



# அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மிக்னிதழ்



காலாண்டு இதழ்  
(ஜனவரி, ஏப்ரல், ஜூலை, அக்டோபர்)  
ஆகிய மாதங்களில் வெளிவரும்

## ஆசிரியர் குழு

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சிற்பக்கலாநிதி ஸ்தபதி வே.இராமன்  
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அரண் பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழில் வெளிவரும் ஆய்வுக்கட்டுரைகள் அனைத்தும்  
(Peer Review) பீர் ரிவியூ செய்யப்பட்டு பதிவு செய்யப்படுகிறது என்பதைத்  
தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.

## அகத்தினுள்

தமிழ்ச் செவ்வியல் நூல்களில் திருநர்  
முனைவர் கி. அய்யப்பன்

எளிய முறையில் இலக்கணம் கற்றல் - கற்பித்தல் (புகழுவமை அணியின் சிறப்புகள்)  
இரா. அருணா

குறுந்தொகையின் கட்டமைப்பில் அகமரபு கூறுகள்  
முனைவர் ச. பேச்சியம்மாள்

கலித்தொகையில் புணர்ச்சிக்குப்பின் களவு வெளிப்படும்போது நிகழும்  
மெய்ப்பாடுகளும் அதன் பரிணாம வளர்ச்சிநிலையும்  
வ. மீனாட்சி

நெடுநல்வாடையில் தொழில்நுட்பக் கூறுகள்  
முனைவர் வி. காலாவதி

சங்ககால பெண்பாற்புலவர் பாடல்களில் நாடகக் கதைக்கோப்பு  
து. உமாமகேஸ்வரி

சங்ககாலநோக்கில்பெண்ணினம் - ஒருபார்வை  
முனைவர் க. லெனின்

சங்க இலக்கியத்தில் கலைகள்  
முனைவர் இரா. மோகனா

சங்க இலக்கியத்தில் நீர் மேலாண்மை  
அ. முத்துஇளஞ்சியம்

இலக்கியங்கள் காட்சிப்படுத்தும் கோட்டை அமைப்புமுறைகள்- ஓர்ஆய்வு  
முனைவர். நா. அமுதாதேவி

புகார்காண்டத்தில் மலர்கள்  
தே. தீபா

தமிழ் இலக்கியங்கள் நவீன அறக்கருத்துகள்  
வெ. பாலமுருகன் (மயிலம் இளமுருகு)

# அகத்தினுள்

வள்ளுவர்காட்டும்கல்விக்കொள்கை -ஓர்ஆய்வு  
முனைவர் மா. தாமரைச்செல்வி

மேத்தா கவிதைகளில் யொருளாதாரச்சிந்தனைகள்  
முனைவர் ச. நாகரத்தினம்

வில்லிசையும் மகுட இசையும் - ஓர் ஒய்யீடு  
சோ. கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி

நாடகஅரங்கின்வழியாகஉருபெறும்அரவான்களின்தேசம்”  
(சுகுமார்சண்முகத்தின்அரவான்நாடகநிகழ்வைமுன்வைத்து)  
முனைவர் பெ. அருணகிரி

Tamilnadu: Emergent Media and the Contemporary Documentary  
Dr. Swarnavel Eswaran

புலப்பாட்டுக் கட்டுமான இலக்கண நோக்கில் பாரதியாரின்  
நாட்டுப்பற்றும் பாடல்களின் சொல்லாடல் பகுப்பாய்வு  
முனைவர் சு. சந்திரசேகரன், முனைவர் சி.சித்ரா

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தமிழகப் பாறை ஓவியங்களில் ஓரையான் என்னும் வின்மீன் தொகுதியின்  
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ஜீ. பால்ராஜ்

Aaduthinnapai Aristolochiabracteolata Lam. (Aristolochiaceae)  
used as Indian System of Medicine

Gajarajan M., Damodaran R., Jayaraman P., Amarjothy S., Saraswathy A.,

தமிழ்நாட்டில் கடல்கோள் (வட தமிழ்நாடு)  
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முகப்பு

முனைவர் பெ. அருணகிரி  
அரவான் நாடகம்



தீரைய்ப்படம் மற்றும்  
நாடகத்துறை

## Tamilnadu: Emergent Media and the Contemporary Documentary

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### Abstract:

This essay engages with the documentary form surrounding the Tamil cultural event of Jallikattu as it became a signifier of the mobilization of the rebellious spirit of the Tamil people to seek social justice and lend their voice for celebrating their cultural specificity. The contemporary digital documentary aesthetics enabled both the cinema-verite inspired newsreel coverage and later retooling the footage to cull out a documentary that had a distinct narrative of its own beyond the sound bites of a television news reportage. This documentary analyzes the work of the young documentarian Dayalan who works for News 18 as well as an independent filmmaker. This essay looks at how such a locus of Dayalan has been enabled by the new and emergent media as well as his investment in the documentary's political potential to address contemporary issues in the context of the sociocultural history of a community.

### Keywords:

Tamil Documentary, Digital Documentary, New Media , Emergent Medi, Jallikaatu Constellation of Protests , Dayalan

My essay focuses on some of the key issues surrounding the context of the form and content of documentaries due to the transition to the digital from the celluloid medium. In India, documentaries were most identified with 16 mm film during the 1970s, and the 1980s before the low band video made its entry, and analog video became the only choice for most filmmakers due to its lower cost and the shoestring budget allotted for documentaries. With the state's encouragement of the sponsored programs and later the privatization of television channels, the video format with its improvement in technology, for instance, from low band to high band and Betacam, affected documentary productions. Nonetheless, privatization led to investment in (often mediocre) serials with higher TRPs (Television Rating Points) rather than meaningful programs for the consumer/audiences. Documentaries and documentarians suffered as a consequence, as the time slots allotted were sparse and inconvenient ones often during the late nights when intended audience may be asleep after work or at work during weekday-afternoons. However, more than the switchover to video technology during the 1980s and the 1990s, it is the transition to digital technology, mainly during the new millennium, that has contributed to significant changes in the production, distribution, and exhibition of documentaries. This essay would, therefore, focus on some of the contemporary trends in Tamil documentaries, particularly through the work of

the young filmmaker Dayalan who also is an employee of the News18 Tamilnadu news channel, and engage with their form and content in the context of the increasing importance of new/emergent media, mainly the video- sharing site YouTube and the social networking site Facebook. Toward this end, this essay would engage with Dayalan's uploaded videos, Facebook postings and documentaries, to explore the activism-driven documentarian's investment in the facilities afforded by digital technology for reaching and communicating with a constellation of like-minded people and in mobilizing and giving vent to the voices of the people on the fringes who are generally outside the radar of the mainstream media.

#### Social Activism and Contemporary Documentaries:

Recently, during the mobilization of the youth during the protest against the ban on Jallikattu, or pro-Jallikattu protests or the support for the bull-taming festival in Tamilnadu, one could feel the power of the digital medium and technology in playing a central role both in the production of media, mostly through cell phones and DSLR cameras, and its immediate distribution mainly through social networking sites like Facebook and digital-video sharing websites like YouTube. It recalled a similar role played by youth and new media during the Arab Spring and Occupation Wall Street protests elsewhere with the youth and the emergent media platforms at the center of the rebellion.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Jallikattu protests, not only did the documentation of the events and its immediate exhibition through digital exhibition spaces enable the constellation of protesters in Tamilnadu to be informed and educated about what was going on in other places across the state but also shed light on the ban on Jallikattu itself as a metaphor that stood for the suppression of the underprivileged, including the Dalits, women, and the LGBT community, and their rights, like the trade union, women, Children, and farmers' rights. While diverse issues could not be cohered and addressed through a microphone on the podium, the nature of the voluntary assembly of the protesters in their (adjacent) places of choice and as per their issues of priority marked a new way of democratic protest.

If we look at the protest at the Marina Beach, the focus of Dayalan's videos discussed in this essay, one of the key issues is the urban space itself, both as the place of assemblage of diverse people and their voices at the fringes/borders of a city that has grown exponentially and lopsidedly in recent years, thanks to the unparalleled corruption and disavowal of the laws regarding restrictions and ceilings. "[F]or new modes of urbanization" on the part of the dispossessed, as signified by images and voices of many of the interviewees in Dayalan's Facebook posts and YouTube videos, the preeminent Marxist-geographer, David Harvey, suggests their unification under the theme of "the right to the city" for the democratization and the reclaiming of such a right.

