

S. S. Rajamouli

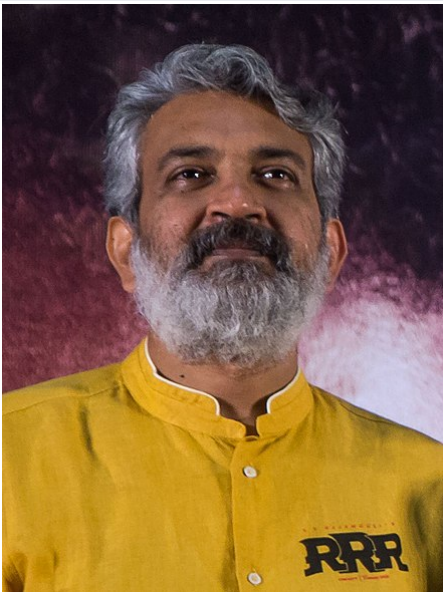
(Redirected from Ss rajamouli)

Koduri Srisaila Sri Rajamouli (/ˈrɑːdʒəmaʊli/ *RAH-jə-mow-li*; born 10 October 1973) is an Indian film director and screenwriter who primarily works in Telugu cinema and is known for his action, fantasy, and epic genre films. He is the highest grossing Indian director of all time^[2] and the highest-paid director in India.^{[3][4][5]} He is a recipient of various national and international honours including a New York Film Critics Circle award, a Critics' Choice Movie Award, two Saturn Awards, and three National Film Awards. In 2016, the Government of India honoured him with the Padma Shri, for his contributions in the field of Art. In 2023, he was included on *Time's* list of the 100 most influential people in the world.^[6]

Rajamouli has been described by film trade analyst Komal Nahta as "the biggest Indian film director ever".^[7] Rachel Dwyer, professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS, called him "India's most significant director today".^[8] He has directed twelve feature films so far, and all of them have been successful at the box office.^{[9][10][11]} Three of his films—*Baahubali: The Beginning* (2015), *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* (2017), and *RRR* (2022)—are among the top six highest grossing-films in India to date. All three films were also the most expensive Indian films ever made at the time of their release. *Baahubali 2* is currently the highest grossing film in India, and sold over 100 million tickets during its box office run; the highest estimated admissions for any film in India since *Sholay* (1975).^{[12][13]}

The 2009 fantasy action film, *Magadheera* was the highest-grossing Telugu film ever at the time of its release.^{[14][15]} *Eega* (2012) won nine awards at the Toronto After Dark Film Festival, including the Most Original Film. *Baahubali* films have received six Saturn Award nominations with *Baahubali 2* winning the Best International Film. *RRR* received various international accolades including an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award for the song "Naatu Naatu", and a Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

S. S. Rajamouli



Rajamouli in 2021

Born	<div>Koduri Srisaila Sri Rajamouli</div> <div>10 October 1973</div> <div>Mysore state, India (now in Karnataka, India)</div>
Nationality	Indian
Other names	Jakkanna, Raja, Nandi
Occupations	Film director · screenwriter
Spouse	Rama Rajamouli (m. 2001)
Children	2
Parent	V. Vijayendra Prasad (father)
Relatives	M. M. Keeravani (cousin)
Family	See Koduri family
Awards	Full list
Honours	Padma Shri (2016) ^[1]

Rajamouli's films are typically characterized by their epic grandeur, stylized action sequences, unbridled heroism and larger-than-life characters with historical and mythological references. His films have been noted for their integration of CGI with practical effects. With his *Baahubali* films, he has pioneered the pan-Indian film movement.^{[16][17][18]} He is also credited for expanding the market of Telugu cinema and South Indian cinema into North India and international markets.^{[19][20][21]}

Early life

Koduri Srisaila Sri Rajamouli was born on 10 October 1973 in a Telugu family^[22] hailing from Kovvur in Andhra Pradesh to V. Vijayendra Prasad and Raja Nandini.^{[23][24]} His parents were staying in Hirekotikal in Raichur district of Mysore state at the time of his birth.^[25] They are ardent devotees of Lord Shiva. Rajamouli was born after his mother had a dream when she visited the pilgrimage site of Srisailem. Hence, he was named Srisaila Sri Rajamouli.^[26] He has one sister.^[27]

His father hails from Kovvur near Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh.^{[28][29][30]} His mother hails from Vizag, Andhra Pradesh and Rajamouli lived there for several years.^[31] Rajamouli grew up in a joint family — his father and his five brothers lived in the same house with their families.^{[32][33][34]} Prasad's family had lands in Kovvur, which were lost when the railways lines were laid through them.^[30] Then, Prasad and his family moved to Karnataka from Kovvur in 1968. Prasad, along with his elder brother K. V. Sivashankar, bought seven acres of paddy fields in Hirekotikal village near Manvi in Raichur district. Their family moved back to Kovvur in 1977.^{[35][36]}

Rajamouli was educated in Kovvur till fourth standard and then shifted to Eluru where he studied till Intermediate first year. He then took a break of two years and finished his Intermediate second year in Kovvur. After that, he did not pursue any further formal education.^[28]

