



A Journal Deducing the Arts in Politics

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Abstract:

Art, an essence of human existence finds various forms of expression. Art has transcended from Art for art's sake to its own reality. The diversity of art world is a powerful tool of mass communication. Art as activism has been efficacious, self-reflective and a cultural tool for social change. The paper looks at one such artistic medium, the political cartoon illustrations which express the socio-political situations, through creative output and penetrating the daily lives of people which creates scope for reflection. Political cartoon illustrations are graphic satire, with a language of their own depicting the social issues through humorous touch. These are an expression which symbolize emotions and bring out an idealist's thought representing pictures and strokes. Cartoon illustrators are exceptionally good observers of the society owing to their creative minds with logic to create awareness and understanding of social situations for its readers. They are meaningful and carry elements of surprise, sarcasm and illustrate all emotions involved. These art forms have motives which define art for entertainment and for satirical political views. These art forms convey even complex matters in a simple and easy to comprehend manner and convey the powerful message in a translucent mode.

Keywords: Editorial cartoons, Political cartoons, Satirical, Irony, Semiotics.

Aims and objectives of the paper:

The paper aims to analyse the various illustrations by different Political cartoonists.

The three objectives are:

- 1) to list out two political cartoonists of the past and the contemporary times
- 2) to point out the kind of illustrations depicted in the artist's work
- 3) to bring out the mere comparison of the political cartoon illustration of the past and the current.

Introduction:

An editorial cartoon also known as political cartoon is an art which encloses political or social commentary, political cartoon illustrations are used to communicate a facet of daily news or current affairs. Political cartoons are entertaining art forms that portray public figures and current events in humorous yet thought-provoking ways. Political cartoons are vital part of Journalism that are typically pictures, strokes and caricature drawings, to create impersonation of a subject which could be social or political in nature. This form of depiction helps cartoonist to express their point of view or comment through humor or satire.

On Political cartooning makes serious commentary on serious topics, doing it not so seriously (Matt Wuerker). They are able to communicate an opinion quickly through these depictions. The political cartoon encapsulates the socio-political events and the nation's sentiments and at times leading to controversies. One of the exhibit curators from Canada mentioned in an interview that political cartoons first make you laugh and then react and later make you think. They not only comment on history, they make history.

A political cartoon is also an artistic medium defined by both metaphorical and satirical language to convey the untold. It brings out the contexts, concerns, and divergence of a political condition. An illustration is cartoonist's assessment and point of view and a prudent editorial cartoonist wouldn't alter facts though there may be elements of exaggeration. The cartoon illustrations are entertaining in nature, their visual commentary renders numerous artistic decisions such as symbols, allegories, techniques, composition, and so on. The cartoonist must also be able to keep in mind whether the audience can grasp and relate to the content being expressed. Political cartoon is an art form which critically analyses the societal phenomena which encourages the audience to participate in a process of opinion formation and decision making.

Editorial or Political cartoons are very engaging and are great learning tools. An illustrator needs to equip himself or herself with the current happenings of the society and in depth knowledge of the content in order to interpret the complexes of the political and societal scenario. Cartoon illustrations are appurtenance to understanding of the society. These illustrations have been highly effective communication tool for bringing about both public opinion and important issues over the years.

The basic strategy for interpreting editorial cartoons are background knowledge about a particular political or social phenomena and the language employed. It promotes its audience with the skill to interpret art and critical thinking.

Usually, the editorial cartoon illustrations are expressed through idioms, puns, context, clues, satire, irony, caricature, adages, dialogues, interpreting visuals and understanding titles. Cartoon illustration uses analytic and persuasive techniques as a communicative device.

Artistic movement cartoons have simple constituent or symbols, to represent larger concepts or ideas. Exaggeration is also used to highlight the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point. Facial physiognomies and attire are some of the most commonly exaggerated characteristics. Labeling Cartoons convey the message in precise terms. An analogy is a technical device to create comparison between two dissimilar things in a complex situation which can help their readers to look at it in a different light. Irony is a rhetorical device utilised to express their opinion on an issue which might be intended to emphasize the convoluted issues more effectively and persuasively.

Editorial cartoons make the context highly relevant and focussed, they deeply reflect the social issues. They are often dismissed on the grounds of political absurdity and ideological insignificance. Semiotics are another way of expression of this art form.

