

THE ART OF TROUBLE: POLITICAL CARTOONS, POPULAR CULTURE AND TRANSLATION

A dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN

TRANSLATION STUDIES

by

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10 HAPT 07



Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies

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UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

11th May, 2012 saw Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, the Upper House and the Lower House of the Indian Parliament respectively, adjourned over a controversy regarding a cartoon on B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian constitution and a Dalit icon. The cartoon was created by the renowned cartoonist Shankar Pillai and was published in his famous *Shankar's Weekly* in 1949 and republished in the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) textbook for higher secondary courses. The issue was brought to the Houses by Thol. Thirumavalavan, a Lok Sabha MP and a Dalit activist from Tamil Nadu. He argued that the cartoon was insulting the memory of Dr. Ambedkar and therefore, insulting the Dalits. The cartoon showed Dr. B. R. Ambedkar riding a giant snail, holding a whip while Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, also holding a whip, seems to be hell-bent on getting the snail to move faster. The snail is named 'Constitution'. The cartoon was made to suggest the snail pace in which the Constitution of India was being drafted, under the committee headed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Thol. Thirumavalavan claimed that the cartoon to be 'insulting' to the Dalits and the downtrodden mass of India whose hopes of climbing the social ladder was ignited by the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar. Not only did the issue started off a major debate, it also ignited wide-spread protests across the country demanding the resignation of the Minister of the Human Resource Department, Kapil Sibal. The issue was resolved later after the resignation of the Chief Advisors to the Textbook Development Committee,

Prof. Suhas Palsihkar and Prof. Yogendra Yadav. Kapil Sibal, also apologised to the nation for the error and ordered an immediate withdrawal of all cartoons from the textbooks under NCERT¹.

‘This government fully appreciates the sensitivities involved, and the concerns expressed by the hon. Members of this House to the nature of these cartoons and their inappropriateness finding place in textbooks. The government fully appreciates these concerns and will take effective steps to ensure that henceforth textbooks take into account the concerns and the sensibilities of individuals and communities to ensure that only educationally appropriate materials are included in the textbooks.’

While academia and social media grouped into two, one group arguing for the freedom of expression and the other group, supposedly hurt by the crude attitude of the form of cartooning, the issue successfully brought back to debate, the position of cartooning in democracy. While one group reminisced of cartoons as an intellectual critique of democracy, the other group feared its sharp edge. The Ambedkar Cartoon Controversy, as the page is aptly titled in Wikipedia, brought back the issues the act of cartooning faced in a democratic, post-colony where it gained overwhelming popularity in the years following independence. At the same time, it highlighted the fact that cartooning, as form of dissent, faced threat from various corners, as always. During the course of the controversy, from its beginning in Lok Sabha to the end, several attacks were organised against the academicians who headed the committee that decided to include the cartoons in the textbooks. Dalit activists in Maharashtra ransacked the office of Dr. Suhas Palshikar in Pune University whereas Dr. Yogendra Yadav faced numerous other threats. While addressing the issue

¹ “A Number of Cartoons were Inappropriate.” *Outlook* 14 May 2012. Web.

in the Parliament, Union Human Resource Minister Kapil Sibal called for censoring of the media a total banishment of cartoons from all the textbooks.

While the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Telugu Desam Party demanded the resignation of Kapil Sibal, several members suggested that such cartoons ‘poisoned’ the impressionable minds of young children. Some members of the BSP even went as far as alleging that there was a conspiracy out there to malign politicians through cartoons.

²Raising the issue, Harsimrat Kaur Badal (SAD) said she was shocked to hear during a visit to a school that out of the 100-odd children she interacted with, none wanted to join politics. While seeking the reasons, she said that she came to know of the textbook in which cartoons denigrating politicians were incorporated.

Sanjay Nirupam (Congress) regretted that politician-bashing had become “fashionable”. It was all the more regrettable that the textbooks were brought out by the NCERT under the HRD ministry, he said. Yashwant Sinha (BJP) pointed out that not only were MPs and MLAs being made fun of, but the entire parliamentary and democratic structure was also being denigrated by some people. Sharad Yadav (JD-U) said, “Such cartoons need mature minds to understand. The minds of the youngsters who are being taught are not.”

Lalu Prasad Yadav (RJD) said withdrawing cartoons and textbooks would not help in “clearing” the minds of the children who had been influenced by these books.’

What may have caused the sudden interest in a cartoon which was published sixty three years ago and were in circulation through textbooks for over five years? How does this controversy

² “Govt. to probe role of NCERT officials in cartoon row”. *The Hindu* 18 May 2012. Web.

contribute to the larger issue of censorship and concentrated attacks on cartoons and cartoonists that popped up before and after it? What must have caused this rare unanimity that the Indian Parliament showed in the days of debate over the inclusion of a sixty three year old cartoon in a textbook? Is it the fear of being ridiculed and exposed by cartoonists? Clearly, the very idea of banning political cartoons from the textbooks seems to have crossed all the boundaries of ideologies and regions and beliefs of the different parties and leaders that voiced their opinion on the matter. While many condemned the idea of cartoons being part of textbooks and also as a critique of democracy, lone voices like Sharifuddin Sharique of the National Conference blamed the politicians for presenting cartoonists with opportunities to paint them in a bad light.

‘³We have ourselves given cartoonists the chance to make cartoons on us. Instead of criticising the cartoons, we should do some introspection. It is a reflection of what we have done and a reaction to it. Is it not a reality that when one becomes an MP or an MLA, he becomes richer? His assets show a considerable increase?’

While the issue was being discussed in the parliament, Dr. Yogendra Yadav and Prof. Suhas Palshikar resigned from their positions as advisors to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Dr. Yadav said, ‘The heated and not very well-informed debate in Parliament did not do justice to the responsibility that a democratic society has towards future generations.’

According to him, the decision implied that ‘a law must be passed to ban all cartoons.’⁴ Prof. Suhas Palshikar’s vein attempt, a day before he officially resigned, at imploring others to see

³ “We ourselves have given the chance to cartoonists.” *The Hindu* 15 May 2012. Web.

⁴ “Scholars quit textbook body as government bans 1949 cartoon.” *The Hindu* 18 May 2012. Web.

reason in the middle of controversy pointed out that the understanding of the issue lacked the very knowledge of history and democracy.

‘⁵We created a textbook that would encourage young citizens to think seriously about politics. But our politicians are not ready for that yet. When an emotional issue erupts in the public domain, argument becomes difficult and secondary to decision-making. That is what happened over the controversy regarding the inclusion of a cartoon depicting Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in a class XI textbook. One self-proclaimed inheritor and interpreter of Dr. Ambedkar’s legacy ensured the debate could not even enter the realm of reason by comparing him to the Prophet. Such persons have done immense harm to the Ambedkar legacy of critique – remember that he not only sought to critique and demolish Hinduism or Gandhi’s ideas; he even sought to critique and recreate Buddhism when he chose to embrace the Buddha. But now the controversy has become wider in scope. When the Parliament of the country, almost in one voice reprimands the inclusion of cartoons in political science textbooks, is there any scope for reason? Thus, in either case, argument is the casualty.’

Prof. Yogendra Yadav’s attempt to clearing doubts regarding the interpretation of the cartoon did not prove to be fruitful either. He termed the controversy ‘ironical’ and alleged that the cartoon was made to look at in a specific manner.

‘⁶The cartoon has been made to look offensive by a series of misreading.

One, the content of the cartoon has been mischievously presented by overlooking

⁵ “Save the classroom from the political class.” *The Hindu* 17 May 2014. Web.

⁶ Yogendra Yadav. “Dangers of Deletion.” *The Indian Express*. 14 May 2012. Web.

the positive symbolism (that Ambedkar holds the reins to the constitution and holds a whip) and overplaying a possible negative symbolism (Nehru holding a whip behind Ambedkar has been presented as Nehru whipping Ambedkar). Two, the art form of a cartoon is negated by a crass literal reading of the symbol of whip. Three, the cartoon is detached from the text accompanying it on the same page that celebrates the deliberations that led to the delay in the making of the Constitution. Four, the cartoon is isolated from other cartoons involving Nehru, Indira Gandhi and other leaders that appear in this and other textbooks.'

Was this stringent reaction to cartoons a follow up of an issue that rocked the country a few months ago or was this just a lonely incident ignited by a genuine hurt of feelings from the part of the Dalit community? The biggest suppression of civil rights that India faced was during the period of Emergency from 25 June 1975 – 21 March 1977, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi felt threatened by a series popular movements across the country. Similarly, Anna Hazare's hunger strike to pressure the Indian Government into passing a stricter anti-corruption bill in 2011 triggered off a series of mass agitations with New Delhi as the epicentre. As part of these agitations, Aseem Trivedi, a freelance cartoonist and a supporter of Anna Hazare, launched a campaign named *India Against Corruption*, which showcased a series of scathing cartoons that attacked the government and the corrupt system. A ban on his website and cartoons were followed by his arrest, leading to debates on Right to Freedom of Expression and even a fight against internet censorship. The controversy that stemmed up from Aseem Trivedi's arrest was as big as the one his cartoons created. Trivedi targeted the national symbols to vent his anger at a corrupt system and was subsequently arrested, charged with treason and contempt for the national emblems. Trivedi's distortion of India's national emblem, The Saranath Lions, caused an uproar which could

be rivalled only by his alteration of the Indian Parliament into a toilet seat in another cartoon titled 'National Toilet'. In his interpretation of the national emblem where he changed the four lions into four bloodthirsty wolves, even the caption was changed into 'Bhrashtamev Jayate' (Long Live Corruption) from the Vedic lines 'Satyamev Jayate' (Long Live Truth). Aseem Trivedi was arrested on 9 September 2012 in Mumbai on charges of sedition causing a nationwide debate on the issue. From freedom of expression to growing tendencies towards anti-nationalism, the debates explored a variety of reasons with prominent leaders and judges and political activists taking sides on why a certain amount dissent exist in the society.

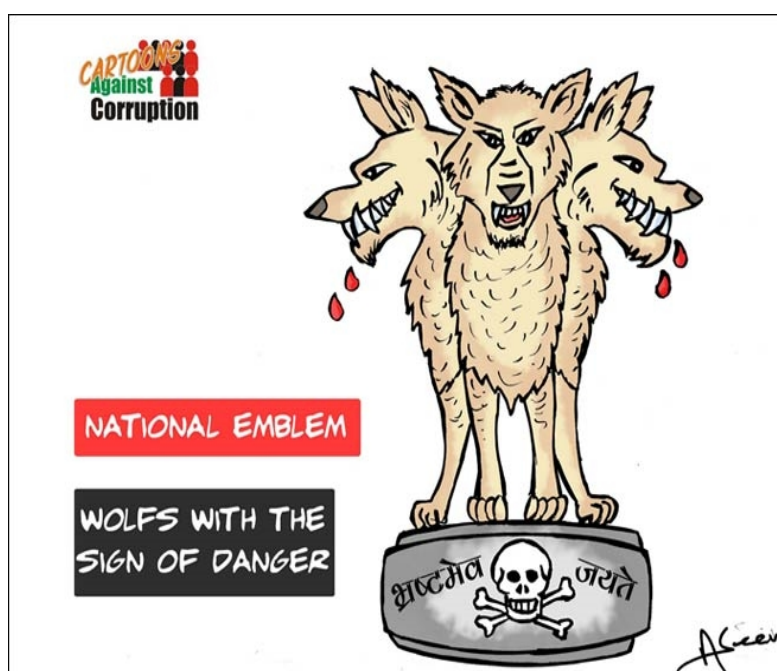


Figure 1

Source: www.ifex.org



Figure 2
Source: www.ifex.org



Figure 3
Source: www.ifex.org

Mamata Banerjee's Cartoon Controversies

India rocked under another cartoon controversy during the latter part of 2012 with cartoons of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee surfaced, inviting her ire at the makers and finally resulting in their arrest. A Jadavpur University Professor, Ambikesh Mahapatra and his neighbour Subrata Sengupta were arrested for making and circulating a cartoon which apparently depicted Mamata Banerjee in bad light. Though the image that was being circulated did not belong to the category of cartoons, it was a distorted graphic content which parodied Mamata's political decision to remove the Union Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi for not consulting with her on the matter of the railway budget which had become controversial for a rise in price. The image was a spoof based on the famous Satyajit Ray film *Sonar Kella* (The Golden Fortress). Professor Mahapatra was arrested under the Information Technology Act and the police put it as 'for spreading derogatory messages against respectable people'⁷. Mamata Banerjee's response to the professor's arrest showed an average politician's paranoia about conspiracies: 'If one commits an offence, one has to face arrest. Conspiracies won't be tolerated.'⁸

The intolerance towards political cartoons took a violent turn when followers of Trinamool Congress⁹ violated the privacy of Professor Mahapatra and manhandled him to write a letter in which he confessed that he was a 'supporter of the CPI (M)'. By 2013, the duo arrested in the cartoon issue had moved to the State Human Right's Commission arguing that they were being

⁷ Amitabha Bhattasali. "India professor held for cartoon 'ridiculing Mamata.'" *BBC News*. 13 April 2002. Web.

⁸ "Professor arrested for poking fun at Mamta." *Hindustan Times*. 14 April 2012: Web.

⁹ All Indian Trinamool Congress is a breakaway faction of the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee. Founded on 1 January 1998, AITC became popular in West Bengal as a worthy opponent to the almost three decade long Marxist governance. Catapulted through the Nandigram and Singur issues, Trinamool Congress won landslide victory in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and the 2010 Kolkata Municipal Corporation elections. In the 2011 West Bengal Assembly Elections, TMC (as it is locally known) won 184 out of 294 seats, making Mamata Banerjee the Chief Minister and also a major player in the Indian political arena.

penalised for employing their right to freedom of expression. On August 24, 2013, the rights panel had recommended departmental proceedings against two police officers of Purba Jadavpur police station for the arrests that allegedly followed a call from a Trinamool Congress leader. The rights panel also directed the government to pay Professor Ambikesh Mahapatra and Subrata Sengupta Rs. 50000 each as compensation which the state government rejected, causing another controversy and debate regarding the blatant violations of Mamata Banerjee's government. Mamata Banerjee's labelling of the image as 'character assassination' and the act of e-mailing the said image to others as 'unbecoming of a teacher', drew criticism from the intellectuals and the opposition. Banerjee was also known for expressing displeasure over a cartoon that showed her coming out of an editorial cartoon box in a newspaper to grab a reader by the throat, shouting the words, 'How dare you laugh at this cartoon'¹⁰?



Figure 4
Source: The Hindu

¹⁰ 'P. Surendra. 'How dare you laugh at this cartoon!' *The Hindu*. 25 April 2012. Web.

The Hindu's political cartoonist P. Surendra's take on Mamata Banerjee on her intolerance towards her political opponents in West Bengal, the CPI (M), is notable. Mamata Banerjee government's attempt to ban the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels from the higher secondary textbooks of state-run schools in West Bengal caused a nation-wide furore from the left intellectuals and historians alike almost the same time as the cartoon controversies regarding the Chief Minister erupted. By April 2012, a committee to restructure the school syllabus had prepared a new draft to change the existing syllabus omitting topics related to the Left from the textbooks. It claimed that the new textbooks has 'done away with excess stress on any particular topic including Karl Marx' and that they have tried to 'present history of the world in a new thematic way'.¹¹ Though the left parties condemned the move as an attempt to 're-write history'¹², Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien brushed away the accusation.

‘¹³Marx, I believe should be studied as a historical phenomenon but not at the expense of the Mahatma, and not at the expense of Mandela. Bengal is redressing balance, not doctoring history. History doesn't begin with the Bolsheviks and end with Basus and Bhattacharjees. History preceded them and will survive them.’

However, Surendra's cartoon¹⁴ on *The Hindu* regarding the topic of banning Marx from classrooms became almost as controversial as the move itself when Mamata expressed her ire against the cartoon. Even his cartoon depicting Mamata Banerjee's paranoia was not very well-received by the leader who was dealing with a steep rise in the vote percentage for BJP in her state.

¹¹ Shiv Sahay Singh. 'Marx, Engels to go from West Bengal History textbooks.' *The Hindu*. April 6, 2012. Web.

¹² 'Somanth slams Mamata for banning Karl Marx from school syllabus.' *The Indian Express*. April 6, 2012. Web.

¹³ Mamata to ban Marx, Engels from history syllabus?' *The India Express*. April 6, 2012. Web.

P. Surendra depicted Mamata Banerjee in a paranoid state, watching the question marks of her listeners transforming into the sickle, hammer and star, the insignia of CPI (M). Surendra cartooned Mamata again, lampooning her for the state of suppressed right to freedom of expression in West Bengal.



Figure 5
Source: The Hindu

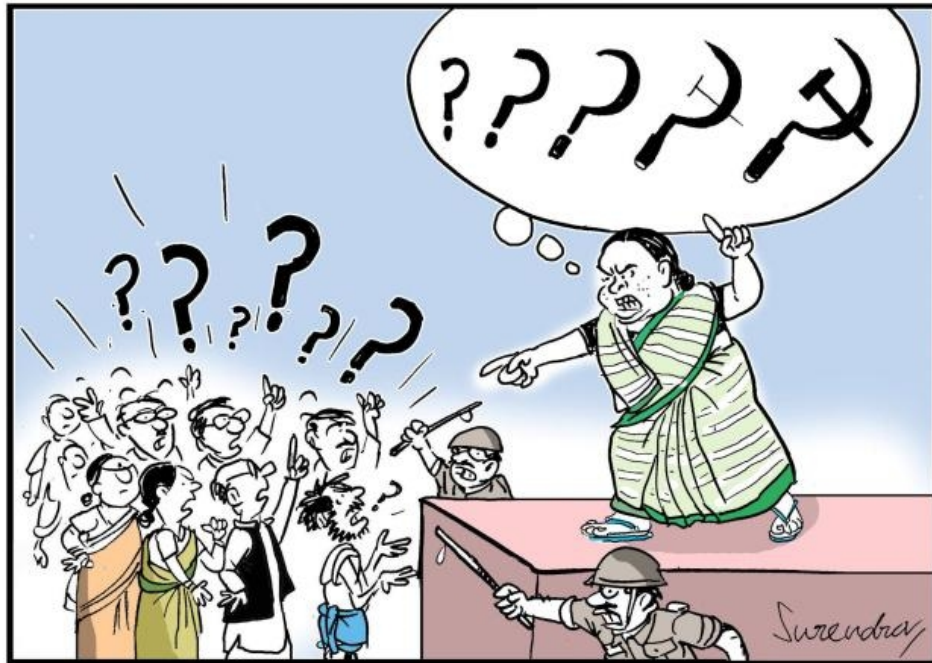


Figure 6
Source: The Hindu

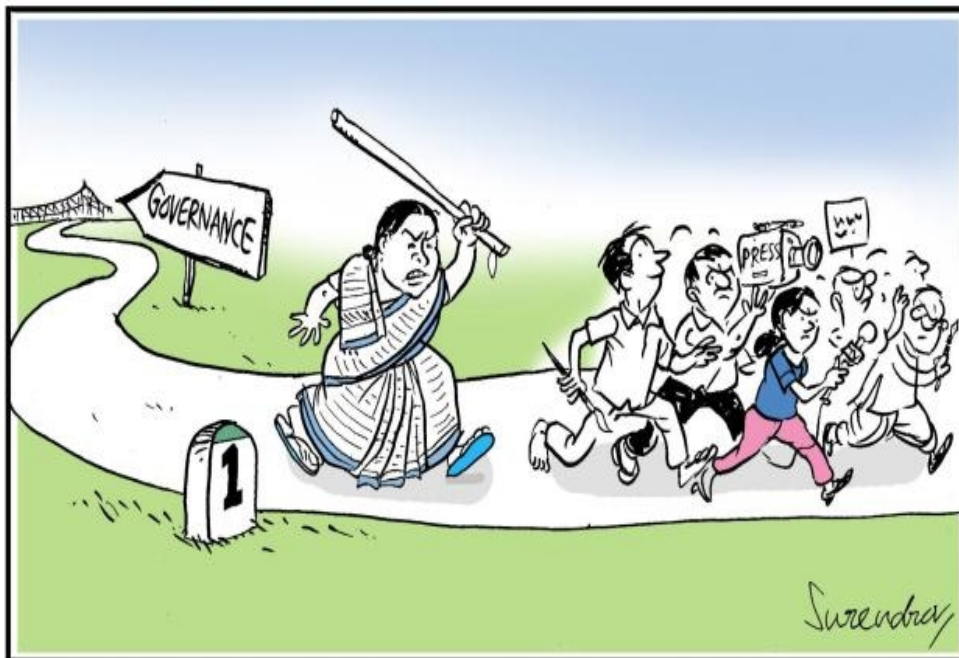


Figure 7
Source: The Hindu

If issues such as Ambedkar Cartoon Controversy showed a certain kind of intolerance from the part of the minority to interpret a cartoon as ‘suppressive’ and ‘hurtful’, the arrest of Aseem Trivedi and Prof. Ambikesh Mahapatra by the state showed nothing other than a violation of the right to freedom of expression. While Aseem Trivedi was charged with sedition, Prof. Mahapatra was charged with defamation. The question naturally arises here is what makes cartoons so incendiary? Why is it such a fearful thing for people in power? While political parties and its supporters taking to streets, condemning the ‘attack’ on their party or its leaders is common in India, Cartooning invites a lot more than that. If the controversy regarding a decades old cartoon of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar created much debate in the country, protests from Tamil Nadu against an old cartoon of R. K. Laxman sealed the fact that cartoons, and cartoonists, are always at the trigger point in India where anything and everything can offend someone or the other. On the wake of the row on the Ambedkar cartoon, another cartoon featured on the NCERT textbook paved way for protests in Tamil Nadu by DMK¹⁵ leaders. R. K. Laxman’s cartoon which featured his iconic character ‘the common man’, depicted the 1965 DMK protests in Tamil Nadu against the introduction of Hindi as India’s national language. The cartoon portrayed C. Rajagopalachari showing an agitating student a list of promises in English assuring that Hindi will not be imposed on anyone who did not wish it. A supporting character quips, ‘The boy can’t read English either.’ MDMK¹⁶ Chief Vaiko took up the issue of the cartoon and called it ‘a total distortion of history and hurts the sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu’. The anti-Hindi agitation of 1965 by Dravida

¹⁵ Formed in 1949 as Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam by C. N. Annadurai, DMK was a faction that broke away from the Dravidar Kazhagam, a party that aimed at uniting Dravidians behind one flag. Though initially it rallied for secession of Tamil Nadu from the Indian Union, DMK successfully managed to garner members through its movements against the imposition of Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states.

