

A Semiotic Study on Ananda Vikatans' Editorial Cartoons on Jallikattu Protest

Nepul Raj A¹, Dr. Jayaprakash D²

¹ Research Scholar, School of Mass Communication, Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (Deemed to be University), Chennai, India

² Associate Professor, Department of Visual Communication, School of Mass Communication, Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (Deemed to be University), Chennai, India
E-mail: ¹E-mail: nepu2005@gmail.com, ²jpdmedia@gmail.com,

Abstract: This paper focuses on the significance of cartoons as a vehicle of setting Jallikattu protest theme among people of Tamil Nadu in the leading magazine Ananda Vikatan. This study has applied qualitative method to examine the cartoons through semiotic analysis. The researcher has applied play theory in this study to understand how media contents along with entertaining the viewers, influences their perception as well.

Keywords: Ananda Vikatan, Cartoons, Jallikattu Protest, Play Theory, Semiotics.

Date of Submission: 27-03-2019

Date of acceptance: 11-04-2019

I. INTRODUCTION

Cartoons are very simple and creative visual medium that are used to mock at serious social issues in a humorous manner. Though cartoons are simple drawing or sketch, they widen their knowledge and perception among the people in the society by commenting in a satirical way on various issues ranging from cultural values, economic power, political play to policy, health, environment, sports, and fine arts industry, etc.

Jimoh (2017) states that "Cartoons use imagery, metaphor, symbolism and other rhetorical devices, to define political and other situations and attempt to interpret topical issues and events visually in a manner that is amusing and thought-provoking".

Recently this medium has been creating a solid atmosphere in spreading the message of unconventional issues as a serious mode of communication. Tamil Nadu cartoonist Bala's controversial cartoon (2017) on naked Tirunelveli Police Commissioner, Collector and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu covering up with wads of case, as they close their eyes to a child's burning body. Cartoonist Bala landed into trouble with his arrest. But his cartoon widened people's perception and discussion on politics and society as well as it extended the power of cartoons in various quarters. It created some unset climate among the officers and politicians who were involved in this issue.

Likewise, Cartoonist Ma Mugilan exhibited his works in 2019, January at Loyala College Chennai. The cartoons were supposedly against the BJP government and many big corporates of India. He stated "I use my art as a weapon when my land or my people are threatened in any way and I fear no one" (Johanna Deeksha 2019). This is the only art medium in which one can spread awareness on issues and criticize anyone affecting the wellbeing of society. There are many cartoonists like R.K. Laxman, Keshav, Madhan, Mangesh Tendulkar, Hasif Khan and Ravi who have all made some remarkable imprints in this creative medium.

All daily Newspaper and Magazines gives sufficient space to cartoons to hold serious issues to be narrated in a visual form. In this study the researcher has chosen Jallikattu cartoons from Ananda Vikatan, India's leading Tamil Magazine (India Readership Survey 2017). All Jallikattu cartoons in Ananda Vikatan Magazine are drawn by Cartoonist Hasif Khan. These are very amusing and convey serious messages about the Jallikattu protest.

Jallikattu, a sport with bull is celebrated every year in the mid of January during the Tamil harvesting festival, popularly known as Pongal. It's a thanksgiving celebration of Tamil farmers to the nature and cow. On this auspicious occasion a bull is released into the crowd of people and the participants make an attempt to grab its hump and ride on it as long as possible. This is the sport of pride among the people of Tamil Nadu. The NGO People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and other animal activists jointly filed a case against this sport and made Supreme Court to ban it in 2014. Ministry of Environment and Forest included Bulls under the list of non-performing animal; this further lost and stopped all traditional sports like Jallikattu, Kambala, Rekla Race under Preventions Cruelty of Animals Act, 1960.

In January 16, 2017 youngsters from Tamil Nadu gathered in Marina Beach against the ban on Jallikattu. This was led after the arrest of 200 people of Allaganallur village who initiated this protest for Jallikattu. Social Media supporters made this protest viral with thousands of messages, memes, cartoons and videos to support Jallikattu. The constant support from cinema actors, judges, general public, to children favoring the conduct of Jallikattu on the Tamil soil was immense.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this semiotic study on Ananda Vikatan cartoon is to create a link between the literal and symbolic meaning of Jallikattu cartoons by Hasif Khan and how the viewer can perceive the inner meaning of every element within the cartoon. Using cartoons as a medium of communication, codes and symbols are used to depict the purpose of every concept and construction patterns of cartoon that represents issues from the society.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The cartoon serves as a capsule version of editorial opinion meant for the reading public to swallow and probably get some societal ills cured. In other words, the drawing or graphic illustration and the commentaries in cartoons on political and social issues are not only intended to create fun for the readers but they also seek to ginger their sense of reasoning into clamouring for positive change in the political structure (Onakpa and Mohammed 2014).