Political cartoon are used to reorient social agenda, harnessed to build and shape public opinion. Political cartooning is a blend of art and journalism, which raises its voice through its countenance. Political cartoon construct public opinion which are weapons of political activism. Cartoon illustrations speak louder, what words may fail to convey. The cryptic captions supplement further to this art form. The cartoon illustrations provide kaleidoscopic view of the society and leads to greater scope in mobilising for change.

Artist Marcus Ellsworth states that Art as activism can help connect people, motivate them to act, to move. Art as motional and emotional expression can change and express their truth. The creative expression can intent to change the world with the truth.

An editorial cartoonist has an aesthetic proximity and investigates to keep updated about society and takes a shot at the information. Editorial cartoon is a craft with a profound certainty covered behind the hilarious appearance of the subject.

A political cartoonist attempts to comprehend the fundament of the situation and tries to connect and convey to their audience quickly. A political cartoon utilizes pictorial language and anatomy and investigates to make embellishment through elements of composition. It

gives significant proclamation and controversial pictures and attempts to juxtapose two pictures through comparison. The aim isn't to vex individuals but to encourage people to speak. It is substantiated that the artists are courageous and have gut to talk through their pictures in portraying their art, which is a symbol of courage and righteousness. Political cartoons throw light on things which people sometimes don't take note of. Cartoon illustrations are dialogues engaging the audience in a highly creative and cognitive semantics.

It is the intensity of political cartoon to capture viewers' attention and bring forth the awareness and the mindfulness about unfairness and other societal or political occurrences to its audience and significantly impact them. Political cartoons speak an idea and arguments which are intrude in nature and the visual dialogue opine the artist's mind. The political discourse and complex issues can be simplified for individuals to understand through this framework. Art of political cartoon is delineated paradoxically which is incomprehensible. With only a couple of strokes of pen, the illustrator summarizes an intricate circumstance in a solitary amazing picture that clarifies everything. In this way, the unassuming cartoons achieve change, harmony, fellowship and comprehension.

Parody is essentially to bring about humour to the context that may make individual overlook the buzzing about of the everyday routine. Political cartoons are a delightful outline of the real world. It's anything but a simple ability and one must be talented to sketch them. On the off chance that we experience the specialty of making political cartoons, we understand that in an exceptionally inconspicuous and agreeable way, they give the message to the peruser. Political Cartoons are easy to visualize and digest over the huge printed messages. The cartooning activism has given voice through art.

Art of Political Cartooning

An analysis and understanding of the political cartoonists of the past and the contemporary.

R.K Laxman's first six decades of post-colonial India and his creation of common man in his illustrations represented the common man of India. His illustration were pulse of the nation through powerful message and idiosyncrasies of Indian society, they were astute in portrayal and communicated the real issues through satirical political views. The illustrations were paradoxical and commentary were satirical in nature.

R.K Laxman unarguably was termed as the uncrowned conscience keeper of the nation for his clever and witty observation of the society. He conveyed through few dexterous strokes on matters that were an act of impropriety or injudiciousness with right metaphor and apt imagery. The cartoon illustrations reflected hopes and aspirations, idiocies and eccentricities

of a society in transition. These cartoon illustrations speak volumes about Laxman's capacity to convey complex geopolitical realities in his characteristic style. In an interview, R.K. Laxman revealed that fun is embedded in political leaders, perhaps, this led to his artistic creation and expression of the political situation with ease. He has illustrated various social -political issues spanning his long career be it the intense opposition brewing up against MNC's in 1970, the Inflation rates, hike in petrol, bribery etc.