¹⁶ Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was established in 1994 by the ousted DMK leader Vaiko aka V. Gopalsamy. Ever since its inception, MDMK is known for its support to the Sri Lankan Tamil issue and its rivalry with DMK.

Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) under the leadership of C. N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi had garnered a lot of support in Tamil Nadu against the central government's decision to make Hindi the official language of India. The movement forced the central government to change the decision as Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri ensured that regional languages will also be considered as official languages along with English for communication between state governments and state governments and the central government. The anti-Hindi agitations organized by the DMK had catapulted the party to a key position in the political arena of Tamil Nadu that in the state elections that followed in 1967 had made it win comfortably, ousting Congress from the ruling position forever. DMK chief M. Karunanidhi also voiced his opinion regarding the cartoon which had become a controversy.

¹⁷The 1938 and 1965 anti-Hindi agitations are moments of pride for DMK.

The cartoon ridiculing such a movement would infuriate Tamils. Therefore the Centre should immediately intervene and ensure it is removed from text books to respect Tamil sentiments.'

Vaiko, the leader of MDMK who raised the issue, called the anti-Hindi agitation times in the state as 'a glorious chapter' in Tamil Nadu's political history and called the cartoon as depicting students 'as if they were ignorant and indulged in violence¹⁸.' He also wrote to the Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal asking for the removal of the cartoon so as not to hurt the Tamil sentiments.

¹⁷ "Now cartoon on anti-Hindi agitation raises storm in Tamil Nadu". www.dnaindia.com

¹⁸ "Cartoon row: Vaiko's protest may kick up political storm in Tamil Nadu." *The Times of India*. June 9 2012. Web



Figure 8
Source: Laughing With Laxman

The issue of cartoons hurting sentiments of marginalized sections or regions probably began the, now largely forgotten, issue of attack on a Malayalam daily *Thejas*, for its publication of a cartoon targeting the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and BSP¹⁹ leader Mayawati. The cartoon by the staff cartoonist of *Thejas*, Sudheernath, was termed as provocative and insulting by

¹⁹ Bahujan Samaj Party was formed by Kanshi Ram in 1984, as a political party focusing on representing and uplifting the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Communities in India. The party claims to have been founded on the philosophy of B. R. Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy and Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj. Mayawati succeeded to become the party supremo in 2003 and became the Chief Minister after the 2007 elections to the legislative assembly. BSP government formed under Mayawati was the first to complete the full five year term in the history of Uttar Pradesh. Due to widespread allegations of corruption and abuse of power, Mayawati faced electoral defeat in the 2012 legislative elections. However BSP remains the third most voted for party in the country even after its abysmal performance in the 2014 general elections in which it failed to get elected in a single seat.

supporters of Bahujan Samaj Party in Kerala. It was drawn in the wake of the ‘²⁰cash garland controversy’ that rocked the Indian Parliament in March, 2010. During a rally that marked the silver jubilee of BSP, its supremo Mayawati was given a garland by the party workers, made of 1000 Rupees currency notes, estimating to be around 15 Crore Rupees in total value. The cartoon depicted Mayawati in her toilet asking for a bunch of 1000 Rupees notes to be used as toilet paper, signifying the value it generates for her. While the issue rocked the parliament and helped the leader to get noticed on a global level²¹, the BSP outfit in Kerala attacked the office of the newspaper *Thejas* in Thiruvananthapuram, alleging the cartoon to be ‘unbecoming of the journalistic ethics and values²².’ The cartoon was immediately removed and the editor of the newspaper. N. P. Chekkutty, apologized. He wrote on his blog later,

‘²³I was seriously in trouble last week as I decided to publish a cartoon of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Ms. Mayawati, in a provocative posture, following the public outrage over her acceptance of a currency garland which is said to be valued anything between Rs 5 crore to Rs 20 crore. It was a disgusting scene, the chief minister of a state accepting such a garland from people who evidently had strings to pull. It was corruption through and through and a cynical expression of contempt for all norms of public decency by one who holds power under our Constitution. That perhaps explains why our cartoonist Sudheernath decided to draw a very

²⁰ Mayawati received not one, but two garlands in a row even after the controversy raged about the source of money from which the garlands were made. BSP leadership and the followers of Mayawati, enraged by the outcry of the opposition said that from that point onwards Mayawati will only be given cash garlands.

²¹ “India’s Dalit champion Mayawati’s £285,000 cash garland causes outrage.” *The Telegraph*. 17 March 2010. Web.

²² “Kerala: BSP workers protest Cartoon on Mayawati.” www.oneindia.com. March 20, 2010. Web.

²³ “Some Ethical and Cultural Questions with Regard to Mayawati Cartoon Controversy.” www.chespeak.blogspot.in/2010/03/some-ethical-and-cultural-questions.html 24 March 2010. Web.

provocative cartoon with Mayawati in her toilet, asking for a bunch of 1000-Rupee-notes for use as toilet paper.’

Not only did the cartoon regarding Mayawati’s currency garland issue become controversial, it also received a certain level of attention as the office of *Thejas* was attacked by BSP, a party which has minimum presence and virtually no political power in Kerala.

Cartoons, Symbolism and Iconography

Taking a look through the different cartoon controversies in India, starting from the Mayawati to Aseem Trivedi and the most popular of them all, the Ambedkar cartoon controversy, it is easy to recognize that most of these issues have been created on the basis of a ‘symbolic injury’. This injury is allegedly created or, to be precise, ‘perceived’, by certain groups for the purpose of voicing their issues out to a system that had been suppressing them. These protests are often subjective and sometimes, selective as it aims at only to invoke a memory of the past, often of ill-treatment or oppression, using the present situation as a platform to start a discourse. All the recent protests over cartoons erupted abruptly, often on cartoons that were drawn decades ago and were in the public sphere for too long, present in textbooks, anthologies, memoirs, magazines etc. The cartoon on Ambedkar was drawn by K. Shankar Pillai in 1949 and the cartoon on anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu was drawn by R. K. Laxman in 1965. They did not make any issues then but years later, both cartoons were dragged along to create controversies to suit the interests of a group or a person. Anand Teltumbde started his article on *The Economic and Political Weekly*, with a straight statement.

‘²⁴Why has there been such a silence from dalit leaders over the Bathani Tola²⁵ judgement acquitting all those accused of killing 21 dalits? At the same time, what explains their loud protests over the Ambedkar cartoons in the textbooks? Has the elevation of Ambedkar as an icon relegated the dalit leadership to a politics of empty symbolism? Is the issue of a lack of accountability in the judicial system towards dalits not more important than the hollow iconisation of Ambedkar?’

Was the attack against the Ambedkar cartoon selective criticism? Who decided that it was hurtful to the downtrodden masses? Was it because it was interpreted as insulting to the dalit icon that made the cartoon worthy to be removed from textbooks? Did the context of the time of the making of the cartoon play any role in its contemporary interpretation or it was just simply based on the pictorial image which was free for interpretation? From analysing the way Bahujan Samaj Party and Republican Party of India broached the Ambedkar cartoon issue in the parliament and the Indian public shows that it was nothing but political activity as exploited by organized groups to get explicit and concrete benefits for themselves. No amount of debate or explanation on the matter made any changes in their demand for the ultimate removal of all cartoons from the NCERT textbooks. Here, in the core of the issue, one can find the iconisation of Ambedkar as a totem in which the Dalits of the country rally around. Ambedkar’s image as a rational and logical leader at the time of the production of the cartoon went through a radical change and was reduced to nothing

²⁴ Teltumbde, Anand. “Bathani Tola and the Cartoon Controversy”. *The Economic and Political Weekly*. 22 June, 2012. Web.

²⁵ Bathani Tola Incident, also known as the 1996 Bathani Tola Massacre is an incident in which an upper class militia attacked and killed 21 dalits including women and children in Bihar on 11 July 1996. The attack was allegedly organized by an upper class outfit called Ranvir Sena as a response to a demand of hike in wages from the part of the dalit workers. CPI (M-L) was uniting the lower caste workers in a bid to hike the minimum wages to a statutory level of 30 Rs. a day. However, the landowners were willing to pay only Rs. 20 and the CPI (M-L)’s decision to use an economic blockade was dealt with violence from Ranvir Sena. No member of Ranvir Sena was ever arrested for the massacre and the main incident was followed by a series of further attacks against dalits in the state in which 81 more people were killed.

but a symbol of the downtrodden, to be used in any way the present day leaders of the emancipation deemed fit.

²⁶The entire dalit emotional charge is concentrated in the Ambedkar icon. Given the monumental contribution of Ambedkar to the dalit cause, it is natural that he is considered as their emancipator, a messiah. Further, given the state of the dalit masses, it is also natural that he is iconised. Ambedkar's icon replaced their gods and symbolised their self-esteem, honour and prestige. It became their beacon, a rallying point to carry on with their emancipatory struggles. As it did all this it became susceptible to manipulation by vested interests. The first such manipulation came from within, by a section of college-educated urban dalits who painted it with shades that suited their self-interests. The icon was shorn of Ambedkar's vision of radical transformation of India expressed, for instance, in *States and Minorities* and he was portrayed as a caste-based reservationist, constitutionalist, an anti-materialist and mind-centric Buddhist. When electoral politics became increasingly competitive with the rise of the regional parties of the middle class, the political class realized the importance of the dalit vote bank and used this icon to influence dalits.'

The political analyses of the Ambedkar cartoon concentrated highly on the whip that Nehru wielded, standing behind Ambedkar seated on a slow-moving tortoise representing the Constitution of India, not on the whip that Ambedkar was holding to drive the tortoise. If Nehru's whip was hyped as aimed at Ambedkar and not as an attempt to drive the tortoise to walk faster in

²⁶ Teltumbde, Anand. "Bathani Tola and the Cartoon Controversy". *The Economic and Political Weekly*. 22 June, 2012. Web.

an effort to help Ambedkar as the cartoonist intended, Ambedkar's whip which also represented the power and responsibility he wielded in the newly independent India, was largely avoided from being discussed. Thus, the image of the whip was manipulated to mobilize a large section of dalits against the cartoon, calling it 'an instrument to subjugate slaves, women and dalits historically²⁷.' If the whip was interpreted as 'a symbol of the abuse, prejudice and exclusion dalit pupils face in educational institutions', the cartoon in general was also interpreted as 'ethically, morally and pedagogically flawed and mischievous to the core²⁸.' As explained by Aditya Nigam²⁹,

'Clearly, there can be no single meaning that supposedly emanates from the cartoon in question – as indeed from any text. And matters certainly become more complicated and volatile when it comes to visual representations. But to say that the cartoon is open to multiple interpretations is not to suggest that meaning is entirely independent of it and lies only 'in the eyes of the beholder'. If there has to be any rigour in the argument for or against, we must be able to at the very least account for the various elements in the cartoon/text. If we simply wish to focus on *one whip* where there are *two*, we are clearly doing a selective reading. All our interpretive energies are spent on that single whip and the fact that its wielder is the Brahmin prime minister, without any reference to the other elements of the cartoon. Similarly, if we simply ignore the fact that the snail represents the Constituent Assembly that comprises largely upper caste people, and Ambedkar actually has its reins in his hands, whipping it when necessary, while sitting on it, are we actually

²⁷ "Whipping up 'critical pedagogy': Uncritical defense of NCERT's violence." *Savari* 21 May 2012. Web

²⁸ Menon, Nivedita. "Amedkar's Cartoon and the Caste Question." *Kafila*. 31 May 2012. Web.

²⁹ Nigam, Aditya. "Red Herrings, Red Rags and Red Flags – Once More on the Cartoon Controversy". *Kafila*. 23 May 2012. Web.

being true to the ‘text’? Perhaps, those who are opposed to the cartoon should undertake an analysis of all the elements of the cartoon at some point. Else this criticism is destined to remain at the level of pure rhetoric.’

Other than the fact that these protests over apparent insult to political or cultural icons achieves nothing in the terms of justice, the state addresses the issue by either banning or retracting the cause of the ‘hurt’. Indian state, here, assumes the role of a mediator between those who caused the hurt and those who received the insult by lulling the complainant to a temporary sleep using a swift retraction of the material that caused the grievance. It clearly does not bother correcting the system to find out the root cause of the issue, in the case of a cartoon that caused alleged hurt amongst the marginalized, a step towards social mobility or upliftment. So the whole raising of the issue concludes by itself as a temporary venting of the anger or disillusionment amongst the minority communities or as a platform from which their political grievance is opinionated. Sheba Tejani³⁰ writes on the issue,

‘...the Indian state has shown itself to be particularly vulnerable to sensitivities of all kinds. Even the murmur of an insult is enough to throw the state into a tizzy as it goes to strengths to demonstrate its secular or anti-caste character and makes use of the presenting political opportunity. The Indian government was one of the first in the world to ban the *Satanic Verses* and was complicit once again as Salman Rushdie was forced to withdraw from the Jaipur Literary Festival earlier this year due to threats from the Darul Uloom Deoband that “appropriate action” would be taken if he was allowed into the country. The Shahbano case has gone

³⁰ Sheba Tejani. “Symbolic Injury as a Site of Protest”. *Economic & Political Weekly*.
<http://www.epw.in/node/126679/pdf>

down in history as an instance in which the Congress government overturned one of the most progressive rulings for Indian Muslim women delivered by the Supreme Court that entitled them to maintenance under secular law because it hurt Muslim religious sentiments. Offence caused to Hindu religious sentiments was the ostensible reason for the wholesale revision of the NCERT school textbooks under the rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party led National Democratic Alliance from 1999 to 2004 and the impetus to make education “value-based” and “India-centric”.’

If the controversy was created to protect the icon of Ambedkar created over the many years of Dalit activism in India, it did succeed with the removal of the cartoon from all the NCERT textbooks. Even the controversy regarding Aseem Trivedi’s cartoons were based on nation and national symbols. The iconoclastic nature of his cartoons, destroying the symbols that India as a nation has created and cherished for more than half a century. If we are to subscribe to the views of Eric Hobsbawm³¹ or Benedict Anderson, it is impossible to define ‘nation’ as a historical community or ethnic group. They see it as a ‘³²myth fabricated by elites who shape what they consider to be the cultural, historical, and ethnic characteristics of a particular population group into a powerful myth’. Thus, in India’s case, national symbols like the Parliament, the Ashok Chakra, the Saranath Lions and even the flag or the widely emotionalised idea of Bharat Mata, as extensively disseminated by the popular media and culture through the years following independence reflect in the population’s mind and stand as symbols for the nation, its unity and the common culture it represents. In short, these symbols convert the *state* into a *nation* and helps

³¹ Hobsbawm, E.J. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Web.

³² Geisler, Michael E. ed. *National Symbols, Fractured Identities Contesting the National Narrative*. Vermont: Middlebury College Press, 2005. Web.

in formulating the national identity. They help to maintain a certain level of solidarity above cultural, linguistic and ethnic disparities. Aseem Trivedi's caricaturing of the national symbols were a form of dissent against the use and abuse of power and largescale corruption by those in power. The elevation of national symbols as representing the virtue of the nation made it easily vulnerable to those who want to target it. Also, questioning something that stood defining the nation became an 'offense' in the eyes of those who claimed to protect it. The questioning of something that exist as a bookmark to an earlier period in our collective and shared history as a physical landmass, is now perceived as 'sedition'. So, when a cartoonist mocks the Indian Parliament as a toilet seat or the Saranath Lions as bloodthirsty wolves, it is taken as a direct insult to the very idea of nation which qualifies the maker of such images to be put behind bars charged on laws created during the colonial times, ironically is also the time some of these national symbols were gaining currency. The state's ultimate power in handling and preserving these national symbols proclaims its status as a hegemonic power structure.

Yet another incident of iconoclasm through cartoons and the subsequent reaction for it can be found in the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoon controversy which began in 2005 but culminated ultimately in the Charlie Hebdo shooting incident in 2015.

Jyllands-Posten Muhammad Cartoon Controversy

Whether it was intolerance from the politicians towards cartoonists or a tendency from the cartoonist's side to lose nothing at poking fun of politicians and their follies, cartooning and cartoonists succeeded in remaining as the frontrunners for later part of the 2012. It is clear that cartoons became a favourite target of extremists and intolerant political factions in the first part of the 21st century. Where did it began? One could point to the publication of 12 cartoons, some of

them depicting Prophet Muhammad, by the Danish newspaper *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* in 30 September 2005 as a triggering of a long chain of incidents in which cartoons provoked a group into targeting them. Though the newspaper reasoned the publication of cartoons as a ‘contribution to the debate about criticism of Islam’, Muslim groups in Denmark protested strongly against them. Instead of contributing to the debate on Islam, the cartoons were seen as a result of rising Islamophobia in the West and was even talked about as the latest incident in the conflict between the West and the Islamic World. Denmark, with its new nationalistic ideas coinciding with a strong anti-immigrants sentiment, refused to enter into a dialogue with domestic or foreign Muslim leaders. Danish Imams, after receiving rejection from the Danish government, travelled to the Muslim countries to raise awareness regarding the issue and succeeded creating a global stir in most of the Muslim countries by January of 2006. Whether or not the Muhammad cartoons were the final outcome of a series of political and social attacks against Muslims in Denmark, it certainly grabbed the attention of international media. *Jyllands-Posten* had in its editorial once, called on Danish feminists,

‘³³Why don’t they protest against foreigners, who come to our country to argue noisily, and self-righteously that women should wear the headscarf and preferably be mummified behind a veil, that girls should be circumcised, and young women should be married in “forced” marriage to unknown cousins in foreign countries, and that women in all aspects are inferior to the men? (...) Why don’t they stand up and let their voices be heard, when representatives of foreign cultures readily pronounce young men’s unlimited right to sexual intercourse with women, while the women should be virgins at the night of the wedding, knowing that such an

³³ Hervik, Peter. *The Annoying Difference*. New York: Berghahn, 2011. Web

argumentation can only make sense, when you feel entitled to distinguish between women and whores?’

Though *Jyllands-Posten* had an openly anti-Islamic stance since 2001, it was in 2005 that the cartoons on Muhammad were published and started off a series of protests throughout the world. *Jyllands-Posten*’s history of affiliation with the Conservative Party of Denmark, Det Konservative Folkeparti, and later ties with the The Liberal Party (Venstre), with their regard for a strong Danish nationalism only helped in establishing an image of anti-Islamic media. The radical right wing populism in Denmark bordering on this anti-Islamic, along with anti-Communist, sentiments manifested in the form of cartoons on Muhammad. This radical right wing populism, based on the rhetoric that Denmark, as a forward-looking European nation has to face an everyday clash between good rational westerners and angry, dangerous Muslims. The views of the radical right became open when the Danish People’s Party MP Pia Kjaersgaard, in her weekly commentary said,

"³⁴Not in their wildest imagination would anyone [in 1900] have imagined, that large parts of Copenhagen and other Danish towns would be populated by people who are at a lower stage of civilisation, with their own primitive and cruel customs like honour killings, forced marriages, halal slaughtering and blood-feuds. This is exactly what is happening now. Thousands upon thousands of persons, who apparently - civilisationally, culturally and spiritually - lives in the year of 1005 instead of 2005, that have come to a country [Denmark] left the dark ages hundreds of years ago."

³⁴ Tillyke, Pia Kjaersgaard. "*Politiken*". 20 January 2006. Web.

Operating on new levels of hatred, *Jyllands-Posten*'s series of editorials targeting the Muslim minority in Denmark, if analysed carefully in light of the Muhammad cartoon controversy, would reveal that it had been executed on a making an impact in the popular minds as if they are in the middle of a culture war. The argument that came along with the twelve cartoons on *Jyllands-Posten* indicated their belief that a strong contrast existed between the Muslims and the Christians which was dangerous to the ideas of democracy and freedom of speech. ³⁵Some Muslims reject the modern, secular society. They demand a special position when they insist on special consideration for their religious feelings. This is incompatible with a secular democracy and freedom of expression in which one must be prepared to accept disdain, mockery and ridicule.'

This opinion that Muslims must be prepared to accept disdain, mockery and ridicule in order to prove that they are modern, democratic and accept freedom of expression was received as nothing but shock by the Muslims community. From Denmark, protests spread to Pakistan and then to mostly all Muslim countries. Protests by Muslim immigrants and minorities in secularized Europe and the official demand for the intervention of the United Nations in the matter took Denmark to its biggest and longest foreign policy debacle since the German occupation during the Second World War.

The Muhammad Cartoon controversy not only initiated a debate regarding freedom of speech but also positioned cartoons in a place where it could be blamed for anything from instigating religious or social violence to just being offensive. A certain amount of defiance could be seen amongst the European nations when it came to facing the opposition from the Muslim nations where protests against the cartoons of the Prophet were gaining momentum. On January

³⁵ "Muhammeds Ansigt". *Jyllands-Posten* 30 September 2005. Web.