One step towards unifying these struggles is to adopt the right to the city as both working slogan and political ideal, precisely because it focuses on the question of who commands the necessary connection between

urbanization and surplus production and use. The democratization of that right and the construction of a broad social movement to enforce its will is imperative if the dispossessed are to take back the control which they have for so long been denied, and if they are to institute new modes of urbanization. Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all.<sup>2</sup>

The constellation of voices, as we see/hear at the Marina Beach through Dayalan's videos, are undeniably the forces of resistance in contemporary times of globalization wherein an earlier factory model of the industrial mode of production has been replaced by a global economy predicated on a transnational assembly of parts that relies on cheaper labor and the toil of laborers in inhumane sweatshops, wherein the workers are stripped of their rights and labor unions to fight for their rights. The constellation of protesters, therefore, mirror the mobility of global capitalism in contemporary times when it has become impossible to pin corporations to any one country, like in an earlier period. For instance, Sony Corporation, which was earlier geographically tied to Japan with all its tape recorders and televisions carrying the "made in Japan" tag during the 1970s and the 1980s, has lost its exclusive ties to Japan now. Presently, a Sony product could be manufactured anywhere and assembled anywhere. Similarly, its corporate offices could be located in any continent/country. Often, Indian food items like savories, carry the tag made for XYZ Co. in the US, without the details or the address of the place in India where it was made and exported. Only the importer/marketer's details seem mandatory. Such an erasure of labor is becoming an increasingly accepted norm of the globalized economy of exploitation. Therefore, the constellations of protests become an important phenomenon as it provides the space for people invested in the democratic rights of fellow citizens and workers to join the fight along with the affected people. In such an assimilation of and protests by likeminded people who want to give vent to their voice against suppression and violation of human rights, media and documentarians have always played a major role as exemplified by the archival and stock footages/still photographs/newspaper clippings used in many of Anand Patwardhan films, or in films like *Hearts and Minds* (dir. Peter Davis, 1974) on the Vietnam War, and *The Times of Harvey Milk* (dir. Rob Epstein, 1984) on the struggles and achievements of a gay icon in the backdrop of virulent and strident homophobia, to name a few. But in contemporary times of digital technology with the ease and affordability of shooting and editing, the time frame in the retooling of the newsreel footage or the videos posted on social networking sites for a documentary has significantly changed. The almost simultaneous straddling of live postings and editing a documentary leaves little space for distance or thinking about a deeper theoretical frame to couch the multidimensional/intertextual arguments one wants to make and organize the materials.

Let us look at the case of one of the energetic social-activist and prolific documentarian of contemporary times in Tamilnadu: Dayalan (Dayalan

Shunmuga) is active simultaneously on YouTube,<sup>3</sup> and Facebook.<sup>4</sup> The videos he uploads on YouTube gets a simultaneous introduction and a brief summary regarding the immediacy and the depth of the sociopolitical issue at stake through his constant and tenacious Facebook postings, which also provide the links to his YouTube videos. Often the Facebook postings themselves carry an embedded brief video clip in the form of a trailer or a teaser to evoke the interest in the subject and provoke discussions. More important for the purposes of this paper is the telecast of the documentary that is made out of several such video postings. The telecasted documentary, in News18 Tamilnadu, is a modified version with a subdued tone which focuses on giving a brief history and context of the subject in hand, say for instance, sand theft or the history of the ban on Jallikattu, followed by the edited version of the uploaded footages on Dayalan's social media platforms. However, the activist impulse and the didactic tone, as often seen in the raw uploaded footage on YouTube and Facebook, is modified as per the requirements of the channel, and to reach a wider audience to garner their support. News18 Tamilnadu is the channel for which Dayalan works, and one could argue that his regular job there as a contributor to daily programs, particularly videos regarding significant events in Tamilnadu, enables him to keep his activism alive by posting the (unedited) versions he deems fit for his social networking sites.<sup>5</sup>