Rajamouli was passionate about storytelling right from his second standard.^[37] When he was seven years old, his grandmother introduced him to the epics *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Bhagavata*.^[32] At the same age, his father introduced him to *Amar Chitra Katha* comics that featured stories on Indian historical figures, religious legends and folktales. It had a huge impact on him and developed his penchant for larger-than-life characters.^{[38][32]} He would remember those stories and the films he watched and then re-tell them to his friends in his own way.^{[38][37][39]} His mother was keen on him learning English and would take him to watch English-language films in the nearby towns. She encouraged him to read comics and storybooks in his free time and never pressured him in academics.^{[32][40]} His father recollecting about Rajamouli's childhood noted, "he was not an ambitious child. For a long time, we did not know what interested him. He showed some inclination towards films. He played the role of young Krishna in a film I directed."^[41]

Rajamouli's grandfather was a wealthy landlord who owned 360 acres of land. By the time Rajamouli was 10 or 11 years old, they lost much of their wealth.^{[42][43][44]} As his father Vijayendra Prasad and uncle Siva Shakthi Datta were passionate about filmmaking, they sold most of their remaining assets and shifted to Madras to make films. They started many films that went unfinished. They faced financial losses and started working as ghostwriters to make ends meet.^{[45][29][46]} Thirteen members of his extended family started living in a two-room apartment in Madras. Rajamouli recollects his family sitting together and making fun of themselves and their condition at the time, but they were never sad about it.^{[42][43]}

Later Prasad established himself as a screenwriter with films like *Bobbili Simham* (1994) and *Gharana Bullodu* (1995).^{[30][47]} Wanting to make another film, his father then co-produced (along with Katragadda Prasad) and directed a film called *Ardhangi* (1996) with his life

savings.^{[29][48][28][49]} Rajamouli recalls about that film:

I was very actively involved in the project as an associate director. I felt that film was my child, even though I didn't direct the film. It was a miserable failure. My family went into a debt trap. It took us years to pick up and put the pieces together. All of that strongly stayed in my mind. That was a very low period for me. I then decided to never take anything for granted. It imbibed in me the work ethic to make everything perfect and interesting for the audience, no matter how small or unimportant that scene or shot might be. That lowest phase of my life taught me how I should work later on in my career.^{[46][28][48][49]}

Career

Early work

Rajamouli started his film career as an apprentice to the veteran film editor Kotagiri Venkateswara Rao and worked with him for six months.^{[50][29]} Rajamouli recollects, "Even in my early 20s, I didn't know how to plan for my future. My father would constantly scold me for doing nothing. I joined films just to get away from his nagging. Slowly, I found my love for direction."^[41] He worked at AVM recording theatre in Chennai for a few days. He also worked as an assistant director to Kranthi Kumar for some time.^{[51][52]} Then, he assisted his father Vijayendra Prasad for six years.^[28] He started writing for films but was always disappointed by the execution of his stories by other directors. His frustration as a writer motivated him to become a director so that he can bring out his vision as a writer perfectly onto the screen.^[53]

He then shifted to Hyderabad from Chennai and worked with his relative, Gunnam Gangaraju, from whom he learnt about the practical aspect of filmmaking.^{[28][29][54]} Later under the supervision of K. Raghavendra Rao, he directed social message-oriented commercials. He also directed a few advertisements for the Telugu Desam Party.^{[29][54]} He then worked for one and half years as the director of the Telugu TV serial, *Santhi Nivasam*, along with Vara Mullapudi, which was produced by Raghavendra Rao. It aired on ETV.^{[29][54]} In an interview in 2005, Rajamouli called it the most arduous period in his life as he used to work for 17 hours a day.^[28] He recalled:

“My main aim while working in television was to get Mr Rao’s approval. During my TV days, I didn’t have much of an idea of what I was making. The good thing was that I was a hard worker, and I earned the nickname work devil.”^[44]

2001–2008: Film debut and breakthrough

In 2001, Raghavendra Rao offered Rajamouli the chance to direct a feature film for his production house titled, *Student No: 1*, which the latter accepted.^[29] Raghavendra Rao provided the screenplay in addition to supervising the direction. Rajamouli later regretted not working for a longer time as an assistant director. “When I made my first film *Student No: 1*, I didn’t know how to use a crane because I never used a crane while I was doing my TV serial.”^{[55][56]} *Student No:1* was a coming of age romantic action film and was the second film of Jr. NTR in a lead role. Rajamouli would go onto collaborate with Jr. NTR in three more films. Released on 27 September 2001, the film marked the official debut of SS Rajamouli as a director; the film went on to become a critical and commercial success, and was Jr. NTR's first successful film.^[57]

Rajamouli's second film was *Simhadri* (2003), again with Jr. NTR. After his first film, he realised that the kind of films he wanted to make had more drama and action, and so he made *Simhadri*, an action film.^[54] It marked Rajamouli's first collaboration with his father Vijayendra Prasad who provided the story. *Simhadri* was also the first film penned by Rajamouli. The film emerged as a blockbuster and became one of the highest grossing Telugu films ever at the time.^[58]

