

Representation Of Urban Raw Realism in Kannada Cinema: A Study on Duniya Suri's Movies

Puneeth V Kashyap¹, Dr. Santosh S Murthy²

¹*Student, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Jain (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

²*Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Jain (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

Abstract—Indian cinema is one of the world's largest film industries and has historically tended toward glorification or escapism from lived social reality. Yet certain regional voices have created spaces for authentic storytelling that mainstream cinema ignores. With a rich literary and cultural heritage, the Kannada film industry has increasingly moved away from the romanticism of its golden era toward a more direct engagement with caste, class, poverty and urban violence. Duniya Suri stands as the most prominent figure of urban raw realism in contemporary Kannada cinema. This paper examines four of his films Jackie (2010), Kaddipudi (2013), Kenda Sampige (2015) and Tagaru (2018) as case studies in the aesthetics and ideology of raw realism. Using qualitative textual analysis across four parameters (visual aesthetics and cinematography, narrative structure, character portrayal and social identity, and ideological themes), the study demonstrates how Suri employs location shooting, local dialect, non-linear narrative, and morally ambiguous characters to present the lived experience of the urban underclass with uncompromising realism. The findings establish that Suri's cinema constitutes a sustained political critique of institutional violence, class inequality and the structural production of criminality.

Index Terms—Kannada Cinema, Raw Realism, Marginality, Underworld, Non-linear Storytelling, Urban Realism, Duniya Suri.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema has always functioned as a mirror of socio-political and cultural realities. From Italian Neorealism to France's Nouvelle Vague, from Iranian revolutionary cinema to Latin American social realism, filmmakers across the world have used the medium to interrogate power, suffering and structural inequality. Raw realism in world cinema arose as a

conscious rejection of classical Hollywood's moral clarity, arguing instead for uncertainty, texture and the burden of lived experience. Its grammar location shooting, non-professional actors, unresolved narratives, marginalised communities in the foreground travelled to regional cinemas across the globe. Indian cinema has nurtured a strong counter-tradition alongside its commercial mainstream. The Parallel Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, led by Shyam Benegal, Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, and later the neo-noir urban narratives of the 2000s Satya, Black Friday, Gangs of Wasseypur demonstrated that Indian audiences craved stories that addressed the realities of a rapidly urbanising and deeply unequal society. This realist impulse was not confined to Bollywood; it found, arguably, its most unrestricted expression in regional language cinema.

Kannada cinema, one of India's oldest film industries, has undergone an extraordinary ideological and aesthetic transformation in the past two decades. A new generation of filmmakers turned away from commercial templates toward the rawness of form and moral seriousness rooted in Bengaluru's urbanisation its migrant workers, street-level criminals, socially invisible youth and marginalised women. Duniya Suri is the most prominent name in this movement.

Suri's films offer a fearless examination of the dark side of urban Karnataka: violence, poverty, caste, exploitation and systemic neglect. His cinema is formally engaged with realism actual locations in Bengaluru's outskirts, actors who embody rather than perform working-class identity, and narrative designs that refuse heroic redemption. The four films examined here Jackie (2010), Kaddipudi (2013), Kenda Sampige (2015) and Tagaru (2018) together

constitute a coherent and critically significant body of cinematic work.

Jackie (2010) uses star power to illuminate human trafficking as a lived social evil rather than a plot device. Tagaru (2018) is Suri's most politically complex film, exposing the nexus between organised crime and political power in modern Karnataka. Kenda Sampige (2015) ventures into intimate psychological territory trauma, identity and gendered violence demonstrating that raw realism does not require spectacle. Kaddipudi (2013) interrogates the impossibility of escape from the structural logic of the underworld, functioning as a critique of the romantic myth of the redeemable criminal.