If the 3,846 friends he has on Facebook, help Dayalan with quick responses and immediate suggestions/endorsements/criticisms of his postings and videos, the number of hits on his YouTube videos helps him gauge how much of the interest that he has generated through his Facebook postings and discussions has translated into his audience watching the videos on YouTube and responding through his YouTube or Facebook page. The documentary which started as a newsreel coverage for News18 finally finds its way after the telecast into documentary film festivals. For instance, the recent Fifth Chennai International Documentary and Short Film Festival (13-19 Feb., 2017) screened News18 Tamilnadu news channel's productions of Dayalan's documentary *Chellakkasu: Makkalin Kural/Counterfeit money: People's voice*, and Vijay Anand's *Vardha Chidhaitha Agathi Mugam/Cyclone Vardha's devastating affect on a refugee*, on Sunday, 19th Feb., at Periyar Thidal, in Egmore, in the evening from 5.30 onward. One of my friend Chelladurai, in a telephone conversation, told me that he could attend the screenings as he could get the details of the screening from the Facebook pages of Amudhan Ramalingam Pushpam, the founder-director of the festival, and the ever active Dayalan. If Amudhan, who is himself an award-winning documentarian, could allot the primetime of the concluding day-- Sunday at 5.30 p.m. for Vijay Anand, and 6 p.m. for Dayalan--of an important documentary festival in Chennai, it indicates the significance of the issues dealt by these films. Dayalan's film engages with the difficulties the people in Tamilnadu faced due to demonetization, and Vijay Anand's deals with the affect of the Vardha cyclone on the people of Tamilnadu, in December 2017.<sup>6</sup>

Dayalan's film on Jallikattu could be read as exemplifying the voices of many postings on Facebook by students across caste and class on the major disruptions to their normal life and routine; there were also others that had a more personal tone drawing attention to the disruptions due to lack of planning and communications in a city fraught with traffic delays due to its massive expansion in recent years. For instance, the preeminent Tamil cinema scholar and the regional director of the L.V. Prasad Academy, Venkatesh Chakravarthy, also posted on his Facebook page on the difficulties he had to face due to the way demonetization was imposed on the people without any consideration of their normative life and regular schedules.<sup>7</sup> Even as I am writing this essay the World Bank CEO, Kristalina Georgieva has in her statement to *The Hindustan Times* said, "[w]hile demonetization has, in the short term, created some impact on businesses dependent on cash, in the long term the impact will be positive... The reforms India is targeting are profound."<sup>8</sup> While legitimate debates on the politicizing of such a major economic move and the stark divide regarding the effect/affect of demonetization on the rich and the others will continue for a long time to come, what is significant about the social media is the space it provides for the recording of the difficulties and grievances as people go about their normal life. The impact it leaves cannot be subsumed by the larger rhetorical move on the part of the spokespersons of the institutions that epitomize global power which, nonetheless, is in counterpoint to the critique of many learned economists, including from prestigious universities like Harvard and Oxford who have studied it very closely:

Among critics of demonetization are Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, a Harvard professor; Lawrence Summers, former U.S. treasury secretary and president emeritus of Harvard University; Kaushik Basu, former chief economist to the World Bank who also advised India's government and taught at Harvard; former Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, who was educated at Harvard; and Modi's predecessor Manmohan Singh, who read economics at Oxford. Singh had told lawmakers the cash ban could strip as much as 2 percentage points off GDP.<sup>9</sup>

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his critique, "without naming anyone," said, "[o]n one hand, there are these intellectuals who talk about Harvard, and on the other, there is this son of a poor mother, who is trying to change the economy of the country through hard work ... In fact, hard work is much more powerful than Harvard," he said. (ibid.) However, when we carefully look at the voices within Harvard, they were not as monolithic; for instance, the former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, Kenneth S. Rogoff, who is currently the Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University, in his series, in the Princeton University Press Blog, is positive about the long run benefits of the demonetization move if it is properly implemented:

Will Modi's plan work? Despite apparent huge holes in the planning (for example, the new notes India is printing are a different size and do not fit the ATM machines), many economists feel it could still have large positive effects in the long-run, shaking up the corruption, tax evasion, and crime that has long crippled the country. But the long-run gains depend on implementation, and it could take years to know how history will view this unprecedented move.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, some of the economists and Forbes contributors like Tom Worstall are questioning Modi's euphoria over the GDP "numbers which showed 7 % growth in the most recent quarter to December despite whatever the effects of demonetization were." Worstall also points to the significance of an economy in India that depends on cash, particularly the one which is substantial and seems to be unaccounted for in the calculation of the recent GDP growth numbers:

"While this early data doesn't capture the note ban's impact on small companies and unorganized workers -- a fact the finance ministry's advisers acknowledged last month ... The government's top statistician on Thursday said the entire data set will be available only next year ... ." Some 45% of [the Indian economy], and perhaps 75% of [its] employment, is in the unregistered, usually cash using, untaxed and near entirely unregulated sector. 25% of employment and that 55% balance of GDP is in the registered and regulated (and taxed) sector. The government's GDP figures are based upon numbers from that regulated and licit sector. Sure, estimations of the unregulated part are made, but they are just that, estimations.<sup>11</sup>

It is the unregulated sector which was the most affected and also the one that could not be accounted for due to its very nature. Herein lies the significance of the diverse voices of the quotidian people which we could hear because of the hundreds of young enthusiasts and activists like Dayalan, who were busy documenting a rare gathering of ordinary people across demographics, during the protest against Jallikattu ban. The young men and women who had assembled were mostly speaking as or on behalf of the ones who generally escape the radar of such official calculation of growth numbers due to their socioeconomic placement and/or predicament because of caste, class, and gender. For instance, documentarian and well-known writer-filmmaker Arunmozhi Sivaprakasam and his students, and documentarian Pandiaraju (along with cinematographer Chezhiyan) have documented not only the folk artists and transgender performers performing short skits about their plight as invisible people or their visibility only as "outcastes" but also women and children reenacting their difficult lives and times in unorganized sectors like the ironing of clothes and the selling of vegetables, and roadside catering and construction industry in distant suburbs. Most of

the important interviews conducted by Arunmozhi was at the Marina Beach during the protest against Jallikattu ban.<sup>12</sup>

Dayalan's video of the cross section of people assembling and protesting, "Thannezhuchiyay Ezhuntha llangyargal/The Rise of the youth on its own accord," documents through a tapestry of voices the significance of the protest against the ban on Jallikattu.<sup>13</sup> Like the Lacanian metonymic displacement of signifiers, Tamil specificity, "parampariyam" or tradition, culture, etc., slip through to the union of Tamils across caste/class, which we see clearly etched through a placard, till we reach the points de capiton/quilting points, "by which the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement (glissement) of the signification,"<sup>14</sup> to get a glimpse at the signified underneath/of stable meaning when we see an old woman performing for the camera, singing and dancing, and demanding the rights of the farmers. But this illusive coherence or an anchoring moment is further disrupted again through the chain of metonymic signifiers and points de capiton, like the talking-head interview regarding the "threshold of Tamils" and their acceptance/tolerance levels. This video thus points to Jallikattu itself as a master signifier, which marks the gap between our supposed understanding of it as a marker of culture and the displacement of its essence or fixed meaning which keeps slipping through the differences in its interpretation/appropriation by students/media anchors/activists/farmers among others. While such a displacement of signifiers warrants the increasing number of videos uploaded during such a massive and voluntary protest, as a means of pointing to the diverse voices that are democratically converging and of keeping pace with the immediacy of the social issues at hand, for instance, the Hindu right's politicization of the rights of Muslims to practice their religion in peace,<sup>15</sup> it also indicates the ephemeral nature of the posts, as exemplified by Dayalan's successive postings after the protest at the Marina Beach on the fight for the Chief Minister's post in Tamilnadu, followed by issues of water, environment, and the protest by the inhabitants of Neduvasal village, near Pudukottai, against the government's hydrocarbon project and the Oil and Natural Gas Commissions' covert plans to take over their land.<sup>16</sup>

