

Communication through CARTOONS in times of Crisis.

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Abstract

Cartoons are an important part in any newspaper and strong means of communication. Cartoons through Social media have redefined communication and make it even better, especially during Crisis. Those cartoons adorn a small part of a newspaper, often in a corner. Sizes wise the cartoons are small but the impact is huge. A cartoon conveys a lot of information with no words or in very few words. The philosophy, logic and motivations behind the cartoons are genuine and make the common public prudent. Sometimes it makes harsh depictions, but with a sense of humour and put lights on dark sides of society or the political agendas. The editorials carries and considers the readers are elite and publish for elite masses who understand the good intellectual contents, while the Cartoons make great sense and appeals to all common people. The social media with editorials or who claims their data is more authentic than others have tendency to be politically correct and hold back, unlike cartoons. Cartoons are generally transparent about their stand on the issues. Yes, there have been controversial cartoons and some of the effective yet less controversial like R.K.Laxman's.

This Paper will concentrate on how Cartoons are in fact one of the most important part of any Social media in terms of Communication in times of Crisis. It will try to understand the effectiveness of Cartoons over any other communication and how the Cartoons are a strong means of communication. It will also try to understand how effectively Cartoons are communicate in times of Crisis by studying R. K. Laxman's common man which have become symbol for the "aam aadmi"- *a common man*. This paper will try to point out that immaterial of the gender, cartoons have a reach to people. It will also try to focus on the fact that the Cartoons may be realistic, simplistic or relatable; people connect and get communicated through Cartoons irrespective of gender and it does not take an exceptional

understanding of politics or sociology or the current crisis but just awareness. The methods of research will include a qualitative and a quantitative analysis by questionnaire method to understand how people read and understand and get communicated through cartoons over media.

Keywords: *Crisis communication, Cartoons on crisis, Social cartoons, Political Cartoons, Media cartoons, Cartoons in Newspaper, Cartoons on social media;*

Introduction:

Virginia Satir says:

“Once a human being has arrived on this earth, communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he makes with others and what happens to him [or her].”

From the times of Leonardo-da-Vinci caricatures have been an art form that was used for light hearted satirical comedy that often exaggerated the physical features of the subject to create humour. Cartoons have evolved from the 1700's where they were elaborate heavy on dialogues and obscure visuals. Cartoons have proven to be operative and influential communication tools that involve viewers of all background for years. They provide brief, humorous, quick-witted snapshots of all types of issues from society. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the role played by cartoons in setting the examples of R.K. Laxman's Cartoons published with focused on National Crisis interest through emphasizing themes published in leading newspapers of India.

Newspaper cartoons are a sketch or comic strip holding social messages that generally narrates to present happenings, typically found on the journalistic side of the newsprint. These are used to communicate in general opinions but construct valuable thoughts and provide specific knowledge on current socio-political crisis. Newspaper cartoons as a replication of public opinion rather than an initiator of thought. (1)

As a commercial Artist, I've come to the following unscientific conclusion on why cartoons work so well when you need to communicate crisis and related issues or need people to participate. Cartoons are the most important part of any Social media in terms of

Communication in times of Crisis. Cartoons are always been effective over any other communication medium and the strong means of communication. The growing influence of the visual media in contemporary society is a paradigm shift from verbal argumentation to visual argumentation. Visuals can argue as simply and forcefully as their verbal counterparts. The Anatomy of Cartoons is the blending of caricature and portraiture, which makes them even more explicit as portraiture denotes the characters so that we can recognize who they are; caricature ridicules them, analogy attributes actions to them in a satirical or sarcastic way, and cultural memory is needed to access the reference to the analogies. Visuals are designed to make the reader think not only about the event or the people being portrayed but also about the message being communicated. This means visuals have the ability to stretch the truth beyond caricature or mere amusement.