This paper argues that Duniya Suri is not merely a commercially successful crime filmmaker but a serious social realist whose work deserves sustained critical attention. The study situates his films within the broader traditions of Indian parallel cinema and global social realism while offering a theoretically grounded analysis of his representational practice.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The existing scholarship on urban realism in Indian cinema provides important contextual grounding for this study. Prasad (2014) introduces the concept of 'territorial realism' to describe cinematic attempts to portray lived urban experience in Indian films, identifying different modes of cinematic observation the authoritative gaze and detached urban observation through which filmmakers construct metropolitan spaces. Vasudevan (2015) develops the concepts of 'atmospheric urbanism' and 'cartographic imagination' to explain how urban landscapes function not merely as backdrops but as active participants in storytelling, creating suspense, psychological intensity and emotional instability.

Mehta (2011) traces the evolution of the Mumbai underworld genre, arguing that contemporary underworld cinema increasingly portrays criminality as a consequence of structural desperation and failed aspirations rather than individual moral failure. Yadav and Singh (2023) apply Foucauldian frameworks to Anurag Kashyap's films, demonstrating how urban spaces become environments where institutions, criminal networks and systemic inequalities shape identity and behaviour. Desai (2013) analyses the relationship between masculinity, violence and urban

crime, arguing that gangster protagonists in contemporary Indian cinema emerge from poverty and marginalisation rather than heroic ambition.

On Kannada cinema specifically, Raj (2022) examines caste representation in Kannada New Wave cinema, arguing that parallel cinema often reproduces voyeuristic modes of spectatorship that aestheticize suffering and poverty. R.C.A. and Poorani (2023) trace the evolution of Kannada New Wave cinema, identifying a major shift from formulaic commercial filmmaking toward narratives grounded in realism and regional identity. Guru (2017) provides historical context for the emergence of socially conscious filmmaking in Kannada cinema, while Panicker (2024) analyses Kantara as a moment when marginalised voices were centred within a culturally rooted narrative framework.

Studies of South Indian parallel cinema more broadly inform the analysis. Rajan and Jayalakshmi (2024) analyse Vetrimaran's films through social realism and critical theory, demonstrating how realistic storytelling and emotionally intense narratives increase the social impact of films exposing marginalised communities. Kamei (2024) examines how subaltern identities are represented in South Indian cinema through film codes shaped by caste, class and regional politics, drawing on Foucault's concept of 'subjugated knowledge' and Third Cinema theory.

The existing body of research on Duniya Suri reveals a significant gap: prior work tends toward auteur-focused textual analysis without empirical evidence, and almost entirely overlooks audience reception studies, particularly how the marginalised communities depicted in his films interpret their own representation. There is also insufficient theoretical attention to caste and gender as distinct analytical categories, and to the industrial pressures created by the star system on Suri's realist aesthetics.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The present study employs qualitative textual analysis of four films directed by Duniya Suri: Jackie (2010), Kaddipudi (2013), Kenda Sampige (2015) and Tagaru (2018). The epistemological context is interpretative visual, narrative and thematic elements of the cinematic texts are analysed holistically rather than

quantified. The study does not aim for statistical generalisation but for robust, evidence-based interpretations that illuminate how intentional aesthetic decisions create meaning and mediate socio-political reality.

Four analytical parameters structure the analysis across all films:

1. Visual Aesthetics and Cinematography systematic analysis of camera movement, shot structure, lighting design, colour palette and location politics.
2. Narrative Structure and Storytelling formal analysis of linear and non-linear narrative strategies, dialogue deployment, temporal structure and ideological function.
3. Character Portrayal and Social Identity analysis of character arcs, social determinism, class positioning and moral agency.
4. Ideological and Social Themes examination of institutional critique, class inequality, systemic violence and political power.

IV. THEMATIC AND FILM-WISE ANALYSIS

4.1 Jackie (2010)

Jackie marks a significant step in the direction of urban realism in Kannada cinema. The film's cinematography, by Satya Hegde, combines warmth and sunlit hues with dark rustic rawness within the same frame. Handheld camera work creates dynamic closeness synonymous with street-level storytelling, embedding the narrative in authentic Bengaluru, Mysore and rural Karnataka geographies. The visual grammar functions as social evidence: the locations are not decorative but indexical, conveying class identity and economic precarity through spatial arrangement.