10, 2006, *Magazinet*, a Norwegian newspaper re-printed some of the cartoons and was soon followed by newspapers in France, Italy, Germany and Spain. Between the 4th and 7th of February, 2006, Danish and Norwegian embassies were attacked all over the Middle East and on 8th February, *Charlie Hebdo*, a French satirical magazine republished the cartoons with its own front page of Mohammad saying, “³⁶It’s hard to be loved by imbeciles.” Muslim groups in France sued *Charlie Hebdo* for the ‘insulting Islam and hurting the sentiments of the minority’, but a year later the French President Francois Hollande testified in favour of freedom of expression drawing attack from the minority groups. A day later, French newspaper *Libération* re-printed the controversial cartoons anew. The same year witnessed *Charlie Hebdo* acquitted by a French court of ‘racial insults’ for publishing the controversial cartoons of Muhammad. Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard was targeted by the Muslim groups as the police arrested many for conspiring to murder him. Following the incident, several Danish newspapers including *Jyllands-Posten* re-printed one of the controversial cartoons. 2011 saw *Charlie Hebdo*’s Paris offices attacked by Muslim groups a day after it published an issue with Prophet Muhammad as ‘editor-in-chief’. The front cover of the magazine had the Prophet saying, ‘100 lashes if you don’t die of laughter.’ 2012 again saw *Charlie Hebdo* taking up Prophet Muhammad as their subject of mockery, depicting him on the front cover with the title ‘The Untouchables 2’ with Muhammad sitting on a wheel chair when the caption read, ‘You mustn’t mock.’ Besides this, an inside cartoon depicted Muhammad as naked. In return, *Charlie Hebdo*’s website was attacked and two Muslim organizations moved to court accusing it of racial hatred. Few months later, *Charlie Hebdo* responded by publishing a 65 page special edition illustrated biography of Prophet Muhammad. The final and the most terrifying of attacks came on the 7th January 2015 when *Charlie Hebdo*’s

³⁶ <http://charliehebdocartoons.blogspot.in/2015/01/its-hard-to-be-loved-by-idiot-charlie.html>

new office in Paris was stormed by gunmen killing 12 members of the staff. The attack was a response to *Charlie Hebdo*'s issue featuring Michel Houellebecq's novel *Submission*, a fictional vision of France under Islamic rule in 2022 described by critics as 'islamophobic' in nature. Seven days later, *Charlie Hebdo* responded by publishing three million copies of new edition showing Prophet Muhammad holding a sign which read, 'Je Suis Charlie'. An attempt to exhibit the Muhammad Cartoons by American Freedom Defense Initiative³⁷ at Dallas, Texas was marred by two gunmen who were shot and killed by the police. Since the publications of the controversial cartoons in 2005, the string of violent incidents and deliberate re-printings in response to that happened till 2015, making it a global issue and sometimes, an issue to be read alongside a general spike in the graph of Islamic terrorism and the birth of threats like ISIS³⁸ (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

³⁷ American Freedom Defense Initiative, otherwise known as Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) is an Islamophobic far right American organization dedicated free speech, religious liberty and individual rights.

³⁸ The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is commonly known as ISIS and is a Jihadist group engaged in constant warfare to achieve what they call 'an Islamic Caliphate.' They follow a fundamentalist Wahhabi doctrine of Sunni Islam and have named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as their Caliph. Although they have claimed religious, political and military authority over all Muslims in the world, various government, the United Nations and prominent Muslim groups have rejected that claim. ISIS has been present in the map of terrorism since 1999 but it rose to prominence after its proclamation of an Islamic Caliphate in 2014 and is presently considered by many nations as a threat.



Figure 9

Source: <http://charliehebdocartoons.blogspot.in/>

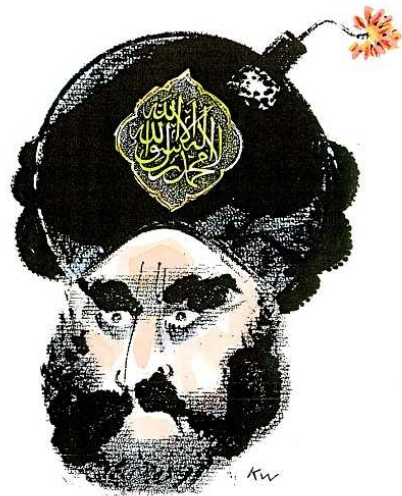


Figure 10

Source: <http://michellemalkin.com/>



Figure 11

Source: <http://michellemalkin.com/>

Figure 12

Source: <http://michellemalkin.com/>



Figure 13

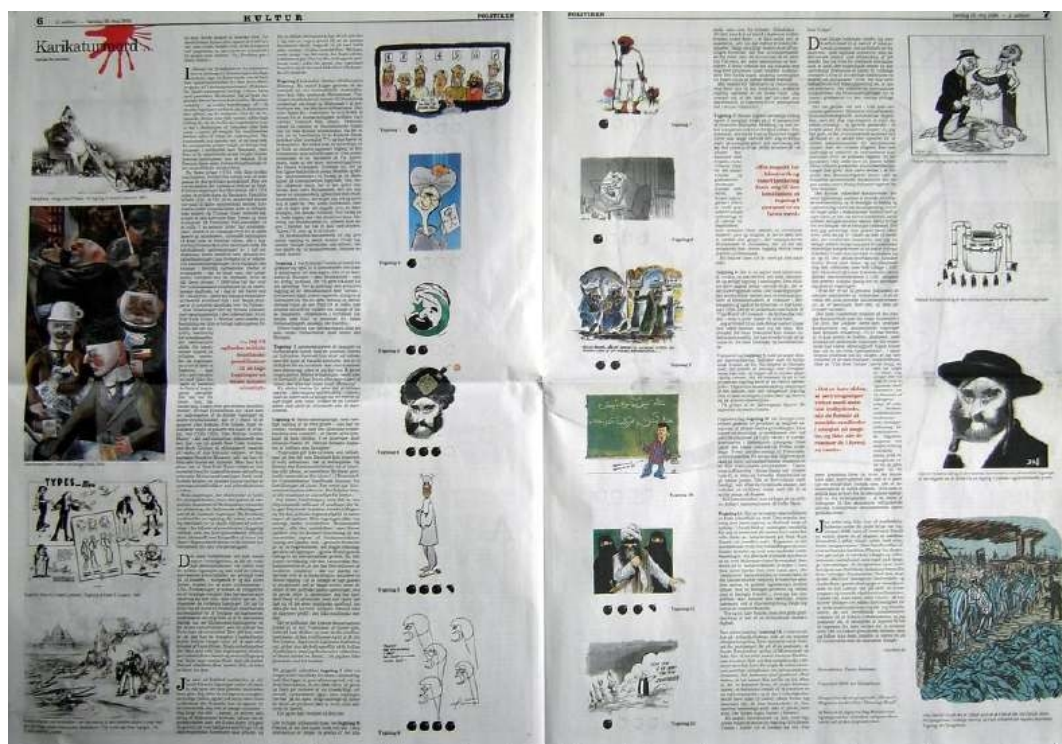
Source: <http://michellemalkin.com/>

Figure 14

Source: <http://michellemalkin.com/>

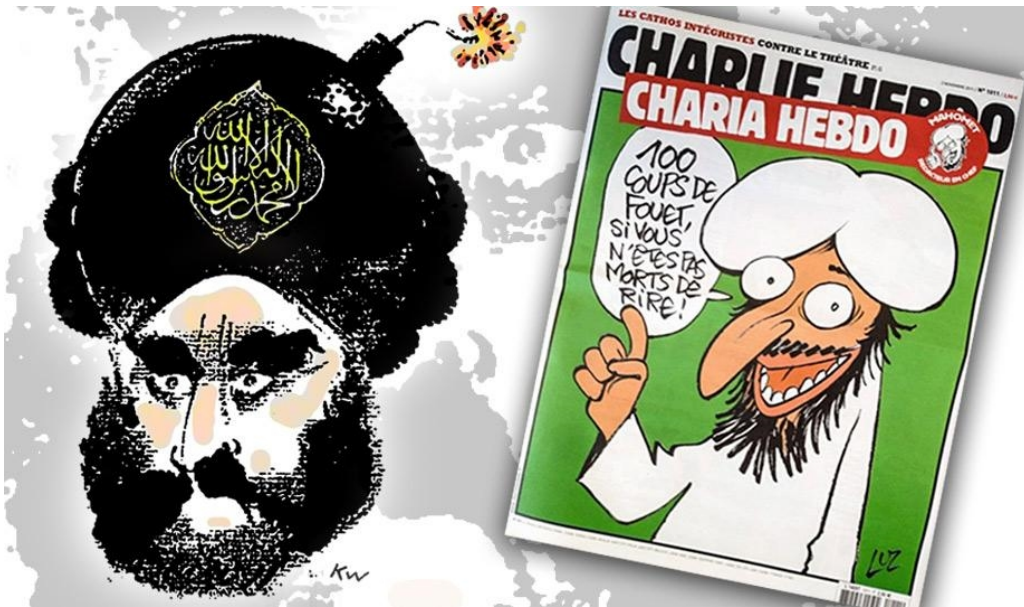


Figure 15

Source: <http://michellemalkin.com/>

The recent controversies on political cartoons are the backdrop of this research, in which I take a look at political cartooning in India, and the history behind it by analysing the cartoons of K. Shankar Pillai, R.K. Laxman and O.V. Vijayan as a parallel historical narrative of the country. In the second chapter titled 'Defining Popular: Through the Origins of Political Cartoons', I approach the evolution of political cartoons from the earliest of the drawings of its sort that originated in the West and how it fits itself into the category of popular culture. The said chapter analyses the growth of popular culture with emphasis given to the growth of caricaturing as an act which got popular in the 18th, 19th and the early 20th century where it began on its tumultuous path to becoming a major part of culture in the present times. In the third chapter, titled 'Political Cartoons as Translation; India through Political Cartoons', I analyse the post-colonial political history of India through the political cartoons of the major cartoonists of the time. It also examines how political cartoons work as translations. In the fourth chapter titled, 'Reading Political

Cartoons: Memory, Nation-State, Dissent', I examine political cartoons' role as a carrier of memory. In this chapter I look at political cartoons as a popular form of dissent in a post-colonial democratic nation-state. This chapter explores various popular forms of dissent through pictorial forms, even considering the less studied Amul cartoons, as lampooning the political as well as social day-to-day affairs of the country.

The aim of this work is to take a fresh look at the study of political cartoons as a major cultural practice. In fact, the very idea of researching in this particular topic stemmed during the years leading up to the arrest of Aseem Trivedi and the subsequent issues regarding cartooning and freedom of speech. Cartoons and the attacks against cartoonists have been constantly in the news since the publication of the controversial Prophet Muhammad cartoons in 2005 by the Danish newspaper Jyllands Posten. Though that is the most famous of all the incidents in this category, there have been other incidents as well such as the abduction of a Sri Lankan cartoonist, Prageeth Eknaligoda³⁹, in 2010, allegedly by the government of Sri Lanka for his active participation against the government in the months leading up to the presidential elections of January 2010. The same year also saw Anwar al-Awlaki, an Islamic cleric, threatening American cartoonist Molly Norris with death for her drawing of a poster calling for an "Everybody Draw Muhammad Day"⁴⁰. The threat eventually forced FBI to enrol her in a witness protection programme to keep her in hiding for the rest of her life.

³⁹ Prageeth Eknaligoda was a cartoonist, political analyst and reporter for Lankanews.com, a pro-opposition website. He was abducted in January, 2010 and has never been seen since that.

⁴⁰ Everybody draw Muhammad Day was organized in support of those who were being targeted for depicting Muhammad. American television show *South Park* had one of its episodes cancelled because it depicted Muhammad. Death threats were issued against animators Trey Parker and Matt Stone and the internet soon had a page (in Facebook and independent) calling for support for them. The popularity of the page enraged a section of Muslims all over the world and resulting in Pakistan banning Facebook in the country. However, the issue worsened further and the Yemeni-American cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki issued a death threat against Molly Norris which forced FBI to change her identity and enrol her in a witness protection programme.

Thinking about cartoons in a new light, as an art susceptible of doing so much damage through a single frame, made me start collecting materials for it. Going through the cartoons of R.K. Laxman and O.V. Vijayan and the research involved in understanding their context is where the idea of this research stemmed from. In order to understand the method of cartoons, it is necessary to understand the history of the art of cartooning. Very few researches have been done on chronicling the history of cartooning. To get a complete picture of it, a close study of different researches conducted on the topic is required. The second chapter of this work is the result of such a study in which a history of the art of cartooning is analysed along with where it is generally placed in the giant spectrum of Cultural Studies: Popular Culture. Therefore, it was necessary to perceive cartoon as part of popular culture and as an art that gained considerable amount of popularity during the years preceding up to the Industrial Revolution. As explained in the second chapter, the rise of popular culture in England is related to the economic and technological strides made during the industrial revolution.

The primary aim of this work is to look at cartoons as translations. In this regard, I intend to look at three types of translations. First, cartoons translate a political reality in the form of a coded text. For example, a cartoon by Shankar in 3 May 1953, about the issue of linguistic reorganization of states depicts Nehru as a snake-charmer, and the proposed states as venomous snakes crowding behind him.

THE CHARMER AND THE CHARMED

May 3, 1953



Nehru stated at a public meeting that he was not opposed to the idea of linguistic states.

Figure 16

Source: <https://whatshappbangalore.wordpress.com>

It is Shankar's interpretation of the complex scheme of things regarding the reorganization of states based on linguistic lines. A careful analysis of the period would prove that the process of reorganization was a time taking task that would have long-term repercussions. Shankar's interpretation of the states as venomous snakes warn that despite the charming efforts of the government, the task that Nehru was agreeing to do was in no way an easy one. I would like to argue that, through this cartoon, Shankar is not only reflecting a political reality but ensuring that it is interpreted in a certain way for the readers of the cartoon.

But cartoons do not just stop at being representations of a political reality or interpretations of it. In fact, they comment on the political reality and present it in a new light for the readers thus by shaping public opinion. Looking at the above mentioned cartoon of Shankar, without

understanding the political setting of the time, to disseminate a correct meaning would prove to be a difficult task. In a way, cartoonists ‘defamiliarize⁴¹’ political contexts allowing viewers and readers to have a fresh look at political decisions and contexts. In this sense they are translations of political contexts in a “nutshell.”

The second type of translation that is attempted in this work is to decode the cartoons. They are coded texts and to read them we require to decode the coded text and the codex of history. Attempting that involves translation and interpretation. The decoding of cartoons are done by translating crooked lines, features, strokes, characters, objects, highlights etc. and a cryptic text into a verbal text. This has been attempted in the third chapter titled ‘Political Cartoons as Translation; India through Political Cartoons’. If such a study is attempted on a certain period in history, such as the World Wars or the Emergency, it requires research because cartoons do not provide contexts and even when they do, they are cryptic in nature. So, a certain amount of translation is required to make sense of them in the present.

Roland Barthes⁴², way of decoding an image is the method adopted for decoding political cartoons in this work. Barthes’ essay deals with a photograph meant for advertising and explains how meaning can be disseminated from an image by analyzing it. According to Barthes’ there are three types of messages in an image;

(a) Linguistic

(b) Symbolic, and

⁴¹ According to Victor Shklovsky, the Russian Formalist, the primary aim of literature is to estrange or defamiliarize, by disrupting the modes of ordinary linguistic discourse, literature “makes strange” the world of everyday perception and renews the reader’s lost capacity for fresh sensation.

⁴² Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977. Print.

(c) Literal

Barthes argues that almost all images are accompanied by some sort of a linguistic message. It functions through two ways; anchorage, in which images are inclined to have multiple meanings and interpretations and relay, in which the text in the image adds to the meaning. Together, the text and the image help in giving the intended meaning. Barthes says that the words ‘in the same way as images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the digesis.’ This complementary relationship between the text and the image is one of the main features of cartoon and it also helps in interpreting them for the purpose of research.

The third level of translation is the actual translation of cartoons from one language to another. This has been attempted in the fourth chapter. O.V. Vijayan’s cartoons which are translated into Malayalam as part of an article have been taken in as examples to understand the translation of cartoons.

Chapter Two

Political Cartoons and/in Popular Culture

1. Definitions of Popular Culture

Contemporary popular culture is difficult to explain but there is never a lack of definitions. From radical definitions to carefully defined and analyzed ones, modern theorists offer many insights into the idea of popular culture. Most often, popular culture is defined as part of differentiating between what is ‘High Culture’ and ‘Mass Culture’. Ray Browne⁴³ writes,

“‘Popular Culture’ is an indistinct term whose edges blur into imprecision. Scarcely any two commentators who try to define it agree in all aspects of what popular culture really is. Most critics, in fact, do not attempt to define it; instead, after distinguishing between it and mass media and between it and “high” culture, most assume that everybody knows that whatever is widely disseminated and experienced is “popular culture””.

According to Browne, popular culture lacks a serious definition because there is a lack of serious study focusing on it. In fact, through his article Browne questions the existing norms regarding the study of popular culture and feels that the elitist critics have always insisted that ‘whatever was widespread was artistically and aesthetically deficient, therefore, unworthy of study.’

⁴³ Browne, Ray B. “Popular Culture: Notes towards a Definition.” *Popular Culture Theory and Methodology: A Basic Introduction*. Ed. Harold E. Hinds., Marilyn F. Motz and Angela M.S. Nelson. London: University of Wisconsin, 2006. Web.

Tony Bennett writes⁴⁴, ‘The concept of popular culture is virtually useless, a melting pot of confused and contradictory meanings capable of misdirecting inquiry up any number of theoretical blind alleys.’ Through his article Bennett provided four different ways in which popular culture can be defined. John Storey⁴⁵ on the other hand lists six views on how popular culture emerged and how it is looked upon in the contemporary perspective. But before venturing into examining the definitions of popular culture, it is imperative to understand the words ‘popular’ and ‘culture’. Raymond Williams⁴⁶ offers four meanings to ‘popular’. According to him, the term ‘popular’ can apply to anything ‘well-liked by many people’ or ‘culture actually made by the people for themselves.’ Contrastingly, it could also be ‘inferior kinds of work’ or ‘work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people.’

Raymond Williams⁴⁷ definitions of ‘culture’ is equally interesting. According to him, ‘culture’ is ‘one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.’ Williams gave early meaning of the word as ‘the tending of something, basically crops or animals.’ After giving a brief account on how the meaning of the word ‘culture’ evolved through time he concentrates on the contemporary importance of it. Williams attributes two definitions. According to him, culture can be used to refer to ‘a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development.’ His second definition of the word suggests ‘a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or group.’

⁴⁴ Bennett, Tony. ‘Popular Culture: Themes and Issues’, in *Popular Culture*. New York: Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1982. Print.

⁴⁵ Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London. Pearson Longman, 1994. Print.

⁴⁶ Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*. London. Fontana, 1983. Print.

⁴⁷ Williams, Raymond. *Culture*. London. Fontana, 1981. Print.

If broadly examined, it can be understood that the first definition of ‘culture’ is something that can be applied to a certain region or a people. Based on the given definition, it is possible to look into the cultural development of South India and explain how the region evolved by examining the evolution of languages, literary contributions or socio-political-religious movements. On the other hand, the second definition of ‘culture’ by Raymond Williams would solely concentrate on a people or a group. Williams also suggests a third meaning for the word ‘culture’; the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic creativity. According to John Storey, ‘culture’ according to Raymond Williams’ third definition ‘is synonymous with what structuralists and post-structuralists call ‘signifying practices’.

Both the terms ‘popular’ and ‘culture’ enjoys a variety of meanings and definitions. So it can be said that a term such as ‘Popular Culture’ is about how these two words co-exist through different historical and social contexts. John Storey⁴⁸ says, ‘An obvious starting point in any attempt to define popular culture is to say that popular culture is simply culture that is wildly favored or well-liked by many people.’

There is a good amount of effort happening in establishing the norm that contemporary popular culture is almost without definition and anything and everything can be assimilated into its folds. But it is prudent to understand another definition of popular culture before looking into what constitutes it. Raymond F. Betts⁴⁹, in the introduction to his book *A History of Popular Culture* gives popular culture a purely mechanical as well as mass-produced image.

⁴⁸ Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London. Pearson Longman, 1994. Print.

⁴⁹ Betts, Raymond F. *A History of Popular Culture: More of Everything, Faster and Brighter*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

‘What most obviously sets contemporary popular culture apart from anything preceding it is the mass-produced means of pleasure and entertainment that are now being enjoyed by multitudes never reached before. Moreover, contemporary popular culture is about market-directed activities intended to yield large profits while personal success is certainly assigned to those individuals who enjoy huge incomes in providing that entertainment.’

What about the culture that is not mass produced or produced for the masses? In fact, that is another way of defining popular culture. It could very well be the opposite of culture produced by and for a few. There exists a ‘high culture’ that is produced for the high classes. It could be the result of an individual act of creation. According to the French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu⁵⁰, cultural distinctions are often used to support class distinctions. The idea of popular culture had to contest along with the idea that it was mass produced and is essentially, a mass culture. Does this affect the meaning of Popular Culture? Does the adjective ‘Popular’ corrupt a complex term like culture? These questions can be answered only if a theoretical analyses of the term is possible. Concerns over who controls culture and the role of popular culture as a tool to assert control over the masses can be addressed in a later stage. What makes the ‘popular’ intriguing in popular culture is its apparent association with terms such as ‘capitalism’, ‘commodity’, ‘commercialization’ etc. This, in fact, could leads to another aspect of popular culture, which is to be discussed later in this chapter, ideology. Capitalism as a dominating economic system, with commodification and commercialization as its powerful allies, often flirts with the ideology for its own benefit. Contemporary studies of popular culture often poses these questions regarding the identity of

⁵⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre. Johnson, Randal. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Columbia University Press, 1993. Print.

popular culture and its role in controlling the human population. The advent of cinema, radio and the subsequent mass production of culture in the beginning of 20th century increased the number of debates on this matter. Dominic Strinati⁵¹ documents the origin of these debates,

‘The major claim of mass society theory refers to the disruptive consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation. The rise of large-scale and mechanised industrial production, and the growth of massive and densely populated cities, are argued to have destabilised and then eroded the societies and values which previously held people together. These radical changes included the eradication of agrarian work tied to the land, the destruction of the tightly knit village community, the decline of religion and the secularisation of societies; and they have been associated with the growth of scientific knowledge, the spread of mechanised, monotonous and alienating factory work, the development of large anomic cities populated by anonymous crowds, and the relative absence of moral integration. These processes are thought to lie behind the emergence of a mass society and mass culture.’

The politics of popular culture portrays it as a culture constituted by people that are ready to consume a product as soon as it is launched. Unlike, ‘high art’ or ‘high-culture’, the products of popular culture are produced in a massive scale. It can be said that the profit-mindedness of the culture industry is one of the determining factors of popular culture. The spokespersons of high culture would argue that this constant urge to make more and more profit through techniques of mass production influences the taste of societies.

⁵¹ Strinati, Dominic. *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*: New York and London. Routledge, 2004. Print.

