi , the female lead .

Keechaka Vadham was the first silent film made in South India . The film was shot in five weeks at Nataraja Mudaliar 's studio , India Film Company . Despite being a silent film , the cast members were from Tamil Nadu , hence it was also considered the first Tamil film . Keechaka Vadham received critical acclaim upon its release and went on to become a commercially successful venture . The film 's success prompted Nataraja Mudaliar to make a series of similar historical films . Because no print of the film is known to survive , this makes it a lost film .

= = Cast = =

Raju Mudaliar as Keechaka  
Jeevarathnam as Draupadi

= = Production = =

Mooppanar , a wealthy landowner based in Thanjavur , had owned a Williamson 35mm camera and a printer purchased in England . R. Nataraja Mudaliar , then an automobile dealer in Madras , had taken the entire equipment from him at a price of less than ? 2 @, @ 000 , thereby making his debut in the film industry . Nataraja Mudaliar developed a passion for moving pictures after watching the films of Dadasaheb Phalke . At the time cinematographers from Britain were filming a documentary on Lord Curzon , then the Governor @-@ General and Viceroy of India . Nataraja Mudaliar got introduced to Stewart Smith , one of the cinematographers who worked in the documentary , and learned about the basics of photography in film @-@ making through him . This eventually led to Nataraja Mudaliar establishing his production house , India Film Company . He brought together some of his business associates , allowing them to invest in the production house , and established South India 's first film studio on Miller 's Road , Purasawalkam , Madras .

Nataraja Mudaliar sought the advice of his friend , Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar , one of the founding fathers of the Renaissance of Tamil Theatre , who suggested that he should picturise the story of the Mahabharata characters Draupadi and Kichaka . Some of Nataraja Mudaliar 's relatives objected to it as they felt that it was not a proper story for his debut venture . But Nataraja Mudaliar decided to proceed and launched his maiden film titled Keechaka Vadham , which was based on an episode from the Mahabharata . The episode follows the attempts made by Keechaka , one of the generals of King Virata , to woo and marry Draupadi before she reports about it to Bhima , who kills him . Nataraja Mudaliar was not a writer , so he had to take assistance from his close friend C. Rangavadivelu , a lawyer by profession . Besides writing the screenplay , Rangavadivelu agreed to coach artistes on sets . Nataraja Mudaliar engaged stage actors Raja Mudaliar and Jeevarathnam to play the roles of Keechaka and Draupadi respectively . The total budget of the film was ? 35 @, @ 000 , which was then considered high .

According to film historian S. Muthiah , filming began in 1917 , and was shot in a span of five weeks . The entire film was shot at the India Film Company . The film 's intertitles were written in English , Tamil and Hindi . The Tamil intertitles were written by Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar while the Hindi intertitles were written by Mahatma Gandhi 's son Devdas Gandhi . Nataraja Mudaliar also handled the film 's production , cinematography and editing . Despite being a silent film , the cast was filled with Tamil people , hence it was considered the first Tamil film . The final length of the film was 6 @, @ 000 ft ( 1 @, @ 800 m ) .

= = Release and legacy = =

Keechaka Vadham was the first silent film made in South India . According to film historian Randor Guy , Nataraja Mudaliar established a film laboratory of his own in Bangalore to process the film negatives as there was no film laboratory in Madras . Nataraja Mudaliar believed that Bangalore 's colder climate " would be kind to his exposed film stock " . He processed the film negatives there each weekend and return on Monday morning to resume the film 's shooting .

According to Muthiah , Keechaka Vadham was released in January 1918 at the Elphinstone Theatre . He states that the film netted ? 50 @, @ 000 after being screened throughout India and in Burma , Ceylon , the Federated Malay States and Singapore resulting in a yield of ? 15 @, @ 000 , a " tidy profit in those days . " According to writer Firoze Rangoonwalla , a reviewer from The Mail rated the film 's success highly by commenting " It has been prepared with great care and is drawing full houses " . With the film 's critical and commercial success , Nataraja Mudaliar had " created history " . No print of it is known to survive , so it is considered a lost film .

The success of the film incited Nataraja Mudaliar to make a series of historical films such as Draupadi Vastrapaharanam ( 1918 ) , Lava Kusa ( 1919 ) , Shiv Leela ( 1919 ) , Rukmini Satyabhama ( 1922 ) and Mahi Ravana ( 1923 ) . In 1923 , the death of his son that occurred in a fire accident which also burnt up his entire studio led Nataraja Mudaliar to retire from filmmaking and close up shop . Nataraja Mudaliar is widely recognised as the father of Tamil cinema and his films helped in laying the foundation for the South Indian cinema industry . Nataraja Mudaliar 's work inspired Raghupathi Prakasa , son of Raghupathi Venkaiah Naidu , later revered as the father of Telugu cinema , and J. C. Daniel , who was later revered as the father of Malayalam cinema .

== = Books = = =

== = Newspapers = = =

== = Websites = = =