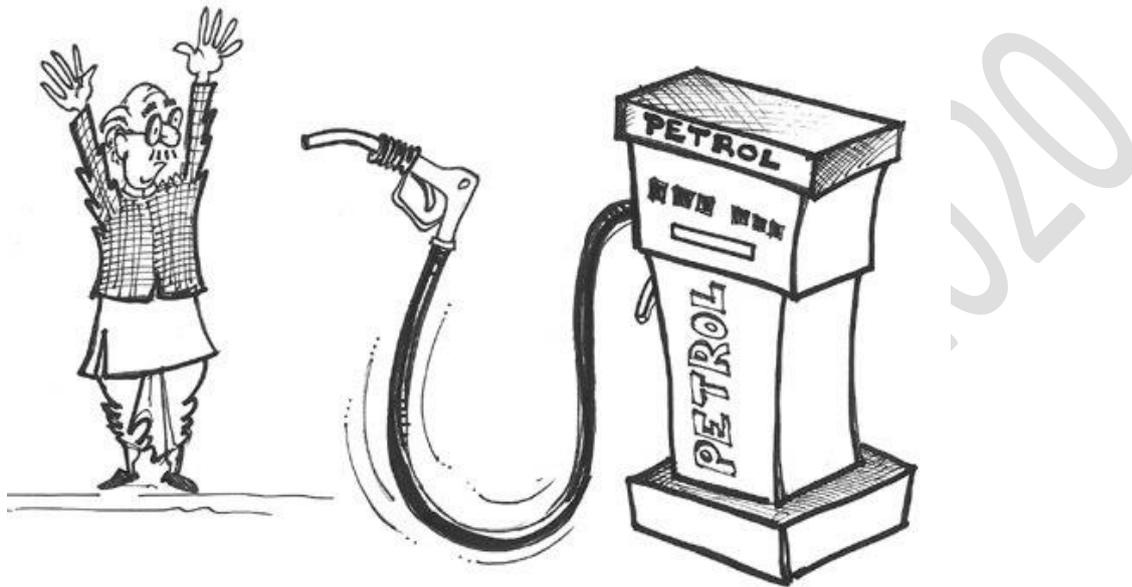


Figure.1



Figure.2

In the above illustrations of R.K.Laxman (Figure.1), the common man is threatened by the hike in the petrol prices and the illustration says it all. It is interesting to note how the craft has been used to denote dual aspects, that of the petrol dispenser and revolver to convey that the price hikes are threatening the common man.

In Figure.2, the imagery talks about the ironical element where at one end the school kid's bag gets heavier and on the other end depicts a kid being employed to reduce the burden, thereby engaging in child labour.

In the above illustrations, the cartoonist tries to bring awareness on societal situations in a subtle way creating a strong message.

Maya Kamath was a cartoon illustrator during 80's and 90's, her work proved her as a gender -sensitive humanist, from domestic humour to torrid issues like dowry or female foeticide. Her work were authentic and never clichéd. Her style was distinctive in simple lines embracing humanity and topical issues with cool sense of irony.



Figure.3



Figure.4

The illustrations from Figure 3 and 4 showcase the work of Maya Kamath which depict the deplorable condition of girl child and status of women in India

Aseem Trivedi, a cartoonist and human rights defender, his socio-political depictions are bold in nature. His anti-corruption movement with his "Cartoons Against Corruption" were highly controversial.