The narrative employs both linear and non-linear modes, with the story narrated through Jackie and his associates' parallel viewpoints. Suri's economical screenwriting uses street-level dialogue and choreographed fight sequences as narrative exposition rather than conventional backstory scenes. Jackie is portrayed as an illiterate young man on the margins of Bengaluru's criminal world a jolly protagonist who transforms into an invested one upon confronting the hard truths of urban trafficking. The film's core ideological argument is that vulnerability and exploitation are structurally produced: institutions fail to protect the powerless, and an unqualified young

man of no social standing becomes the only person willing to act. Sound design by V. Harikrishna uses energetic folk-inflected rhythms grounded in Karnataka's working-class sensibility, while real environmental sound street noise, village acoustics anchors each scene in documentarian realism.

4.2 Kaddipudi (2013)

Kaddipudi occupies a transitional position in Suri's filmography, combining elements of raw realism with the emotional architecture of mainstream narrative. Cinematographer Krishna employs a darker, more mysterious colour palette a moral statement that visually encodes the film's thematic commitment to criminality and ambiguity. Location shooting in authentic Bengaluru rowdy-sheeter localities avoids the polished visual grammar of commercial Kannada cinema, and action choreography maintains street-level physical authenticity.

The film's most formally significant decision is the use of Anant Nag's voice-over as an ideological framework from the film's opening moments, establishing that what follows is not a heroic journey but a socially determined trajectory from which the protagonist cannot escape. This structural choice positions the film within neo-noir: social, institutional and moral factors combine to deny the protagonist any exit. Kaddipudi's characterisation is rooted in socio-economic specificity his identity is derived from birth into the tobacco business and its attendant criminal social networks. The ideological core of the film is its demonstration that organised crime and political power are mutually constitutive in contemporary Karnataka: politicians build criminal networks for electoral utility and dissolve them when they cease to serve that purpose. Kaddipudi is not guilty by individual moral failure; he is structurally entrapped.

4.3 Kenda Sampige (2015)

Kenda Sampige represents a deliberate departure from the male genre of crime and power toward intimate, psychologically complex territory. The film begins within the familiar conventions of the road movie but progressively reveals a crime syndicate beneath the romantic surface drug smuggling, police corruption and judicial ineffectiveness. The audience discovers this in tandem with the protagonists, creating tension based on restricted information rather than melodramatic revelation.

Cinematographer Satya Hegde's most significant compositional choice is the film's careful transition from a warm, bright colour palette to cold greys and blues, cinematographically mapping the protagonists' psychological descent into institutional entrapment. The use of first-time actors Vikky Varun and Manvitha Harish emphasises authenticity over star appeal. The film's ideological argument is that corruption is systemic rather than individual police, drugs and politics form an integrated network that criminalises the poor while protecting the wealthy. The class disparity between Ravi, a poor orphan, and Gowri, whose affluent family can weaponize the police system, is rendered visible through spatial composition and institutional access. V. Harikrishna's score transitions from melodious notes to increasingly anxious ones, mapping the characters' declining psychological and contextual states.

4.4 Tagaru (2018)

Tagaru is Suri's most visually bold, stylistically daring and politically complex film. Cinematographer Mahendra Simha employs aggressive camera angles and tight close-ups to create intense understanding,

immersing the audience in the film's moral conflicts. A desaturated, gritty colour scheme reinforces the neo-noir aesthetic while shadows and lighting contrasts cinematographically convey the film's central thesis: the boundary between good and evil is structurally vague.