In the two-year gap between *Student No.1* and *Simhadri*, Rajamouli planned his first mythological film with Malayalam actor Mohanlal, but the film eventually got shelved.^[59] In 2015, Assistant art director Manu Jagath, who later worked as the art director for Baahubali, released several sketches he had drawn for the shelved Mohanlal project.^[60] During the same period he was also supposed to direct a fantasy film with Prakash Kovelamudi as the lead but the film was shelved due to financial reasons.^{[28][29][30]}

Rajamouli's third film was *Sye* (2004), starring Nithin and Genelia. He recalls, "I got plenty of offers after the success of *Simhadri*. But I deliberately made a decision not to make an emotionally charged mass film like *Simhadri* immediately. I don't want to get branded as mass director. Hence I did *Sye*, which is radically different compared to *Simhadri*."^[28] It was a first-of-its-kind film in Telugu cinema, in that it was based on the sport of Rugby. This film was also the first instance where Rajamouli collaborated with K. K. Senthil Kumar who would eventually work with him on seven more films.^[61] *Sye* was commercially successful and won four Nandi Awards. *Sye* made a huge impact on the Telugu popular culture through its popularisation of Rugby to the masses.^[62]

His next venture was *Chatrapathi* (2005), an action drama set in Vizag dealing with the plight of refugees. *Chatrapathi* starred Prabhas in the lead role with music composed by M. M. Keeravani and cinematography by Senthil Kumar. It was Rajamouli's fourth consecutive hit and became one of the highest grossing Telugu films of the year.^[63]

In his next project *Vikramarkudu* (2006), Rajamouli worked with Ravi Teja and Anushka Shetty. Rajamouli was attacked during the shooting of the film near Nanakramguda in Hyderabad. He suffered a hairline fracture on his hand and was admitted into a nearby Apollo hospital.^{[64][65]} *Vikramarkudu* was a breakthrough film for Anushka Shetty. The film was screened at the International Film Festival of India in the mainstream section.^[66] The film was a big success and was remade into several Indian languages including Kannada as *Veera Madakari* (2009), Tamil as *Siruthai* (2011), and Hindi as *Rowdy Rathore* (2012).^[67]

He then directed *Yamadonga* (2007), a fantasy action comedy film starring Jr NTR, Priyamani, Mohan Babu, and Mamata Mohandas. The plot follows Raja, a thief who is killed by his rivals. Raja's soul travels to Naraka (hell) to face the trial for his sins by Yama, the Hindu god of death and justice. The film was successful at the box-office and became one of the highest grossing Telugu films ever at the time.^{[58][68]}

Rajamouli started his own production company Visvamithra Creations named after the ancient Indian sage Visvamitra. Prabhas acted as Visvamitra for the logo shoot of the company.^[69] *Yamadonga* was produced under the Visvamithra Creations banner but the producers were Cherry and Urmila Gunnam with Rama Rajamouli presenting the film.^[70]

2009–2014: Critical acclaim and recognition

Rajamouli's next venture was the fantasy-action film *Magadheera* (2009), starring Ram Charan and Kajal Aggarwal. Made on a budget of ₹35–44 crore (US\$7–10 million), it was the most expensive Telugu film at the time.^[a] It was the first Telugu film to list a "visual effects producer" in its credits. *Magadheera* became one of the biggest commercial successes in Telugu cinema and was the highest-grossing Telugu film at the end of its theatrical run.^{[14][15]} For *Magadheera*, Rajamouli

won the Nandi Award for Best Director and Filmfare Award for Best Director – Telugu. The film also won the National Award for Best Choreography and Best Special Effects at the 57th National Film Awards and a total of six Filmfare Awards South and nine Nandi Awards.^[74] The film's success catapulted both the leads into stardom.

Magadheera was dubbed into Tamil as *Maaveeran* and into Malayalam as *Dheera: The Warrior* and was released on 27 May 2011.^[75] Both the dubbed versions were successful and earned a good fan base for Ram Charan in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.^[76] The Japanese-dubbed version of the film released in August 2018 and became one of the highest-grossing Indian films ever at the Japanese box office.^{[77][76]}

In 2010 he directed the action comedy film *Maryada Ramanna* starring Sunil and Saloni. Rajamouli watched the 1923 silent comedy film *Our Hospitality* and liked it immensely. He wanted to re-tell the same story in his own way. He tried to contact the original creators but found out that the original writers of the film were long dead and that the film's copyright had expired as it had been over 75 years since the film's release. His cousin S. S. Kanchi and him then adapted that story with a Rayalaseema backdrop focusing on the factional violence and hospitality that co-existed in the region.^{[78][79]} Regarding his decision to make a small film like *Maryada Ramanna* he remarked, "I decided that my next project would be *Maryada Ramanna* during *Magadheera* shooting itself because *Magadheera* is a one and half year project that demands lot of physical labour and mental strain. I didn't want to commit another physically exhausting film immediately after *Magadheera*."^[80]

