Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics
Volume [10] 2017, Pp.207-210

Indian Slogans: A Semio-Communicative Analysis

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Abstract

Slogans evolved during the independence struggle and political campaigns and the part they played in achieving the goals of freedom. Hundreds of slogans used in different parts of the nation united the Indians; there was one Indian voice, irrespective of diverse traits in religion, custom, belief, politics, ideology, culture and geography. This paper aims to analyze the multidimensionality of slogans as a tool of communication and as an instrument of ideological propagation. As part of the democratic life, electoral campaign slogans are implemented to communicate political message to large numbers of voters and publicize the views of a candidate contesting an election.

Key Words: Slogan, Speech, Ideology, Culture, Candidate

1. Introduction

Electoral slogans have been widely used in India since the beginning of the democratic life in India. Indian freedom struggle slogans definitely carried connotations of Indian culture which eventually worked up to make the slogans powerful and effective in the minds of common Indians. The term 'slogan' came into the English language in about 1589 and signified "a word, sentence, or phrase attached as a legend to an 'impress' or emblematic design. Hence, slogan is a short sentence or phrase expressing an appropriate reflection or sentiment. It suggests that words, phrases, other parts of speech, are main components of slogans, and may have differentconnotations to effectively arrive at the persuasive-central purpose. In most ways, parties use the techniques of selling a product to sell themselves to voters. Texts, as political billboards, enjoy certain elements to be successful. For example, they must catch people's attention and "hold it long enough for the message to be taken in". This means that they must be visually eye-catching and must be brief to easily read, as they are often placed strategically along busy roads. The length of the verbal text is deemed to be limited (Adrian 2000:63), but its impact, if phrased deeply and thoroughly is tremendous. Therefore, and as a way of advertising, it is important that the slogan seeks a discourse that engages the audience and attract their attention to persuade them with its message (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristán, Arribas-Baño et al 2001:1291-1307).

This paper is specifically an attempt to find out the reasons for the origin of various slogans evolved during the independence struggle and political campaigns and the part they played in achieving the goals of freedom. Slogans vary from the written and the visual to the chanted and the vulgar. Often their simple rhetorical nature leaves little room for details, and as such they serve perhaps more as a social expression of unified purpose, rather than a projection to intended audience. The present paper on slogans largely belongs to the epistemological category of 'mass communication' that has recently captivated the attention of modern communication

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theory. The paper delves into the issues of independence movement and election campaigns in post independence India.

Slogans played an important role in India's freedom struggle. For example, the slogan "*Bharat choro*" (Quit India) were the two words (a 'slogan' par excellence) shouted and sung by millions of Indian freedom fighters which brought an empire down. Hundreds of slogans used in different parts of the nation united the Indians; there was one Indian voice, irrespective of diverse traits in religion, custom, belief, politics, ideology, culture and geography.

One of the goals of such slogans is to attract people's attention and thus encourage them to vote. This paper aims to analyse the multidimensionality of slogans as a tool of communication and as an instrument of ideological propagation. As part of the democratic life, electoral campaign slogans are implemented to communicate, convey political messages to large numbers of voters, and publicize the views of a candidate contesting an election. They aim at persuading voters and making them aware of the candidate's basic ideology and views that might be highly needed at the time of elections. In other words, slogans allow candidates to express their opinions and thoughts with regard to the change which they wish to achieve in their society (Nakate, 2011). Electoral slogans can be socially effective for different reasons. They can express the character or aims of the candidate, and can be catchy phrases for voters at the polling time to remember. Moreover, slogans are virtually the key entrance to exhibitor's mentality and orientations. Stimulatingly, they can strongly attract people's attention regardless of their backgrounds, being different socially, economically, educationally, and more importantly politically.

Persuading people to vote for a candidate is vital in the political process as it is the art of what is possible; politics often shares a vocabulary with military activity, and this is specially the case with elections: both winning elections and winning wars involve running successful campaigns (Adrian 2000: 69). Words, phrases, other parts of speech, and photos, are main components of slogans, and may have different connotations to effectively arrive at the persuasive-central purpose.

In most ways, parties use the techniques of selling a product to sell themselves to voters. Texts as political billboards enjoy certain elements to be successful. For example, they must catch people's attention and "hold it long enough for the message to be taken in". This means that they must be visually eye-catching and must be brief to easily read, as they are often placed strategically along busy roads. The length of the verbal text is deemed to be limited (Adrian 2000:63), but its impact, if phrased deeply and thoroughly is tremendous. Therefore, and as a way of advertising, it is important that the slogan seeks a discourse that engages the audience and attract their attention to persuade them with the its message (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristán, Arribas-Baño et al 2001:1291-1307).