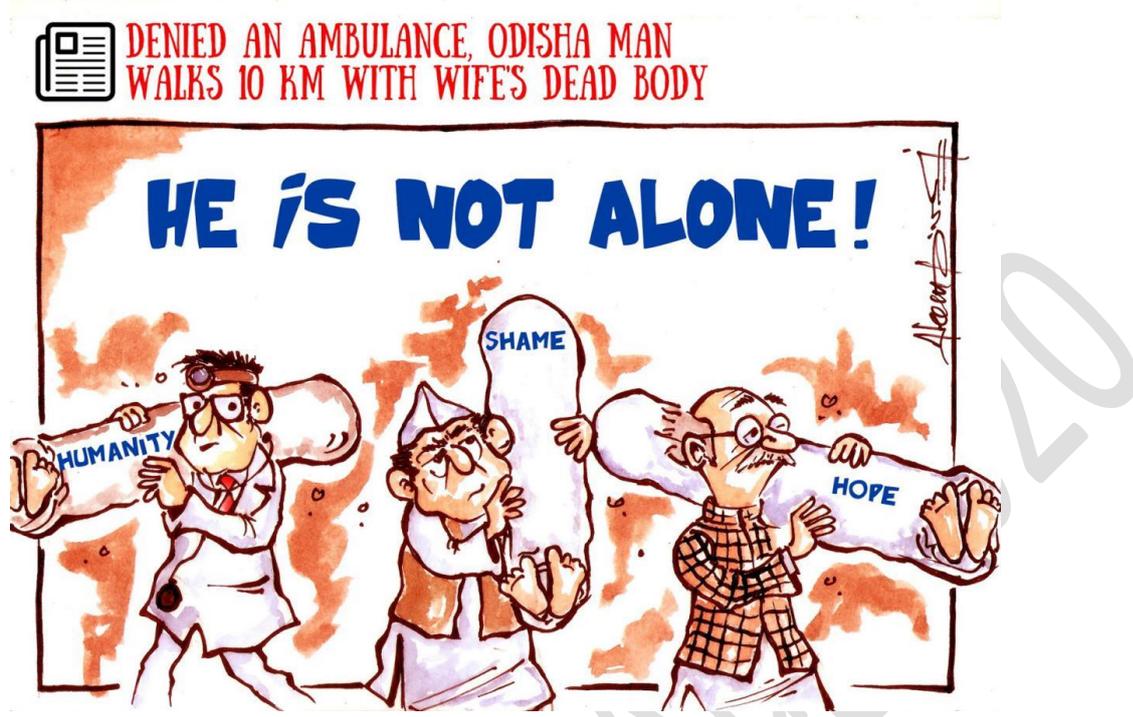


Figure 5

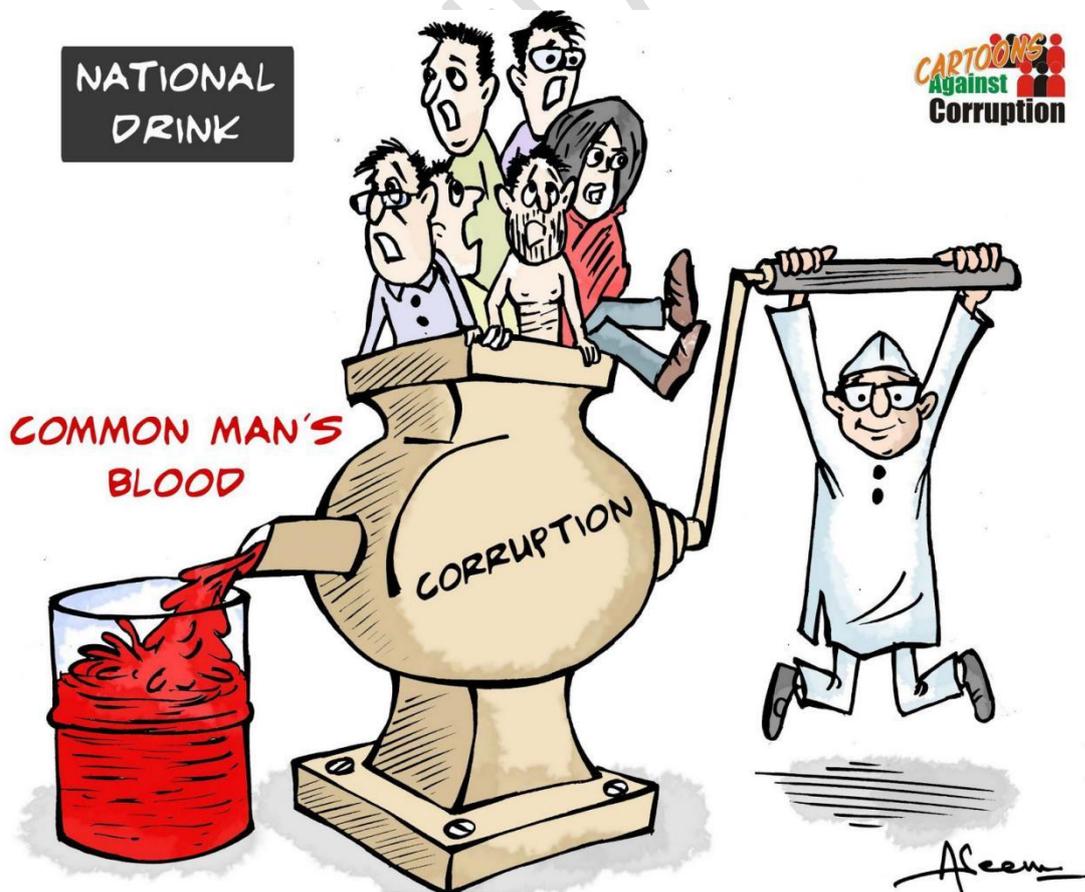


Figure 6

The cartoon illustrations in Figure 5 and 6 depict the current socio-political condition of the country. The illustrations which are animated political cartoons speak about the spiking rate of corruption and helplessness of the common man.

