



## THE SOCIAL SYMBOLISM OF A YOJANA: DECODING BY THE STATE

**Dr. Anand Raja**

**TATA Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.**

### ABSTRACT

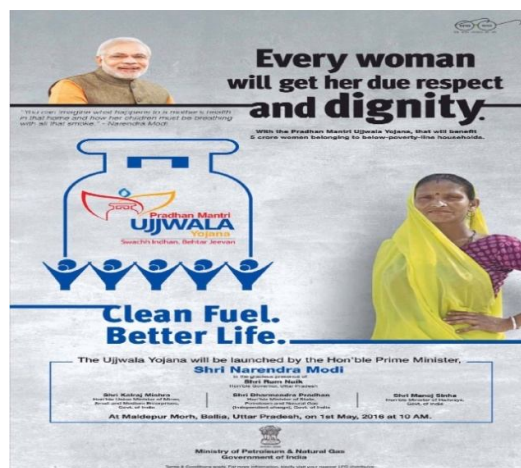
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY) aims to have reached with LPG connections to poor families. The Yojna promises 'Clean Fuel, Better Life' and that 'Every woman will get her full respect and dignity'. If and why this Yojna's language (which is a set of symbols, images and words with a grammar) may have harmony and variance with the Yojna's public perception is not known. Sociolinguistics can uncover how the Yojna, as encoded by the government, is decoded in the private sphere and the public sphere. Yojna's multiple meanings to all stakeholders will also be known after this research. Based on this research, the stakeholders can learn to make the Yojna an overall success. This research aims to explore the deeper meanings of the UjjwalaYojna.



**KEYWORDS :** Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY) , Sociolinguistics , Clean Fuel.

### INTRODUCTION

The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Damodardas Modi dedicated the Yojna to the country on May 1, 2016 at Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. The Yojna aimed at providing LPG connections to 5 crore BPL families. Both the government and the beneficiary contribute financially to set up the gas stove. After the target was revised upwardly, the website pmuy.gov.in repeats that over 8 crore Yojna connections have been released as on 7 September 2019.



As a government website (Anonymous 2021) indicates, for centuries, households, especially women of the household, have fended for coal, firewood, kerosene and dung-cakes for cooking fuel. This caused environmental harm, breathing problems, eye ailments, safety issues and sheer drudgery. The Yojna was launched to provide LPG connections to many such families. The Yojna promises 'Clean Fuel and Better Life' and that every woman will get her full respect and dignity. Indeed, Shah (2019) says that the Yojna has reduced 'ocular injuries caused by the use of wooden sticks during cooking.'

The scope and coverage of the Yojna is wide. As indicated in the literature review below, the Yojna is also seen as a big political initiative. The Yojna has been given roots in civic dialogue as part of making the Yojna a success. Probably, the processes involved in getting an LPG connection and putting it into the household brought a social-psychological change in private families and communities. The Yojna has also entered the social lives of individuals. The review will establish that the success of the PMUY and its social symbolism are under-studied.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The initiative is a public relations exercise. Sahu, Patel & Patel (2018) point out that 'To promote the Ujjwala scheme, the government organized 50,000 safety camps, effective mass media was used in advertisements, videos, pamphlets and LPG- panchayats were conducted to create awareness about program and dispel fear and myths related to usage of LPG based cooking.' 1.13 crore LPG consumers voluntarily gave up subsidies on their LPG cylinders. The resulting amount of Rs. 5000 crore went towards financing the Yojna.

The scheme has been implemented phenomenally well. Dabadge, Sreenivas & Josey (2018) say that since the start of the Yojna, 'Over 70% of the target five crore connections have been disbursed in about two-thirds of the intended time.' Perhaps encouraged by the response, the government decided to have 'three crore additional connections over an extra year.'

There are several impediments in the path of the success of the Yojna. Involving Aadhar in the processing of the Yojna meant that those who did not have Aadhar were left out. There were issues of 'such as affordability, reliability, accountability, and viability' (Dabadge, Sreenivas, and Josey 2018). Giri and Aadil (2018) in a survey in Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh, have uncovered other impediments: 'These include the high price of refills, cultural or behavioural beliefs, and issues with access, which translates to the long distances of beneficiary households from the LPG dealer.' As a consequence of such factors, '23% of beneficiaries who had received LPG connections before 1st September, 2017, never refilled their cylinders'; found (Giri and Aadil 2018). (CAG 2019) has discovered some procedural lapses in the implementation of the Yojna.

The Sociology of Development has largely been concerned with macro-level processes that can be studied mainly at global and national levels (Viterna and Robertson 2015). Even Randomized Control Trials on Poverty do not take account of the sociology of Yojnas; how Yojnas are 'encoded' by social actors and political actors. The understanding of PMUY can be enriched by locating it in a social-semiotic frame.

The socio-political semiosis of the Yojna shall shed light on the management needs of inputs, processes and outputs of the government programmes. This study will say what constitutes the various inputs in a successful program; what constitutes right and proper procedures in carrying out the yojna and how the output and impact of the Yojna, in terms of semiosis, can be measured.

One of such frames is enunciated in the 'Conceptual Framework' as below.

## Research Gap

The Yojna has not been seen in its social-semiotic context; it's life in society. Yojna can be seen in a sociological imagination which involves 'Thinking ourselves away from the familiar routines of our daily lives in order to look at them anew (Giddens 2009).' This involves looking at how the Yojna is encoded by those who brought the Yojna to life as well as how people in general decode the Yojna and give more meaning to it. This paper is an attempt to see how this Yojana is encoded by the system.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the PMUY in a wholesome manner, the Yojna's collective and subjective dimensions have to be appraised; with reference to semiotics. Habermas can help understand the economic and political structures; steering media and network of shared meanings, public sphere and private sphere. The semiosis of the Yojna, however, is dependent upon what Pierce calls interpretant. Wittgenstein's Duck-Rabbit illusion and Weber's 'subjective meanings' are important.