To make the argument clearer, let us draw an example from the Indian film industry. While Bollywood is something that fits the description of ‘popular’, India’s parallel cinema with its people and its issues could be seen as the ‘high culture’ that attracts the intelligentsia. Although filmmakers such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan⁵² or Mrinal Sen⁵³ may enjoy a certain amount of international recognition, makers of popular Bollywood flicks like Karan Johar or Rohit Shetty might enjoy a wider popularity in the subcontinent.

Another example can be found in the sudden surge of the Indian pop, generally referred to as ‘Indi-Pop’, in the beginning of 90s. Although the term Indipop is believed to have been used first by the British-Indian fusion band Monsoon in 1981, the term was later revived and popularized in the 1990s with the surge in the Indian music industry when a group of artists emerged with individual albums, backed up by new music companies and music channels. With India’s exposure to the outside world in the beginning of the 90s, multinational satellite channels like MTV⁵⁴ influenced Indian youngsters to rock, hip hop and other genres, which culminated into what could now be termed as Indipop, a fusion pop which mixed international music styles with that of the local. A group of Indian musicians emerged with their own albums, soon competing

⁵² Adoor Gopalakrishnan is a pioneer of the ‘New Wave’ film movement in Kerala which is considered to be triggered off by his first film *Swayamvaram* (1972). Adoor Gopalakrishnan was part of the setting up of the first Film Society in Kerala called ‘Chitralekha Film Society’ to promote what was later known as ‘art films’, a certain kind of parallel cinema as opposed to the popular films made for the mass. A winner of sixteen National Awards and seventeen Kerala State Film Awards, Adoor Gopalakrishnan has also won several international awards including the prestigious British Film Institute Award for *Elippathayam* in 1981. He was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2004.

⁵³ A contemporary of Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen is often acknowledged as one of the greatest filmmakers of Indian Parallel cinema. Reputed as a Marxist artist, Mrinal Sen’s films featured in many of the International Film Festivals across the world and he was often part of many of the acclaimed juries. Also known for his friendship with Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mrinal Sen is credited with taking the parallel cinema of India to the world stage.

⁵⁴ MTV India was launched in 1996, banking on promoting youth culture in a speedily developing India with its market wide open to International tastes. From specializing on music programmes, MTV has gone on to making reality shows and road shows. MTV also has a show called *Coke Studio* which brings in local talents from different Indian cultures to an International platform.

with the movie industry and their songs. This sudden boom coincided with that of the economic liberalization of India in 1991, which made international music tycoons such as Sony and BMG to enter the Indian markets, giving local companies and the extremely popular devotional music industry, a run for their money. Indipop not only ushered in a new style of music with new sounds made of new techniques and instruments, it also succeeded in revitalizing the old and at times, clubbed the Indian classical with that of its western counterpart. The adapting of popular Hindustani singer Hariharan to Indipop, by collaborating with Leslie Lewis to create a first of its kind band so aptly titled ‘Colonial Cousins⁵⁵’, probably marked the beginning of Indipop as a serious music genre. Daler Mehndi, a Punjabi singer stormed into the Indipop scene in 1996 with his album, *Bolo Ta Ra Ra*. A variety of artists followed such as Lucky Ali, Shaan, Palash Sen, Sunidhi Chauhan, Falguni Pathak, Shankar Mahadevan, Adnan Sami, Alisha Chinai, Himesh Reshammiya etc during the period in which Indipop sustained a steady market. Rather than the separate identity of ‘Indipop’ it is the need for the making such an identity that attracted my attention. Music industry in India, before the advent of Indipop, concentrated heavily on the multitude of film industries that thrived in the country. Indian popular cinema’s affliction with songs provided ample opportunities to the musicians to make a living without venturing in to the rather risky business of album making. Even then, classical musicians and Ghazal singers occasionally forayed into independent album making with music companies. Devotional songs also contributed a lot to popular music industry, at times. However, the beginnings of 2000s saw a decline in the Indipop as several of these music talents started switching to the higher paying gigs in Bollywood, the country’s biggest movie industry with a wider reach to the public. The effect of Indipop has to be understood not just in terms of its cultural impact but also in terms of

⁵⁵ Colonial Cousins was the first Indian act to be featured on MTV Unplugged.

its market popularity that makes it one of the ‘popular’ mediums in India. In the decade that Indipop ruled the country’s music scene, it owned a share of 10% in the country’s music market. A.R. Rahman’s album *Vande Mataram*⁵⁶, celebrating fifty years of Indian Independence, holds the record of the largest selling Indian non-film album to date. Bringing in a certain patriotic fervor with representations from all the regional cultures in its visual, the album was ironically, brought to the market by an American music company, Columbia Records. Indipop was a cultural phenomenon more than it was a market phenomenon yet it is the latter that might give it the popular tag because it is music that is produced for the purpose of mass-consumption. It was made due to the unexpectedly available opportunities welcomed by a changing polity and a sudden demand for it from a new generation of Indians, ready to consume it. It is this hopeless commercial culture that defines popular culture. John Storey⁵⁷ says,

‘Its audience is a mass of non-discriminating consumers. The culture itself is formulaic, manipulative (to the political right or left, depending on who is doing the analysis). It is a culture that is consumed with brain-numbed and rain numbing passivity.’

This clear distinction between high-culture and positive culture existed throughout the emerging period of mass-consumed culture. The blurring of the line that divided one from the other can be attributed to many incidents. In 1963, John Lennon urged before a performance of the Beatles at the Albert Hall in London, where Queen Elizabeth was also a spectator, ‘People in the cheap seats, please clap your hands... The rest of you, rattle our jewelry.’ This daring and public

⁵⁶ The song, *Maa Tujhe Salaam*, holds the record for the second famous song of all times in a survey conducted by the BBC World Service in 2002.

⁵⁷ Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London. Pearson Longman, 1994. Print.

mocking of the 'high-culture' and its followers from the contemporary leading rock band of the world probably worked as an eraser of the already blurring lines between high-culture and popular culture.

Is there a clear defining line between the so called high culture and popular culture? The answer would be a no because as established social and cultural practices, they seem to have more in common than against each other. The globalization and the neo-capitalism of the twenty first century may have further blurred the lines between high-culture and popular culture. For example, both are influenced by capitalist notions of fast production and consumption. The pop culture which emerged as a clear revolution against existing cultural practices, uniting a working class urban population behind it, is clearly the key of capitalist high culture in the world today. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson say,

‘⁵⁸Scholars have come to see how much the traditional division of high culture and popular culture has been a political division rather than a defensible intellectual or aesthetic distinction. They have begun to trace the mutual influence of high and popular culture. They have come to take popular culture more seriously as a terrain of political and social conflict and a weapon of political mobilization.’

Cartoons, in their emerging period, were considered as the 'other' because the pioneers of the art, if it was considered as art at all, were also the pioneers of contemporary painting.

A theoretical mapping of popular culture is almost impossible without taking a look at the possible origins, along with the evolution, of it. There are some who would date it back to cavemen

⁵⁸ Mukerji, Chandra, and Michael Schudson., eds. *Rethinking Popular Culture Contemporary Perspective in Cultural Studies*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991. Web.

drawings and Roman graffiti and on the other hand, there are some who would connect the origins of popular culture with the Industrial Revolution. According to Raymond F Betts⁵⁹, ‘...the abbreviated term ‘pop’ as a qualifier is modern, appearing in England in the 1950s to describe art inspired by consumerism and then music directed to the young.’

However, Marcel Danesi⁶⁰ has a different claim when it comes to the birthplace of ‘Pop’. ‘The term surfaced in the United States in the 1950s, when it had become a widespread social reality, breaking down differential categories of taste and lifestyle and, consequently uniting the nation in a populist fashion.’ Danesi goes on to explain the reason for such a sudden shift in the taste of the common.

‘Pop culture’s emergence as a default form of culture in that era was due, in large part, to post-war affluence and a subsequently baby boom, which gave people in the mass, regardless of class or educational background, considerable buying power, thus propelling them into the unprecedented position of shaping trends in fashion, music and lifestyle through the market place.’

Andrew Ross⁶¹ also supports this view in his book *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. ‘Popular Culture has been socially and institutionally central in America for longer and a more significant way than in Europe.’ It is also likely that popular culture derived its name from

⁵⁹ Betts, Raymond F. *A History of Popular Culture: More of Everything, Faster and Brighter*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

⁶⁰ Danesi, Marcel. *Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2012. Print.

⁶¹ Ross, Andrew. *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1989. Print.

the ‘pop art’ movement in the 1950s U.K and the United States. Or, it might have been developed from the English word ‘populace’ which means people. According to Tilman Osterwold⁶²,

‘Pop Art does not describe a style, it is much rather a collective term for artistic phenomena in which the sense of being in a particular area found its concrete expression. Pop is a buzzword. It is cheerful, ironic and critical, quick to respond to the slogans of mass media, whose stories make history, whose aesthetics shape the paintings and our image of the era, and whose clichéd “models” determine our behavior.’

Pop culture, as explained, is evidently a western creation. It is a cultural phenomenon born under a post-world war, industrial society through technological advances made for the war. Rapid Americanization of the world after the Second World War could also be termed as a cause for this mass-produced cultural advance. Richard Maltby⁶³ points out another angle of popular culture. According to him, it provides, ‘an escapism that is not an escape from or to anywhere. But an escape of our Utopian selves.’

All of these arguments show popular culture as something produced by and for the people and sometimes even as an ‘authentic culture of the people.’ Mass production and commerce are two aspects of popular culture that are often acknowledged whenever theoretically approached. Fredric Jameson⁶⁴, noted literary critic and culture analyst, measures the term globalization as ‘the export and import of culture.’ In a highly globalized world culture is what is rapidly transferred through diverse means of communication from cellphones to internet. When anything from a song to a TV

⁶² Osterwold, Tilman. *Pop Art*. New York: Taschen, 2003. Print.

⁶³ Maltby, Richard. *Dreams for Sale: Popular Culture in the 20th Century*. London Harrap, 1989. Web.

⁶⁴ Jameson, Frederic. “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” *Postmodern Culture*. Edtd Hal Foster: London: Pluto, 1985.

show could be part of what one can call popular culture, success is analyzed only through economical ways. This somewhat eccentric love for commodification and the subsequent consumerism is what modern popular culture is all about.

2. A Theory of 'Popular' Culture

French Sociologist Jean Baudrillard, in his book *America*⁶⁵, offers a peek into the American society based on consumerism and capitalism. Other than calling America 'a land of liberty and advanced bastion of capitalism', he also calls it 'the original version of modernity' as opposed to Europe which he calls 'dubbed or subtitled versions'. Throughout the book, Baudrillard describes how America is fascinated by images. Baudrillard is riveted by America's fascination for images; cartoons, graphics, graffiti, cinema, photographs... He even considers the Vietnam War as won by both sides. '...by the Vietnamese on the ground, by the Americans in the electronic mental space. And if the one side won and ideological and political victory, the other made *Apocalypse Now*⁶⁶ and that has gone right around the world.' Baudrillard's chapter titled 'Utopia Achieved' concludes with a revelation on culture in the United States. 'Culture is space, speed, cinema, technology'.

Hollywood is perhaps an easier example for the commercialization of culture. The mere availability of records on billion dollar success rate of directors and producers formulate their identity. Popular Culture is indeed measured in bizarre ways. Hollywood director James Cameron reportedly earns an average of 868 \$ million per film and is closely followed by Sir Peter Jackson who directs the much celebrated 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy, with an earnings of 429 \$ million.

⁶⁵ Baudrillard, Jean. *America*. Translated by Chris Turner: London and New York: Verso, 1988.

⁶⁶ Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now* is a 1979 American film based on the Vietnam War. Inspired from Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness, Coppola's film follows Captain Benjamin Willard on a mission to kill a renegade and insane Colonel Walter E. Kurtz in the jungles of Vietnam. Known for its extensive settings and the theme, *Apocalypse Now* is now preserved in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress because it is considered 'culturally, historically or aesthetically significant.'

Literature has its share of billion dollar stories too. The recent popularity enjoyed by G.R.R. Martin's 'Game of Thrones' series and Suzanne Collins' 'The Hunger Games' series adapted to TV and films respectively are examples. Interestingly enough, the popularity of Game of Thrones was even measured by taking into account the number of illegal downloads it received. The Independent⁶⁷ reports,

‘The first four new episodes leaked earlier this month, leading to more than 32 million illegal downloads in just one week. Ten percent of these downloads came from within the U.S with data analyst Tru Optik estimating that 44 \$ million was lost in U.S revenue from the first episode alone. France, Brazil, China, Russia, the U.K, India, Canada, Australia and Spain have also been pirating the series the most.’

By ‘popular’ it is generally meant as a culture or products of culture enjoyed or experienced by large numbers of people. It does not necessarily have to be people belonging to the lower classes of the society. Of course, some uses ‘popular’ to signify ‘low-brow’ culture as opposed to ‘elite’ culture. This distinction could be based on many things; sophistication involved in the production of the said art, the perceived standards of taste, or even the presumed customers.

It is this ‘produce-to-consume’ aspect of popular culture that grabbed the attention of Marxist thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, and Leo Lowenthal etc. To put it simply, they saw popular culture as essentially a commodity culture, following the same principles of capitalism.

⁶⁷ Denham, Jess. “Game of Thrones Season 5 breaks piracy record with 32m illegal downloads.” *The Independent*. April 23rd, 2015. Web.

Theodor Adorno⁶⁸ studied the development of popular culture and the ideas that influenced it and finally found a term for its contemporary status; ‘Culture Industry’⁶⁹.

Deborah Cook⁷⁰ explains,

‘The culture industry is geared to profit-making, controlled by centralized inter-locking corporations, and staffed with marketing and financial experts, management and production teams, technicians, ‘star’ reporters, writers, actors, musicians, and other creative talent. Since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, culture has gone into mass production. Owing to the mass production of culture, hundreds of millions of people now watch the same television programs and movies, listen to the same music in recordings and on radio, and read the same newspapers and magazines. The culture industry plays a powerful role in the daily life of the vast majority of individuals in the western world.’

Adorno’s book *The Culture Industry* explores this idea, often questions the intentions and reach conclusions that are not so positive about the machinery of culture industry. The second chapter of the book is titled ‘The Schema of Mass Culture’ and it begins with an intriguing

⁶⁸ Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

⁶⁹ Theodor Adorno coined the term Culture Industry in his chapter ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’ in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). He perceived culture as mass-produced and distributed through mediums such as film, radio and TV which are then used to manipulate society into passivity. Adorno argued that this web of culture industry dangerously created a need for certain things in the minds of people, which were ultimately met only through products of capitalism. Adorno, along with Max Horkheimer, saw these mass-consumed culture as a dangerous phenomenon rather than the ‘technically and more difficult high-art.’

⁷⁰ Cook, Deborah. *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1996. Print.

sentence. ⁷¹‘The commercial character of culture causes the difference between culture and practical life to disappear.’

Adorno argues that the schema of mass culture is to betray reality in order to amplify profits gained from the commercial production of an object. According to him, mass culture is the product of bourgeoisie mindset and is employed largely for the benefit of a capitalist society. Adorno sees mass culture as something that betrays the mass. He summarizes the concept in a single but plain sentence; ‘Monopoly scorns art’. Adorno coined the term Culture Industry in 1947 in his book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* written along with his fellow Frankfurt school philosopher Max Horkheimer⁷².

‘In our drafts we spoke of ‘mass culture’. We replaced that expression with ‘culture industry’ in order to exclude from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates: that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art.’

Adorno perceives Culture Industry as an advanced form of already existed capitalist outlook. The new plan, products aimed for mass consumption is produced with precise intentions, under an organized economic and administrative concentration. For the purpose of winning over masses, the differences that existed between the ‘high’ and ‘low’ art is effectively erased. Since social control by lower classes was not yet a reality, rebellious resistance is featured as a sentiment to appeal to the masses. According to Adorno, all these betray the popular belief that ‘customer is king’. Here, those who control the means of production becomes invisible masters whose voice

⁷¹ Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

⁷² Max Horkheimer (14 February, 1895 – 7 July, 1973) was a German philosopher and sociologist who belonged to the Frankfurt School of social research. His most famous work is *The Eclipse of Reason* (1947).

become the spirit of culture. Adorno sums it up easily. ‘The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry, even though the culture industry itself could scarcely exist without adapting to the masses.’

This could also bring another Marxist theoretician and thinker into focus. Cultural theorists have taken Antonio Gramsci⁷³’s political concept of ‘hegemony’ to explain how popular culture gets political: ‘...that a social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by direct and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological views so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwittingly accept and participate in their own oppression.’

Applying Gramsci’s theory of hegemony to popular culture, it can be said that it is what consumers of popular culture understand from texts and practices of the given culture industry. So, culture is consumed by people in ways never thought of its producers. The consumers of the culture industry analyze cultural products in their own way hence generating many more meanings than the intended ones.

The term hegemony originates from the ancient Greek word ‘hegemonia’ which expresses the dominant and oppressive status of one element in the system over the others. It can be seen that Georgi Plekhanov⁷⁴ and Vladimir Lenin have used the term hegemony before it was redeemed by Antonio Gramsci. Plekhanov used the term hegemony in an attack against economism, a situation in which strict economic laws dictate social and political developments. Plekhanov’s use

⁷³ Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist who was instrumental in founding the Communist Party of Italy. His resistance against the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini landed him in jail. His theory of cultural hegemony gained importance years later and continue to be one of the most discussed theories in culture and politics.

⁷⁴ Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov was a Russian Marxist theoretician and one of the founding fathers of revolutionary social-democratic movement in Russia which ultimately led to the Russian Revolution of 1917. But, Plekhanov, after being identified as a Marxist, was exiled to Switzerland before that. After his return home, he showed his dissent towards Lenin’s Marxist Party. However, Plekhanov is still regarded highly as one of the founding fathers of Russian Marxism.

of hegemony was in the late nineteenth century Russia where a weak and unorganized proletariat faced off an autocratic aristocracy. Vladimir Lenin took over from Plekhanov and added that small proletariats should be organized to form a resistance for revolutionary struggle. Thus, it is evident that by the time Gramsci's idea of hegemony came, it was already familiar, although used for scoring different thoughts.

Before Gramsci gave the term its current meaning, it was used to denote a dominance of a particular nation over others, in friendly circumstances. Gramsci's writings on hegemony made it one of the most popular terms of modern times and is used to describe intricacies of power relations in fields ranging from literature, education and political science to cultural studies and international relations. Gramsci becomes important not just as a founding member of the Communist Party of Italy and a Marxist thinker but also for his vehement refusal to exclude cultural and social institutions from his analyses of the political. He perceives politics as something inconceivable if non-political things like books, films or even cultural practices are excluded from it.

Gramsci's idea of hegemony focuses on the organization and analysis of consent in a society. In fact, Gramsci's hegemony is based on the relationship between coercion and consent. Gramsci claims that hegemony, in a modern capitalist society, works with some sort of consent as opposed to coercive domination, which was present in the term's classical meaning. Although in his opinion, the bourgeoisie of liberal society and the proletariat of a communist society possess hegemonic control, only the latter is desirable. Gramsci's analysis of how the 'high culture' Florentine dialect became the standard Italian shows the workings of hegemony. Mark Haugaard

and Howard H Lentner in their book *Hegemony and Power: Consensus and Coercion in Contemporary Politics*⁷⁵ says,

‘...prior to unification there was no singular Italian language but a multiplicity of minor Latin-based languages spoken in the Italian peninsula. A political decision was taken to make Florentine the official language of Italy because it was associated with high culture and literature. Thus, this dialect was known to the educated classes, although it was spoken as an everyday language by as little as two percent of the population. This meant that the linguistic dialects and mannerisms that were relatively easily attainable by the elite became the ‘correct way’ to speak. The association between Florentine, now Italian, and some great classics, including Dante and Boccaccio, meant that this was not some arbitrary linguistic form which was contingently elevated but represented a “superior civilization”. The language of school became consistent with the taken-for-granted knowledge of the bourgeoisie but inconsistent with that of the rural peasantry. However, the latter did not see this as the imposition of an alien cultural form (which is what it was) but as socialization into a higher civilized and educated form of speech. Consequently, they consented to the imposition of bourgeois speech upon their children.’

Perceiving Gramsci’s thought with the unification of Italy as its backdrop would reveal that he was of the belief that the Italian state was the result of an imposition from above rather than a product of a mass movement with moral and intellectual leadership. Through this unwillingness to exclude the seemingly non-political, cultural aspects of a society to redefine the idea of hegemony, Gramsci kicks off a wide variety of topics to be discussed in the popular culture

⁷⁵ Haugaard, Mark, and Howard H. Lentner, eds. *Hegemony and Power: Consensus and Coercion in Contemporary Politics*. New York, Lexington Books. 2006, Print.

context. The decade that saw Gramsci furnishing the term hegemony also saw an increase in the use of two other terms that are equally important to the study of popular culture; Ideology and Propaganda.

How does the study of political cartoons fit in the framework of popular culture? Political cartoons, working as a critique to the very basic power structures, dealing through methods that are unusual as opposed to newspaper reporting or chronicling, could very well form part of popular culture both as the meaning of the term ‘popular’ is concerned and as a cultural practice of everyday life, preserving with it a codex of the time of its creation. A study of the evolution of political cartoons is also a study of the evolution of the dominant political structure of the time. In England, France and most parts of the Europe, it emerged and became popular during the monarchical times and evolved well in to its present form as these nations progressed well into democracy. Other than being a cultural practice of the time, it also chronicled the evolution of its polity, often working as a critique of the dominant power structures of the time. Its purpose as a tool for propaganda may have given it a boost in the years leading up to the First World War, but by the time Europe descended in to the chaos of the Second World War, cartoons had taken up a dominant position in the media culture of the century. It is not just the ‘popularity’ of the cartoons that makes it appealing to the future researchers of Cultural Studies, but its capability as a raconteur of the everyday life of the days gone by. Just as David Low preserved the everyday life of pre-war and post-war England, R.K. Laxman’s cartoons reveal an India, its city life, the ethos of the middle class and the worries of its citizens in the public sphere. It is the process of deciphering the everyday life, along with the political and cultural aspects of it, that makes cartoons very much a part of the broad discipline of Cultural Studies.

