



The Handmaid's Tale finale goes on floors

ACCORDING to reports, production has started on the sixth and final season of *The Handmaid's Tale*, starring Elisabeth Moss in the lead. Moss made the announcement alongside distributor Hulu through a photo on social media. The actor also dons the hat of a director for *The Handmaid's Tale* finale, with Nicola Daley as the cinematographer.

The show is based on Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and depicts life in the dystopian Gilead. The story follows June Osbourne/Offred (Moss), a fertile woman forced to bear children for powerful commanders. Season five ends with the murder of commander Waterford (Joseph Fiennes), leaving June to face consequences and redefine her life. In the meantime, commander Lawrence works with Nick and Aunt Lydia to reform Gilead and gain power. June, Luke, and Moira continue their fight against Gilead from Canada.

The series also stars Joseph Fiennes, Yvonne Strahovski, Bradley Whitford, Max Minghella, Ann Dowd, Madeline Brewer, Amanda Brugel, Sam Jaeger, and Ever Carradine. Josh Charles is the latest addition to the cast of the show. The makers plan to release *The Handmaid's Tale* finale in the first half of 2025.



Heat, wind and an adamant cinematographer

Cinematographer B Sakthivel opens up on his work in *Kottukkaali*, capturing Madurai in its raw self, and breaks down the various shots used in the film and its meaning



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EVERY frame in PS Vinodraj's *Kottukkaali* brims with intentionality. And every shot holds a story—sparking discussions among viewers even weeks after the film's release. B Sakthivel, who worked as an associate cinematographer in films like *Maara*, *Mookuthi Amman*, and *Pathu Thala*, made his debut as a cinematographer in *Kottukkaali*. He says it was overwhelming to hear how deeply the audience connected with his work. "What thrilled me most wasn't just the praise, but hearing the audience cite specific scenes to appreciate. They told me they felt like they were journeying alongside the film and its characters," he shares.

Sakthivel and Vinodraj's association began long before the making of *Koozhangal*. "I was supposed to work in *Koozhangal*. At the time, I couldn't take up the responsibility. Vinodraj narrated *Kottukkaali*'s script to me in 2022. From the moment I read it, I knew it would be challenging as well as interesting," he recalls, adding that he wanted to capture the travel as well as the characters' emotional journey in a cinematic way.

A minimalist and precise approach

In a labour-intensive process like cinematography, Sakthivel had the added challenge of cutting mundanity wherever possible. "We experimented in all possible ways, by setting up shots from the auto's front to back, placing shots from mid to



wide to not make it repetitive. A lot of work went into figuring out which shot would convey the intended meaning. We designed and fixed the rig ourselves in Madurai with the help of a local builder," he explains, noting that it was a first of its kind.

The laborious pre-production

Just like the director's debut film, the scorching sun was a constant companion in *Kottukkaali*. With almost all the scenes taken in daylight, the cinematographer mentions having to do laborious pre-production work for three to four months before the shots could be finalised. "Each day would be different with varying intensity of heat and lighting. To ensure continuity, my assistants and I would visit the location and observe how the sun travels through the day and block the shots accordingly. We have shot the entire film in such harsh lighting," he recalls. "You can notice that the landscapes and the wind would be a constant layer across the film. If not for nature's support, we wouldn't have been able to complete the film."

Bringing out Meena's defiance on camera

In the long shot from across the bridge, nature remained calm before they arrived and will remain unchanged after they leave.

-B SAKTHIVEL, CINEMATOGRAPHER

frame, just as we hoped. That moment was exhilarating for us, and it remains one of my favourite shots," he says.

Shift in perspectives

As he unravels every trivia, one naturally wonders about the challenges of working in the film. "Apart from the lighting, we struggled with the interval portion, as it needed to be shot in a single take. The lengthy chaotic sequence required a lot of rehearsals. All of their beatings were real. This had to be done to record the sound. There were almost six retakes for that sequence alone," he reveals. From point-of-view shots to close-ups and wide, long shots, the trial and error of camera placement led to diverse perspectives. "When you examine an issue up close, it can seem enormous, but when you step back, it feels different. We played with this irony in the long shot from across the bridge during the fight scene. Nature remained calm before they arrived and will remain unchanged after they leave. It is us who abuse it," he says.

Debate around the climax

Meena is looked at as a possessed woman and the family is also adamant on casting the 'spell' out of her. By the time the film reaches its climax, the audiences are already part of their lives. "The point-of-view shots were used to make the audience interact with the characters. Pandi is confused and is shaken after the ritual takes place with another girl. The handheld shots indicate his troubled mind. The lens here is the human eye," elaborates Sakthivel. According to him, Soori had undergone a change even before the climax. "After the interval scene, where he hits everyone, he reflects on his behaviour and apologises. Throughout the journey, he is in a dilemma, which reaches its peak in the end," he signs off.