The film's non-linear structure begins with an attempt on ACP Tagaru Shiva's life, deliberately withholding context so the audience cannot pass moral judgment until cause-and-effect relationships have been assembled. The opening metaphor society as an apple where violence and corruption lurk beneath the surface establishes the film's ideological coordinates. Shiva is constructed as neither righteous nor corrupt in conventional terms but as someone who acquires the tools and language of the state to produce extrajudicial order that echoes the very crime he aims to suppress. The underworld in Tagaru is not merely a location but a political system: a closed loop of crime, political power and law enforcement that trades in violence and favours. Charan Raj's score uses heavy bass, electronic layers, industrial percussion and synthesiser distortion to mirror institutional peril, prioritising tension over emotional drama.

V. METRIC ANALYSIS

The following table summarises the comparative scoring of the four films across the analytical parameters:

Parameter	Jackie (2010)	Kaddipudi (2013)	Kenda Sampige (2015)	Tagaru (2018)
Narrative Intensity	High – multi-threaded structure mirrors urban criminal chaos	Medium – emotionally oriented linear narrative	Medium – slow, emotionally layered progression	Very High – non-linear, fast-edited, high visual impact
Character Construction	High – anti-hero shaped by Bengaluru's criminal sociospace	Medium – protagonist torn between love and criminal identity	High – innocent protagonist entrapped by systemic power	Very High – morally torn police hero between justice and violence
Auteur Signature	High – dialects, congested cityscapes, ensemble storytelling	Medium – balance between realism and commercial conventions	High – minimalist style, emotional and social realism	Very High – non-linear narrative, dark visuals, moral ambiguity
Ethical Conflict	High – moral limits defined by survival in violent socio-economy	Medium – dilemma between moral recovery and criminal role	High – innocent heroes confronting systemic injustice	Very High – continuous moral doubt about justice vs. vengeance
Realism / Grit	Very High – hyperlocal account of crime and poverty in Bengaluru	Medium – realism combined with cinematic commercial storytelling	High – realistic environments, mundane scenarios, emotional truth	Very High – stylised violence rooted in realistic socio-political landscape
Socio-Cultural Representation	High – lived realities of marginalised urban communities	Medium – socio-political themes secondary to personal narrative	High – systemic injustice, class disparity, youth vulnerability	High – crime networks, policing and political violence as social landscape

Three defining characteristics distinguish Duniya Suri's authorial voice across all four films: the role of socio-spatial environment in shaping character identity and moral conduct; violence deployed as both artistic element and manifestation of moral and institutional conflict; and the blending of fragmented narrative forms with realistic representation to depict urban chaos and social unrest. Unlike conventional mainstream films, Suri's characters are not autonomous agents but individuals determined by the structural systems that surround them.

VI. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the four films confirms that Duniya Suri is a filmmaker who deploys urban raw realism as both artistic medium and political discourse. In all four films, Bengaluru becomes a socio-political document rather than merely a backdrop: congested lanes, tobacco trade spaces, dilapidated interiors and semi-urban highways are employed as commentary on structural inequality rather than as decoration.

The narrative architectures are carefully calibrated to ideological ends. Jackie's multi-character fragmented structure reflects the chaos of urban criminal networks. Tagaru's non-linearity prevents premature moral judgment. Kaddipudi's linear neo-noir structure, anchored by Anant Nag's voice-over, establishes structural determinism from the first frame. Kenda Sampige's gradual disclosure of corruption sustains ideology-based tension without melodrama.

The most consistent ideological thread across Suri's work is the argument that crime and marginalisation are not products of individual moral failure but of structural production. The police, political establishment and criminal underworld do not function as opposing entities in his films but as one integrated system that perpetuates class inequality. In Kaddipudi, politicians construct and dissolve criminal networks for electoral gain. In Tagaru, ACP Shiva's extrajudicial violence is a continuation of the criminal system he is supposed to eliminate. In Kenda Sampige, institutional power criminalises poverty while protecting privilege. In Jackie, the police function as instruments of fear rather than justice.