Maryada Ramanna opened to favourable reviews from critics. It became one of the highest grossing Telugu films of 2010.^{[81][82][83]} It received four Nandi Awards, including Best Popular Feature Film. *Maryada Ramanna* was remade in Hindi as *Son of Sardaar* and into other languages like Kannada, Bengali, Tamil, and Malayalam.^{[80][84]} In 2012 Rajamouli stated in an interview with Maa TV that *Maryada Ramanna* was his personal favourite among all the films he had directed.^[85]

His next project was the fantasy action film *Eega* (2012). The film was produced by Sai Korrapati's Vaaraahi Chalana Chitram with an estimated budget of ₹30–40 crore (US\$6–7 million). It was simultaneously filmed in Tamil language with the title *Naan Ee* (transl.*I, the Fly*). The film stars Sudeep, Nani, and Samantha. The idea of *Eega* originated in the mid-1990s in Vijayendra Prasad's mind. At that time, he was joking about a housefly seeking revenge on a human in a conversation with his son Rajamouli.^[86] After completing *Maryada Ramanna*, Rajamouli reconsidered the concept after thinking of directing a film that was distinct from any other.^[87] He explained it thus:



Sudeep, Nani, and Rajamouli on the sets of *Eega*

When I started making films, I stuck to formula films for a while which did well at the box office. After a while, I was getting too comfortable with what I was doing, so I wanted to experiment with something completely different. I wanted to take the audience by surprise and that is when I went back to the story I had heard 16 years ago.^[88]

Upon release, the film received widespread critical acclaim including for Rajamouli's direction. It became one of the highest-grossing Telugu films of all time. The Tamil version *Naan Ee* and Malayalam version *Eecha* were also big hits at the box office.^[89] The Hindi dubbed version *Makkhi*

underperformed at the box office which Rajamouli attributed to a poor promotional strategy. But the satellite rights of *Makkhi* were sold at a price of ₹8 crore to Star Gold, by far the highest price ever paid for the Hindi dub of a Telugu film at the time.^[90]

Eega was screened at various international film festivals including the 2013 Cannes Film Festival.^[b] The Telugu version won nine awards, including Most Original Film at the 8th annual Toronto After Dark Film Festival.^[91] *Eega* won two National Film Awards (Best Feature Film in Telugu and Best Special Effects) and five South Filmfare Awards including Best Telugu Film and Best Telugu Director. Speaking at an event, filmmaker Shekhar Kapur said regional cinema is surpassing Hindi cinema in content and story, and cited *Eega* as an example. Kapur said he was impressed with its story and use of technology, and called it "no less than a Hollywood superhero film".^[92] *Eega* was listed among "The 25 Best Foreign Films of the Decade" by The Ringer.^[93]

2015–present: Pan-India and international acclaim



Rajamouli and Sabu Cyril on the set of *Baahubali the Beginning*

In 2015, he directed the epic action film *Baahubali: The Beginning* starring Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, and Tamanna.^{[94][95]} The film was shot using Arri Alexa XT camera, marking Rajamouli's first film shot using a digital camera.^{[96][97]} Rajamouli's work was lauded by *The Hollywood Reporter*, *The Guardian* and *The Huffington Post*.^{[98][99]} It became the second highest grossing Indian film of all time, and the highest grossing Indian film of all time within India.^{[100][101][102]} Its Hindi dubbed version also broke several records. It was the first dubbed film to collect over 100 crore nett at the Hindi box office and became the highest-grossing

dubbed film in Hindi of all time. It was screened at various international film festivals including the 2016 Cannes Film Festival.^[c] The making of the film was featured in BBC's documentary on 100 Years of Indian cinema, directed by Sanjeev Bhaskar.^{[103][104][105]}

Baahubali: The Beginning received several awards. It won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film and became the first Telugu film to win the award. It also won the National Award for Best Special Effects. At the 63rd Filmfare Awards South, the Telugu version won five awards from ten nominations, including Best Film and Best Director award for Rajamouli. It became the first Indian film to be nominated for Saturn Awards, receiving five nominations at the 42nd ceremony, including Best Fantasy Film.^[106]

In 2015, Rajamouli was named as the CNN-News18 Indian of the Year in Entertainment.^[107] In 2016, he was honoured with the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian honour for his contributions towards the field of Art.^[108]

His next project was *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* (2017), which served as both a sequel and a prequel to *Baahubali: The Beginning*.^[109] The film was premiered at the British Film Institute.^{[110][111]} It was made on an estimated budget of ₹250 crore (\$37 million)^[d] and was the most expensive Indian film ever made at the time. *Baahubali 2* was released on 28 April 2017 and later dubbed into Hindi, Malayalam, Japanese, Russian and Chinese. Released in conventional 2D and IMAX formats, *Baahubali 2* was the first Telugu film to also release in 4K High Definition format.

