



A Study Of Sustainable Development Goals Reflected In Actor Vivek Comedy In Tamil Cinema: A Special Reference To The Film Kadhal Sadugudu

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Abstract: This research investigates the incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the comic performances of actor Vivek in Tamil cinema, with a particular emphasis on the film Kadhal Sadugudu (2003). Vivek, known for blending comedy with social conscience, uses his screen presence to promote key topics such as environmental preservation, education, and civic responsibility—all of which are essential themes connected with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The present research examines selected sequences and exchanges from Kadhal Sadugudu, focusing on how Vivek's character promotes sustainable principles softly but successfully via sarcasm and wit. The research adopts the qualitative analysis of content technique to investigate the relationship between enjoyment and advocacy. By analyzing Vivek's role in raising public knowledge about sustainability, the research highlights the power of popular film as a tool for social change. Finally, this study adds to the discussion of cultural interaction techniques for environmentally friendly growth via the perspective of regional film and popular comedy performance.

Index Terms – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), development Communication, Satire, Gender Violence, Social Justice

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals, endorsed by the United Nations in 2015, are a comprehensive and transformative framework aimed at addressing global disparities in poverty, education, gender equality, climate resilience, and institutional justice by 2030. With 17 interlinked goals and 169 actionable targets, the SDGs are a policy directive and a normative blueprint for inclusive human progress. Importantly, cultural platforms, especially cinema serve as vital channels for advancing the SDG agenda by translating abstract principles into emotionally resonant narratives. Tamil cinema exemplifies popular film can challenge entrenched power structures and promote Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) themes such as social equity (SDG 10) and justice (SDG 16). This aligns with Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), wherein media not only shapes public discourse but also influences issue relevance and policy attention. As a vehicle of mass communication, cinema plays a critical role in fostering sustainability consciousness and catalyzing

civic engagement, making the 2030 Agenda more accessible, actionable, and enduring within the public imagination.

COMEDY FOR SOCIAL AWARENESS

Cinema is a powerful medium that shapes culture, influences public opinion, and drives social change. Tamil cinema, with a rich history rooted in social reform and political activism, has long used storytelling and song to challenge injustice and promote progressive ideas, making it a vital force in shaping society

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a paradigm shift in Tamil cinema's approach to comedy, transitioning from slapstick humor designed purely for entertainment to satire imbued with social critique. Prior to this period, comedic elements primarily functioned as lighthearted interludes without substantive socio-political engagement. However, the emergence of social reform movements and rationalist ideologies during this era reshaped Tamil cinema's narrative priorities. Comedy evolved into a platform for interrogating systemic issues including caste hierarchies, gender inequities, and political malfeasance—thus reflecting broader societal transformations (Baskaran, 1996).

N. S. Krishnan (NSK) revolutionized Tamil cinema by transforming comedy into a powerful tool for social reform, embedding Dravidian ideals like anti-casteism, rationalism, and social justice into his films. Aligned with Periyar's Self-Respect Movement and collaborating with thinkers like C. N. Annadurai, NSK used satire to critique untouchability, superstition, and gender inequality without alienating audiences (Baskaran, 1996; Pandian, 1991). Films such as *Miss Malini* (1947) and *Naveena Sarangadhara* (1949) showcased his ability to merge entertainment with reformist messages, making cinema a vehicle for mass political awareness. His legacy endures through socially conscious comedians like Vivek, affirming NSK's foundational role in Tamil cinema's engagement with social change. M.R. Radha was a pioneering force in Tamil cinema who seamlessly merged art with activism. A vocal proponent of the Dravidian movement, his films tackled caste oppression, religious dogma, and social injustice, echoing Periyar's rationalist ideals. In works like *Ratha Kanneer*, Radha used satire, sharp dialogue, and commanding performance to challenge societal norms and promote scientific thinking. His cinematic voice anticipated the goals of SDG 10 and SDG 16, positioning cinema as a tool for social reform. Radha's legacy remains a powerful example of film as a platform for political and cultural transformation.