John Hartley calls Cultural Studies ‘⁷⁶the study of everyday life in modern, urban and suburban societies.’ He attempts to define it in broader terms later,

‘Cultural Studies attempts to make sense of everyday life within the terms of its own ongoing inquiry into meaning, power, ideology and subjectivity in contemporary societies. It undertook an anthropology of modern, mediated, managed, multicultural life. But it was also the inheritor of disciplinary and intellectual preoccupations, approaching everyday life less with wide-eyed interrogative naivety than with preconceived or received ideas. Because of cultural studies’ own history as a political as well as an academic discourse, these included a strong sense that the purpose of any study of everyday life was *critical* – the point was not simply to understand that world, but to change it. This was a kind of intervention analysis, dedicated neither to the improvement of everyday activities themselves, nor to appreciation of cultural pursuits, but to critique of the society of which these activities were both symptom and stage, with a view to reform, revolution or replacement.’

Cultural Studies in the 20th century evolved by engaging in the constant investigation of the dominant ideologies and power structures of the time. A study of popular culture would reveal the same struggle of the different popular cultures to come to terms with the ever changing everyday reality, be it the Pop music or a casual wall graffiti in a New York downtown. Raymond Williams’s definition of culture as a ‘⁷⁷whole way of life’ has definitely tempted future scholars to understand culture as something to be studied based on the different forms of markers that exists

⁷⁶ Hartley, John. *A Short History of Cultural Studies*. London: Sage Publishers, 2003. Web.

⁷⁷ Williams, Raymond. *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. London: Verso, 1958. Web.

in a society; location, monuments, books, music, films, etc. From the understanding of Williams, one can leap to the essentially ideology-based understanding of the evolution of culture in the early capitalist societies of Europe in the first half of 20th century. With advanced methods of production and large-scale consumption, the working class in Europe became more and more organized, resulting in a newly defined class with its own priorities and preferences in life as opposed to the capitalist class. Towards the latter half of 20th century, the advances in media and communication presented the world with new markets and products, not just for daily consumption but also for ‘enjoyment’. Robert Bocock called it ‘leisure markets’⁷⁸. Perceived as essential to the everyday life, products such as TV, Radio and other means of communication became part of the working class, giving other forms of culture a platform and a wider audience. Though Marx started the debate on the cultural production of the industrial society, it was the later thinkers such as Adorno, Horkheimer et.al. that dwelled further into the topic with their opinion leading to the understanding that dominant sections of the society that used popular media and communications to manipulate mass opinion.

3. Ideology

Ideology has been termed as one of the most elusive, at times, confusing concepts. Generally, before attempting to understand or explain the term ideology, scholars of it divide it between the Marxist and the non-Marxist. Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels (and later, Gramsci and Althusser) had developed the term into a somewhat reasonable definition with a lot of debate left on it. On the non-Marxist group, Emile Durkheim and later Karl Mannheim grappled with the term ideology. All of this, along with thousands of other writings make the term a rather difficult one

⁷⁸ Bocock, Robert. *Consumption*. London: T&F, 1993. Web.

to ‘define’. Terry Eagleton⁷⁹ has an interesting way to define it. ‘The word ideology, one might say, is a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands; it is traced through by divergent histories, and it is probably more important to assess what is valuable or can be discarded in each of these lineages than to merge them forcibly in to some Grand Global Theory.’

The simplest way ideology could be defined is that it is a body of ideas belonging to a particular social group or class. Studies of ideology usually focus on its relationship with social or political movements, class, economy, or even gender and culture. The first clear definition of ideology can be traced back to Destutt De Tracy⁸⁰, a French economist and theorist. He worked on a theory of ideology after reading works of John Locke and Etienne Bonnot de Condillac⁸¹, during his imprisonment. He coined the term in 1796, to refer to his “science of ideas”. De Tracy’s definition attempted to create a secure foundation for all the moral and political sciences by closely examining our sensations and ideas as these interacted with our physical environment. For him, ideology referred to a liberal, social and economic philosophy that provided the basis for a strong defense of private property, individual liberty, the free market and constitutional limits to the power of the state.

In the process of defining a somewhat modern definition of ideology, Karl Marx seems to have abhorred the definition by De Tracy. According to Marx, ideology is a false consciousness of a ruling class in a society which falsely presents their ideas as if they were universal truth. He

⁷⁹ Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

⁸⁰ Head, William Brian. *Ideology and Social Science: Destutt de Tracy and French Liberalism*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985. Web.

⁸¹ Etienne Bonnot de Condillac was a French philosopher who specialized in ‘Philosophy of Mind’. He developed the concept of empirical sensationism.

argued that their ideas were neither universal nor objective but they emerged out of and serve their class interests.

Graeme Turner⁸², in his book *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, says that ‘ideology remains the single most important conceptual category in Cultural Studies – even if it remains one of the most contested.’ James Carey⁸³, the media critic, also had similar views on ideology. According to him, British cultural studies could be described ‘just as easily and perhaps more accurately as ideological studies for they assimilate, in a variety of complex ways, culture to ideology.’

Though cultural studies generally adopts an impartial approach towards ideology, most literature on Popular Culture takes a rather negative meaning of the term. For Althusser, ideology exists and spread through four state apparatuses (I.S.A⁸⁴).

- (a) The Family
- (b) The Educational system
- (c) The church
- (d) The mass media

This is significantly different than the Gramscian thought in which he argued that ideology is understood in terms of ideas, meanings and practices which are maps of meaning that sustain powerful social groups. It is this Gramscian thought that becomes the connection between ideology and popular culture. Gramsci’s notion of ‘popular’ constituted mostly the working class and for

⁸² Turner, Graeme. *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2003. Print.

⁸³ Carey, James W. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

⁸⁴ Ideological State Apparatuses.

him, popular culture was going to be the socialist view of the world. For him, through the ‘common sense’ of popular culture, people will organize their lives and experience. Here, common sense becomes the most significant site of ideological struggle.

‘Every philosophical current leaves behind it a sediment of ‘common sense’; this is the document of its historical effectiveness. Common sense is not rigid and immobile but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. Common sense creates the folklore of the future, that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time.’

Gramsci’s findings reveal a gap between the elite culture and popular culture in Italy largely due to the Italian elite intellectual’s failure in creating a national – popular culture. Although Gramscian thought gives us the first glimpses of leftist thought on popular culture, strongly footed on his concept of hegemony, it is the almost negative connotation of ideology that gets it a popular push in the latter half of the twentieth century.

‘A second definition suggests a certain masking, distortion, or concealment. Ideology is used here to indicate how some texts and practices present distorted images of reality. They produce what is sometimes called ‘false consciousness’⁸⁵. Such distortions, it is argued, work in the interests of the powerful against the interests of the powerless.’

This carefully constructed description of ideology is essential for the study of popular culture because it brings the focus of this chapter closer to another term; Propaganda.

⁸⁵ Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London. Pearson Longman, 1994. Print.

4. Propaganda - Cartoons as Propaganda

Like ‘culture’ and ‘ideology’, propaganda also is a term that offers many meanings and as elusive. Many scholars view it as an inherent thought and practice in mass culture. Propaganda means to circulate or promote certain ideas. In their book *Propaganda & Persuasion*, Gareth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell argues about the negative sense of the word.

‘In 1622, the Vatican established the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda fide*, meaning the sacred congregation for propagating the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. Because the propaganda of the Roman Catholic Church had as its intent spreading the faith to the New World, as well as opposing Protestantism, the word propaganda lost its neutrality, and subsequent usage has rendered the term pejorative.’

How much ever negativity the word ‘propaganda’ may have been used with, its status in the modern popular culture is beyond debates. Though mostly ‘political’ in nature, any idea intentionally instigated can be termed as propaganda. From its honorable usage of a papal dictate to a rather negative meaning in the years leading up to the First World War, propaganda has been at work in many nations and different continents. The American Revolution saw an extensive use of propagandist writings when leaders like John Adams and Thomas Paine engaged themselves in it. Benjamin Franklin’s cartoon titled ‘Join or Die’ that appeared in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754 can even be considered as the first political cartoon in America.

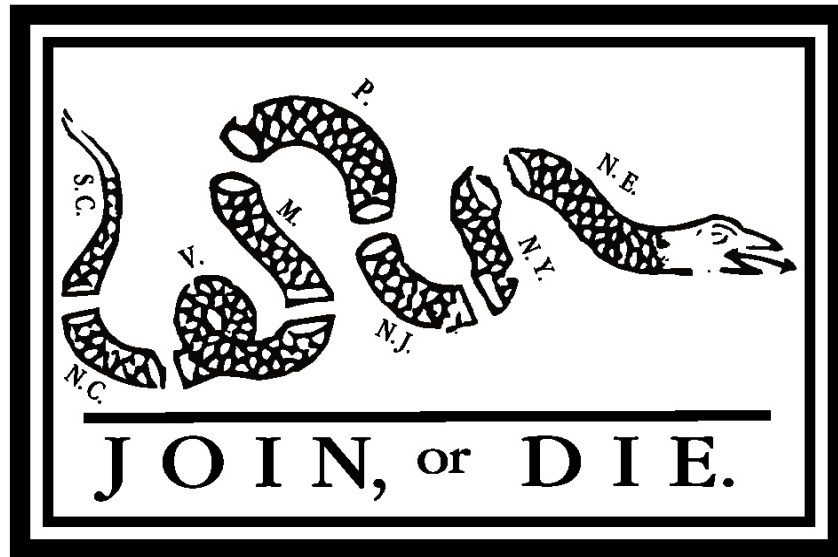


Figure 17
Join or Die
Benjamin Franklin, 1774

The First World War saw large scale use of propagandist cartoons and other popular means of shaping or distorting agenda. Right from the beginning when Germany and Britain competed to win American favor to the end when the peace treaty was signed, the First World War produced a bunch of cartoonists who would strengthen the art of political cartooning and make it popular for the decades to come. These carefully constructed propagandist images from the First World War period can be considered as the first calculated use of an image for the purpose of uniting people for a cause, in this case, war! One such image is of Lord Herbert Kitchener⁸⁶'s imposing

⁸⁶ Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener was a Field Marshal of the British Army who is famed for many imperial campaigns such as Battle of Omdurman which seized the control of Sudan and the Second Boer War. He is also

mustachioed face, commanding the English citizens to go to war. The image is titled 'Your Country Needs You'. From reminding the people of their 'duty to the nation', a change in tone can be seen in the later posters, to invoke them into war by appealing to their honor. The famous poster by Savile Lumley in 1915 depicted two young children asking their father about his time in the war. Posters often played on national sentiments and occasionally were reassuring the people of the idea of nation and Empire. The famous 1915 poster showed a Union Jack and a large bulldog, the British icon, with small bulldogs depicting Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa standing united against a common threat. The German cartoon titled 'The English Beast' published along with a propagandist pamphlet shows England as a monstrous squid, lying on a bed of money and choking the globe with its twisting tentacles.



Figure 18
Source: www.bl.uk

known for his strained relationship with Viceroy Curzon during his brief stint in India. He participated in the early stages of the First World War and was killed when the British ship HMS Hampshire sank off the coast of Scotland. His victories gained him a lot of recognition and following in Britain.

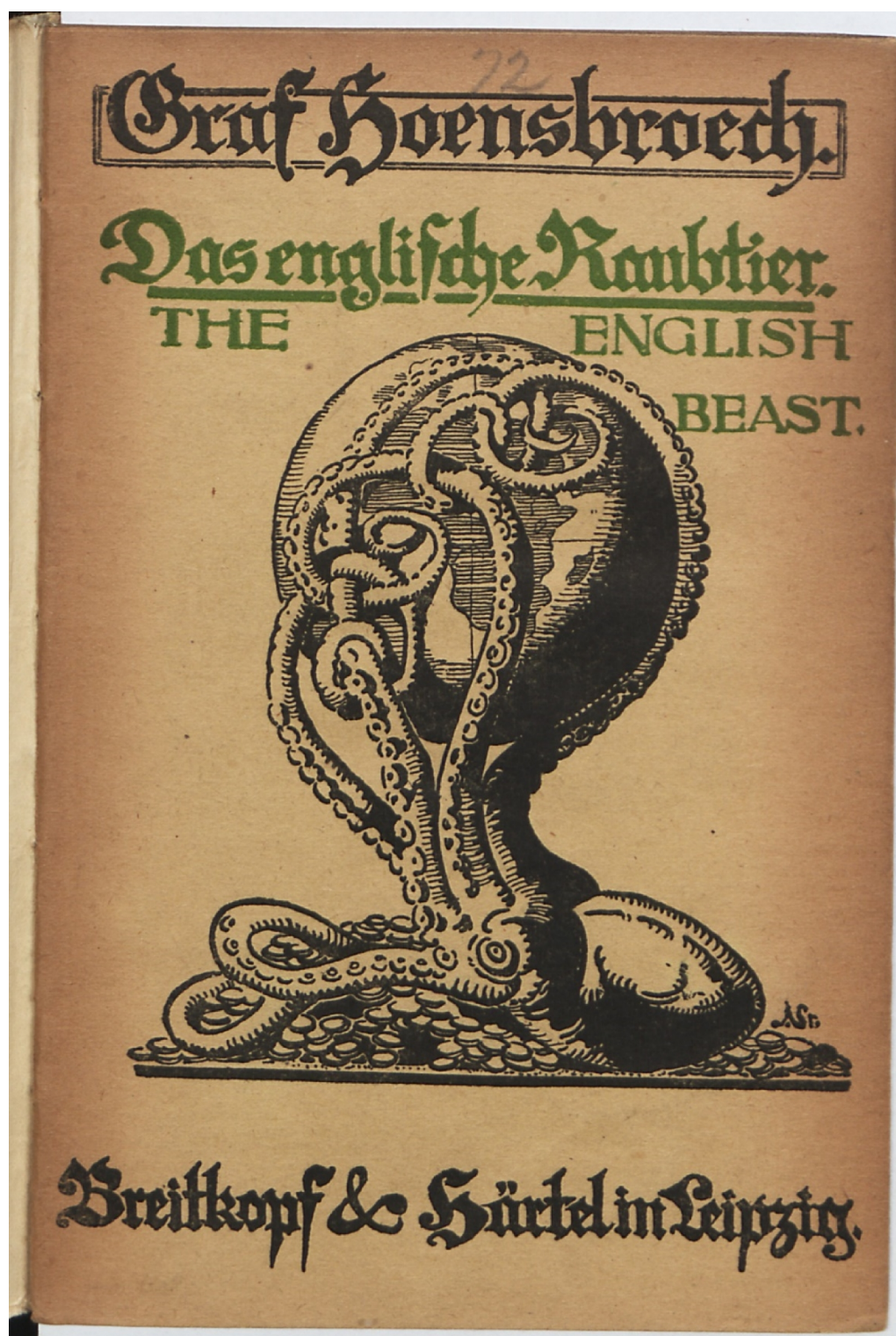


Figure 19
 Source: www.bl.uk



Figure 20
Source: www.bl.uk



Figure 21

Source: www.bl.uk


London Opinion, 4th September, 1914.

LONDON ONE PENNY. 5th SEPTEMBER, 1914.

OPINION

Vol. XLII. No. 546.
(Reg. G.P.O.)

This paper insures you for £1000. For conditions see page 374.



“YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS
YOU”

50 Photographs of YOU for a Shilling.

See Page 400.

Figure 22
Source: www.bl.uk

Cartoons of war initially came out either as a device for boosting the morale of the troops by ridiculing the enemy or sometimes as a light humor depicting the sufferings that soldiers faced in the trenches. The emergence of the 'Old Bill' cartoons can be a perfect example for war cartoons. Created by Bruce Bairnsfather⁸⁷, a soldier who was hospitalized during the second battle of Ypres in Belgium in 1915, 'Old Bill' is a British Private. Bairnsfather's cartoons, although not entirely political in nature, depicted life in the battlefronts and trenches in a light manner. Old Bill, the character he created, lampooned the British High command, juggled with grenades to keep the unit on its edges and stood in trenches filled with water. His cartoons rose to prominence after appearing in *The Bystander Magazine*⁸⁸. Several special editions titled *Bullets and Billets* and *Fragments from France*⁸⁹ were produced with more and more cartoons featuring the character Old Bill in funny situations. Bruce Bairnsfather continued to draw Old Bill cartoons until the Second World War when he was made the official cartoonist of the American forces in Europe.

⁸⁷ Bruce Bairnsfather is often hailed as 'the man who won the war'. In 2014, English Heritage organized a display of his cartoons at the Stonehenge Visitor Centre. The purpose of this exhibition was to get Bruce Bairnsfather, a recognition from the UK Parliament, while celebrating the 100 years of his iconic cartoon titled 'Better 'Ole'. This campaign was launched by Military historians Major Tonie and Valmai Holt who published the book 'The Biography of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather: In Search of the Better 'Ole.'

⁸⁸ The Bystander was established in 1903 by George Holt Thomas. It was a fairly popular magazine in London and published until 1940 when it merged with The Tatler. From then on, it published as Tatler & Bystander until 1968.

⁸⁹ Bairnsfather, Bruce. *Fragments from France*. London: Pen & Sword Military Books, 2009.



Figure 23
Source: www.telegraph.co.uk



The Things that Matter

Scene: Loos, during the September offensive.

Colonel Fitz-Shrapnel receives the following message from "G.H.Q.":-
 "Please let us know, as soon as possible, the number of tins of raspberry
 jam issued to you last Friday"

© Onslow's BNPS

Figure 24

Source: www.telegraph.co.uk

If Bruce Bairnsfather came with firsthand experience of the battlefield, cartoonists who stayed back home, like William Haselden⁹⁰ achieved tremendous popularity. Haselden's cartoons can be seen as acting along with the purpose of the time; maintaining morale. Satirizing, ridiculing and debunking the German threat was of utmost priority and William Haselden excelled at it by directly targeting none other than the German Kaiser Wilhelm II and his son the Crown Prince William, through the British newspaper the *Daily Mirror*. Captioned 'Sad Experiences of Big and Little Willie No. 1', these cartoons started off as comic episodes lampooning the Kaiser and his army. In 1915, they were collected and re-printed in book form and made Haselden to be seen as the father of British newspaper strip cartoon.

5. Fashioning of Caricaturing as a 'Social/Political' Act

Although caricaturing of a political nature and social commentary did exist even before the First World War, it can be undoubtedly said that the immediate years leading up to the war and political friction amongst the major European nation states helped in shaping the method of cartooning and its style to what we see today. But, to study the art of cartooning as a popular art, a close examination of its beginning is necessary. Isabel Simeral Johnson⁹¹ starts her article 'Cartoons' in an interesting way.

'Cartooning as we know it today is an outgrowth of caricature. Cartooning is not caricature evolved to a higher plane. Rather, a division seems to have occurred at some time in the seventeenth century, and thereafter two simultaneous developments are apparent – caricature, or the distorted representation of an

⁹⁰ William Haselden worked in the *Daily Mirror* until his retirement in 1940. For a brief period, he also contributed cartoons to the *Punch*. Although he started off as a political cartoonist, Haselden soon switched to light social commentary and is credited with predicting inventions such as camera phones and feminism.

⁹¹ Johnson, Isabel Simeral. "Cartoons." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 1 (1937): 21-44. Print.

individual, and cartooning, which is the more or less distorted representation of issues, situations and ideas.’

Isabel Simeral Johnson’s distinction between caricature and cartoon is significant when it comes to understanding political cartoons as part of popular culture. Tracing the origin of caricaturing can be a mammoth task because it could even date back to the cave drawings that ancient humans did using just a piece of rock or coal. Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan in their book *The Ungentlemanly Art* attempts to date back the oldest caricature to around 1360 B.C.E. According to them, the target of the caricature was Amenhotep IV⁹², the pharaoh husband of Queen Nofretete, who had alienated Egyptians by imposing monotheism on his kingdom.

The Burlesque Portraits that rose to style during the Renaissance period can be considered as a predecessor for caricatures. Leonardo da Vinci was one of the practitioners of this form. These paintings were made with the intention of making fun at someone by highlighting their physical characteristics. One of the most interesting names related to the growth of Renaissance caricature is that of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the Italian artist whose sculptures in marble is scattered all across Rome. Considered by many art historians as a worthy successor to Michelangelo and credited as the creator of the Baroque style of sculpture, Bernini also styled caricaturing in a fashion previously unknown. He mastered the art of spontaneous caricaturing and drew his subjects in a highly abbreviated way with comically distorted likeness.

⁹² Amenhotep IV is a crucial figure in the Egyptian History for it was he who abandoned Egyptian polytheism to introduce Atenism, a worship centered on Sun, or a form of Ra, the Egyptian Sun god. But traditional beliefs were restored after his death and a new dynasty was formed under Tutankhamun, the most famous of Egyptian rulers. Amenhotep IV is also known as Akhenaten and he was also interested in patronizing arts which included pictorial representations and pottery.



Figure 25
Caricatura de Cardinale
 Source: www.oddonkey.com

The 1590s saw the Italian painters Agostino and Annibale Carracci experimenting with somewhat comical images. The Carracci brothers were notable painters of the era and even established the ‘Accademia degli Incamminati’ at Bologna. Constance C. McPhee and Nadine Orenstein⁹³ acknowledge the contribution of the Carracci brothers in their book,

⁹³ McPhee, Constance., Orenstein, Nadine. *Infinite Jest Caricature and Satire from Leonardo to Levine*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011. Print.

‘Only a few Carracci caricature drawings survive, most of them attributed to Agostino, but descriptions from the period make it clear these works were made as a kind of comic relief to mock the progressive theories the brothers were teaching in their academy at Bologna. They were thought of as portraits demonstrating what one contemporary termed “perfect deformity”.

But caricaturing was yet to become popular. The Renaissance era caricaturing was largely made for the amusement of the high class mentors of the art or in the confined space of a studio. They never enjoyed any wide circulation or great popularity among the masses. In fact they were nothing more than a quick burst of artistic strokes though never lacking in intelligence and purpose. But the origin of the word ‘caricature’ can be traced back to those times as these amusing drawings were regarded in Italian as ‘ritratti caricati’ which meant ‘loaded’ or ‘charged portraits’.