Grossing ₹1,810 crore worldwide (\$267 million),^[d] the film surpassed *PK* (2014) to briefly become the highest grossing Indian film of all time, collecting approximately ₹800 crore worldwide within just six days of its release. It became the first-ever Indian film to gross over ₹1,000 crore, doing so in just ten days. Within India, it set many film records, becoming the highest-grossing film in

Hindi, as well as in its original Telugu language. It stands as the highest-grossing film in India,^[113] the second highest-grossing Indian film worldwide and the 39th highest-grossing film of 2017. The film sold over 10 crore (100 million) tickets during its box office run, the highest estimated admissions for any film in India since *Sholay* (1975).^{[114][115]} *Baahubali 2* released to positive reviews from critics. It won the Saturn Award for Best International Film and three National Film Awards: Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment, Best Special Effects and Best Stunt Choreographer.

The exceptional success of *Baahubali* films across different Indian languages, regions, and states kickstarted what has been termed the pan-Indian films movement where a film is simultaneously released in multiple Indian languages and is made to appeal to audiences across the country, cutting across the linguistic and cultural barriers.^{[16][18]} Several filmmakers and film analysts have credited Rajamouli for almost single-handedly expanding the reach and market of South Indian cinema to Northern India and beyond.^{[16][17][116]}



Anushka Shetty, Tamannaah, Rajamouli, Karan Johar, Prabhas, Rana Daggubati at the trailer launch of the Hindi version of *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*



Rajamouli, Ram Charan, Alia Bhatt, Jr. NTR and DVV Danayya at the RRR Press Meet in Chennai

Rajamouli's subsequent film *RRR* (2022) is an epic action drama based on the lives of Indian revolutionaries, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem. Made on a budget of est. ₹550 crore (US\$72 million),^[117] it is the most expensive Indian film ever made. The film stars NTR Jr, Ram Charan, Alia Bhatt, and Ajay Devgn.^[118] *RRR* opened to positive reviews from critics with praise for the performances, particularly Rama Rao and Charan, and screenplay by Rajamouli.

With ₹240 crore (US\$31 million) worldwide on its first day, *RRR* broke the record for the highest opening-day collection earned by an Indian film. *RRR* emerged as the highest-grossing film in its home market of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana,

grossing over ₹400 crore (US\$52 million) and surpassing Rajamouli's previous film *Baahubali 2*. The film grossed 1,200 crore (US\$175 million) worldwide, setting several box office records for an Indian film, including the second-highest-grossing film in India and the third-highest-grossing Indian film. *RRR* is nominated in three categories at the 47th Saturn Awards including a Best Director nomination for Rajamouli. It was also nominated in Best Action / Adventure Film and Best International Film categories.^{[119][120]}

Upcoming projects

Rajamouli is committed to collaborate with actor Mahesh Babu. The film, touted to be a jungle adventure set in Africa, is expected to begin its production in 2023.^[121] While attending the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival, he revealed more details about the project. "My next film with Mahesh Babu will be a globetrotting action adventure. It's going to be a kind of James Bond or Indiana Jones film with Indian roots."^{[122][123]} In September 2022, he signed with the American talent agency Creative Artists Agency (CAA) in a move that has been described as a "coup for the agency".^[124]

There were also reports of him planning a live-action animated film rooted in Indian content.^[125] In August 2022, he revealed that he was working on a couple of scripts that would be suitable to be made as animation films.^[40]

Rajamouli frequently speaks about his intention to make a film based on the Indian epic *Mahabharata* in the future.^{[126][127]} He thinks it will be at least a four-part project requiring a time period of six to ten years.^{[128][129][130]} In May 2017 he noted, "I don't want to compromise in making it and the huge project is going to take 10 years perhaps. I am apprehensive as to whether I will be able to execute such a technically-superior project (in the immediate future)." He had also revealed that the film series may not feature established movie stars. "This is the kind of film that will not work out if I rope in stars. Once the different characters are designed, I would have to hunt for the right artists and mould them accordingly," he said.^{[126][131]} In July 2022 he said, "*Mahabharata* has been my long, long, long dream project, but it will take a long time for me to step into that ocean. Before I step into *Mahabharata* I want to make, maybe, three or four films."^[49]

He also expressed his wish on several occasions to make films on the historical rulers Sri Krishnadevaraya, Rajaraja Narendra, Kakatiyas, Rani Abbakka.^{[132][133][134][135]}

Personal life

Rajamouli married Rama, sister-in-law of his cousin Keeravani in 2001.^{[29][54]} After their marriage, Rama worked as a costume designer for many of Rajamouli's films. He adopted Karthikeya, Rama's son from her previous marriage. The couple also has an adopted daughter Mayookha.^{[137][138]} Karthikeya is married to Pooja Prasad, niece of Telugu actor Jagapathi Babu.^[139]

Rajamouli's cousin, M. M. Keeravani has worked as the music composer for all of his films. His other cousins Kalyani Malik and M. M. Srilekha are also music composers.^{[140][141][142]} S. S. Kanchi, a screenwriter and actor known for his role in the sitcom *Amrutham* is also one of his cousins.^{[143][144]} He collaborated with Rajamouli as a script doctor on many of his films and also acted in four of his films.^{[80][117]} Raja Koduri, an Executive vice-president at Intel is also a cousin of his.^[145] Rajamouli considers K. Raghavendra Rao as his guru and mentor.^{[146][147]} He called Gunnam Gangaraju his philosopher and guide who made an impact on his worldview.^{[54][39]}

My personal opinions, my thoughts, and my lifestyle have nothing to do with my profession. I keep that completely separate. Professionally, I am different. I don't try to rub my thoughts on to my characters, or on to my storytelling.