ACTOR VIVEK (1961–2021)

Vivek (1961–2021), awarded the Padma Shri (2009) for his contributions for entertainment with public service messaging. Popularly known as Vivekanandan and awarded the title Chinna Kalaiwanar was a transformative figure in Tamil cinema. Vivek's humor was rooted in social realism and reformist ideals. Drawing inspiration from predecessors like N. S. Krishnan and M. R. Radha, comedy, he used satire as a tool for social criticism, environmental advocacy, and SDG-aligned messaging, blending entertainment with activism. Vivek's work continues to inspire generations of comedians and filmmakers to use art not only to entertain but also to enlighten and mobilize society toward positive change. Proving that humor could be both entertaining and emancipator. By integrating SDG-aligned messaging (sustainability, education, equality) into mainstream cinema. During the COVID-19 pandemic, his old dialogues on hygiene were repurposed for awareness campaigns.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To critically examine how Vivek's comedy in *Kaathal Sadugudu* addresses gender-based violence and patriarchal justice systems in Tamil cinema

To analyze Vivek's comedy representations of religious fundamentalism and its impact on education, aligning with relevant SDGs

To explore Vivek's comedy highlights rural challenges like farmer suicides and agricultural crises, attention to critical issues addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Radha Bathran (2021) Popular Tamil films promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) An analysis of *Jai Bhim* (2021) The film emphasizes the social dimensions of SDGs, highlighting issues like police brutality, caste discrimination, and gender violence aligning with SDGs 16 and 10. It also portrays economic struggles such as poverty, forced labor, and migration, reflecting SDGs 1 and 8. Though subtle, environmental elements like indigenous practices align with SDG 15. Institutional failures, including lack of

legal documents and corruption, obstruct SDGs 5, 10, and 16. The film uses narrative power to expose injustice and advocate for reform. As a form of sustainability communication, it calls for human rights and equity. Jai Bhim reinforces the urgency for inclusive development and justice.

S. Yamunai Selvan (2017) 23rd Pulikesi may appear as a light-hearted commercial Tamil film, but beneath its comedic surface lies a potent political satire addressing several pressing social issues. The film critiques child labor by advocating for children's rights to education and freedom from exploitation. Its strong stance against foreign soft drinks like Pepsi and Coca-Cola promotes healthier, local alternatives such as coconut water, encouraging better public health and conscious consumption. The narrative also critiques corruption, caste-based politics, and government inaction, while promoting the need for justice and institutional accountability. Through satire, the film highlights the importance of responsible media and creative storytelling as tools for awareness and social development. Overall, the film functions as a medium for social critique and change, proving that even commercial cinema can serve as a catalyst for positive transformation.

(Ganesh, 2015) Saravana Ganesh has written about the Marathi movie 'Court' in his blog. He stated that Court is a very simple movie which documents the present judicial system in a realistic way. It makes the observer passive bringing out the mass psychology, judicial absurdity and bureaucracy which seems to be more tightened within the system without identity but it could change the life of people who needs justice

Kumar (2022) T. J. Gnanavel's Jai Bhim (2021) brings to light the legal and systemic oppression faced by the Irular tribal community; a marginalized group often overlooked in mainstream discourse. The courtroom drama exposes the deep-rooted injustices in the legal system and society's failure to protect vulnerable communities. It highlights the intersectionality of caste and tribal identity, broadening the scope of caste discourse in Indian cinema

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing content analysis to critically examine comedian Vivek's scenes that highlight pressing social issues, including gender equality, Judiciary, population, family planning, agriculture, public healthcare. By conducting a detailed, scene-by-scene visual analysis is conducted with particular focus on the film Kaathal Sadugudu. The study emphasizes the transformative potential of satire in advancing SDG-related values and challenging entrenched social norms.

