

A Semiotic View on Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi's RIP Memes

E Muruganandam

Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication, St. Thomas College of Arts and Science,
140/6, AKR Road, St. Thomas Nagar, Koyambedu, Chennai – 600 107.

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Abstract

Social media have been effectively and extensively used for exchanging various information's, such as photographs, text, memes, animation, etc. Among which memes one of its kind that are pleasurable while creating and sharing thereby convey one's own emotions and varied purposes. This research paper focuses on memes that have been created and shared based on Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi's death. The Researcher employed qualitative approach. Analysing RIP memes and studying on its visual and textual elements using Saussure's semiotics is considered as the key significance of this study.

Keywords: Social media, Memes, Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi, Qualitative, Visual and text, Semiotics, Signifier, Signified

Introduction

Nowadays Memes is one of the important medium used for communication. The word "meme" is derived from the Greek word "Mimeme" which means imitating things. Meme is the term which is coined by the English scholar Richard Dawkins. According to him meme is an element of culture like an idea, behaviour that spreads from one person to another person through imitation.

Memes can be text alone or combination of text and visual. It can also be still or motion picture. Memes are created based on one's personal life, current affairs, celebrity, etc. It conveys meaning clearly and effectively. Text, visual and message are the important elements of memes. Usually text used in memes are big in size and thick to get the attention of the audience as well as to emphasize the meaning delivered by the text. Text in some memes are outline with different colour to make prominent. Visual can be a portrait of a person, photograph or stills from cinema. Memes are created for creating fun, convey emotions, passing information's, pointing out mistakes, etc. It is shared through Internet, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social Medias.

Memes can be created by anybody. It is small in size. No need of creative layout like invitation, poster, advertisement, or else other. The meme creator should know to create meaningful text, use appropriate visual to communicate the message what they wanted to. Internet meme, Social media memes, Comedy memes, are some of the types of memes.

Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi had been in politics for nearly 70 years as DMK treasurer, Deputy Leader of opposition in assembly, Public works minister, Chief Minister and has not lost an election since 1957. He has contributed lot for the state of Tamil Nadu. RIP memes have been created for few Tamil politicians such as Selvi J. Jayalalitha, Cho. Ramasamy and Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi. Considering the contribution of Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi towards Tamil culture, Tamil language and Tamil people and had a long journey in politics, researcher has taken his RIP memes for his research.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is to study on Dr. Kalaigar M. Karunanidhi's RIP memes.

E-mail Id: e.muruganandam@gmail.com

Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2285-6443>

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Objectives

- To analyze the textual and visual elements used in memes and study on the message conveyed through social media
- To find out the signifiers and signified meanings of Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's RIP memes

Review of literature

Abdul Aziz Turhan Kariko in his research on "Analysis on Internet Memes using Semiotic", he analyzed 5 memes using semiotic analysis. Analysis are conducted especially on how the relation between images, text and meaning connect with each other to form social messages, political, universal emotions or even just to be funny and entertain its users. He randomly chose 5 memes and used qualitative method of research. He found that Internet memes serves as a humorous way to have fun with context, words, image, meaning, symbols, culture, etc. The fact that it only needs an image of something or someone accompanied with a caption/text can generate different meanings. Internet memes require users to be creative in producing meanings in respect to symbols, words and contexts. These memes contain humor, as well as reflecting universal emotions, social messages, cultural messages and many more.

Made Nunik Sayani in his research "Semiotic Analysis of Memes in 9gag.com" which is international comedy website set in Hong Kong but hosted in the United States. The study analyzed two typical memes that frequently used in the posts, "Poker face" memes and "Okay" meme. The aim of the study was to find out the signifiers and signified of each memes used in 9gag.com. The data source of this study was taken from www.9gag.com. The reason why only these two memes are used because they are the most popular in 9gag.com and often shared via Facebook and Twitter. In collecting data both library and online research were applied. The data were analyzed based on the theory of semiotics from Saussure and the theory of semiotics and signs by Chandler. He found that the signifiers of each memes the signified or abstract concept from each of them can be known, and leads to the meaning of each memes.

Methodology

The memes used in this research are taken from WhatsApp group and memestimes.com. Researcher used both primary and secondary data. Researcher has randomly chosen 5 memes of Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's RIP for semiotic analysis. It is exploratory research study and employed qualitative research method.

Data interpretation

Sample 1



In this meme Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's photo and two Tamil words are used. These two words are broken into two lines. If the two lines are in a single line it looks like a message. But the silence while reading the broken words gave us sad feeling that Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi said bye to Tamil people and he will not meet them again. The creator gave importance to second word "Tamilagame". It showed how important Tamil Nadu is for Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi. In photo Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's pose communicate that he is going away from the people of Tamil Nadu.

Table 1

Signifier	Signified
Karunanidhi's photo	He is going away from the people of Tamil Nadu.
Two Tamil words	These two words are broken into two lines, But the silence while reading the broken words give us sad feeling that Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi said bye to Tamil people and he will not meet them again
Vidai perugiren	He is going away
"Tamilhagame"	People of Tamil Nadu

Sample 2



In this meme only text was used in white colour with black background. This word is pronounced by Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi whenever he started his speech in the public meeting and whenever he addressed Tamil people through broadcast media. White colour is associated with light which is present everywhere. Like that the word “En uyirinum melana anbu udanpirappukkale” said by Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi, remain in the heart of Tamil people for long-lasting. Black colour denotes absence of colour. It means the person who said the above word is no more. That is the word is live but Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi will not be available to pronounce it.