— Rajamouli on mythological themes in his films despite him being an agnostic.^[136]

Rajamouli is nicknamed *Jakkanna* after the legendary 12th century sculptor Jakanachari (known in Telugu as Jakkanna) who is credited with building numerous temples during the Hoysala reign. The moniker was coined by actor Rajeev Kanakala during the making of the TV serial *Santhi Nivasam* (c. 2000) directed by Rajamouli and was in reference to his work ethic and perfectionism like the famed sculptor.^{[148][149]}

Regarding his religious views, in a March 2022 interview, Rajamouli stated that "I don't believe in God or religion the way it is portrayed now. But if you ask me 'Do you believe in the existence of God?' I'd say 'I don't know'."^[150] At Beyond Fest 2022 in Los Angeles, Rajamouli said that he is not a Hindu in the religious sense, but considering it as Dharma, he is 'very much' a Hindu. "I am a follower of Hindu dharma", he said.^{[151][152][153][154]}

In 2017, Chandrababu Naidu, then chief minister of Andhra Pradesh consulted Rajamouli for inputs on the design of Amaravati, the proposed capital of the state.^[155]

Filmmaking style

A self confessed "film freak,"^[156] Rajamouli's penchant for filmmaking is best captured by the word "emotion". He has often stated that his films are based on stories driven by human emotions.^{[157][158]} Revenge is a recurring theme in his films.^[159]

While scaling up his work with "larger-than-life" themes over the years, Rajamouli maintained his signature style of filmmaking that allows audience to simmer in the thrills and emotions of the story with less dialogue.^{[160][161]} All his films end with a print of his trademark circular stamp stating: "an S. S. Rajamouli film".^[162]

Film critic Baradwaj Rangan opined that Rajamouli is a "great storyteller" who takes up common concepts and develops them in a novel acceptable way.^[163] Production designer Sabu Cyril, a four-time National Award winner for Best Art Direction and who worked for the *Baahubali* duology, said his team came up with as many as 25,000 sketches to design the various grand sets for the film inorder to satisfy the rigorous visualisation standards of Rajamouli, which were grand and at the same time gone into very minute details ensuring that every pillar and wall had the right design. Cyril said, "Rajamouli makes no compromises."^[164]

In 2022, Rajamouli participated in the British magazine *Sight & Sound* film polls of the year 2022. Held once every ten years, the magazine asks popular contemporary writers and directors to name their ten personal favourite films.^[165] Rajamouli listed the following ten films in order: *Forrest Gump* (1994); *Mayabazar* (1957); *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981); *Kung Fu Panda* (2008); *Aladdin* (1992); *Braveheart* (1995); *Apocalypto* (2007); *Ben-Hur* (1959); *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Lion King* (1994).^[166]

Filmography

Film

Key

†	Denotes films that have not yet been released
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Rajamouli has directed 12 feature films so far.

Directed features

Year	Title	Director	Writer
2001	<i><u>Student No: 1</u></i>	Yes	No
2003	<i><u>Simhadri</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2004	<i><u>Sye</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2005	<i><u>Chatrapathi</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2006	<i><u>Vikramarkudu</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2007	<i><u>Yamadonga</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2009	<i><u>Magadheera</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2010	<i><u>Maryada Ramanna</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2012	<i><u>Eega</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2015	<i><u>Baahubali: The Beginning</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2017	<i><u>Baahubali 2: The Conclusion</u></i>	Yes	Yes
2022	<i><u>RRR</u></i>	Yes	Yes

Other roles

Year	Film	Role
2004	<i>Sye</i>	Nalla Balu's henchman (cameo)
2008	<i>Rainbow</i>	Himself (cameo)
2009	<i>Magadheera</i>	Cameo in "Anaganaganaga" song
2011	<i>Rajanna</i>	Choreographed action sequences
2012	<i>Eega</i>	Narrator (voice role) and a biker in traffic
2012	<i>Andala Rakshasi</i>	Co-Producer ^[167]
2015	<i>Baahubali: The Beginning</i>	Spirit seller (cameo)
2016	<i>Majnu</i>	Himself (cameo)
2022	<i>Radhe Shyam</i>	Narrator Telugu version (voice role) ^[168]
	<i>RRR</i>	Cameo in "Ettara Jenda" song

Television

Year	Title	Credited as	Network	Ref.
2000	<i>Santhi Nivasam</i>	Director	<u>ETV</u>	[28]
2008	<i>Yuva</i>	Himself (cameo)	<u>MAA TV</u>	[169]
2010	<i>Come on India</i>	Host	<u>HMTV</u>	[170]
2017–2020	<i>Baahubali: The Lost Legends</i>	Executive producer	<u>Netflix</u>	[171]
TBA	<i>Baahubali: Before the Beginning</i> †	Producer		[172]

Box-office performance

The budgets and box-office figures are all estimates collated from various sources like newspapers, magazines, reputed film portals etc. Wherever the estimates vary, a range of highest and lowest estimates is provided. All values in Indian Rupees (₹) are converted to US Dollars (\$) based on the average yearly exchange rate data (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF?end=2021&locations=IN&start=1960&view=chart>) from World Bank.