Suri's filmography demonstrates a traceable aesthetic evolution: Jackie embodies chaotic realism through fragmented multi-character narration; Tagaru achieves controlled fragmentation through non-linear form and

neo-noir stylistics; Kaddipudi occupies a transitional position balancing realism with commercial viability; and Kenda Sampige signals a deliberate move toward minimalist social realism in which structural violence is expressed through the textures of ordinary life rather than spectacular display.

VII. FINDINGS

The following key findings emerge from the analysis:

1. Urban space as social argument: In all four films, Suri uses Bengaluru locations as moral and socio-economic indicators. The surroundings of his characters are essential elements of their moral conduct, reflecting M. Madhava Prasad's concept of 'regional realism' in the Indian film industry.
2. Visual aesthetics as ideological discourse: The deliberate choices of colour, lighting and camera work across the four films constitute a refusal of commercial cinematic language. The warm-to-cold colour shift in Kenda Sampige symbolises psychological deterioration; neo-noir desaturation in Tagaru visualises moral ambiguity.
3. Non-linear narrative as moral device: Tagaru's fractured timeline makes the viewer an active participant in ethical evaluation, requiring cause-and-effect relationships to be assembled before judgment can be rendered. Kaddipudi and Kenda Sampige employ narrative withholding to sustain ideological tension.
4. Structurally determined protagonists: Suri's characters are invariably shaped by class, caste and urban violence rather than individual choice. Jackie's criminal entanglement results from economic disempowerment; Kaddipudi's inability to exit rowdyism is structurally inevitable; ACP Shiva in Tagaru is equally a creation of the violent system he operates within.
5. Institutions as systems of structural violence: Police, political establishment and criminal networks across all four films form an interconnected apparatus that reproduces class inequality. This systemic critique is the most sustained ideological argument in Suri's cinema, and what most clearly situates him within the tradition of Indian parallel cinema.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has examined urban raw realism in Kannada cinema through close textual analysis of four films by Duniya Suri, employing four analytical parameters: visual aesthetics and cinematography, narrative structure and storytelling, characterisation and social identity, and ideological and social themes. Tagaru emerges as the most formally complex and developed film across all parameters; Jackie establishes the base aesthetic vocabulary for raw realism in the Kannada context; Kaddipudi functions as a transitional work; and Kenda Sampige represents a conscious shift toward minimalism.

The visual practice of Suri constitutes a form of political discourse. The cinematography of Satya Hegde in Jackie and Kenda Sampige, Krishna in Kaddipudi and Mahendra Simha in Tagaru develops an aesthetics of desaturation, natural light and handheld camera technique that negates the visual grammar of commercial Kannada cinema. Sound design from V. Harikrishna's folk-inflected scores connecting characters to Karnataka's working-class culture, to Charan Raj's industrial electronic compositions creating institutional peril functions as an ideological instrument alongside the image.

The study formally argues that crime and marginalisation in Suri's films are not individual pathologies but structural products. The one constant across all four films is Suri's refusal to separate police, political establishment and organised crime into competing forces: they constitute an integrated system that perpetuates economic difference. By situating Suri's films within the broader context of Italian neo-realism, Indian parallel cinema and contemporary South Indian social realism, this study positions him alongside filmmakers such as Satyajit Ray, Shyam Benegal, Anurag Kashyap and Vetrimaran. His specific contribution lies in his rootedness in Bengaluru's particular socio-geography its street language, working-class cultural life and specific landscapes of precarity.

The study's primary limitation is its auteur-focused methodology, which does not account for audience reception, particularly among the marginalised communities Suri represents. Future research should conduct ethnographic audience studies in working-class Bengaluru neighbourhoods, employ caste and feminist theoretical frameworks for more precise

analysis of social identity in the films, and undertake transnational comparative studies situating Suri within global traditions of urban social realism. Duniya Suri is not merely an artistically gifted crime filmmaker. He is a socially engaged realist whose four films form a coherent body of cinematic work that positions Kannada cinema as an important, autonomous and critically under-examined tradition in Indian filmmaking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author expresses gratitude to Dr. Bhargavi D. Hemmige, Head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Jain (Deemed-to-be University), and to the research guide Dr. S. Santosh for their unwavering support, insightful guidance and invaluable feedback throughout every stage of this research.