The cartoon offers entertainment for newspaper and magazine readers. Entertainment is one of the cardinal roles of the press in the society. Even though some people are of the opinion that -Life is too serious for laughter (to quote an anonymous English Politician), laughter is an antidote to stress, a palliative therapy for the depressed. Using his art the cartoonist cheers people up when they are low-spirited. One can conveniently refer to the cartoon as a safety valve meant to ease tension and stress. It is therefore very apt when J. Geipel, in David and Charles (1972) describes it as the slang of graphic art. He says,

“Like verbal slang, they tend to rely for their impact on spontaneity, playfulness, popular imagery and often deliberate vulgarity... providing a most suitable way out of man's healthy and irresistible urge to poke fun at his fellow, institutions and himself.”

A critical analysis of Geipel's statement could lead to a tendency to see the cartoon as a vehicle for trivializing very serious political and social issues of human life. But the reverse is actually the case. Most of art-drama, music, painting, prose writing, poetry are all engaged in this, making fun of serious situations but simultaneously, launching pungent attacks on such situations and the personalities involved. Cartoons cover the pulse of the nation. They bring out in sublime ways the social contradictions in the society. They also provide a means of educating readers and equally offer opinion leadership. Invariably, the cartoonist makes it possible for a society to engage in soul searching.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The play theory of Mass Communication is selected as appropriate for this study. Stephenson (1964) had propounded this theory, which underlined the way for the use of media for our satisfaction and also how media bring changes in our lives based on its content. Pain and pleasure are the two main faces of this theory. These have two ends. Uses and gratification theory is in a way related to this theory. Uses and gratification states the pleasure from its use not as the medium of information and education. We use media information for our real lives. The information from media can have different interpretations. Jallikattu protest information through the media can make someone think seriously, can make someone see it as satiric illustration and mock against the politicians and people. These cartoons can reflect the real life happenings and also people tend to see it as a continuation process of expressions.

III. METHODOLOGY

The cartoons were analyzed using Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics. In which, denotation and connotation are terms explaining the correlation and associations between the signifier and its signified, and an analytic distinction is made between two types of signified namely a denotative signified and a connotative signified. “Denotation can be described as the literal and obvious lexicon attempts. The term connotation is used to bring up to the socio-cultural and personal associations involving ideological and emotional content of the sign as stated by Daniel. Folklores serve the ideological function of naturalization and their function is to enfranchise the cultural dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely ordinary, normal, undeniable, timeless, obvious common-sense and thereby objective and true reflections of the way things are” (Barthes 1977).

The researcher employed the purposive sampling, which includes pictures of *Ananda Vikatan* magazine of 2017. Jallikattu editorial cartoons have been effectively employed in analyzing on how cartoons in leading

magazine are used as a vehicle of setting *Jallikattu* protest agenda among people in Tamil Nadu. This research applied qualitative method to examine the cartoons through semiotic analysis. The researcher applied play theory in this study about how media contents entertain the viewer and also changes our perception. The significance of the study in this paper is that how far Ananda Vikatan cartoons on Jallikattu themes were entertaining and informative to common people.

IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Cartoon No: 01



Figure 1. Ananda Vikatan, Jan 2017

Table No. 1 Adutha Alai Varum! (The Next Wave Shall Come!)