England is where the art of caricaturing achieved tremendous success. In the latter half of 1700s, caricaturing started making its presence in the social scene and soon was taken up by many as a comic relief. Printed caricatures that were sold through individual shops had independent caricaturists working for them. The satirical images were most often custom made and sometimes, creations of a particular individual, marking a certain political or social incident. The development of printing might have played a significant role in the evolution of caricature. Evolving printing techniques made it easier to produce it in a larger scale hence easily available to the public. It is safe to assume that printing made cartoons more accessible and popular. With the new technology, satirical engravings could be done on wood with text and image included on a single plate. In Europe, this technique found great success in England especially through the works of William Hogarth and George Townshend, a field marshal and a member of the parliament.

Often credited as the father of English caricature, William Hogarth⁹⁴ was an observer of social life, who used humour to counter social injustice. Hogarth's engravings like 'A Harlot's Progress' (1731), 'Marriage a'la Mode (1743) and 'Industry and Idleness (1747) provided brilliant examples of social criticism. Marriage à-la-mode is a series of six paintings by William Hogarth. Done between 1743 and 1745, they depict 18th century English society in a satirizing way. Each painting is titled differently

⁹⁴ William Hogarth (10 November 1697 – 26 October 1764) has been credited with pioneering satirical art in England. After practising his art under Sir James Thornhill, the first knighted English-born artist, Hogarth re-established his drawing school and turned into painting portraits. But his social prints came just before this period when he enjoyed a certain amount of popularity in the middle class and as well as political circles.



Figure 26

Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_à_la_mode_\(Hogarth\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_à_la_mode_(Hogarth))

William Hazlitt⁹⁵ wrote of Hogarth,

‘His pictures are not imitations of still life, or mere transcripts of incidental scenes and customs; but powerful moral satires, exposing vice and folly in their most ludicrous points of view, and with a profound insight in to the weak sides of character and manners, in all their tendencies, combinations and contrasts. There is not a single picture of his containing a representation of merely natural or domestic scenery. His object is not so much “to hold the mirror up to nature” as “to show vice her own feature, scorn her image.” Folly is there, seen at the height – the moon is at the full – it is the very error of the time. There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities, a tilt and tournament of absurdities, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy, extravagant, and ostentatious! Yet he is as little a caricaturist as he is a painter of still life. Criticism has not done him justice though public opinion has. His works have received a sanction which it would be vain to dispute, in the universal delight and admiration with which they have been regarded, from their first appearance to the present moment.

Some persons object to the style of Hogarth’s pictures, or to the class to which they belong. First, Hogarth belongs to no class, or, if he belongs to any, it is to the same class as Fielding, Smollett, Vanburgh, and Moliere. Besides, the merit of his pictures does not depend on the nature of his subjects, but on the knowledge displayed on them, in the number of ideas, in the fund of observation, and amusement contained in them. Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity

⁹⁵ Hazlitt, William, Lytton Edward Bulwer., *Literary Remains of the Late William Hazlitt*. London: Saunders and Otley, 1836. Print.

of the subjects – yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character, - in the invention of incident, in wit and humour, in life and motion, in everlasting variety and originality, - they never have been, and probably never will be, surpassed. They stimulate the faculties as well as amuse them. “Other pictures we see, Hogarth’s we read!””

While William Hogarth popularized the art of caricature in England, he was also at the receiving end for his art. Charles Brooks, in his introduction to the book *Best Editorial Cartoons of the year 1984* writes,

‘⁹⁶Unfortunately, the political cartoon as an art form suffered neglect almost commensurate with its rising popularity. The art establishment has been habitually slow to recognize the cartoon in all its forms as “art”. Even Hogarth’s satirical works were regarded with horror by contemporary painters while enthusiastically received by the English people.’

While William Hogarth somewhat shaped English caricaturing, George Townshend, the aristocratic politician was attempting to do the same with a rather pointy political touch to it. It can be said that George Townshend is the one who added ‘political’ to the caricaturing. The political scene of Britain offered a great deal of opportunities for the newly emerged caricaturists to work on. David S. Alexander⁹⁷ says,

‘The satirists were regarded as a venal set, whose services could be bought by administration, or opposition, and satirical prints were looked upon with some

⁹⁶ Brooks, Charles Ed. *Best Editorial Cartoons of the Year*. Getna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1998. Web.

⁹⁷ Alexander, David. *Richard Newton and English Caricature in the 1790s*. Manchester and New York: The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester in association with Manchester University Press, 1998. Web.

distaste by the members of polite society, even though these images clearly had a certain role in public life and in attempts to influence opinion. These prints were generally etchings, which could be produced with some speed, often within days of an event.’

George Townshend was elected to the parliament in the years leading up to the Seven Years’ War⁹⁸ that once again divided the political landscape of Europe after the devastating Thirty Years’ War. Townshend’s differences with his commanding officer during the conflict, the Duke of Cumberland, paved way to some of his early attempts at lampooning. Though it drew a lot of flak from his fellow politicians and military officers, Townshend continued to make sketches that criticized the government and their policies. His involvement in the passing of the Militia Act of 1757⁹⁹ also contributed a lot in the form of pamphlets and caricatures.

Art scholar E. H. Gombrich¹⁰⁰ notes, ‘transforming caricature from a studio joke in to a social and political weapon to “kill” the powerful and pretentious by ridicule marked a conquest of a new dimension of freedom of the human mind.’

The golden age of British cartooning was dominated by three caricaturists of the era who clearly broke many traditions and took caricaturing to a new level. They still belonged to the era when caricaturists were mostly artists trained in the traditional way of painting. James Gillray (1757 – 1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1756 – 1827) and George Cruikshank (1792 – 1878) were prolific caricaturists of this ‘Golden Age’ which lasted between 1780 -1830. This era also saw a

⁹⁸ Seven Years War is a period between 1755 and 1764, in which every major power in the world except the Ottoman Empire descended into war and chaos. In Europe, England and France were pitted against each other. India had its Third Carnatic War and The United States witnessed The French and Indian War.

⁹⁹ The Militia Act of 1757 aimed at creating a militia to defend Britain during the Seven Years War.

¹⁰⁰ Gombrich, E.H. *The Story of Art*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2008. Web

lot of vicissitudes in England, changes that became subjects to numerous caricatures and plates; from the conclusion of the American Revolution to the beginning of the French Revolution, Britain went through a tumultuous phase that also saw the death of its the longest reigning Hanoverian Monarch, King George III¹⁰¹. The influence of the French Revolution sparked debates between British Jacobins¹⁰² and the loyalists about whether England should continue as a monarchy. England also found itself at war with France once again, with Napoleon Bonaparte at power in France and until 1815, England led an anti-French alliance. This era also saw sudden changes in the social landscape of Britain as Industrial Revolution began its footing in the world.

Caricaturists of the Eighteenth century England were either lithographers or publishers themselves or they had a liaison with one so that it was easier for them to reach the satire-loving crowd. James Gillray was associated with Mrs. Hanna Humphrey for the publication of his caricatures in London and he greatly influenced a generation of caricaturists not just from England but also from France and Germany, where interests in the art of caricature were spiking in those days. *London und Paris*, a German journal on satires from England and France, described James Gillray as the most famous caricaturist in Europe. Diana Donald¹⁰³ writes about the fascination Germans felt for the affairs in London and Paris.

“They assumed that the reader would have not only an extensive knowledge of literature, but also an unlimited appetite for news of the British political world,

¹⁰¹ George William Frederick, known as George III ruled from 25th October 1760 – 29th January 1820. His reign is one of the most tumultuous in the English history as it witnessed colonial domination over North America and India. It also witnessed the Seven Years War and the Napoleonic Wars. With the American Revolution, England lost its colony.

¹⁰² In England, in the present day context, Jacobin means radical, left-wing revolutionary politics. However, the original name came from the place in Paris where members of the revolutionary politics met; Rue Saint-Jacques.

¹⁰³ Donald, Diana. Gillray Observed – The Earliest Account of his Caricatures in London und Paris. London: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

and for the mass of ephemeral publications associated with it. Lacking a major metropolis which could focus and project their own dawning sense of national identity, German readers looked longingly to the capital cities, London and Paris, which seemed to epitomise all the political, economic and cultural advantages of the modern unitary state. In particular they marvelled at the constitutional protection, voting rights and free press apparently enjoyed by the people of Britain, where, it was frequently said, even commoners were well versed in public affairs: privileges described in idealistic terms by successive German visitors to England such as Karl Philipp Moritz, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg and Archenholz, and echoed by London und Paris's writers. Middle-class readers still confined by the system of rank, hierarchy and rigid protocol prevalent in the Holy Roman Empire must have been astonished by Gillray's brazen but licensed abuse of high-ranking figures in public life; and the relative press freedom which made this possible stood in contrast to the state censorship and self-imposed observance of decorum which was normal in Germany."

Gillray made English caricaturing extremely 'political' and took it to new levels of 'giving offense'. Amongst his subjects were not just Whigs and Tories but Lords and even members of the British Royal Family. He was equally critical of the French, widely lampooning the Revolution and the Royal family with equal fervor. Perhaps, Gillray's caricature titled *Monstrous Crows* can be touted as an example of his scathing attack. This caricature lampoons the Prince of Wales, The King and the Queen. The King, George III, is shown as an aristocratic old woman, as the royal family sits around a plate full of gold coins and eating them. Gillray portrayed this scene as it

happens in front of the door to the treasury, lampooning Georg III's handling of the financial situation of the country¹⁰⁴.



Figure 27

Source: www.cruikshankart.com

Another cartoon titled 'Plumb Pudding in Danger' depicts William Pitt Jr, the young Prime Minister of Britain, and Napoleon Bonaparte carving up the world. Clearly set in the backdrop of the Napoleonic wars, this cartoon is probably drawn when the French Emperor Bonaparte decided to have a temporary reconciliation with England in 1805.

¹⁰⁴ Some historians accuse George III of pompous lifestyle while the nation was burdened with financial crisis caused by several wars. Garrisoning and protecting large territories in America and the Wars with Spain and France in North America caused a great deal of financial crisis to the British Crown. Even greater than that was the loan given to the East India Company for maintaining forces to ensure a peaceful administering of India.



Figure 28

Source: www.cruikshankart.com

Gillray's anti-French Revolution stand made him a popular caricaturist for the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, a conservative British political periodical. George Stanley gives out a contemporary account of James Gillray's influence as a caricaturist in his introduction to *Historical and Descriptive Account of the Caricatures of James Gillray comprising a Political and Humorous History of the latter part of the Reign of George the Third*¹⁰⁵ by Thomas Wright and R. H. Evans.

‘Admirable as are many of these works, it is as a caricaturist that Gillray is best known. In this art, he has no rival; and the exquisite tact with which he seized upon points, both in politics and manners, most open to ridicule, is only equalled by the consummate skill and wit with which he satirized them. His earlier works

¹⁰⁵ Wright, Thomas. Evans, R. H. *Historical and Descriptive Account of the Caricatures of James Gillray Comprising a Political and Humorous History of the Later Part of the Reign of George the Third*. London. Henry G. Born, 1851.

are more carefully than spiritedly executed, and look like the productions of an engraver only. The earliest of his undoubted caricatures, though many others antecedent, have been with great reason attributed to him is dated 1779; it is probably a satire on the Irish Fortune-hunter, and is called “Paddy on Horseback,” the so called *horse* being a *bull*, on which he is riding with his face to the tail.’

George Cruikshank¹⁰⁶ came into the scene of British pictorial satire at around the same time or a bit after James Gillray did. Both men were pitted against each other during the political tensions of the time between the Tories and Whigs and the result was a fine number of caricatures that are preserved for the future generations. Born as the son of the popular illustrator and painter, Isaac Cruikshank, George Cruikshank started his career as caricaturist but later turned into book illustration as the flourishing English Novel offered more opportunities for his artistic talent. His early caricature style was almost indistinguishable with that of Gillray’s that the latter’s publisher Ms. Hannah Humphrey employed him to complete the projects that Gillray had left unfinished due to his illness.

Like James Gillray, Cruikshank also had found it a pleasure to target the Prince of Wales, later King George IV¹⁰⁷, for his political caricatures. Late 1820s saw a decline in the popularity of caricature as two of its most popular practitioners James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson died. Cruikshank took this opportunity to turn his talents towards the budding industry of book illustrations. His illustrations for the very popular book *German Popular Stories* made him a

¹⁰⁶ George Cruikshank (27 September 1792 – 1 February 1878) was praised as ‘Modern Hogarth’ during his lifetime. More than a caricaturist, Cruikshank was famous for the illustrations he did for the novels of Charles Dickens with whom he later had altercation regarding the authorship of *Oliver Twist*.

¹⁰⁷ George Augustus Frederick, later King George IV, reigned for ten years following George III’s death in 1820.

household name in England. This book was an English translation of the fairy tales by the Grimm brothers by Edgar Taylor¹⁰⁸.

Perhaps his collaboration with Charles Dickens was what made him the famous illustrator that he was. Cruikshank famously illustrated the *Sketches by Boz* (1836) *The Mudfog Papers* (1837) and *Oliver Twist* (1838) for him. But his claims on writing certain parts of *Oliver Twist* twisted up a controversy in 1871 and ended the relationship he had with Dickens.

Thomas Rowlandson¹⁰⁹ started off as an engraver and a portrait painter, after honing his skills in Paris, and soon entered the arena of caricaturing. He is famous for the numerous sketches he made of the English landscape he encountered through his journeys. Started in 1784, with fellow caricaturist Henry Wigstead¹¹⁰, these sketching tours took Rowlandson through the English countryside as he recorded budding cities and its thriving people. Thomas Rowlandson was more of a social caricaturist before he ventured into the larger area of ‘political’ cartooning. He did not specialize in scathing political attacks as opposed to his contemporary James Gillray, but focused more on bringing attention to the society’s follies and false virtues. His series ‘The Comfort of Baths’ published in 1798 satirised an average English society’s pretences and posh. Even though he was not interested in political caricaturing, Rowlandson ventured into it occasionally. His

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, Edgar. *German Popular Stories* – Kinder und Hausmarchen collected by M. M. Grimm from Oral Tradition. London: C, Baldwin, Newgate Street, 1823.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Rowlandson (13 July 1756 – 21 April 1827) enjoyed friendships with James Gillray and Henry William Bunbury, a lesser known caricaturist.

¹¹⁰ When George III became ill, both mentally and physically, the Prince of Wales, later George IV, hired Henry Wigstead to do satirical caricatures of the King and William Pitt Younger, whom the Prince believed was trying to curb his rights to regency. Recent researches threw light into the fact that the payments on this were made to Thomas Rowlandson not Henry Wigstead which proves that Rowlandson did the caricatures, not Wigstead

caricature titled ‘The Two Kings of Terror’ features Napoleon Bonaparte sitting face to face with Death after his defeat in the Battle of Leipzig¹¹¹ in 1813.



Figure 29

Source: <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/302585668688579424/>

After enjoying royal patronage in the 1780s, Rowlandson toured Europe and returned with seriously depleted finances and took up a job under Rudolph Ackermann¹¹², a lithographer in

¹¹¹ Considered as the largest battle in Europe prior to World War I, The Battle of Leipzig was fought from 16-19 October 1813 at Leipzig in Saxony. In this battle, the coalition armies of Russia, Prussia, Austria and Sweden led by Tsar Alexander I of Russia and Karl Philipp, Prince of Schwarzenberg, defeated the French emperor Napoleon I.

¹¹² Rudolph Ackermann was also an inventor who pioneered the technology to make paper and cloth waterproof. He also patented the Ackermann Steering Technology.

London, with whom Rowlandson helped making a series of colour-plate books titled *The Microcosm of London* between 1808 and 1811. 1830s saw minimal curbs in the publication of caricatures. King George IV who succeeded King George III to the throne of England was a favourite subject of caricaturists such as James Gillray and George Cruikshank. Taking a look at where these caricaturists have taken the physiognomy of their contemporary monarchs might throw some light into what might have forced King George IV into paying off caricaturists to stop portraying him. It is also to be noted that England was the only European country in which no visible censorship existed during the period. The editorial independence enjoyed by the caricaturists of the time can be seen in the large number of caricatures they have left behind.

When caricaturing went through a period of temporary decline in England, the demand for it surged in France with *La Caricature* started publication in 1830 by Charles Philipon¹¹³ and Gabriel Aubert upon relaxation in the French censorship laws. They specialised in targeting the French monarchy and the influential upper class which caused its shut down two years later. Its repeated targeting of French diplomacy and particularly, the King Louis-Philippe, made it a target of the government at least a dozen times before its final closure. Perhaps the most famous caricature in the era came from *La Caricature* as Charles Philipon drew the French monarch Louis-Philippe, comparing him to a pear. This cartoon enraged the monarchy so much so that the government passed a legislation to stop the future publications of *La Caricature* and Charles Philipon was jailed for a year. Isabel Simeral Johnson¹¹⁴ says,

¹¹³ Charles Philipon (19 April 1800 – 25 January 1861) edited and published two magazines in French, *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*, exclusively for satire and cartoons.

¹¹⁴ Johnson, Isabel Simeral. "Cartoons" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol 1, July 1937: 21-44. Web.

‘In *Charivari*, Philippon sketched Louis Philippe¹¹⁵ with a pear for a head. The device struck the popular fancy and week after week he and his confreres rang the changes of that theme. “La Poire” appeared on billboards, in lithograph, everywhere that public attention might wander. Nearly every drawing which came from this group used the pear as a motif.’

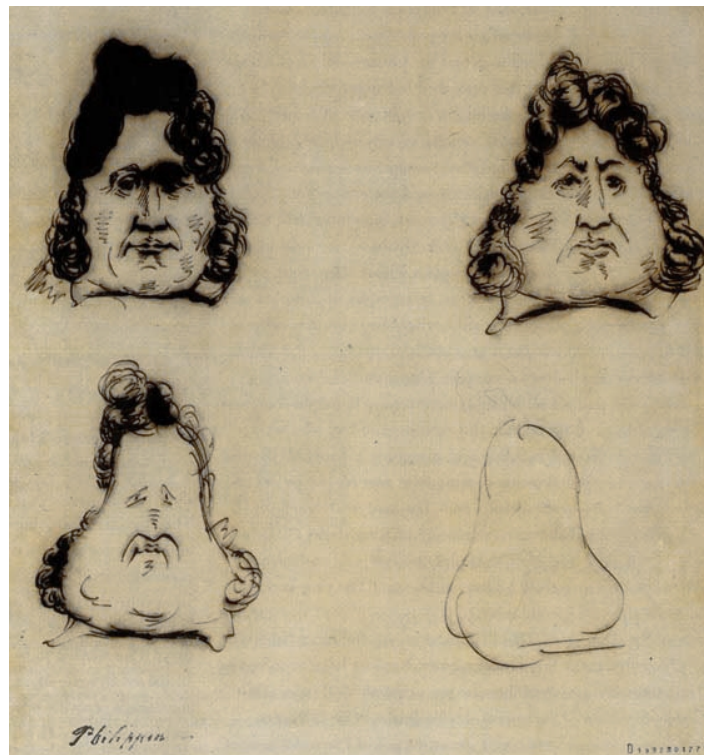


Figure 30

Source: <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/327073991659289222/>

The struggle between the publishers of *La Caricature* and the French Crown stirred off a controversy in Europe. Charles Philippon started publishing *Le Charivari* in 1832 but treaded carefully as it focused on social caricaturing more than the political issues of the time. Lachlan R.

¹¹⁵ Louis Philippe I was King of the French from 1830 to 1848 as the leader of the Orleanist Party.

Moyle¹¹⁶ writes in his thesis ‘Drawing Conclusions: An imagological survey of Britain and the British and Germany and the Germans and British Cartoons and Caricature, 1945-2000.’ ‘In Charles Philipon’s (1806-1882) successive ground-breaking cartoon publications *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*, the highest artistic qualities were combined with modern lithographic technology to achieve the widest public impact.’

6. The *Punch* of Political Cartooning

The trend did not take too much time to reach England where the art of caricaturing was falling in to a steady decline due to the increased demand for illustrated novels. King George IV had passed on the throne to a young Queen Victoria and England was slowly stepping into a long era of prosperity and colonial expansion. It is safe to say that when *Punch*, the first English journal dedicated to caricaturing, started publishing in 1841, the Victorian Age was already set in motion. *Punch* effectively stopped the era of lithograph cartoons in England as it relied on a more effective way of printing images and text together, using steel plate stereotyping. M. H. Spielmann¹¹⁷ in *The History of Punch* summarizes the importance of *Punch* as a publication that made a difference.

‘It is the pride of “PUNCH” that the “Cartoon of the Week”, in which for so many years he has regularly crystallised his opinion of the week’s chief idea, situation, or event, is truthfully representative of the best prevailing feeling of the nation, of its soundest common-sense, and of its most deliberate judgment—a judgement... seriously formed, albeit humorously set down and portrayed. It follows therefore, that the “PUNCH” cartoon is not to be considered merely as a

¹¹⁶ Moyle, Lachlan R. *Drawing Conclusion: An Imagological Survey of Britain and the British and Germany and the Germans in German and British Cartoons and Caricatures, 1945 – 2000*. University of Osnabrück. 2004. Web.

¹¹⁷ Spielmann, M H. *The History of Punch*. London: BiblioLife, 2009. Print.

comic or satirical comment on the main occurrence or situation of the week, but as contemporary history for the use and information of future generations cast into amusing form for the entertainment of the present. Current national opinion frequently becomes modified, and history may qualify – it may even radically alter – the view of the day; but the record of how public matters struck a people, an imperial people, at the instant of their happening, is surely not less interesting to the future student of history, of psychology, and of sociology, than the most official record of the world's progress.'

Punch's growth as a cultural establishment is similar to the growth of England as a colonial power. *Punch*, through its brand of new cartoonists, provided a new improved method of cartooning from where it was left by the generation before. The sharp lampooning of subjects by James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank was replaced by a softer yet more satirical approach. Young talent of the times like Richard Doyle¹¹⁸, John Leech¹¹⁹, John Tenniel¹²⁰ and Charles Keene in the formative years of *Punch* used satire with exceptional skill, making the magazine an extremely popular London topic. Not only did *Punch* form the British opinion it also recorded the popular sentiment of a people and a government that controlled one third of the planet's population.

Punch can also be attributed with the shaping of the term 'cartoon' in 1843 when the decision to decorate the House of Parliament with murals was made. The murals for the artwork was open

¹¹⁸ Other than making the first cover page of *Punch*, Richard Doyle is to be credited for giving *Punch* its masthead, something they used for over a century. He was also the uncle of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes Stories.