REFERENCES

- [1] M. C. Raj, "Caste, voyeurism and Kannada new wave cinema," in *The Routledge Companion to Caste and Cinema in India*. Routledge, 2022.
- [2] M. M. Prasad, "Realism and fantasy in representations of metropolitan life in Indian cinema," in *Figurations in Indian Film*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- [3] L. Srinivas, "Cinema halls, locality and urban life," *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 189–205, 2010.
- [4] R. Vasudevan, "Bombay cinema's mapping impulse: Location, suspense and atmosphere," *Studies in South Asian Film and Media*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 5–26, 2015.
- [5] M. Mehta, "Festering dreams: Cinematic representation of Mumbai underworld," *South Asian Popular Culture*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 41–53, 2011.
- [6] S. Yadav and V. P. Singh, "Urban landscape and political violence in Anurag Kashyap's cinematic narratives: A Foucauldian perspective," *Media Watch*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 112–124, 2023.
- [7] B. P. M. C. Guru, "Critical analysis on history of Kannada cinema," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 8, pp. 204–217, 2017.

- [8] S. Jayakumar, "Neorealism in Indian cinema," *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013.
- [9] N. S. Wright, "Urban violence and cinematic space in contemporary Indian cinema," *Screen*, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 471–488, 2018.
- [10] J. Desai, "Violence, masculinity and the Indian gangster film," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 310–325, 2013.
- [11] S. S. Dave, "Real locations and the politics of authenticity in Indian cinema," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 27–44, 2020.
- [12] Y. Wang, "The discussion between puzzle film and non-linear narrative film," *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 4, pp. 19–26, 2022.
- [13] J. J. Panicker, "Subaltern identity, psycho-cultural sensibility and caste parlance in film *Kantara*," *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2024.
- [14] G. V. Rajan and V. Jayalakshmi, "Cinema's portrayal of marginalised voices: A study of Vetrimaran's films," *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2024.
- [15] A. S. M. Riyas and S. Keerthana, "Cult cinema as a guide to life: Subcultural identity in *Vada Chennai*," *Studies in Indian Place Names*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 3782–3790, 2020.
- [16] R. Haripriya and M. Saranya, "Polychromatic paradigms: The semiotics of colour in Tamil cinematic narratives," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 6, no. 5, 2024.
- [17] H. B. Sharma and G. Gera, "Resurgence of parallel cinema in the OTT era," *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1245–1258, 2024.
- [18] D. Biswas and G. Roy, "Negotiating cultural dominance within Indian regional cinema," *European Economic Letters*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2026.
- [19] M. Kamei, "Subaltern identity and film code in cinema from the South of India," *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2024.
- [20] S. K. Putta, "Emergence of Pan-Indian South cinema," *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2024.
- [21] R. C. A. and A. Poorani, "The new wave in Kannada cinema: From 2006 to the present day," *Peer-reviewed Journal Article*, 2023.
- [22] R. Doraiswamy, *The City in Indian Cinema: Space, Identity and Urban Experience*. Film Studies Publication, 2017.
- [23] T. N. Banerjee, "New masculinities and the aesthetics of violence in *Gangs of Wasseyapur*," *Research Paper*, 2025.
- [24] S. Sarkar and A. Choudry, "Indian cinema and cultural identity: Negotiating tradition, modernity and global influence," *Film Studies Journal*, 2025.
- [25] N. J. Sachin, "Film as development communication: An analytical study of selected Kannada movies," *Research Publication*, 2023.