The Yojna is a program of the Government of India. Explaining Habermas, (Appelrouth & Edles D, 2008) confirm that the Government is a part of the system which 'comprises a society's political and economic structures that are responsible for the organization of power relations and the production and distribution of material resources.' The Yojna can be seen as a product of our political structure which is distributing a material resource, cooking equipment in our case, for obvious political gain, including votes and legitimacy.

State is about the distribution of power. Economy is about money circulation. Steering Media are those 'organizational mechanisms for self-organization' which are developed by the state and the economy to run the system. These steering media are goal oriented, and governed by calculated logic. The Yojna is a consequence of one such steering media. The Yojna is not only a product of the system; its meaning is constructed and de-coded in the lifeworld.

(Appelrouth & Edles D, 2008) say that the Lifeworld consists of a 'network of shared meanings that individuals draw from to construct identities, to negotiate situational definitions, or to create social solidarity'. The 'construction of meaning happens in two domains. (1) The Private Sphere of the Family. (2) The Public Sphere of Open Civic Debate.' Lifeworld exists in each society, says Habermas. Lifeworld is a sociological resource. If, however, there are no minds to make meaning of; there is no use of a 'network of shared meanings.'

Such individual dimension gives meaning to symbols that are collectively available. Symbols are those objects and entities which have a meaning other than that object or entity. This meaning is both denotative, which is a central meaning; as well as connotative, which is a peripheral meaning. These meanings are attached to symbols in ways that are arbitrary but which belong to the symbol by convention (Saussure, 2018). For instance, the Yojna can mean beneficence on the part of the Government.

Even in Peircean semiotics, the interpretant refers to the impact of sign on the individual mind. Yet, in a constructivist orientation, one cannot conceive of the sign as independent of the individual meaning making capacities. This research takes the ideas and cognition very seriously as it investigates the semiosis of the Yojna, as it takes place in the specific time-space occupied by the Yojna.

Reality is not just a reflection of objects on the mind. The individual mind conceives objects in various ways; especially when it comes to meanings. (Wittgenstein, 2009) discusses the Duck-Rabbit illusion; a picture that can be seen as both a Duck and a Rabbit. Following the same, we can make a distinction between 'Seeing That' and 'Seeing As'. 'Seeing That' is a simple act of perception; while 'Seeing As' is an act of interpretation, like seeing the same picture *as* a Duck or *as* a Rabbit. When individuals interpret the Yojna in one way, they see it 'As' a peculiar phenomenon.

Individuals may assign various meanings to the Yojna. The reason may come from considering Weber's Verstehen approach. As (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008) point out, Weber wanted an 'interpretive understanding of social action'; social action is that 'by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course.' For our purposes, we will see how the social action of the Yojna is 'Seen As' and encoded and decoded social-semiotically.

Saussure's linguistics speaks of a sign; which contains a signifier and a signified. Signifier is an object that denotes an idea or an object; while signified is the idea or object denoted by the signifier. Mainly, the publicity around the Yojna creates a signifier which potentially, has a great deal of meaning. This is first order signification. The sign comes to acquire a new signified; which is a second order signification. For instance, the Yojna can be a sign that gathers even more signified with additional publicity, in new frames.

In Peirce (1958), there are three facets of signs. 'The Representamen: the form which the sign takes (not necessarily material). An interpretant: not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign. An object: to which the sign refers.' An analysis of these concepts can distinguish the various characteristics of the sign of the UjjwalaYojna; in new ways.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In the light of the concerns raised above, this study will ask the question:  
How the government encodes the Yojna and why it gives particular meaning to it?

### METHODOLOGY

The system and lifeworld with reference to the Yojna are spread all over India and in some respects, internationally. The Yojna has spanned several years, given that it was launched in 2016. The aim of this research is not to give an exhaustive report of the Yojna in massive time/space.

This research wants to uncover how the Yojna is encoded by the system; how it is decoded by households and public sphere and *why* the Yojna is conceived in the way the Yojna is. Sociolinguistics is the method for this research.

### CONCLUSION

New methodological insights can be gained from this study. This study can say if sociolinguistics can be used to uncover meaning; which is an assumption in the methodology. This study can further test if language is a good sign-vehicle and how other sign vehicles relate to language. This study is in the same league as Weber's Verstehen approach; which is a type of methodological individualism. It can say if the system can be studied through Verstehen approach. The study can be important for society, politicians, civil-society activists. Society can learn to how to make the Yojna its own.

The image above is a representative of the Lifeworld of the political with the slogan Clean Fuel, Better Life. The Life of the political is to provide Clean Fuel and the Lifeworld of the public is better Life. The image gives a clear and strong social political meaning.

The message of the Yojna is encoded in the form of an image comprising Shri Modiji in the left hand corner, the most important place in the banner, a rural woman is a representative of the beneficiaries and is placed in the right hand corner establishing the giver and recipient relationship. It reminds of various gods from whose raised hands emanate light to the worshipper. The slogan says every woman will get her due respect and dignity. The messages are mutually contradictory but serves the political purpose.

The semiotics of the Yojna tells us how symbols, including words and visual images, are able to communicate meaning. They draw upon tradition; on the link between the state and the people; between man and woman; between the rich and the poor, between the urban and the rural. This seepage into tradition is a way to give symbols a lot of deep roots in civilization, so that symbolism can be strong.

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