Year	Title	Budget (est.)	Box-office (est.)		Ref
			Worldwide Share ^[e]	Worldwide Gross	
2001	<i>Student No. 1</i>	₹1.85 crore (\$392,000)	₹12 crore (\$2.54 million)	—	[173][174]
2003	<i>Simhadri</i>	₹8.5 crore (\$1.8 million)	₹26 crore (\$5.6 million)	—	[173][174]
2004	<i>Sye</i>	₹10.2 crore (\$2.2 million)	₹11 crore (\$2.4 million)	—	[174]
2005	<i>Chatrapathi</i>	₹12.5 crore (\$2.8 million)	₹22 crore (\$5 million)	—	[173][174][175]
2006	<i>Vikramarkudu</i>	₹11 crore (\$2.4 million)	₹16–23 crore (\$3.5–5.1 million)	—	[176][177][175]
2007	<i>Yamadonga</i>	₹18–20 crore (\$4.3–4.8 million)	₹29 crore (\$7 million)	—	[173][178][175]
2009	<i>Magadheera</i>	₹35–44 crore (\$7–10 million) ^[a]	₹73–78 crore (\$15–16 million)	₹150 crore (\$31 million)	[179][180][181]
2010	<i>Maryada Ramanna</i>	₹12–14 crore (\$2.6–3.1 million)	₹29 crore (\$6.35 million)	₹40 crore (\$8.75 million)	[173][175][182][183]
2012	<i>Eega</i>	₹30–40 crore (\$6–7 million) ^[f]	₹54 crore (\$10 million)	₹125 crore (\$23 million)	[187]
2015	<i>Baahubali: The Beginning</i>	₹180 crore (\$28 million)	₹302 crore (\$47 million)	₹650 crore (\$101 million)	[188][189][175]
2017	<i>Baahubali 2: The Conclusion</i>	₹250 crore (\$38 million)	₹831 crore (\$128 million) ^[g]	₹1,810 crore (\$278 million)	[190][191][192]
2022	<i>RRR</i>	₹550 crore (\$72 million)	₹624 crore (\$82 million) ^[h]	₹1,200–1,258 crore (\$150–160 million)	[193][194][195]

Awards and recognition

Rajamouli is a recipient of several awards including three National Film Awards, four Filmfare Awards South, and five state Nandi Awards.

In 2015, Rajamouli was named CNN-News18 Indian of the Year in Entertainment.^[107] The Government of India honoured him with Padma Shri in 2016, for his contributions to the field of Art.^[196]

His films have been screened at various film festivals such as Cannes Film Festival, Shanghai International Film Festival, Busan International Film Festival, Sitges Film Festival among others.^{[b][c]} A retrospective of Rajamouli's films was held from September 26 to October 10, 2022, in a special program titled "From Tollywood to Hollywood" as part of the 10th edition of Beyond Fest, the highest attended genre festival in the U.S.^{[217][218]}

Rajamouli was cited as an influence by directors Prashanth Neel and Ayan Mukerji.^{[219][220]} Filmmaker and actor Rahul Ravindran thinks Rajamouli alone has a foresight to predict the success of a script.^[221]



Rajamouli receiving the ANR National Award from the vice-president of India Venkaiah Naidu, September 2017.

Matt Groening, creator of the television shows *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*, while discussing his inspiration for *Disenchantment* mentioned that Rajamouli made some of his favourite films of the last decade, especially *Magadheera*. He added that the show has homages to Rajamouli.^[222] Filmmaker Mani Ratnam mentioned that the success of *Baahubali* inspired him to work on *Ponniyin Selvan: I*.^{[223][224]}

Rajamouli has redefined the reach of regional cinema consistently through his films, starting with *Eega* [2012] to the *Baahubali* series, and now with *RRR*. The entire concept of pan-Indian films came from him when he succeeded with *Eega* across many Indian languages. This opened up this concept. Thanks to his vision, today, a lot of films are able to be made on a bigger budget targeted at a pan-Indian audience. Rajamouli stands tall among all Indian filmmakers for his vision, innovation, and expansion of the regional language market at a global level.