2. Political Slogans

Indian politics has a rich history of slogans and they have provided the humour, interest and enthusiasm needed to engage pundits and voters alike. Some of the most memorable slogans include "GarabiHatao" (Eradicate poverty), "India Shining" and "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer). Former PM Indira Gandhi's "GaribiHatao" campaign in 1971 resonated with the nation and secured a landslide victory for her Congress. India's economy was in a bad shape and the message brought hope to the poor. In response, several opposition parties came together to form the Janata Morcha (People's Front) which campaigned under slogans such as "*Indira Hatao, DeshBachao*" (Remove Indira, Save the Nation) and "*Sampoorna Kranti*" (Total Revolution). The group swept to victory in the 1977 election.

Indira's father and India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was more famous for his speeches than slogans. However, he did coin the slogan "*Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai*" (Indians and Chinese are brothers) in the early 1950s. This backfired as relations between Delhi and Beijing

deteriorated sharply as a result of border disputes, eventually leading to a full-blown war in 1962. It was Nehru's successor and India's second PM, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who came up with the country's most popular slogan since independence in 1947. India was locked in a war with Pakistan in 1965 and there was a severe food shortage. Shastri's slogan "*Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan"* (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer) boosted the nation's confidence at a time of crisis and aided the Congress party's success in the polls.

Former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee tweaked the slogan after the nuclear tests in 1998. Atal Bihari coined the new slogan *"Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan*" (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer, Hail Science) underlined the growing investment in science and technology at the time. The BJP came to power in 1996 on the back of several famous slogans relating to Mr Vajpayee, whose corruption-free image made him an ideal face for the party.*"SabkoDekha Bari Bari, Abki Bari Atal Bihari"* (We have seen several others, now it's Atal Bihari's turn) was the catchphrase among BJP supporters in the run-up to the elections.

But the most famous slogan which related directly to a political leader was created for Indira Gandhi. Congress party member Dev Kant Baruah coined the slogan *"Indira is India and India is Indira*" in the mid-1970s. His slogan indicated the power that Indira Gandhi wielded at the time.

However, "India shining" campaign failed in 2004. In the 2004 general election, national parties hired professional firms to devise slogans and run campaigns. The BJP, which was seeking a re-election, chose its much-publicised "India Shining" campaign, while the Sonia Gandhi-led Congress decided on "*AamAadmiKo Kya Mila*?" (What did the common man get?). India's economy had been performing fairly well, but was far from shining and the BJP's campaign failed spectacularly - the voters elected the Congress party. The Congress campaign that trumped BJP's India Shining in 2004 was *Congress ka Haath, AamAadmikeSaath.* Once again India's Grand Old Party targeted India's common man to come back to power. It was a variation of an earlier Congress slogan that had "garibkesaath". The "aamaadmi" was to include India's growing middle class.

In recent years, some regional parties have also come up with winning slogans. Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee ran a successful election campaign with "*Maa, Maati, Manush*" (Mother, motherland and people) in 2011 and came to power in the eastern state of West Bengal. Mamata Banerjee is a popular leader in India's West Bengal state.

Creative slogans are advertised in newspapers almost daily and can also be heard on radio and television. Slogans often help politicians communicate with their ideas to voters. Not many can forget "Yes We Can" - Barack Obama's slogan in the 2008 presidential election. But how do slogans work in India's incredibly diverse political culture? Here, they are often a test of any party's ability to gauge the nation's mood. A good slogan can bring together people usually separated by religion, region, caste and language, but a bad one can crush political ambitions. In recent elections in India, all the main parties hoped that they have found a winning combination of words to strike a chord with the electorate. Narendra Modi with his umbrella slogan "*Abki Bar, Modi Sarkar*" (This time, it's Modi's government) became hugely well-known, both with the party's admirers and opponents.The BJP's rivals say Mr Modi has "hijacked" the party and its slogan suggests that no other leader is worth highlighting in its campaign. But beyond the political profitability of the phrase, it is humour that is driving much of the conversation on social media platforms with users finding lines to rhyme with the slogan.*"Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Abki bar Modi Sarkar,"* goes one humorous take.

3. Conclusion

The paper tried to examine as to how ideologies are constructed in the spoken and written slogans. It concludes that those involved in slogan making consciously try to make slogans

catchy, and poetic. The paper portrayed how various parties have coined and successfully used the slogans in the electoral campaigns.

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