This leads to the question regarding the documentary form. While not only Facebook and YouTube but also Twitter and WhatsApp were sites overloaded with the visuals and sounds during the massive protests against the banning of Jallikattu, the organization, and editing of the materials uploaded in these sites to later showcase them as a documentary during a film festival begs the question of a common theme/structure. The compilation of talking head interviews, in Dayalan's documentary, *Chellakkasu: Makkalin Kural*, seems an extension of the efforts to give coherence to the various voices/topics, mainly recorded through the DSLR and its lightweight-mobility afforded aesthetics of grab on the go, and retain some of the gritty lines from the interviews which were edited out during the

telecast for a wider audience. As an informative video on the background and the context of demonetization and the Vardha Cyclone, Dayalan's and Vijay Anand's documentaries have a certain value, but their most important contribution is in terms of foregrounding the voices of the affected people by reaching them at their homes or in places they frequent, the spaces generally avoided by the main stream media because of distance and/or inconvenience. Often their suffering is profound and poignant, but it has nothing sensational to offer to the media in terms of drama or sound bites as their trauma is neither easily recountable nor representable. The criticism surrounding the didactic nature of activist-documentaries resonate with these films as well, since they often do not allow us to think about the trauma in their eagerness to fill the soundtrack with the narratives of unexpected loss and the seething anger against the apathy of the state and the government machinery. Iconic filmmakers like Anand Patwardhan, with films like *Hamara Sahar* (Bombay Our City, 1985, 75 min.), have informed us about the art of didactic-activism, particularly when it is driven by an ideology and the humaneness of the filmmaker, and its centrality to the politics of resistance and protests against the undemocratic policies and practices of the state. The painstaking and prolonged structure of Patwardhan's films do not allow the audience to wander away from the basic concerns of his documentaries for long, and herein lies the reason for his preference for the long form/feature-length documentaries that allow the space to record the multifarious voices which keep pivoting around a central theme; for instance, the anxiety surrounding the immediate eviction of the slum dwellers in Bombay in *Hamara Sahar*. The organization of the material and the cinematography (Ranjan Palit, Anand Patwardhan, and Pervez Merwanji), sound (Indrajit Neogy), and editing (Patwardhan with the assistance of Ramesh Asher and Sanjiv Shah) add to Patwardhan's investment in focusing on the plight of the proletariat, the four million slum dwellers in Bombay, as they struggle for their survival in a city where they coexist with affluent people, living in high-rises/skyscrapers, who are oblivious to their plight.

The Visual artist Amelia Crouch in her blog "Other Matters," notes that,

Patwardhan acknowledges the potential for his work to objectify impoverished people – one woman in "Hamara Shahar/Bombay: Our City" reprimands him saying: "you take photos to make your name...don't take photos of the poor." But his films are nuanced, and though they represent a particular situation the questions of power, wealth and corruption raised by the films transcend a specific place or time period. This makes them affecting and important even 30 years after "Hamara Shahar/Bombay: Our City" was produced.<sup>17</sup>

As Amelia observes, "Patwardhan uses the voice of the Dalit poet/singer Ghogre" and juxtaposes "the protest song and several scenes of street theater by Vilas Ghogre." The street performances of Ghogre and his band not only

entertain the audience within the diegesis but also educate the audience outside. "[T]he humor and creativity of these scenes humanises the slum dwellers. They act as a counter to depressingly familiar comments made middle class city residents," who have a series of redundant complains. In contrast, "Ghogre's music is intricate, the lyrics reflective and the theater is darkly comic" (ibid). Herein lies the secret of the metamorphosis of the documents into a documentary: the art and politics of performance are brought to bear on the target of state apathy regarding the predicament of slum dwellers through the voice of a profound and revolutionary Dalit poet and singer. Additionally, such juxtapositions of performativity with quotidian reality help in exploring and experimenting with the rhythm and pace of documentaries, as exemplified by Patwardhan's *Jai Bhim Comrade* (2011) which not only revisits and uses Vilas Ghogre's songs but revolves around his unfortunate suicide in protest against the abuse of the Dalits and the police firing and mass killing of Dalit residents at Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar Colony in Bombay, in July 1997. As Anupama Rao notes,

*Jai Bhim Comrade* traces the development of Dalit critique through the musical traditions of *tamasha* and *jalsa*, Ambedkari *geet*, and the performances of Ghogre and the recently banned Kabir Kala Manch. Indeed, the film begins where Patwardhan's earlier film on urban demolitions, *Bombay Hamara Shahar* ends, with the unforgettable voice of Vilas Ghogre, who offered a stinging indictment of state violence and caste dispossession in life, as in death. Ghogre chalked his suicide note on the wall of his *zhopadi* like it was graffiti, that quintessentially urban form of insurgent, subaltern speech, 'I salute the martyred sons of Bhim. Hail Ambedkarite unity. Shahir Vilas Ghogre.'<sup>18</sup>