Table 2

Signifier	Signified
Black background	Black colour denotes absence of colour. It means the person who said the above word is no more
White colour text – “En uyirinum melana anbu udanpirappukkale”	White colour is associated with light which is present everywhere. Like that the word “En uyirinum melana anbu udanpirappukkale” said by Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi, remain in the heart of Tamil people for long-lasting

Sample 3



This meme contains visual only. Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's face was drawn like Tamil Nadu map which denotes he has ruled Tamil Nadu by his political party DMK with the symbol Rising Sun. Rising Sun denotes the start of the day or start of something. Sun set represents the end of the day or end of something. Now the party leader Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi is no more with the people of Tamil Nadu. It is visualized by showing Sun set in the West of Tamil Nadu.

Table 3

Signifier	Signified
Karunanidhi's face	He belongs to Tamil Nadu state
Tamil Nadu map	Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's face is drawn like Tamil Nadu map which denotes he has ruled Tamil Nadu by his political party DMK with the symbol Rising Sun
Sun set	Sun set represents the end of the day or end of something. Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi is no more with the people of Tamil Nadu. It is visualized by showing Sun set in the West of Tamil Nadu.

Sample 4



This meme used cinema concept from the Tamil film M Magan along with text. In that film the comedy actor Vadivelu went to cemetery to saw his father's buried body. He has cried and applied buried body ash on his face that was actually not his father ash. That denotes the white colour text present at the top of the meme. The person standing next to Vadivelu scolded him for his wrong doing. That text present at the bottom of meme in yellow colour. The bottom text expresses the rumour spread about Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi that he has refused to give space in Marina to former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Thiru. Kamaraj, after his death that is actually not true.

Sample 5



Table 4

Signifier	Signified
Tamil film M Magan still	The comedy actor Vadivelu went to cemetery to see his father's buried body. He has cried and applied buried body ash on his face that was actually not his father ash
White colour text at the top of meme	It expresses about Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi that he has refused to give space in Marina to former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Thiru. Kamaraj after his death
Yellow colour text at the bottom of meme	The bottom text expresses the rumour spread about Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi that he has refused to give space in Marina to former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Thiru. Kamaraj after his death that is actually not true

In this meme the message is connected with the still from Tamil movie Velaikaran, Sivakarthikeyan as hero characterized Arivu. In this film Arivu fought against his owner to produce good quality consumer products without mixing of chemicals which causes diseases to consumer health. This story is linked with Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's political life that he was fighting against many things in his political carrier. Some of them are

- Fought to get seat for school education in his tender age
- In 1953, his leadership at the Kallakudi protest lying over railway tracks for Hindi protest.
- His courage in opposing the emergency against then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi
- In 1974 his efforts led to Chief Minister winning the right to fly the National Flag on Independence Day.
- Fought for 33% reservation for women in local body election, 30% in Government job and 69% reservation for BC, MBC, SC and ST community people.

The above list showed that Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi fought for Tamil people for many things particularly for underprivileged people, women and children throughout his political life. The line at the top of the meme expressed that even after his death Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi fought for getting space in Marina for his funeral.

Findings

- The memes used in this research conveyed message clearly and precisely
- The relationship between text and visual are appropriate
- Each meme created with different messages
- Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's RIP memes are created only to convey information's not to criticize anything about him
- Some memes are created using Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi photo, and some are related with cinema

Table 5

Signifier	Signified
Karunanidhi's photo	He was died
Top text "Irappirku piragum ida othikkeedu porattam"	Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi fought for Tamil people for many things particularly for getting 33% reservation for women in local body election and 30% in Government job and 69% reservation for BC, MBC, SC and ST community people, women and children throughout his political life. This line expressed that even after his death he fought for getting space. (in Marina for his funeral)
Actor Sivakarthikeyan photo from the Tamil film Velaikaran	Sivakarthikeyan as hero characterized Arivu fought against his owner to produce good quality consumer products without mixing of chemicals which causes diseases to consumer health. This story is linked with Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi's political life that he was fighting against many things in his political carrier.
Bottom text "Vazhntha pothum poradiyalthan idam marukkappadugirathu pola"	Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi was in politics for nearly 70 years. During that period he has struggled for many reasons. It continues after his death to get space (in Marina for his funeral)
Red text "ida othikkeedu"	Red is the colour of fire and blood which is associated with war. Dr. Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi was fighting hard to get reservation for Tamil people. It continues after his death to get space (in Marina for his funeral)

- All memes are related to Dr. Kalaighnar M. Karunanidhi's political life only. No memes are expressed about his personal life.
 - All memes are portrayed the positive aspects of Dr. Kalaighnar M. Karunanidhi.
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Suggestions

Meme creators should handle the language carefully which should not disrespect others. A meme in this research used comedy actor Vadivelu's still from the Tamil film *M Magan*. The creator used the word "Mootheyvi" to point out the mistakes of Vadivelu. The meme creator should not use such kind of words against the political party who has wrongly spread the message about Dr. Kalaighnar M. Karunanidhi that he refused to give space in Marina to former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Thiru. Kamaraj after his death that is actually not true. The meme creator should keep in mind that how Dr. Kalaighnar M. Karunanidhi handled the language effectively to point out others mistakes, while create a meme which is related to him.

Conclusion

RIP meme culture is developing in Tamil Nadu past recent years. Through RIP memes users came to know many new information's about that person. It is true that the meme is one of the effective methods of communication which was used effectively in creating Dr. Kalaighnar M. Karunanidhi's RIP memes. The text and visuals are used appropriately to communicate the messages about Dr. Kalaighnar M. Karunanidhi.

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