S.No	Icon	Meaning
1.	The man writing on the beach shore.	O. Panneer Selvam Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. His white dress tells that he is a politician.
2.	144	The Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) prohibits any assembly of five or more people in an area where it has been imposed.
3.	Lathi	It is a heavy iron-bound bamboo stick used as a weapon by the police. Symbolically it represents the Power, Control, Supremacy, Authority and Fear.
4.	Light house	Marina Beach Land mark. One of the largest beach in Asia that gained popularity during the Jallikattu protest 2017.
5.	Text - “அடுத்த அலை வரும்!”	Black colored font represents protesters voice with exclamatory mark.
Denotation	Connotation	Myth
The cartoon explains about the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu writing the 144 in Marina Beach shore. He is using lathi as a tool to write 144 in sea shore. He wears white color dress and black shoe.	Based on the study, the paper concludes that the cartoon of Adutha Alai Varum! Voices out on 144 of IPC ACT which was imposed by the government (ADMK) after the Jallikattu protest, an act that orders people not to gather in beach for any kind of protest.	Article 19 of Indian Constitution says every citizen of India has right for expression. It's our fundamental rights. But this 144 IPC law is against people's freedom. Even this law creates a fear among people who stands for the basic right.

4.2 Semiotic Sign Analysis

This cartoon shows about the Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu O.Panneer Selvam writing down the Central Government Act 144 on Sea Shore. He is holding a stick very tightly with both of his hand and writing IPC act 144. The sticks in his hand is not just an ordinary one, it is a lathi used by police to control any unlawful activities and crimes in society. The Ex-Chief Minister in this cartoon is appearing in white shirt and dhoti and wearing black colored shoe. He looks same as always as with *kumkum* and *vibuthi* in his forehead with smiling face here.

The background of this cartoon is lighthouse tower which shows this activity is happening in Chennai marina beach. The sea waves are in motion but do not touch the text '144'. This cartoon contains a text saying “அடுத்தஅலைவரும்!” (Adutha Alai Varum!) which connotes that this 144 can never stop people from protesting further. '144' has been written on the sands of the beach. The waves are frequent and powerful enough in erasing the writings. The font color being in black perfectly represents protesters voice as against this 144 act. This cartoon symbolize clearly that even if there is no police force in scene, government (state and central) is behind this law enforcement and insist not to protest or gather anymore in marina beach. If there is a violation of law, they will be arrested under Section 144. The Indian Penal Code 144 says “Joining unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapon. Whoever, being armed with any deadly weapon, or with anything which, used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both” (IPC 1860). This cartoon was published in AnadaVikatan magazine in 2017 by the cartoonist Hasif Khan, representing the after effects of Jallikattu protests in Tamil Nadu, that involved over 1,00,000 people, including several thousand who assembled on the Marina beach, to protest against the ban on the rural sport of Jallikattu.

4.3 Cartoon No: 02



Figure 2. Ananda Vikatan, Jan 2017

Table No. 2 Ponga Ponga!

S.No	Icon	Meaning
1.	A man trying to make the traditional sound of Kozhava (Tamil traditional folk sound) (in front of Pongal Pot with sugarcane in his hand).	Thiru. Modi, Prime Minister of India, is making a sound of Kozhavai against the protesters of Tamil Nadu.
2.	A man standing in the background with folded hands.	He is O.Panneer Selvam, Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu with his trade mark actions of folded hands in white veshti hoti and shirts).
3.	Mud Pot	Mud Pot is used to cook pongal in pongal festival in Tamil Nadu. It is a Tamil traditional culture.
4.	Fire	Here the fire is created by wooden stove and wood is used to cook pongal.
5.	Sugarcane	It is one of the main elements in pongal celebration. Modi is holding it.
6.	Farm land	Pongal is a Tamil harvesting festival. Here it is celebrated on a farm land only.
7.	Text - “பொங்கல்பொங்க...!”	Black colored font “பொங்கல்பொங்க...!” (Ponga Ponga!) represents as PM & CM's mocking voice with exclamatory mark.
Denotation		Myth
The cartoon explains about the Prime Minister of India and		Pongal is a Tamil harvesting festival. In other words it is a thanks giving
Connotation		
Based on the analysis, this cartoon Ponga		

<p>Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu who are celebrating Pongal festival. Both of them standing in farming land. Mud pot filled with protesters who are against the ban of Jallikattu. There is a bull inside the Pongal pot.</p>	<p>Ponga!symbolized that the ban on Jallikattu halts pongal festival. While Modi is mocking protesters in the mud pot with Kozhavai sound, Tamil Nadu EX-Chief Minister is standing as a lifeless statue and just watching everything silently with folded hands.</p>	<p>festival to nature which helps the farmers. The second day of Pongal celebration is Mattu Pongal. On this day cattles are accepted and afforded with affection and the main features is there would be a game called bull taming otherwise called as Jallikattu – a traditional sport of Tamil culture. When Jallikattu is banned there would be no celebration in pongal festival.</p>
---	---	--

4.4 Semiotic Sign Analysis

Thiru. Modi, Prime Minister of India, is making a sound of Kozhavai by looking at the protesters for Jallikattu. Kozhavai is a Tamil traditional folk sound used when pongal starts to flow from the pot as a means of happiness and grace of god. But PM expression is not to grace the celebration it seems he is mocking the people for pongal and Jallikaatu.