Kanika Mishra, a cartoonist and web-animator who created 'Karnika Kahen' the voice of her cartoon illustration through 'aam ladki (common woman)' who speaks fearlessly on social issues. She depicts hard-hitting political cartoons on various concerns.



Figure .7

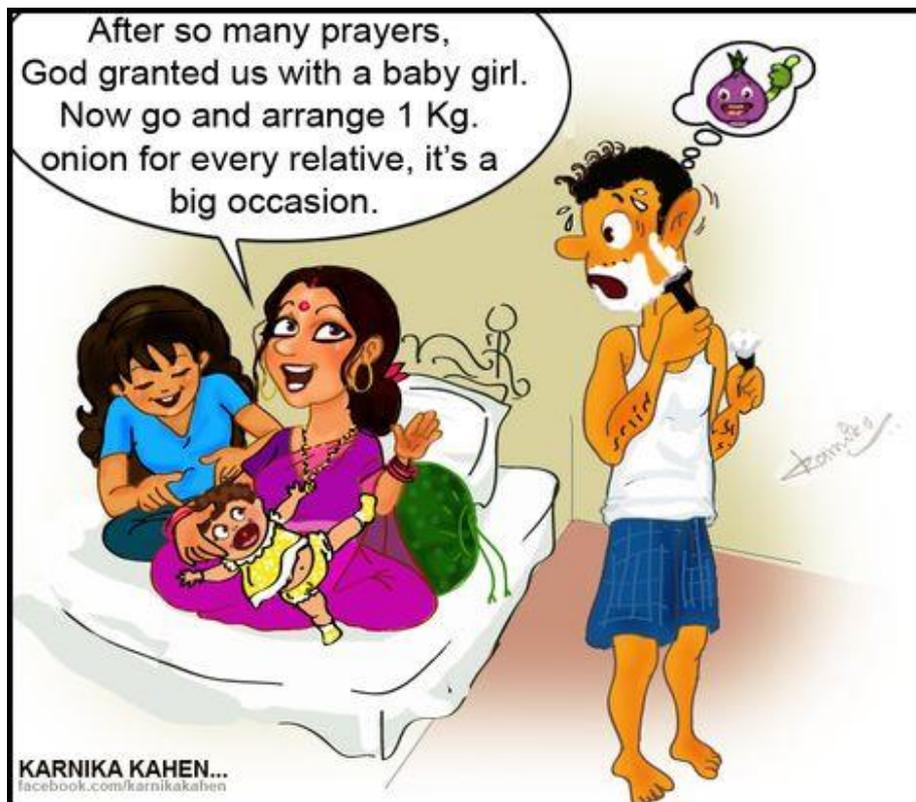


Figure .8

The cartoon illustration in Figure 7 depicts the irony of the status of woman in India. In Figure 8, we can see the changing facets in the society in welcoming the girl child and also subtly implying the soaring rates of inflation in the economy.

This art form in the digitalised age has moved from traditional black and white watercolour strokes to animated version. The political cartoons have found a new way of expression via social media. With the digital realm, the traditional cartoon illustration have transcended to animated GIFs, Memes and so on.

Earlier, the political cartoonist portrayed political and social satire which sent strong message to public. These days cartoon illustrations are used indiscriminately, be it to ridicule, to exalt, to tear down, than for satirical effect. Another observation would be that in the past, Political cartoonists were professional at their work and were highly regarded because of their exclusivity but with the present times we have almost everybody expressing their opinion via social media.

Now that we have seen the past and contemporary political cartoonist, it can be summarised that in the good old days there were newspaper or radio as a medium to convey political view to the public .The illustrations of today not only depict anything and everything, they also pry into personal lives of artists, politicians, celebrities, etc.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the contemporary cartoon illustrations are worthy and yet different from their earlier counterparts. The political cartoon illustrations help in voicing public opinion or the political situation. Political Cartoon illustrations always convey an underlying political philosophy or message through their customary wit and insight.

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