While Anand Patwardhan's oeuvre could help documentarians in thinking about framing the main themes of their activism-driven documentaries through charismatic and committed performers, his meticulous and painstaking approach in the choice of and engagement with his subjects both for his politics and aesthetics illumines us on the need to spend the time demanded by a documentary as an art form when it gradually transforms from being just a documentation of reality. One could also think from the other side of the spectrum: Mani Kaul, who had claimed that Ghatak and Bresson had "cured him of the sickness of realism," was as far removed from an activism-driven didacticism in his films as one could imagine. Nonetheless, Kaul's interest in cinema began with a documentary. He remembers seeing a short documentary on Calcutta financed by film society, *Portrait of a City* (Chidanand Das Gupta, 1961): "I decided immediately that the thing to do was to direct a film. And I went off to the university library to read books on film."<sup>19</sup> But Mani Kaul had a way to foreground his politics through his aesthetics without being didactic. His films like *Nomad Puppeteers* aka *Puppeteers of Rajasthan* (1974), *Chitrakathi* (1977), and *Arrival* (1980) resonate with the subject of this essay, as they too were about

quotidian people trying to hold onto their voices/spaces/art in the backdrop of (chaotic) changes due to an economy in flux and the apathy of the state and its unwillingness to care for the people on the fringes.

To conclude, Dayalan and his team are fortunate as they have the works of iconic filmmakers to guide them; all they need is to pay careful attention to the documentary form and keep diligently working towards the one that would suit their needs for political intervention as well as artistic expression. Personally, I am very hopeful about the future of these younger generation of documentarians, as the provenance of this essay could be traced back to Dayalan's posting of his poignant and compelling documentation about the hardships faced by women in Vellimalai at the top of the Kalrayan Malai: how they were forced to stand in queue from one in the morning for drawing their hard-earned money from the only branch of Indian Bank that served the thirty villages around; how they were forced to withdraw 1000 rupees even if they needed just 300.<sup>20</sup> If we believe documentaries exist for the recording of the voices of such people, then Dayalan's efforts are in the right direction.

### End Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> The uniqueness of the pro-Jallikattu protests aka Thai Puratchi or the January Rebellion was that it was apolitical, say unlike the earlier protest by the youth of Tamilnadu against the imposition of Hindi language during 1965 when the anti-Hindi movement was led by the leaders of the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam/Draavidian Progress Federation). Without the rhetoric of any leader or the agenda of any political party, a massive assembly of people, mainly of young men and women, at the Marina Beach in Chennai and spaces spread across Tamilnadu came together to showcase their support for just causes and resistance against cultural insensitivity. Nonetheless, the protest against the Supreme Court's order against Jallikattu was a protest against a number of issues, and Jallikattu ultimately became a signifier of regional identity/rights of the people (on the fringes) and the ban on it a sign of suppression. Though the protesters were united in their unconditional support for the bull-taming festival in Tamilnadu, Jallikaatu ultimately became the palimpsest on which people painted their disapproval of the status quo and their desires and hopes for the future.
- <sup>2</sup> See for details, David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review*, 53 (Sept.-Oct. 2008), *Newleftreview.org*, <https://newleftreview.org/II/53/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>, accessed 5 March 2017.