O.Panneer Selvam, Former Cheif Minister of Tamil Nadu in this cartoon, with his trade mark body language offolded hands in White veshti and shirts resembles a lifeless statute who can only watch everything silently behind Modi. This kind of actions clearly shows that Modi government as power players controls all happening in Tamil Nadu.

In this cartoon, the Mud pot is painted in three colors saffron, white and green which refer Indian National Flag. There is a Tamil Nadu map on the mud pot in saffron color. On the top of mud pot the protesters holding banners for Jallikattu is filled, a bull in black color is also visible. In the bottom the firewood is placed to cook the mud pot filled with people of Tamil Nadu who fight against Jallikattu ban

The researcher argues that minimum flame is enough to cook pongal. But here it threatens like wild fire that might harm all the people and bull inside the mud pot. The Prime Minister and Chief Minister are standing safe outside. The pongal celebration is taking place in farm land. Even though it is a harvest festival, there are no farmers around to celebrate the festival.

Sugarcane has spiritual significance. Goddess Lalitha Tripura Sundari holding five elements like goad, noose, arrow of flowers, sugarcane and bow represents the mind and the five sense (kama-lust, krodha-anger, lobh-greed, moha-emotional attachment, madar ahankara-pride, matsarya-envy, jealousy). Also, Pongal is a harvest festival in Tamil Nadu, the celebration is incomplete without the decoration of sugarcane. This cartoon symbolizes Modi as Goddess of Tripura with sugarcane in his left hand. He is holding the happiness of Tamil Nadu people.

This cartoon contains a text saying “பொங்கப்பொங்க...!” (Ponga Ponga!) which connotes that the Prime Minister and Chief Minister do not allow people celebrate pongal by banning Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu.

This cartoon was published in *AnandaVikatan* magazine in 2017 by the cartoonist Hasif Khan. The whole concept of this cartoon represents how the ban on of *Jallikattu* stops the celebration of Tamil pongal festival in Tamil Nadu.

4.5 Cartoon No: 03



Figure 3. Ananda Vikatan, Jan 2017

Table No. 3 Tamizhar Kadal! (Tamilians' Sea)

S.No	Icon	Meaning	
1.	Group of police force	More than thousands of policemen are charging against the bulls.	
2.	Bull Herd	More than thousands of bulls are opposing police force.	
3.	Text - “தமிழர்கடல்!” (Thamizar Kadal!)	Black colored font “தமிழர்கடல்!” (Tamizhar Kadal!) represents the sea of Tamil people with exclamatory mark.	
Denotation		Connotation	Myth
The cartoon explains the police force are attacking bulls. The sea waves are made up of bulls and they are in white color. Police force is in khaki uniform.		Based on the analysis, this cartoon “Tamizhar Kadal!” uses bull to symbolize the anger of the students. They are at the most anger against the repression on protester by the police force in Jallikattu protest.	Jallikattu Kaalai (Bull) is our cultural identity of Tamil people.

4.6 Semiotic Sign Analysis

This cartoon symbolizes the police attack on students in Jallikattu protest. This cartoon consists of three major colors. One is khaki representing power, protector, authority, bureaucrats. The other colour is blue which resembles loyalty, trust and revolution and the third color is white meaning peace, freedom and humanity. Here white bulls stand for freedom and peace by opposing against the power of khaki police force at the great marina revolution between the sky and sea.

This cartoon was published in *AnadhaVikatan* magazine in 2017 by the cartoonist Hasif Khan, targeting the Jallikattu protest issue. There was a great drift between the power and the mass. The mass here was students force against the police power which can be compared to the tsunami wave.

The word “தமிழர்கடல்!” (Tamizhar Kadal!) in this cartoon connotes that while power oppose your rights, you need a place to join and fight for it. Marina protest proved it.