¹¹⁹ John Leech was also into wood engraving and lithography. He was instrumental in shaping the English attitude at the time of the much-discussed Crimean War.

¹²⁰ Sir John Tenniel (Knighted by Queen Victoria in 1893), is also known for his illustrations for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found there* (1871).

to public and was exhibited as unfinished artwork on the back of large sections of cardboards. The term ‘cartoon’ was quickly coined from the word *carton*, meaning cardboard in Italian. But, the term cartoon was not applied to all the drawings on Punch except the political caricature of the day. Hans Harder¹²¹ writes,

‘The *Punch* magazine is in itself quite a landmark in the history of newspaper and magazine publishing. In terms of the duration of its publication, it is certainly one of the top 100 newspapers and magazines worldwide. Apart from some interruptions during its last years, *Punch* was published over a period of more than 160 years (1841 – 2002). When limiting this list to satirical magazines, *Punch* easily qualifies as the longest-published journal to date. More importantly for the present context, the history of *Punch* is intrinsically connected with that of the British Empire; the empire, in a way, provided for its distribution beyond Great Britain.’

¹²¹ Harder, Hans, and Barbara Mittler, eds. *Asian Punches A Transcultural Affair*. London. Springer, 2013. Print.



Sportsman. "WHAT ON EARTH'S HAPPENED TO THE FAVOURITE?"
The Jonah Man. "I PUT SOME MONEY ON HIM."

Sportsman: "WHAT ON EARTH'S HAPPENED TO THE FAVOURITE?"

The Jonah Man: "I PUT SOME MONEY ON HIM."

Figure 31
 Source: Punch Magazine
 May 26, 1920



Figure 32
 Source: Punch
 December 8, 1920.

During its undisturbed publication for over 150 years, *Punch* witnessed two World Wars and Britain's demise as a colonial power. The influence of *Punch* spread all over the world as the British Empire took it wherever it went. The colonial imitation of *Punch* that started off from Cairo to Calcutta and extended even up to Tokyo. Although their subjects and ideologies differed from each other, they all followed the tested and tried art and format of *Punch*. Just as *Punch* obtained its inspiration from the French publication *La Charivari*, it carried out its destiny to become an

inspiration for more than a handful of colonial offspring during the British colonial period. Even R. K. Laxman¹²² cited the importance of *Punch* as an inspiration in India.

‘Meanwhile, London humorous weekly *Punch* arrived. Its comic drawings and jokes were almost our first exposure to this kind of art which distorted reality. The educated class of Indians who were in a minority and could read and write English became addicted to this magazine. *Punch* became a household name and a synonym for humor. Even those who couldn’t understand the captions could enjoy looking at the drawing of characters with exaggerated ears and elongated noses, at obese women at sea-side and bean-pole-like men. For the educated, humor in this visual form was an altogether new experience. They were so impressed with it that they came to believe that British humor was the best. Although indigenous jokes and anecdotes have thrived in many regions and various local languages and dialects, they unfortunately remained at the level of private jokes because of the language barriers, the paucity of printed matter, and above all the community’s indifference to the matter of laughter and humor.’

6 (A). The Progenies of Punch

The *Punch in Canada*¹²³ came out as early as 1849 but was a short living publication compared to *Tasmanian Punch*¹²⁴ (1866 – 1879). The most successful imitations of *Punch* came

¹²² Laxman, R. K. “Freedom to Cartoon, Freedom to Speak” *Daedalus*, Vol. 118 *Another India*. The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences. 1989. Web.

¹²³ Launched by John Henry Walker, an Irishman settled in Canada, *Punch in Canada* followed its London counterpart in style and content but failed to catch the attention of the public for long.

¹²⁴ Cleary, Michael Austin. *Tasmanian Punch*. Launceston: J. H. Wallis, 1877. Web.

from Australia and India; *Melbourne Punch*¹²⁵ (1855 – 1925) had a 70 year run but the *Sydney Punch* (1856 – 1857; 1864 – 1888) failed to enter the eventful twentieth century.

India, on the other hand, toyed with the idea of pictorial lampooning and at some point of time, had over seventy versions of *Punch* by the 1900s. *Delhi Sketch Book* started publishing in 1850 when *Punch* itself was suffering from teething issues in London. Even though the *Delhi Sketch Book* explicitly stated that they were ‘not arrogant enough to imitate London’s *Punch*’, they more or less followed the same principle of lampooning. Although the British public in India was longing for a comic relief in the form of newspaper, something similar to *Punch*, *Delhi Sketch Book* seems to have barely filled the gap. The frustration of the British public can be seen in The Calcutta Review¹²⁶ of 1856,

‘Here we have no *Times* nor anything like a *Times*. The topics which interest people in Bengal are not mooted in the North-West; public opinion is divided in the North West on matters which are regarded with profound indifference in the Punjab. Nay, the scope of common interest does not even so far as we have implied; each station has its own news - its own interests – its own jokes; a caricature which amuses all Delhi will be frequently unintelligible at Lahore. On this account, great allowance is to be made for the *Sketch Book*; but when all has been made, is it a publication which reflects credit on the Indian Press? We confess we think not; and this not from want of ability, either among the writers, or the draughtsmen who are to be found among the Indian community, and for all we know, on the staff of the

¹²⁵ Melbourne Punch was titled only Punch from 1900 onwards. It was started by Edgar Ray and Frederick Sinnett, a literary critic and journalist. It was acquired by The Melbourne Herald in 1925.

¹²⁶ “Indian Light Literature” *The Calcutta Review*. Vol XXVI, January – June 1856. Serampore: W.H. Allen & Co. Web.

Delhi Sketch Book, but from that unpardonable carelessness which is in this country the frequent source of literary failure. What we should unhesitatingly condemn at home, we are disposed to tolerate here. We resign ourselves to mediocrity and consequently prevent excellence. What else is it which induces the editor of the *Delhi Sketch Book* to continue week after week, and year after year, a slovenly style of mechanical execution which would disgrace a second or third rate provincial press? Those who have seen the *Delhi Sketch Book* upon a club table in England, will recollect their disgust at the thinness of the paper, the poverty of the type, the rudeness of the engraving, as contrasted with the comfortable and elaborate air of the English periodicals.’

Delhi Sketch Book continued its publication till the 1857 Revolts ruptured the colonial fabric of the sub-continent and reset the foreign rule from the East India Company to the British Crown. The 1857 Revolts had changed the attitude the British had for Indian press. In the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, Lord Charles Canning¹²⁷, the Governor General of India, is said to have been disillusioned by the sympathy the Indian Press was having for the mutineers¹²⁸.

‘But on this occasion the tone of the native press, as if by command, almost immediately changed. Possibly the supineness which its conductors witnessed made them believe that the fatal day for the English had arrived, just as their fathers had seen that day overtake the Mughuls, the Marathas and the Sikhs. Possibly the Bengali portion of the native press representing a highly educated people, unversed

¹²⁷ Known as the Viscount Canning, Charles John Canning was the Governor-General of India during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. For his successful dealing with the Rebellion, he was made the first Viceroy of India in 1858 when the crown took over the rule.

¹²⁸ Kaye, Sir John., Colonel Malleson. *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58*. Ed by Colonel Malleson. New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co. 1897. Print.

in arms, but alone capable of administering the country, should it fall under native domination, believed that their prospects would be greatly improved by the overthrow of the British power. Certainly many of them not only doubted our ultimate success, but openly expressed their doubts. But, whatever may have been the reason, it is undeniable that from the time of the arrival in Calcutta of the news of the Mirath outbreak the tone of the native press changed. It began to speak out against the Government, and to show very plainly that it sympathized with the movement which the revolvers had originated.

This alteration in the tone of the native press was brought to the notice of Lord Canning early in June, and he was urged then to interfere, by legislative action, with its freedom. Unlike his colleagues, however, Lord Canning had been brought up in a free country. He had been accustomed all his life to the freedom of the press. He had seen in England that the law of the land was sufficient to put down license. He knew that an honest government had no better friend than a free and outspoken public critic. To the solicitations of his councilors then he replied that “the remedy was worse than the disease”. But a few days later, the opinions of Lord Canning in this respect underwent a change. On the 13th of June he, for the first and the only time during the tenure of office, went down to the Legislative Council, and, declaring there that the incendiary tone of the native press had driven him to the conclusion at which he had reluctantly arrived, brought forward and carried a measure to place the native press under restrictions so galling that, compared to them, the restrictions on the press of France during the darkest days of the reign of Napoleon III were light and easy.’

The Gagging Act of 1858 was the result of this deliberation and temporarily, Indian Press was brought under control until a more rigid Vernacular Press Act¹²⁹ was passed in 1878. Proposed by Lord Lytton, the Vernacular Press Act was intended to prevent the vernacular press from overtly criticizing the British government and its policies. If the Gagging Act was passed to monitor the establishment of printing presses, the Vernacular Press Act gave the colonial authorities a free hand to censor or abolish publications that they thought were seditious in nature. Under this act, a District Magistrate or a Police Commissioner were awarded the power to call a publisher to ask them to furnish a bond or undertaking not to publish certain kind of material, to demand security and forfeit the money and presses when they think it fit. They were also empowered to confiscate the published material that they thought were objectionable.

What could have made The Vernacular Press Act a target of Indian agitation was the act that passed along with it; The Indian Arms Act. Passed to restrict the Indian access to firearms, this act sought to curb an uprising in the future. Indian opposition to the Second Anglo – Afghan War¹³⁰ (1878 – 1880) had become a worry to the colonial administration as they thought it would stir up another uprising like that of the Revolt of 1857. Both acts that passed in 1878 seemed largely like measures aimed at containing the triggering of another revolt. Although Indian

¹²⁹ Vernacular Press Act of 1878 effectively bettered the informal Gagging Act that was passed in 1858 following the Indian Rebellion of 1857. This new act was designed by Sir Alexander John Arbuthnot and Sir Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

¹³⁰ The Second Anglo-Afghan War was the second time British forces invaded Afghanistan to bring the Barkazai Dynasty to their knees. British fears of increasing Russian influence in Afghanistan and turning down of British diplomatic mission by the Amir of Afghanistan, Sher Ali Khan, were the immediate cause of the war. Though British Indian forces achieved a decisive victory, massive casualties were suffered by both sides which caused a widespread protest in India against the invasion.

intelligentsia of the time condemned the Anglo – Afghan War of 1878, they also saw through the hastily imposed laws by the colonial government. Sir Surendranath Banerjee¹³¹ writes,

‘In the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, when the British Empire in India was really exposed to serious danger, Lord Canning and his advisers did not think it necessary to disarm the Indian population. The Afghan War in Lord Lytton’s time (which, by the way, was a grievous blunder, the whole policy that dictated it having been undone) caused no serious excitement in India, none at any rate among the Hindu population, and little, or hardly any, among the Mohamedans, except perhaps on the frontiers. The Arms Act was unnecessary in the sense that it was not required as a measure of protection against internal revolt; it was mischievous because it made an irritating and invidious distinction between Europeans and Indians, a distinction that has recently been done away with. It inaugurated a policy of mistrust and suspicion, utterly undeserved and strongly resented by our people, and it imposed on us a badge of racial inferiority.’

Together, these two Legislative Acts invited widespread protest among the Indians that, Lord Ripon¹³² who succeeded Lord Lytton as the Viceroy of India repealed the Vernacular Press Act in 1881. However, the protests against the British policies including these Acts brought

¹³¹ Sir Surendranath Banerjee (10 November 1848 – 6 August 1925) founded the Indian National Association along with Anandamohan Bose on 26 July 1876. He was a popular leader of the time, known as the Indian Burke, for his writings and speeches. The widespread protests organized under his leadership against the Partition of Bengal in 1905, made the British revoke it in 1912. Banerjee later merged his organization with The Indian National Congress when the latter was founded in 1885. Apart from bringing up leaders such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Sarojini Naidu, he was also one of the most revered leaders during the Swadesi Movement.

¹³² George Frederick Samuel Robinson, widely known as Lord Ripon in India was the son of Prime Minister F. J. Robinson. He was appointed the Viceroy of India in 1880 by Prime Minister Gladstone and he kept the office till 1884. He tried to introduce the Ilbert Bill which was aimed at giving more legal rights to the Indians. This was disqualified by the British parliament. He was widely believed to be lenient towards the native Indians and is credited with starting forest conservation in India.

together several of the independent organizations that were working towards the advancement of the Indian people. The Indian National Association founded by Sir Surendranath Banerjea and Ananda Mohan Bose in 1876 was one of the strongest critiques of both the Vernacular Press Act and the Indian Arms Act. Although The Indian National Association's predecessor, British Indian Association¹³³ under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore supported the East India Company during the Revolts of 1857, its allegiances changed in the years followed and by incorporating various factions, it finally became the Reform Association and held its first annual conference in Calcutta as Bharat Sabha, a predecessor to the Indian National Congress.

Even though Indian efforts at having its own periodical for cartooning was lampooned at initially, the publication of the *Delhi Sketch Book* was in itself a start in the area. *Hindu Punch* started publishing from Calcutta in 1871 and was quite successful although it was the *Oudh Punch* (1877 – 1936) that lasted through the beginning of the twentieth century, forming a wider fan base in the sub-continent. Started by Urdu journalist and writer, Munshi Sajjad Husain in 1877, *Avadh Punch*'s timeline matched that of the early freedom movement in India and is perhaps the most famous of all the spin-offs that were inspired by *Punch*. Mushirul Hasan¹³⁴ points out the importance of *Avadh Punch*,

‘*Avadh Punch* was published from 16 January 1877 until its closure in 1936.

During this period, it published some of the greatest comic writers in Urdu literature. Like the London *Punch* (1841 – 2002), it became a household name, notable for dignity, geniality of satire and good taste. *Avadh Punch* stood clearly at

¹³³ The British Indian Association was formed in 1851 giving across a clear message that Indians have started coming together to achieve a consolidated Indian identity. Though started by bringing together two societies (The Landholder's Society and The Bengal British India Society), The British Indian Association was stronger in its set up and moderate in its views.

¹³⁴ Hasan, Mushirul. *Wit and Humour in Colonial North India*. New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2007. Print.

the head of the satire produced in the late 19th century. It laid the foundations of the Urdu short story and of literary journalism, and rendered the same service to the Urdu novel as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, the earliest periodicals founded by Richard Steele (1672 – 1729) and Joseph Addison (1672 – 1719) respectively, did for the English novel.’

Avadh Punch satirized contemporary socio-political issues and the British policies, often going to the extent of criticizing them, when issues such as the famines of 1800s and the partition of Bengal in 1905 occurred. But more importantly, *Avadh Punch* worked as a mechanism to form opinion and also to consolidate public favor regarding early Indian Independence movement.

Late 1800s also saw the publications of *Gujarati Punch* and *Hindi Punch*. The Marathi version of *Punch*, *Hindu Panca*, even lasted till 1909. If the London *Charivari*, inadvertently became the symbol of British sensibility, something that had to be imitated to achieve a similar sensibility, in the regions that Britain believed it had a ‘white man’s burden’ to carry out, the versions of *Punch* that appeared in the different provinces of Colonial India not only achieved a similar sensibility but became a tool to create a sense of nationalism. Not only that, they became the foundations upon which a rich artistic tradition of political lampooning was built upon in the coming years. Some of the first newspapers in India too have published political cartoons although not so regularly. *Bengal Hurkaru*, owned by English and the *Indian Gazette* have published some cartoons before the exclusive periodicals started coming out.

Early twentieth century saw more and more magazines starting up in the Indian subcontinent exclusively for political satire and cartooning. Renowned Tamil poet and freedom

fighter C. Subramania Bharati¹³⁵ started *Chitravali*, a monthly magazine, in 1910. An exclusive carrier of political caricatures, its anti-imperial stance made it a target of the British government and the subsequent press restrictions made the publication stop. This might have been one of the attempts by Subramania Bharati to solidify nationalistic sentiments in Tamil Nadu during the Swadeshi movement. A. R. Venkatachalapati¹³⁶ notices the contribution of C. Subramania Bharati,

‘The pioneer of cartoons in Tamil was C. Subramania Bharati (1882 – 1921) the great modern Tamil poet. This is a fact completely missed by Partha Mitter in his otherwise admirable and pioneering work. Even Abu Abraham in his brief introduction to *The Penguin Book of Indian Cartoons* (1988) does not show any awareness of Bharati’s work. Considering the fact that the cartoon has been seen as a powerful tool for airing opinion, ‘a unique visual which combines to make a strong commentary’, it is not at all surprising that Bharati should employ it during the Swadeshi period (1906 – 11), which was the first time that the Indian nationalist movement showed signs of a mass character.’

Gaganendranath Tagore, nephew of Nobel Prize winner and poet Rabindranath Tagore, was one of the early political cartoonists who filled the gap between the Punch progenies and independent India’s grant entry in to the world of political cartooning with the likes of K. Shankar Pillai and R. K. Laxman. Due to his exceptional skill in lampooning, he has even been compared

¹³⁵ Chinnaswami Subramania Bharati, also popularly known as ‘Mahakavi Bharathi’, is considered a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry.

¹³⁶ Venkatachalapathy, A. R. *In Those Days There Was No Coffee; Writings in Cultural History*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006. Print.

to Daumier¹³⁷ by Nirad C. Chaudhuri¹³⁸. Though counted amongst the earliest modernist painters of India, Gaganendranath Tagore published some of his cartoons in the 1910s and 1920s in *The Modern Review*¹³⁹ before he started experimenting with cubism in his painting.



East and West. Indian Lady Dancing with an European Gentleman (Caricature), c. 1915/16

Figure 33

Source: <http://www.artnewsnviews.com/>

¹³⁷ Honoré Daumier was a French sculptor, painter and caricaturist. Though he was later known for his paintings, Daumier, during his time was famous for the numerous social caricatures he did. Daumier was a staff cartoonist for Charles Philippon's *La Caricature*. He was imprisoned for portraying King Louis as a Gargantua, leading to the closure of *La Caricature*.

¹³⁸ Chaudhuri, Nirad C. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968. Print.

¹³⁹ *Modern Review* was a leading magazine for the Indian intelligentsia that started publishing from Calcutta in 1907.

7. Modern Indian Political Cartooning

The real awakening in Indian political cartooning happened with the entry of K. Shankar Pillai¹⁴⁰, who is often touted as the father of political cartooning in India. Apart from pioneering the craft and steering it to a position of dignity almost single-handedly, Shankar can also be credited with priming a generation of political cartoonists who lampooned in their own distinct, thought-provoking manner for decades to come. The starting of *Shankar's Weekly* in 1948, coincided with that of a new nation as India was toddling under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, a friend and a frequent target of Shankar. After publishing a few cartoons in *The Free Press Journal*¹⁴¹ and *Bombay Chronicle*, Shankar joined *The Hindustan Times* in 1932. His spell in *The Hindustan Times* coincided with the Indian struggle for independence and the Second World War, both of which supplied him with ample subjects. In the pre-independence India, Shankar enjoyed remarkable freedom when it came to caricaturing. A. S. Iyengar¹⁴² writes,

‘In the beginning, say about fifteen years ago, Indian politicians resented cartoons as published in the *Hindustan Times* whereas, the Britishers, whether in the I.C.S or in any other walk of life, invariably enjoyed them even though several of the pictures were at their expense. However, every aspect of development must

¹⁴⁰ Kesava Shakankara Pillai (31 July 1902 – 26 December 1989) closed down his famous *Shankar's Weekly* in 1975 and since then, concentrated on his plans for making the children of the world happy. He started the International Children's Competition in 1949 and the Children's Book Trust in 1957.

¹⁴¹ Started in 1930 by Swaminathan Sadanand, *The Free Press Journal* was a supporter of the Indian National Movement. Other than Shankar, it had employed R. K. Laxman and Bal Thackeray as its cartoonists later.

¹⁴² Iyengar, A. S. *Role of Press and Indian Freedom Struggle: All Through the Gandhian Era*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2001. Print.

be allowed time in order that the basic ideas be accepted as essential. The much criticized Finance Member of the Government of India, Sir James Grigg, was the one person who enjoyed Shankar's Cartoons most, among all Executive Councillors, especially of the expanded Council variety, were very much chastened by the cartoonists. The more Lord Linlithgow addressed them as "patriotic" and as belonging to a "national government", the greater was the ridicule poured by the cartoonist over them. The cartoonist always enjoys the liberty of exaggerating the truth with his brush in order to emphasize it and he is therefore able to tickle the mind of the public even more than the journalist or the Special Correspondent. And whoever practices his art with a certain perception of suggestiveness and criticism ranks among the highest in journalism, for his is as much a mission as a profession.'

Shankar did to Indian cartooning what David Low did to English cartooning. Not only did he gave cartooning a new vigour, Shankar revitalized the importance of cartoon in a new era that underlined the importance of Freedom of Speech. The British were gone and a new India offered possibilities and opportunities to any observant cartoonist to explore and criticize. *Shankar's Weekly* worked like a well-oiled satire machine through the initial years of Independent India until 1975. Although the Indian public was familiarized to cartoons before Shankar, as someone who had the opportunity to observe the freedom movement at its zenith and the Second World War, Shankar had the unique fortune to be experienced at his craft before he became the satirical pictorial narrator of an independent India. Having his own magazine relieved Shankar from 'editorial differences', over which he quit from *The Hindustan Times* in 1946. Shankar satirized India's independence, 'The situation has changed; it is entirely Indian now. Instead of the English

saheb we have the Indian saheb.” After a brief stint in London where he honed his craft, Shankar was ready to take on a new India with its innumerable follies that waited to be critiqued.

‘Within a short time of publication of the Weekly, Shankar was recognised as the greatest cartoonist India had ever produced, not only by politicians, leaders, and intellectuals, but even by the layman, who would eagerly wait, week after week, for the new issue of the Weekly. Shankar’s Weekly soon became an institution.’