Cartoons for any newspaper or Social Media are indispensable. It is a visual medium that engages the audience, helps them understand and interpret the political, social and economic scene in the locale, country and the world. The cartoons in India lately have gained much importance and have a raised standing in social Media. Cartoons are mainly inspired by the situations around the cartoonist, what he/she sees and believes are portrayed through the sketch he/she creates. Apart from a great sense of humour, a cartoonist is required to understand the situation around and make a commentary on the situation. A cartoonist tracks the stories of the day and makes his cartoon accordingly. Cartoons are often slapstick and exaggerated, yet aim at making a realistic appeal. Cartoons have been around much longer than newspapers themselves. Cartoons are visual strategies to make a point in small spaces. Cartoons are a reflection of society and provide for a point of view to the people reading it. Cartoons are considered as harmless, while in reality they can unleash a revolution, be it from a positive perspective like in the case of R.K.Laxman's Common man or in a very negative way in case of the Jyllands Posten cartoon of Prophet Muhammed.

R. K. Laxman's common man and Effective Communication:

Since there is no law to implicate cartoonists for their expression of ideas, the power of censorship is vested with the artist himself. On the other hand the Common Man, a symbol of all this the Indian common man goes through has created a cult following for the man and his maker. R K Laxman, a political/social cartoonist has brought in the woes of the common man to the readers through The Times of India and has brought politicians, bureaucrats and just about everyone to the front page.



The Common Man, who needs no introduction, has been Laxman's iconic uniqueness. The Common Man represents the Indian everyman. By profile and looks, he's a villager: clad in a tattered checked coat, older, bald, with a white wisp of hair. His glasses are perched on his nose and he's in a permanent state of bewilderment as Indian politicians behave badly, citizens grasp for power and the country stumbles toward modernization. He is non-violent, and he is silent. Laxman as a humorist and a comic artist gives you your icon for Everyman, an icon of universal identification and simplicity—the main causes of our childhood fascination with cartoons. Common Man assumed the vacuum into which one's social identity and awareness are manifested. (2)

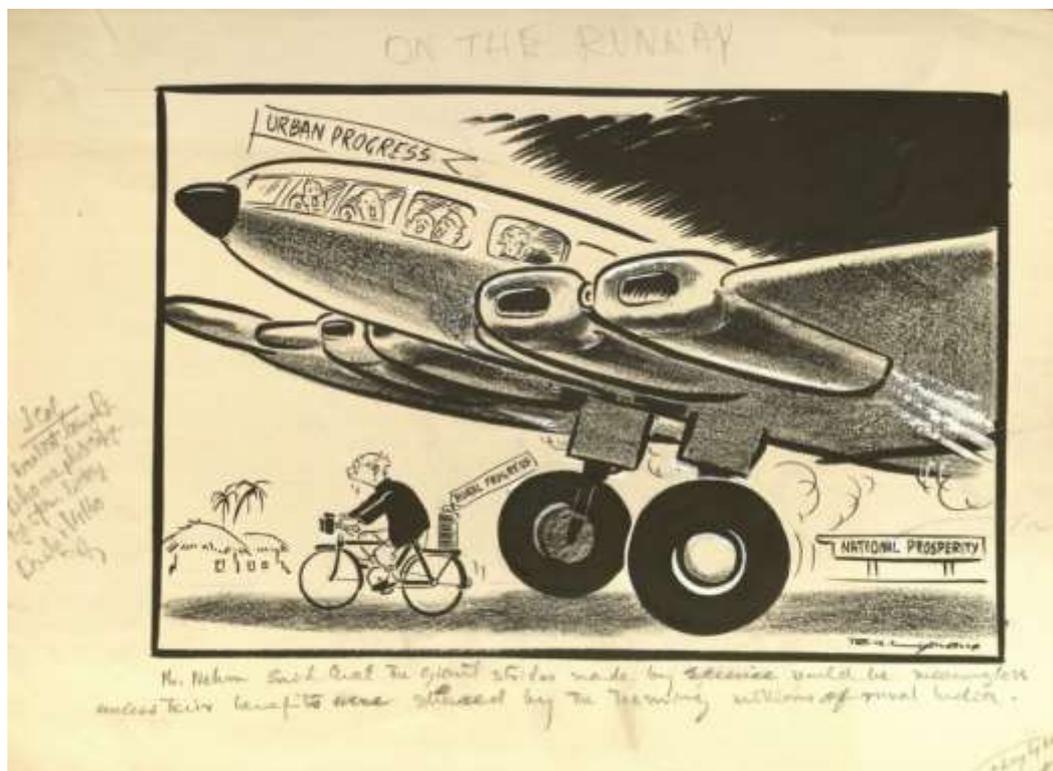
Ritu Khanduri, an academic who writes about the impact of political cartoons on Indian history is one of those Indians who looked forward to Laxman's "You Said It" cartoon strip. "His cartoons were a snapshot of the most important event of the day. It summarized, without necessarily taking sides, what the burning issue was. Laxman would capture it in his brush strokes in a way that was captivating and that allowed you to then navigate the finer details of the news through the prose of the newspaper."