4.7 Findings

Following are the findings of the study:

- Out of the three popular Tamil weekly magazines – Ananda Vikatan, Kumudam and Kungumam - except Ananda Vikatan, no other magazine published any cartoons based on Jallikattu protest.
- The first cartoon “Adutha Alai Varum!” clearly connotes that if there is any gathering unofficially in Marina Sea Shore they will be arrested under the section 144.
- The text “அடுத்தஅலைவரும்!” in this cartoon says that frequent waves from the sea will erase 144 act soon.
- The IPC act 144 is not only against the Jallikattu protest it is against the Youths of Tamil Nadu which prohibits them to even think and stand up for the land of voiceless
- The second cartoon Ponga Ponga...!” has portrayed Prime Minister Modi as a Goddess of Tripura who is a redeemer of peace and prosperity. Prime Minister sidelined Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and made him to see everything just as idol form. Festival is for happiness, gathering is for celebration but the cartoon contents represent only weird atmosphere in Tamil Nadu.
- In second cartoon the map of Tamil Nadu painted on mud pot is set on fire which means the identity of Tamil Nadu is burned by central power.
- The third cartoon “Tamizhar Kadal!” symbolized youths as bull. The cartoon compared their rise with Tunami waves which can erase everything that would come in its way.
- Over all three cartoons indicate that the central government and Supreme Court does not only stop *Jallikattu* but, it also stops the celebration of Pongal festival.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the cartoons on *Jallikattu* protest have fun factors to make clear understanding of issues is being cartooned. The audience, however, believes the concepts and yearns to get more knowledge on the political power play on the traditional faith of people. These cartoons help the viewer perceptions in understating core ideas by themselves with minimum technicality in constructing the messages.

The three cartoons are very simple means of communication. The denotations in these cartoons are IPC act 144, Bull and Pongal Mud Pot. These two signs connote the root meaning of law against the people freedom, thread on gathering for *Jallikattu*, closing ceremony of Tamil traditional pongal festival by the government itself. The simple sketches of Hasif Khan of Anada Vikatan explicit the truth behind the political movement of *Jallikattu* protest. These cartoons lead the viewers in different perception with its symbolic meanings. One

shows political disability, power, oppression, authority and another shows dual faces in imposing laws and regulations.

The researcher concludes his research with the quote of Dr. Baba Sahib Ambedkar "Educate, Agitate, Organize". Simple cartoons are like SMS, can send messages in short, fast and to large crowd. This helps to inform and educate people first, then lets them to decide the need to organize and agitate. A cartoonist can popularize this concept in the right manner

REFERENCES

- [1]. Anyigba, Nigeria, An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia Vol. 8 (1), Serial No. 32, January, 2014:32-41 ISSN 1994-9057 (Print) ISSN 2070--0083 (Online) DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v8i1.3>
- [2]. Barthes, Roland (1977): Image-Music-Text. London: Fontana
- [3]. Chandler, Daniel. (March 07, 2014). "Semiotics for Beginners". Retrieved January 9, 2015 at 08:45 p.m. from <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem06.html>
- [4]. Geipel, John. 1972. The Cartoon: A Short History of Graphic Comedy and Satire. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.
- [5]. Jimoh GA (2010) The role of editorial cartoons in the democratization process in Nigeria: a study of selected works of three Nigerian cartoonists. An M.A. Dissertation, Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- [6]. Johanna Deeksha, "Not afraid to use my art as a weapon: Meet Ma Mukilan, the artist whose 'communal' paintings at Loyola College rubbed the right wing the wrong way", The New India Express, Published: 23rd January 2019.
- [7]. Onakpa, Mohammed (2014) Cartoons, Cartoonists and Effective Communication in the Nigeria Print Media– Department of Mass Communication, Kogi State University.
- [8]. Ranan Devgan, IPC - Chapter 08, Indian Penal Code 1860, 2019 A Lawyers Reference.
- [9]. Stephenson W (1964) The play theory of mass communication: classics in communication and mass culture psychology communication. NY, USA: Transaction Publishers.

IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Nepul Raj A. "A Semiotic Study on Ananda Vikatans' Editorial Cartoons on Jallikattu Protest." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 04, 2019, pp. 06-12