Agenda-Setting Theory: (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) explains how media influences public perception of key issues; this complements the analysis of Vivek's narratives prioritize SDG-linked concerns—such as education inequity and farmer suicides—in public discourse.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the scene, a village elite person attempts sexual harassment, a rape case is resolved with a fine of Rs. 2000 or by the instructing perpetrator to marry the victim. During this conversation, Super Suppu (Vivek) enters and pointedly asks the accused, "Are you going to marry the girl you raped?" To which the accused replies casually, "I already paid the Rs. 2000 fine to the panchayat. In the Scene initially satirizes the panchayat system in rural areas this portrayal aligns with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG 5 Gender Equality Challenging patriarchal justice systems. SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions Exposing flaws in informal dispute resolution SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities Highlighting discrimination against women in rural justice mechanisms. The panchayat's verdict reinforces gender-based violence by treating marriage as a solution to rape, violating women's bodily autonomy. Trivializing Rape via Fines a ₹2000 fine reduces rape to a monetary issue, undermining ending all forms of violence against women. Similar cases in Bihar and Haryana have shown panchayats imposing fines as low as ₹500 (PUCL Report, 2019). SDG 16 Access to Justice & Legal Accountability promotes rule of law and equal access to justice, which informal systems often deny. Real-world parallels exist, like khap panchayats issuing illegal diktats. SDG 10- Reducing Inequalities in Justice Delivery, Village women face double discrimination, gender bias and lack of legal awareness. SDG 10.3 calls for eliminating discriminatory laws; panchayat rulings often contradict this. Studies show panchayats favor dominant castes when adjudicating rape cases (Thorat & Neuman, 2012).

In the second comedy scene, when a baby girl is born, an elderly woman attempts to feed the newborn palm wine. At that moment, Super Suppu stops her and addresses the girl baby death palm wine. Then, as the

village panchayat leader, Super Suppu says, Your father said that if a girl child is born, she must be fed palm wine that is a dharma a righteous tradition.

Kallippaal serves as a metaphor for systemic violence, with the bitter milk symbolizing the deep-rooted neglect of girl children, reflecting ongoing gender disparities. The portrayal of the panchayat as an enforcer of patriarchal norms highlights how traditional institutions can perpetuate harmful gender biases such as viewing the birth of a girl as a 'curse'—thereby undermining efforts toward achieving SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 16 Justice and Strong Institutions by exposing the persistence of tradition-based gender violence.”

FAKE GODMEN & EDUCATION

In a comedy scene, a godman says, "God came to me in a dream last night and told me that He would suddenly appear in this place. He instructed me to fence off four acres of land around here and build a temple. People should come here and worship me." At that moment, Super Suppu (Vivek) asks, "But within those four acres, there's a school. What do we do about that?" The godman replies, "I asked God about that, too. He told me to demolish the school." He then adds, "Also, the bus shouldn't come here anymore. If we don't follow this, it will be considered a sin against God."

SDG 4 Quality Education, The fake godman's claim that God told me to demolish the school directly challenges SDG 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The school, a symbol of learning and empowerment, is portrayed as expendable in the face of unverified religious instruction. SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, by insisting that the bus shouldn't come here anymore, the god man also obstructs SDG 11, which advocates for accessible, safe, and inclusive urban and rural spaces. Public transportation is a lifeline for community mobility, especially in rural or underserved areas

FAMILY PLANNING AWARENESS

In a comedy scene, Super suppu mocks a man with many kids in a bullock cart, asking about family planning. When the man mentions the government warning against plastic, Super suppu wittily says, “The government should clarify which plastic to use and which not to,” humorously linking contraceptives to the plastic ban

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being and SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Through humor, Super Suppu emphasizes the importance of family planning, indirectly advocating for access to reproductive health services and family planning awareness. Simultaneously, the dialogue about plastic reflects on the need for clarity in public health messaging and environmental policies, resonating with responsible consumption. The scene cleverly uses satire to address two crucial development goals, promoting sustainable behavior both in terms of population control. In the comedic scene, Super Suppu observes a bull prepared for Jallikattu, adorned with a garland and cloth. When he questions the nature of Jallikattu, the villagers explain that it involves taming the bull. He then humorously questions how the calm bull becomes aggressive during the event, to which they respond, “We give it alcohol before the competition.”

SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production: The act of giving alcohol to an animal for entertainment purposes raises ethical concerns about irresponsible practices and the misuse of substances. It reflects a need for awareness around sustainable and humane cultural practices. SDG 15 – Life on Land: The scene touches on animal welfare, suggesting a deeper critique of how animals are treated in traditional sports. While cultural heritage is important, the satire points to the need for balancing tradition with animal rights and ethical treatment. SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being: Indirectly, the mention of alcohol being used to provoke animals also reflects harmful substance practices, raising awareness about the broader social implications of alcohol misuse in society.