- <sup>3</sup> See for details, Dayalan Siva:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/dayalan1974/videos>, accessed 5 March 2017.
- <sup>4</sup> See for details, Dayalan Shunmuga,  
<https://www.facebook.com/dayalan.shunmuga?pnref=story>, accessed 5 March 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> My telephonic conversations with Dayalan, Dec./Jan. 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> See for details: Raija Susan Panicker, ed., "What is Cyclone Vardah? All About Storm That Hit Tamil Nadu And Andhra Pradesh," *Ndtv.com*, 12 Dec. 2016, <http://www.ndtv.com/south/what-is-cyclone-varadah-chennai-landfall-storm-tamil-nadu-andhra-pradesh-all-you-need-to-know-1637013>, accessed 6 March 2017.
- <sup>7</sup> For details, see Venkatesh Chakravarthy, Facebook Page: Venkatesh Chakravarthy Posts, *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=venkatesh%20chakravarthy%20posts>, accessed 6 March 2017.
- <sup>8</sup> Mahua Venkatesh and Raj Kumar Ray, "Demonetisation will have a positive impact on Indian economy, says World Bank CEO," *Hindustantimes.com*, 2 March 2017, Hindustan Times, New Delhi, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/modi-s-demonetisation-move-will-positively-impact-economy-world-bank-ceo/story-8Khb9U8UHOoEXoi75vyDfl.html>, accessed 5 March 2017.
- <sup>9</sup> Jeanette Rodrigues and Bibhudatta Pradhan, "Modi Takes a Swipe at Harvard Economists After India GDP Surprise," *Bloomberg.com*, 2 March 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-03-02/harvard-economists-face-modi-s-censure-after-india-gdp-surprise>, accessed 5 March 2017.
- <sup>10</sup> Kenneth Rogoff, "India's Currency Exchange and The Curse of Cash," Princeton University Press Blog, *Blog.press.princeton.edu*, 17 Nov. 2016, <http://blog.press.princeton.edu/2016/11/17/kenneth-rogoff-indias-currency-exchange-and-the-curse-of-cash/>, accessed 6 March 2017.
- <sup>11</sup> Tom Worstall, "PM Modi Can Diss Harvard, But India's 7% GDP Growth After Demonetization Still Doesn't Add Up," *Forbes.com*, 3 March 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2017/03/03/pm-modi-can-diss-harvard-but-indias-7-gdp-growth-after-demonetisation-still-doesnt-add-up/#72df015a345f>, accessed 6 March 2017.
- <sup>12</sup> My telephonic conversations with Arunmozhi Sivaparakasam and Pandiaraju, Jan./Feb. 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> See for details, Dayalan Shunmuga, "Thannezhuchiyay Ezhuntha Ilangyargal," *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/swarnavel?ref=brem>, accessed 5 March 2017.
- <sup>14</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits : a selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Norton, 1977, p. 303
- <sup>15</sup> See for details the various posts of Dayalan Shunmuga, Facebook Page: Dayalan shunmuga Posts, *Facebook.com*,

<https://www.facebook.com/dayalan.shunmuga/posts/1300661519977528?pnref=story>, accessed 5 March 2017.

- <sup>16</sup>See for details, S. Ganesan, Neduvasal: One Hydrocarbon Project, Many Fault Lines, *TheHindu.com*, 5 March 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/one-hydrocarbon-project-many-fault-lines/article17410748.ece>, accessed 5 March 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> Amelia Crouch, Other Matters: Things I have been watching, reading, doing, making and thinking about, "Review: Anand Patwardhan – A Cinema of Songs and People," *Ameliacrouch.com*, 17 Nov. 2014, <http://www.ameliacrouch.com/notes/review-anand-patwardhan-a-cinema-of-songs-and-people/>, accessed 6 March 2017.
- <sup>18</sup> See for details, Anupama Rao, "Stigma and Labour: Remembering Dalit Marxism," *Seminar* 633 (May 2012), *Southasiainstitute.harvard.edu*, <http://southasiainstitute.harvard.edu/website/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Seminar.2012.pdf>, accessed 6 March 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> See for details, Aruna Vasudev, *The New Indian Cinema*, Delhi: Macmillan India, 1986, p. 37.
- <sup>20</sup> See for details, Dayalan Shunmuga, "Demonetization: Notes On Kachirapalayam, near Kallakurichi, and Vellimalai at the top of Kalrayan Malai," *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/dayalan.shunmuga/posts/1279853785391635>, accessed 6 March 2017.





# அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சல்

## அறிவிப்பு / Announcement

அன்பான தமிழ்ச் சொந்தங்களே

வணக்கம்.

வரும் 2019, ஜூலை மாதம் வெளிவரும் அரண் பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சலுக்கான ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரைகள் ஆய்வாளர்களிடமிருந்து வரவேற்கப்படுகின்றன.

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