



Reading Between the Lines; an Analysis of Troll Language in Malayalam Cyber Space

***Amalu. N.S**

MA MCJ Student

Department of English and Foreign Languages,

Hyderabad University

amalusathya@gmail.com

“Sarcasm is the ability to insult idiots without them realizing it.” Anonymous.

Internet trolling is one of the most sophisticated forms of sarcasm in this digital era. Perhaps it is a mere incarnation of the inherent capacity of human beings that is ‘to troll and to be trolled’. But the introduction and widespread of the internet created number of creative talents who are willing to bear the pain of labour to produce their ‘sarcastic trolls’. The urban dictionary provides a wide range of definitions for the term ‘trolling’. But the widely used definition for Troll is that “Being a prick on the internet because you can. Typically unleashing one or more cynical or sarcastic remarks on an innocent by-stander, because it’s the internet and, hey, you can.” Wikipedia defines troll as ““Someone who posts inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as a forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion.”

Every troll has a history, it is a phenomenon which is deep rooted somewhere in the History many years ago. It can be roughly traced in Nordic mythology and Scandinavian folklore. It was a panoptic imagination of generations before they shifted from their ancestral homes (forest, riverside etc) to their ‘tiny’ homes on the internet. These were the tales of west, when it comes to Kerala, trolling extends its sign board to the folklore history of Kerala. Kerala has a long history of sarcastic literature. Indeed it begins from a writer called Kunjan Nambiar (1705-1770) and he was the most noted sarcastic writer of Kerala. He can be considered as a secularist because he ridiculed every community of his time. He satirically criticized every class of the society, from king to common man; everyone became a character in his verbal cartoon. Sarcasm is a well known nature of Malayalee. They always have an inherent deal with humour sense, wit and mocking. This may be the reason why Kerala had the highest per capita output of cartoons among all the regions of India. This may be because of their higher literacy rate and acute poverty rate.

As far as Kerala society is concerned online trolls are very recent phenomena; more specifically with the wide spread of social media. There was a time in Kerala when trolls are limited to cartoons and caricature strips. But the crash landing of digital era made a lot of changes in the way people think and criticise. They invented new platforms to express their arguments, criticisms, opinions, comments etc. People started to use social networking as a tool of their expression. We have reached a period of laymen's trolls which is being circulated and enjoyed by the common internet users. This is the reason why the social media trolls are often called 'mango trolls'. When a person next to you says 'his phone is in Prime Minister Mode' you should understand that it is in 'flight mode'. The language of 'freakers' became distinct and 'likes' for a profile picture turned to be prestige issue. If someone calls you Alia Bhatt do not feel proud for your beauty; they are trolling your ignorance. Numerous subtexts and inner meanings developed in our day to day language which is still growing through the mango trolls.

The significance of language in trolls or memes can be equated to how important the colour, layout or appearance in a cartoon is. A cartoonist always takes care of all slight nuances to be considered while creating a cartoon like, the colour tone of the cloth his/ her character wears, the way their character parts their hair, slight gestures etc to build that larger than life image. So does a troller by trying to choose peculiar dialects, vernacular usages and slangs to enhance the real-time trolls and thereby allowing the readers to connect with the issues raised.

Before deciding the language for a troll, one needs to understand the context properly and should have the ability to visualize it in terms of a common man or a usual facebooker. intended and for it to hit high on the tickling bones, it is advised that you watch the comic blockbusters (movies like In Harihar Nagar, Punjabi House, Chitram, Minnaram, etc) and verbal oriented smash hits of Mammooty, Mohanlal and Suresh Gopi (The King, The Commissioner, Narasimham, etc). The creativity shown by a troller in curating such 'epic' dialogued movie scenes and incorporating them with socio-political issues amidst them is highly appreciated by the viewers.

Memes or trolls attain popularity when humour in language and concerns of common man cross each other. This is very much evident in trolls which satirizes political parties and politicians who are corrupted. 'EnteVaka 500' is one such a popular meme created by eminent young Malayalam movie director Ashiq Abu in response to an alleged bribery case associated with Finance Minister K M Mani in 2015 which eventually led to his resignation. If this accounts to the wider spectrum of literature trolls help in a higher level of political catharsis much like other arts forms. Every troll reflects layman's counter politics against numerous micro politics employed by the dominant sections of the society be they politicians, entrepreneurs, film stars or even beaurocrates.

There are some incidents in which the language itself played a significant role in creating trolls. The announcement of Kerala State award was such an incident. In which the respected Home minister himself mispronounced the names of the awardees. The speech of

the jury of the award committee also hunted by trollers for their speech which was in such a language that almost unable to understand by the common people. These kinds of socio political trolls created a wave in social networking sites.

