

100 years of Ananda Vikatan

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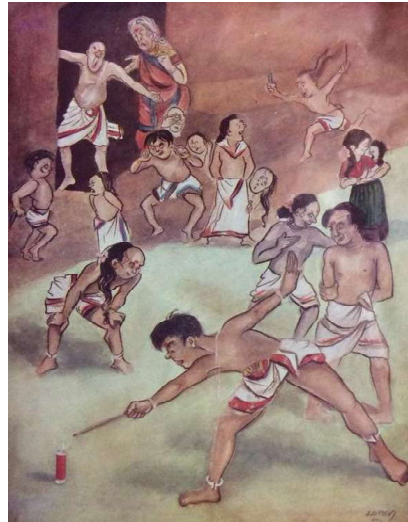
The story of Ananda Vikatan (which means Joyful Humour or Satire), a Tamil-language weekly magazine is, in many ways, the story of modern Tamil journalism itself. It faced financial challenges to begin with, steadied itself and then soared like an eagle to become one of the largest circulated and commercially successful publications. It created new space for itself and set a high ethical standard. It took its role as the watchdog of the society seriously and often paid the price. Rooted in the Tamilian ideal of sticking to tradition, it also embraced emerging media technology, becoming an ideal model of modernity with a soul of tradition.

Ananda Vikatan, was started by Pudhoo Vaidyanadhaiyar in February 1926 as a monthly publication. The issue for December 1927 was not published due to financial difficulties. In January 1928 Subramaniam Srinivasan (popularly known as SS Vasan) bought the rights from Vaidyanadhaiyer and relaunched the publication in February 1928. He built it up into a weekly. Under him it quickly gained popularity. Sales rose. Veteran journalist and media personality and Srinivasan's son S. Balasubramanian served as editor, managing director and publisher of the magazine for nearly 50 years till 2006. He also started the "Manavar Thittam" or student journalism scheme that has been active for the last 30 years and counting. He also launched Junior Vikatan, a biweekly Tamil investigative journal in the 1980s.

Contribution of Ananda Vikatan to Tamil journalism

Ananda Vikatan is known for its ethical approach to journalism, and a fair mix of journalism and literature. It nurtured numerous iconic

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writers like Kalki and Sujatha, shaping modern Tamil literary tastes. It revolutionized Tamil media through high-quality writing, popularizing short stories, and holding power accountable.

It pioneered new formats in Tamil journalism, including investigative reporting and specialized columns. With an eye to future, it introduced the "Manavar Thittam" (Student Journalism) program to mentor young journalists.

By 1950, it established itself as the "moral compass" of Tamil society. To demonstrate that it walks the talk, it banned cigarette advertisements in 1979, setting a precedent in Indian media.

Ananda Vikatan played a foundational role in shaping the tradition of political cartooning in Tamil journalism. At a time when print media in regional languages was still finding its voice, the magazine recognised the power of visual satire as a tool for mass communication-accessible, immediate, and often more impactful than text.

From its early decades under S. S. Vasan, Ananda Vikatan began regularly publishing cartoons that commented on contemporary politics, colonial rule, and social hierarchies. These cartoons distilled complex political issues into sharp, humorous visuals that could be easily understood by a wide readership, including those with limited literacy.

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One of the magazine's most significant contributions was in nurturing iconic cartoonists like Mali (R. Mahalingam), who became one of the most prominent caricaturists of Tamil media. His work set new standards for line, expression, and political wit. Mali's cartoons combined artistic finesse with biting commentary, influencing generations of cartoonists in Tamil Nadu and beyond. He also was editor of the Merry Magazine (an English-language publication of the Vikatan group) in 1935.

Ananda Vikatan also institutionalised the idea of cartoons as a regular editorial feature rather than an occasional embellishment. Its pages became a space where authority could be questioned and public sentiment reflected through satire. Over time, this helped legitimise political cartooning as a serious journalistic practice in Tamil media.

Anand Vikatan at 100

Anand Vikatan always moved with the times so far technology and syncing with public taste are concerned. In 2008, it shifted from a digest format to A4 size, embracing a younger look. It was one of the first Tamil publications to adopt and adapt to digital technology. In 2019, the magazine grew its digital revenue, expanding to a global audience

In 100 years Anand Vikatan evolved from a print-first magazine to a digital-forward multimedia group (Vikatan Group) while maintaining its ethical approach to journalism and critical stance against authority.