In Laxman's cartoons, The Common Man never speaks. Silently, he allows readers to witness the messy business of democracy up close, by bringing them into government offices, along the campaign trail of ethically-challenged political candidates and even into people's homes. "Through [The Common Man's] witnessing, we the reader also witness democracy in action, how the bureaucracy works, why democracy fails, what are the challenges for a developmental agenda for a new democracy," Khanduri says. "The Common Man sees Crisis in action through all these spaces."

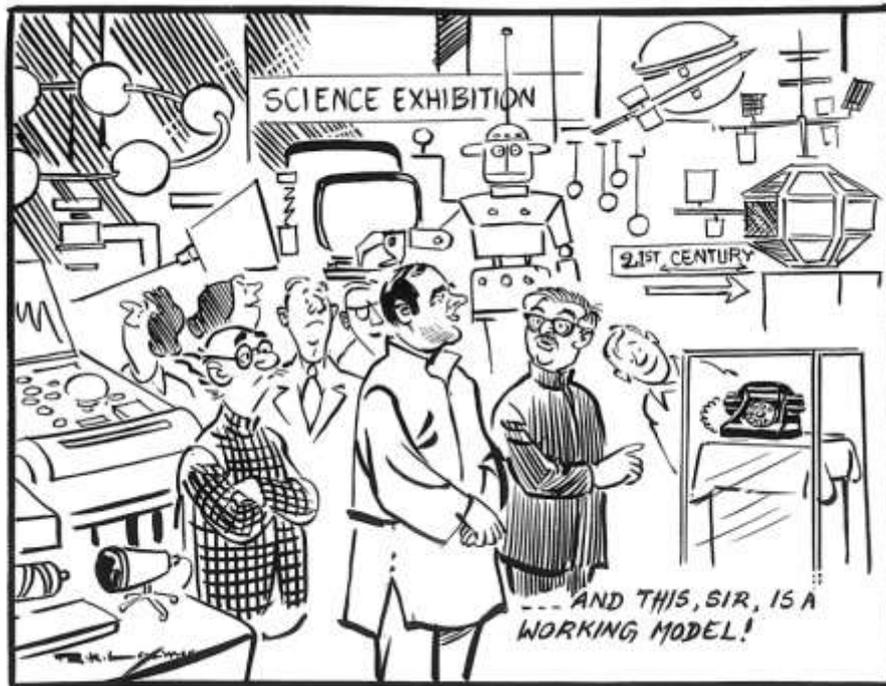
Laxman started drawing cartoons in 1947, the year India won its independence from Britain. Collectively, his cartoons serve as a satirical chronicle of the first six decades of post-colonial India. Among Laxman's favorite punching bags was modernization plans dreamed up by successive Indian leaders.



"[Laxman] would puncture their aspirations and the way that development was modelled and show the disparity between rich and poor," Khanduri says. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had a plan for a national airline. "Whereas if you go to the villages, the vast majority were still struggling with more archaic forms of transportation, like the bullock cart. So there's this gap between what is aspired for and what is actually happening at the ground level." Khanduri says Laxman's cartoons animated this gap and constantly asked the question: Who is modernization for and can all participate and have equal access to this modernization.



April 01, 1960 Credit: Courtesy Ritu Khanduri



November 1985. Laxman drew this cartoon after the Nehru Science Centre in Mumbai was opened to the public by then-Prime Minister Rajiv.

"It's not to say that he was against development, but he wanted to show how experts were always failing because they were working at the level of policy and not seeing how policy actually manifests itself at the ground level," Khanduri says. (3)

Cartoons communicate better than text...