There are many words coined after the widespread of trolling. Le, LOL, ROFL etc are some examples for this. Even though they are not coined in Malayalam, it is widely used in Malayalam trolls also. 'Le' is one of the most commonly used word in Malayalam trolls. But it is interesting to note that most of the Le users don't know the exact meaning of 'Le'. It doesn't have a perfect meaning in English or Malayalam. In Spanish Le means him, his, it, her etc. Normally it added to the end of a verb. And in french it uses as a definite article what would be "the" in English. Trolls were the major catalysts of this verbal migration. Words turned into laughter and it then flourished as the 'language of laughter'.

Once up on a time the legacy of coining of new words were 'patented' to certain people who were well established in their own way. Shakespeare, Noam Chomsky, Carl Marx et al were the dominant names in the horizon of language. But today the story is something different. The connotations and intended meanings of the words incarnated to a new imagery. 'Pongaala', 'mean aviyaal', 'sudappi', 'kammi', 'and kommu', 'Sanghi' etc are some blooming buds of the social networking trollers. The actual meaning of these terms differs very much from the contextual meaning. The youngsters, who get frustrated out of the much conventional worn-out political dramas, express their contempt through trolls.

There was a period when most of the youngsters where curiously talked about the novels and poems of eminent writers of their perspective eras. They used to preach their dialogues and quotations in their day to day life negotiations. But later on this obsession reformed into another form called trolling. People started to use troll dialogues and words in their colloquial usage. Unlike English trolls Malayalam trolls were mostly based on movie dialogues. Trollers enjoyed their privilege of creating innovative and socially relevant trolls through social media.

Kerala possess a versatile attitude towards cinema. Their receptivity of this obsession could be read in their trolls also. It is quite surprising that the dialects of a particular demography get projected in these trolls. From proverbs to film dialogues certain words and phrases gets into our usual talks with myriad connotations and representations awarded by these trolls. The voyage of the movie locations and linguistic variations resulted in linguistic alteration of the troll language. The proclaimed Malabar influence in the contemporary trolls is an example for this alteration. Most of the dialogues those are used in trolls followed the success of respective movies. There is a parallel locomotion of language variations in movies and trolls respectively.

The current trend of trolling after the successes of the movies like Thattahinmarayathu, Usthad Hotel, Oruvadakanselfietc is to adapt this pattern of words and slang. But earlier trolls were more concentrated on the city lives because the movies of that particular time period was predominantly concentrated in the Cochin and premises like Big B, Da Thadiya etc.

For example now there is an overwhelmed practice of Malabar slang and words in the trolls. Even if the troller is not a person from Malabar (northern) area, they also used to create their trolls in Malabar slang. Sometimes it creates a disputes and conflicts among the audience. Most recently there was a troll which says, a new teacher from the southern part of the Kerala is coming to the class of a Malabar region and asking to students that did you people collect your books? And students replied in their colloquial slang, “maangatholund” (yeah! some of them didn’t buy it). In standard Malayalam this particular word refers to the outer peel of mango. And the teacher astonished and asking that “what’s with the peel of mango?” This is a troll which got so much attention recently because of the conflicts it created.

People weirdly commented on this troll, some people from the southern part accused that it was created to mock them intentionally. And some of them seconded it and some refused it. Thus it may create some kind of geographical demarcation among people. But ultimately trolls are a part of our culture. The humour or sarcasm is not exactly meant to create a conflict between people. It is to entertain and it is also intended to make people ignited of handling the freaking jokes in the right sense.

There was little boy named Carlos Ramirez. One day he drew a weird face in MS paint and shared it in social networking sites. At that time that boy didn’t know the fact that it is going to reshape the history of memes worldwide. Later that ‘face’ termed as ‘troll face’ which was something made laugh millions of people around the globe. Sarcasm and humour elements are the major counter parts of laymen’s trolls. People started to celebrate trolls as never before. After the introduction of new media, social networking brought out the common man into spotlight. People started to troll every nook and cranny of the socialsphere. Today there are numerous trolling pages are available in the internet, in which people doesn’t have to reveal their identity. Pseudonyms are letting them to troll on any person or issue, and keep them out of danger. ‘Keep mum in light and utter in dark’ it is as simple as that. Our trolling culture is an Indian counterpart of the western heroes. And then it blossomed as the language of shared memories and culture. And for sometimes it could be say that ‘trolls are mightier than essays’. LOL!