AGRICULTURE CRISIS

In a comedy scene, a farmer tries to commit suicide due to extreme poverty. Vivek intervenes and asks why. The farmer says there's no food, no rain, no water in the wells, and even the free electricity has been cut. When asked, the farmer admits he spends 40 rupees daily on alcohol and 25 on cigarettes, despite his family's suffering. Vivek points out the irony of wasting 70 rupees on himself while planning to abandon his family. When asked if he shared his struggles, Vivek delivers a powerful message, saying 80% of India relies on agriculture, and if farmers had united, rivers would have been nationalized by now but divisions by caste, religion, and politics keep them silent. In this satirical scene, Vivek sheds light on the multilayered struggles of Indian farmers, addressing key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The farmer's desperation and suicidal thoughts due to lack of food and water reflect extreme rural poverty and agricultural distress caused by climate vulnerability (SDG 2.4). Ironically, despite his family's starvation,

the farmer spends ₹70 daily on alcohol and cigarettes, highlighting misplaced priorities and multidimensional poverty the scene also portrays water scarcity and policy failures, with dry wells and electricity cuts worsening irrigation access, pointing to inefficient water use (SDG 6.4) and lack of affordable energy (SDG 7.1). Vivek's remark If farmers united, rivers would be nationalized emphasizes the need for collective action and integrated water management (SDG 6.5). Furthermore, the farmer's addiction underscores the impact of substance abuse on health (SDG 3.5) and neglected mental health issues (SDG 3.4). The satire also critiques social divisions like caste, religion, and politics that fragment farmer unity (SDG 10.2) and exposes media indifference to rural suffering (SDG 16.10). Finally, Super Suppu (Vivek) powerful statement 80% of India depends on agriculture—calls attention to the lack of inclusive and farmer-focused policymaking (SDG 16.7), urging for a more just, unified, and sustainable rural future

HEALTHCARE

In a comedy scene, Super Suppu is admitted to the hospital after drinking passion water, but due to a medical error, the doctors perform surgery on his eye by mistake.

In a comedy scene sharply critiques systemic healthcare failures, highlighting key Sustainable Development Goals SDGs. The wrongful eye operation instead of treating poisoning underscores serious medical negligence, violating the quality healthcare standards outlined in SDG 3.8 and the need to strengthen health risk management SDG 3.D. The revelation that the “doctor” has only passed 12th grade exposes the prevalence of unqualified practitioners, undermining efforts to improve health workforce training SDG 3.C and reflecting inadequate regulation of medical education SDG 4.3 and vocational training SDG 4.4. The nurse's casual dismissal of the error demonstrates poor professional accountability SDG 4.7, while the hospital's failure to verify credentials points to institutional corruption and weak governance (SDG 16.6, 16.5). Super Suppu demand for transparency symbolizes public calls for responsive and accountable institutions (SDG 16.7). The scene also highlights the exploitation of poor and rural communities, exacerbating healthcare inequality SDG 1.4, 10.3.

5. FINDINGS

Vivek scenes serve as powerful critiques of systemic failures across rural India. They expose how patriarchal justice trivializes sexual violence and how cultural traditions normalize gender-based harm. The misuse of religion to obstruct education underscores threats to public infrastructure and rational governance. Humor becomes a tool to address sensitive issues like family planning and mental health. The Jallikattu satire raises ethical concerns about animal abuse and substance misuse. Farmer suicide scenes reveal the impact of climate vulnerability, poor policy, and social fragmentation. The fake doctor narrative spotlights healthcare negligence and regulatory gaps. Collectively, these portrayals align with key SDGs, demanding deeper societal and institutional reform. They reflect the urgent need to uphold SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Each scene challenges the effectiveness of grassroots governance, reinforcing the call for inclusive, accountable, and rights-based development.

6. CONCLUSION

Vivek comedy demonstrates how mass media, particularly film, can effectively promote awareness and dialogue around critical social issues aligned with key Sustainable Development Goals. By addressing themes like gender equality, health, justice, and rural challenges through humor, his work not only entertains but also educates and inspires change. This underscores the important role of film as a catalyst for sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based social transformation.

7. REFERENCE

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