— Film producer G. Dhananjayan on Rajamouli^[18]

Through his *Baahubali* films, Rajamouli is credited with pioneering the pan-Indian films movement.^{[16][18]} Gautam Jain of Ormax Media, a media and entertainment consulting firm writes, "Before the release of *Baahubali: The Beginning* (2015), the term 'Pan India film' did not exist in film media or audience lingo." He also called him the 'original Pan India filmmaker' and the 'most successful Pan India filmmaker'.^[17] Vijay Kiragandur, the producer of the *KGF* films credited Rajamouli for making *Baahubali* films and giving him the confidence to take *KGF: Chapter 1* to audiences across the country.^[116]

Rachel Dwyer, professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS University of London remarked that Rajamouli is India's most significant director at present who can make a film in a south Indian language that becomes a pan-Indian film which can also be enjoyed overseas audience.^[225]

Film trade analyst Komal Nahta, citing the successful track record of Rajamouli called him the "biggest Indian film director ever".^[226] Manoj Kumar R of *The Indian Express* wrote, "It's a rarity to find a director who sells more tickets than the leading stars of a movie. And in that respect, he has monopolized that space."^[57] Sagar Tetali of *Film Companion* noted, that the success of Rajamouli's films is the triumph of directorial ambition over the actor-star image — centered film culture in Telugu cinema."^[47] At the Oscars 2023, *RRR* created history as 'Naatu Naatu' song wins Best Original Song award.

See also

- List of Indian winners and nominees of the Golden Globe Awards

Notes

- Budget estimates of *Magadheera* vary. Independent estimates include ₹35 crore by *The Times of India*,^[71] ₹42 crore by *Mint*,^[72] and ₹44 crore by *News18*.^[73]
- The Telugu version of *Eega* was screened at L'Étrange Film Festival,^{[197][198][199]} 2013 Cannes Film Festival, the Panorama section of the 16th Shanghai International Film Festival and Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival.^{[200][201]} The film received Best Art Direction award at the Fantaspoa film festival of Brazil.^{[202][203]} The Tamil version *Naan Ee* was screened at the 10th Chennai International Film Festival.^{[204][205]}
- Baahubali: The Beginning* was screened at Open Cinema Strand of Busan International Film Festival, Indian Film Festival The Hague,^[206] Sitges Film Festival in Spain,^[207] Utopiales Film Festival in France,^[208] Golden Horse Film Festival in Taipei, Taiwan,^[209] Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia,^[210] L'Étrange International Film Festival in Paris,^[211] Five Flavours Film Festival in Poland,^[212] Hawaii International Film Festival in Honolulu, Brussels

International Fantastic Film Festival in Brussels, Belgium,^{[213][214]} and the Cannes Film Festival.^{[215][216]}

- d. The average exchange rate in 2017 was 67.81 Indian rupees (₹) per 1 US dollar (US\$).^[112]
- e. Box-office figures are reported in the form of either gross receipts or distributor share (distributor rentals). For older films, only the box-office share figures are available. The distributor share of a film is the box-office gross less the exhibitor's cut and taxes. For more details, see Distributor rentals.
- f. *The New Indian Express* quoted Nani estimating the film's budget as ₹26 crore,^[184] S. S. Rajamouli estimated the film's budget to be around ₹30–35 crore in an interview with *The Hindu*,^[185] and Rajeev Kamineni of PVP Cinema estimated the film's budget as ₹40 crore in an interview with *The Times of India*.^[186]
- g. Excluding China and Japan box office share
- h. Excluding Japan box office share

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223. "Mani Ratnam Says The Success of SS Rajamouli's Baahubali Inspired Him To Work On 'Ponniyin Selvan'" (<https://www.outlookindia.com/art-entertainment/mani-ratnam-says-the-success-of-ss-rajamouli-s-baahubali-inspired-him-to-work-on-ponniyin-selvan--news-217604>). *Outlook*. 20 August 2022. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220823064508/https://www.outlookindia.com/art-entertainment/mani-ratnam-says-the-success-of-ss-rajamouli-s-baahubali-inspired-him-to-work-on-ponniyin-selvan--news-217604>) from the original on 23 August 2022. Retrieved 23 August 2022. "I want to thank Rajamouli garu. In a way, he has opened a door for all of us and has shown us that this kind of film can be made. You can tell stories in two parts and be successful. It has become possible because of Baahubali, so I really want to thank him."
224. "Mani Ratnam praises SS Rajamouli: Ponniyin Selvan is possible today because of Baahubali" (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/tamil/movies/news/mani-ratnam-praises-ss-rajamouli-ponniyin-selvan-is-possible-today-because-of-baahubali/articleshow/93673902.cms>). *The Times of India*. 20 August 2022. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220822192038/https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/tamil/movies/news/mani-ratnam-praises-ss-rajamouli-ponniyin-selvan-is-possible-today-because-of-baahubali/articleshow/93673902.cms>) from the original on 22 August 2022. Retrieved 23 August 2022.
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226. Sharma, Suparna (30 April 2022). "Indian director Rajamouli scores a global hit with new film RRR" (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/30/indian-director-ss-rajamouli-rrr-film-teluga-cinema>). *Al Jazeera*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220701074059/https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/30/indian-director-ss-rajamouli-rrr-film-teluga-cinema>) from the original on 1 July 2022. Retrieved 3 July 2022. "'Rajamouli has an impeccable track record. Every film of his has worked ... It would not be wrong to say that he's the biggest [Indian film director] ever,' Komal Nahta, an Indian film trade analyst, told Al Jazeera. Since his film-making career began in 2001, Rajamouli has directed 12 films – all box office hits."

External links

- [S. S. Rajamouli \(https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1442514/\)](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1442514/) at [IMDb](#)
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