Cartoons are an ideal medium to reach a really wide public. Often public service communications will contain cartoons to illustrate their message, or to underline the written content of the message, just to ensure that those who are either illiterate or non-native speaking will grasp the meaning. The message is conveyed in seconds and without the need for a lengthy explanation. Conversely, if you have a message you need to convey with words, cartoons help to emphasise your message. They are increasingly being used in school text books for this very reason.

To meet the research problems and questions, the data was collected from two departments of Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth i.e. Dept of Journalism & Mass Comm, and Digital arts with 120 students in total. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods. The investigation was based on the explanation of the sign system drawing on the

connotation and denotations features of the cartoons. A content analysis method was used to find out cartoon themes into topical themes reflecting current happenings.

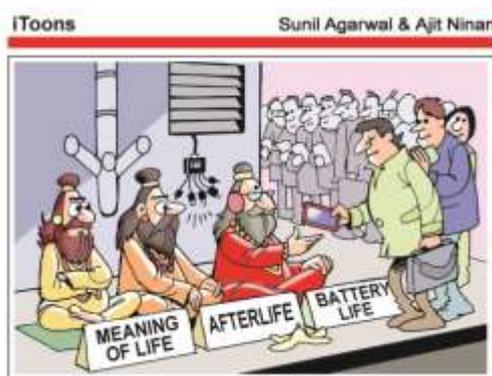
The cartoons taken from leading newspapers of India, namely: Times of India, Hindu, and Deccan Herald etc. For the purpose of understanding six cartoons were nominated and examined.

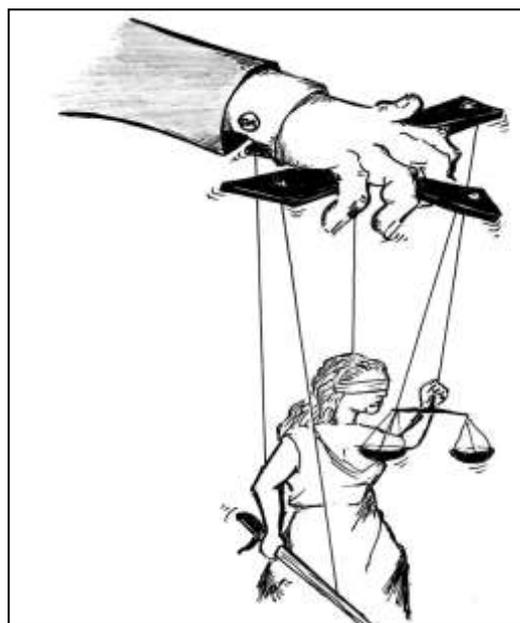
For the classroom test, I made two groups of the students with 80 numbers each. Above six cartoons had been distributed to one group and the descriptive passages with approx. 350 words of text of same situation were given to another group of students. Then asked the students to answer some questions about those six cartoons and the passages randomly.

Finding:

I found that cartoons not only helped college students remember and understand the Crisis in society more than hundreds of word passages explaining those situations. *Main finding was, the Cartoons are more memorable and understandable than text.* Cartoons helped college students learn better and remember longer than the same information in a word passages. Students who'd seen *only* the cartoons remembered 71 percent more than those who'd read the text only. Students who'd seen the cartoons *only* can increase recall and understanding significantly and were able to explain the depicted situation in well manner.

- Cartoons published in various newspaper:





Conclude:

Communication through CARTOONS in times of Crisis becomes more powerful than any other tool. As in conclusion, there are some of the findings as follows: Cartoons make difficult and more boring ideas more interesting and understandable. Cartoons encourage people to participate. A cartoon has the power to make something big and powerful into something small and manageable. This is important if you are trying to communicate something that people find scary or unpleasant. Cartoons stand out in a stream of text, photos and videos. Cartoons and comics are usually much faster to produce than video or other more production heavy visuals – this means they can become part of an extended, constantly changing communication effort. Cartoons are also flexible; you can add real people from the society as characters without scheduling a video or photography session with people.

Cartoons are vivid primary sources that offer intriguing and entertaining insights into the public mood, the underlying cultural assumptions of an age, and attitudes toward key events or trends of the times.

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