Right from the cover page cartoon, to the editorial “Free Thinking”, the pen-portrait of the “Man of the Week”, to the centre spread cartoons “March of Time”, through the humorous and satirical articles on political and social situations in the country, the Weekly provided a variety of wit and humour, to the millions of its fans, who laughed or smiled silently, as they flipped through the pages. There were the “Mota Chotaji and the Chota Motaji”. “Bada Saheb” and the “Mem Sahib” were two particular characters who always drew the attention of the readers. They represented the sophisticated, false and artificial snobs of society, who were in abundance then, and one can find even today. Shankar gave these characters the unique face of a common, ordinary donkey and, according to him, “These two characters are the composite reflection of New Delhi’s society.” But there was no malice in Shankar’s mind. “It could be you, it could be me, it could be my wife,” he said, as a naughty little smile flashed across his face while he talked about his Weekly.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Shankar, Alaka. *Shankar. New Delhi: Children’s Book Trust, 1984. Print.*

Shankar's Weekly came to an abrupt closure when Indira Gandhi declared the infamous Emergency in 1975, which curtailed all civil liberties. Disillusioned by the collapse of the democratic order around him, Shankar wrote in his final editorial¹⁴⁴,

‘In our first editorial we made the point that our function was to make our readers laugh – at the world, at pompous leaders, at humbug, at foibles, at ourselves. But, what are the people who have a developed sense of humour? It is a people with certain civilised norms of behaviour, where there is tolerance and a dash of compassion.

Dictatorships cannot afford laughter because people may laugh at the dictator and that wouldn't do. In all the years of Hitler, there never was a good comedy, not a good cartoon, not a parody, or a spoof. From this point, the world and sadly enough India have become grimmer.’

Shankar concludes the editorial by calling his *Weekly* ‘an incurable optimist’ as he hoped that ‘the world will become a happier and more relaxed place.’ Though the prediction came true, *Shankar's Weekly* never re-started its purpose. Abu Abraham, R. K. Laxman, Kutty and O. V. Vijayan have all described in their writings how Indian cartooning went through the dark tunnels of the Emergency.

P. K. S. Kutty¹⁴⁵ was a prodigy brought to the national scene by none other than Shankar himself. As a cartoonist, Kutty has the credit of working in more news establishments than any during his time. After entering the Indian cartooning arena in 1941 as the staff cartoonist for the

¹⁴⁴ Shankar's *Weekly* published its last issue on 31 August 1975.

¹⁴⁵ Puthukkody Kottuthody Sankaran Kutty Nair was shortened by his mentor Shankar to ‘Kutty’ as he was to be known later. Kutty was first appointed in Jawaharlal Nehru's newspaper *National Herald* but unfortunately, it was closed down by the British when the Quit India Movement started.

National Herald, Kutty switched to the *Madras War Review*¹⁴⁶ in 1943 upon the former's closure and later, to *Free Press Journal* in 1946. From then to 1997 he more or less regularly contributed to *National Call*, *Amar Bharat* and *Shankar's Weekly*. In his autobiography¹⁴⁷, he draws the picture of the Indian cartooning scene in the pre-independent era.

‘When in 1941, I joined the *National Herald* there were only nine political cartoonists operating in India including what is now Pakistan.

Of course, Shankar the pioneer and the giant in the profession, was there in *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi. Lahore had two cartoonists – both Varmas. They were cousins, I believe. One was Vikram Varma, the other was Bhuvan Varma. One was in the British-owned *The Civil and Military Gazette*. The other was in the Indian owned *Tribune*. In Lucknow, the British-owned *The Pioneer* had Ahmed as cartoonist and *The National Herald* had me as cartoonist. Calcutta had P C Lahiri, who signed his cartoons as PCL, as cartoonist in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Madras had Vasu in *The Indian Express*, and Mali as freelancer. In Bombay Mr Leyden, chief of the Walter Thomson advertising agency, was drawing cartoons for the British-owned *Times of India*. He used to sign his cartoons as Denley, a reversal of the letters of his name. He was an Englishman. This was the overall picture. Indian language publications did not carry any cartoons.’

Kutty's cartoons were more visually represented than his contemporaries. His minimal usage of words and attempts to convey the message largely through the images made him one of the most

¹⁴⁶ Madras War Review was a weekly bulletin published from Madras, present day Chennai, during the Second World War.

¹⁴⁷ Kutty, P.K.S. *Years of Laughter: Reminiscences of a Cartoonist*. Kolkata: Thema, 2009. Print.

prolific cartoonists of the era. That could also be the reason why he continued cartooning for the Anand Bazaar group even after their English daily, *The Hindustan Standard*, closed down. Kutty's cartoons not only became popular in the leading English dailies but in West Bengal as well, through the translation of the minimal words that were inserted in the image.

R. K. Laxman had started off as a staff cartoonist in *Free Press Journal* in 1946 after his early cartoons were published in magazines such as *Blitz*, *Swarajya* and a local Kannada satirical magazine called *Koravanji*¹⁴⁸. He cemented his place in *The Times of India* in 1947 and his tryst with Indian political and social scene began then continuing for the next fifty years or so. In 1951, he introduced the character 'Common Man' through his daily comic strip 'You Said It'. Laxman spoke of the famous character later, 'He's been with me throughout my career. I didn't find him. He found me... I would say he symbolises the mute millions of India, or perhaps the whole world, a silent spectator of marching time.'

Clad in a check coat and a dhoti which signifies the simplicity of a common Indian, the Common Man is a silent part of the comic strip that satirized the day to day social and political affairs of a country coming to terms with the harsh realities that awaited through the long struggle that was independence. Unlike Shankar's and Kutty's, Laxman's common man hit a chord with the average Indian trying to deal with condemnable political veracities and life's ever-changing rules. Common man appeared alongside Khadi-clad and saffron-clad Netas alike where politics took turns, in a laboratory as a candidate to go on a Moon mission, on the streets where common folk discussed price rises, in the middle-class homes where uncommon decisions were made, in

¹⁴⁸ Koravanji was a Kannada humour magazine edited and published by Dr. R. Shivakumar, who was inspired by the British magazine, Punch. The first issue of the magazine appeared on January 14, 1942. It is said that the first logo of the magazine was designed by R. K. Laxman.

the corridors of secretarial power where the *Babus* debated away precious time, often wearing his quintessential puzzled look, digesting or not digesting the fact that he was witnessing the sad, sometimes funny, reality of contemporary times. English speaking, middle-class India responded to Common Man in an overwhelming manner. Laxman's Common Man walked through thirteen governments headed by thirteen Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh and nine Presidents. Common man witnessed and satirized everything from the linguistic re-organization of the states to the 123 Agreement on civil nuclear technology between the USA and India. Laxman explains how he zeroed in on a character that carried a pan-Indian aura¹⁴⁹.

‘It is easy for the cartoonist in the West, where dress and appearance are by and large standardized. Not so in India. At one end of the subcontinent are those for whom a turban is almost part of their anatomy, and at the other end of the nation in the extreme south are those with such sparse clothing that they seem clothed only in anatomy! Again, there is no way of classifying an individual by the dress he wears. An industrialist, say a textile tycoon, may be dressed exactly like a retail fruit seller. Or again, a scholar in Sanskrit, English, Greek, and Latin might look like a humble priest of an impoverished old temple. So how was I to discover and portray the common denomination in this medley of character, dress, appearance, habit?

In the early days, I used to cram as many figures as I could within the available time, with all sorts of clothing and looks to represent the masses. Gradually, I narrowed my efforts down to a few figures. These my readers accepted as

¹⁴⁹ Laxman, R. K. “Freedom to Cartoon, Freedom to Speak” *Daedalus*, Vol. 118 *Another India*. The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences. 1989. Web.

representing the whole of India. Finally, I succeeded in reducing my symbol to one man. He now represents the millions with his striped coat, bald head with a wisp of white hair, and bristling moustache supporting a bulbous nose, which supports an oversized pair of spectacles. He has a permanent look of bewilderment, so suitable for our environment. He is ubiquitous.’

Thus, one of the most iconic characters ever created in the Indian political cartoon scene walked into the minds of a multitude of Indians, inspiring thoughts and jestingly, making things a bit clearer.

When Abu Abraham, or Attupurathu Mathew Abraham as he was known then, entered the Indian cartooning scene in 1946 through *The Bombay Chronicle* and later *Blitz*, the Indian political scene was the most turbulent in the world with independence as its immediate demand. When he moved to *Shankar's Weekly* in 1951, Abu had already made a name. In 1953, he moved to London, accepting the invitation of Fred Joss and started cartooning for *The Punch* and the *Daily Sketch*. Abraham was poached by David Astor¹⁵⁰ for *The Observer* as its first ever staff cartoonist in 1956. He started signing his name as ‘Abu’ while working for *The Observer* so that he would not be confused as a Jew for his stand on the Middle-East, a rising issue of the time.

‘¹⁵¹My first cartoon was produced in the first week of April, 1956. I had signed it Abraham as I had done for about ten years. .. David Astor, after approving the cartoon said: Can't you find a pseudonym? He explained, saying that any Abraham in Europe would be taken as a Jew and all my cartoons would take on a

¹⁵⁰ David Astor was the long term editor of the British newspaper, *The Observer*, published on Sundays. First published in 1791, it is the world's oldest Sunday newspaper.

¹⁵¹ Quraishi, Humra. “Cartoonist Who Provokes You to Think”. *The Sunday Tribune* Nov 2. 2003. Web.

slant for no reason, and I wasn't even Jewish. What was more, the Middle-East was beginning to boil at that time with Nasser dominating the scene. I thought up the pseudonym, Abu "Perfect," Astor said, suitably mysterious. Thus was I re-christened on that morning, Friday, April 6, 1956.'

Abu Abraham is noted for his strong criticism of the nuclear policy of contemporary world governments and the Vietnam War. His cartoons on the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy and later, Lyndon B. Johnson, criticizing them for their foreign policies and often lampooning the growing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union somewhat helped in forming the contemporary British public opinion on those issues.

In 1969, Abu Abraham started working for *The Indian Express*, and continued there till 1981. His cartoons on Emergency, one of the darkest hours in the history of India, are what made him important in the Indian political cartooning scene. Despite being close to Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister under whom which India experienced the horrors of press censorship and curtailing of civil liberties, Abu Abraham was scathing in his attacks of her through his cartoons, some of which was published only after the Emergency was lifted.

'It affected me very badly. If this is the kind of politics we have, what is the point in drawing cartoons? Cartoons are supposed to create tolerance, some kind of moderation. Humour always softens the atmosphere. Of course, there are vicious cartoons also. But generally a touch of humour is supposed to give a sense of proportion to politics.'

O. V. Vijayan¹⁵² is perhaps the least recognised of the cartoonists of the time. Although not a cartoonists in the conventional sense of the form, O. V. Vijayan's craft imbibed in dark humour could perhaps be considered as a shocking sociological narrative of the contemporary times. Beginning his career as a professional cartoonist in *Shankar's Weekly* in 1958, Vijayan soon left it to join *Patriot* and later, *The Hindu* and *The Statesman*. Because of his unconventional practice of the art, Vijayan is perhaps the less studied of all the cartoonists from the era that defined Indian cartooning. As opposed to the careful criticism of Laxman or the political correctness of Abu Abraham, Vijayan employed a certain tragic sense; an appeal to the humanity is present in most of his cartoons veiled by pointed sarcasm aimed at those at the helm of things. In Vijayan, one can see the disillusioned writer careless with his thoughts yet exceptionally careful in his strokes. Primarily a writer who re-invented Malayalam fiction in his own way, O. V. Vijayan's career as a cartoonist began, and ended too, abruptly. Ashis Nandy¹⁵³ in his forward to O. V. Vijayan's book *A Cartoonist Remembers*¹⁵⁴ wrote,

‘Vijayan's forte is not tragedy; it is sarcasm – bitter, venomous sarcasm. His drawings always have sharply defined targets and they are never safely institutional, even when he targets the military-industrial complex, capitalism, western imperialism, international terrorism, and nearer home, Third World despotism, the new-look Congress party of Indira Gandhi, or India's most abiding institutions – structured, formalised hypocrisy and corruption. His villains are

¹⁵² O V Vijayan (2 July 1930 – 30 March 2005), was more famous as a Malayalam writer than as a cartoonist. Though he continued occasional cartooning, Vijayan is famous for his path breaking 1969 novel *Khasakkinte Itihaasam* (The Legends of Khasak) and *Gurusagaram* (The Infinity of Grace) which fetched him a Kerala Sahitya Academy Award and a Kendra Sahitya Academy Award.

¹⁵³ Ashis Nandy is an Indian political and social theorist and critic. A winner of the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize in 2007, Nandy's stance on modernity, Hindutva, nuclearism and utopia are debated thoroughly, if not controversially.

¹⁵⁴ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2002. Print.

usually real life persons and clearly identifiable. Yet, there is something unidentifiable in them that makes the viewers feel complicit with the villainy.'

Vijayan's understanding of himself as a Third World Cartoonist burdens him with a responsibility to point out the flaws and criticize more than the lampooning that his peers indulged in. Unlike Shankar, Vijayan was a pessimist who saw the end of Nehruvian era and the enthusiastically articulated idea of democracy withering away into a dynastic rule and culminating in to The Emergency. Like Laxman, Vijayan created a symbol that represented his idea of India; The Father and Child features in many of Vijayan's cartoons, sometimes passing remarks on hapless situations, often at the receiving end of a policy gone wrong or bearing witness to a pointless government act... Most often, they are just victims of the Indian reality. So, in a cartoon when the politicians descend from the steps of the Indian Parliament, looking smug, we see the Father and Child on the side, carrying begging bowls. The Child remarks, 'WE are the scandal they ought to be debating, dad. But there seems to be little choice.' This cruel lampooning of the poor state of affairs in a Parliamentary democratic system that affords choice for everything but the stark realities of Indian poverty is Vijayan's trademark.

Shankar's Weekly closed down in the advent of The Emergency. R. K. Laxman, P. K. S. Kutty and Abu Abraham continued to draw cartoons during the Emergency, sometimes with extreme caution and at other times, with careful selection of subjects. O. V. Vijayan's cartoons on The Emergency were published much later, like Abu Abraham's. It is my intention to focus on the cartoons of three cartoonists - Shankar, R. K. Laxman and O. V. Vijayan – to analyse the history of India from the gaining of Independence till the economic liberalisation, through the brief, yet controversial, period of The Emergency as translated by cartoons of these three cartoonists. I shall decode and interpret these texts with help of other texts on the history of post-

colonial India. In this thesis mine is a humble effort to retranslate the political contexts embedded in cartoons along with their interpretations and comments about the politics in post-independence India. I will be on bringing out a history of the political evolution of a nation through cartoons as translation of the time and as reflections of collective memory.

Chapter Three

Political Cartoons as Translation; India through Political Cartoons

What makes cartoons offensive? How did a mere art form, aimed at poking fun or instigating thought, seen as a tool of offence? Is it because of the ‘pre-oedipal access to the observer’s emotions¹⁵⁵, as Victor Navasky would call it? Or, is it simply because an image with limited or no argument could carry a message faster and deeper than anything? If it was the strong aniconism of Islam that led its followers to protest rather violently against cartoon depictions of Prophet Muhammad, what must have been the cause to the numerous other violations against cartoonists all over the world? When it comes to being intimidated by the government or other possible targets of cartoons, the case of Kanika Mishra¹⁵⁶ protected under the rules of democracy is not so different from that of Akram Raslan¹⁵⁷, tortured and killed by the autocratic regime in Syria. It is evident that cartoons, as a reductionist mode of dissent, is feared by those in power. Is it just a form of dissent or is it all about being plain offensive? If so, how does ‘offence’ work? It is interesting to see how the levels of offensiveness changes depending on the subject of the

¹⁵⁵ S. Navasky, Victor. *The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and Their Enduring Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. Print.

¹⁵⁶ Kanika Mishra is a Mumbai based cartoonist and web developer whose cartoons on the self-styled Godman Asharam Bapu became a target of his supporters’ ire. She is famous for creating a ‘common woman’ character as opposed to R. K. Laxman’s iconic cartoon character The Common Man. The recent attacks and threats against the cartoons on Asharam Bapu and his son, who were both arrested for sexually abusing children of devotees, have acquired a great deal of fan following online.

¹⁵⁷ Akram Raslan was a Syrian political cartoonist, whose scathing attack of the totalitarian regime of Bashar Al-Assad, brought him international fame and recognition. A winner of the Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning, Akram Raslan was incarcerated by the Syrian government along with many other artists, poets and activists and was later tortured and murdered. His story remains a great example of Syrian dissidence to the government of Bashar Al-Assad.

cartoon. There are several cartoonists who have taken offence as a business. According to the famous British cartoonist Martin Rowson¹⁵⁸, being offensive is the business of cartoonists.

‘¹⁵⁹It’s my job, as a satirical cartoonist, to give offence. But I need immediately to qualify that statement. I see my job as giving targeted offence, because satire, to borrow H. L. Mencken’s definition of journalism, is about comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. In other words, if I draw rude pictures of people less powerful than myself, what I do ceases to be satire, and creeps into one of the wider spheres of aggressive, bullying humour and into areas I consider offensive.

But, are cartoons merely a tool to offend? Even though the pioneers of cartooning in its formative stage like James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson indeed took ‘offense’ to a new level, the nature of cartoons had changed in its later years, to a milder manner, more as a social and political critique of the contemporary times. With the establishment of *Punch*, and its progenies in the rest of the world, cartooning and its nature readjusted into its new role as a critique. In democracies like the United States of America and most of the Western world, cartooning in the post-World War II era shifted its focus from mild critique to a sharper, meaner offence. On the other hand, in India, Shankar, and later his disciples, took to cartooning as a form of dissent. If Shankar started off as a critique of the Imperial rule, he stopped cartooning when threatened by the Emergency and its draconian rules. Though there were many attempts from the part of the political leaders to express their displeasure at cartoons that portrayed them as a set of cunning, opportunistic, power-mongers, cartooning thrived in the independent India despite the several

¹⁵⁸ Characterising his work as visual journalism, Martin Rowson works as a political satirist and writer. He has graphically adapted *The Waste Land* and *Tristram Shandy*.

¹⁵⁹ Rowson, Martin. *Giving Offence*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009. Print.

roadblocks it faced. Morarji Desai, as the Chief Minister of Bombay, had attempted to muzzle cartoons.

‘Morarji Desai¹⁶⁰ also banned horse racing and crossword puzzles. A cartoon I drew on this theme annoyed him so much that he held a full cabinet meeting to muzzle me, and ban making the government, politicians and ministers object of ridicule in the name of humour. He was told there was no way of stopping the cartoons since our Constitution fully protected the freedom of expression.’¹⁶¹

Indian cartooning scene differs a lot from its Western contemporaries. If Shankar and the cartoonists belonging to his School gave Indian political cartooning a certain nuance, cartoonists like R. K. Laxman and Mario Miranda¹⁶² gave it a common feel, an easy to understand, plain meaning. Together, they were able to create a parallel history of India as a post-colony, caricaturing the ebbs and flows of its social and political graph, chronicling its growth as a single entity. The first decade of Indian Independence had Shankar as the leading figure of Indian cartooning with the launch of his *Shankar's Weekly* coinciding with India's independence. P.K.S. Kutty and R. K. Laxman followed him with O.V. Vijayan and Abu Abraham with their own distinctive styles. The cartooning of the day to day affairs of the Indian political scene more or less reveals to a later generation, an account of the yesteryears, the fears and anxieties of period. Even with such a rich

¹⁶⁰ Morarji Desai was the first non-Congress Prime Minister India had since its independence in 1947. His tenure as the Prime Minister from 1977-79, in the aftermath of the infamous Emergency proclaimed by the previous Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, saw India working towards peace accords between its neighbours after the wars with Pakistan and China. The only Indian national to be conferred by Pakistan highest civilian honour Nishan-e-Pakistan, Morarji Desai's term as Prime Minister was also known for its infighting and controversies which ultimately brought back Indira Gandhi to power in the elections of 1979.

¹⁶¹ Laxman, R. K. *The Tunnel of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. 1998. Print.

¹⁶² Mario Joao Carlos do Rosario de Brito Miranda worked for *The Times of India* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and was a contemporary of R. K. Laxman. Popularly known as Mario Miranda, he was more in to social caricaturing than political. His illustrations of Goa, Kerala and Mumbai are part of books such as *A Journey to Goa*, *Inside Goa*, and *Legends of Goa* etc.

tradition of cartooning, protected by a powerful Constitution, India and a section of Indians always found some of the cartoons to be insulting to someone.

This chapter is an attempt to answer one of the key questions of this research; *can cartoons be considered as a translation of the time?* I would like to argue that it can indeed be so, if cartoons are presented with the historical context that stimulated the cartoonist's thought to translate into a visual art capable of making and breaking opinions. It is that capability of cartoons, to become the 'secondary-texts' of history, that is explained in this chapter. It is my intention to consider political cartooning of the period, through different stages, as a translation of the times in to a visual art capable of forming opinions and store the cultural as well as political essence of the times in one frame. For the purpose of this, the decades following the gaining of independence have been divided into eras. Starting from the Nehruvian Era to the Era of Economic Liberalisation and the advent of Hindutva Politics, I present the prominent cartoons of the time, produced in response to the landmark events in the history of India. These cartoons are given with the context necessary to decode them and understand them as humorous translations of the times. A certain amount of research has been done about the contexts, to validate the cartoons and to justify them as cultural responses.

1. The Nehruvian Era

In his famous speech titled 'Tryst with Destiny'¹⁶³, on the eve of India's Independence on 15th August 1947, addressing the Indian Constituent Assembly, Jawaharlal Nehru called the achievement as 'a step, an opening of an opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements

¹⁶³ Considered as one the greatest speeches of 20th century, Nehru's *Tryst with Destiny*, not only marks India's entry into the world as an independent nation but also as a triumph over colonisation. Ian Jack of *The Guardian* said of the speech, "Post colonialism began here as well as Indian democracy, which has since outlived many expectations of its death."

that await us.’ But, he also asked a question in retrospection. ‘Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?’

Inspiring to the core and ingrained with vision for a new better future, Nehru’s speech in English, filled with poetic licenses and allegories, is doubtful to have made any impact in the many rural Indias especially in the western parts that was grappling with the refugees pouring in from Pakistan, a new nation formed along with India as a result of the partition. Nehru promised to get rid of centuries of suffering and a slow, real walk towards freedom and success together as a nation. Deepa Mehta¹⁶⁴’s film *Earth*¹⁶⁵, is one of those films that used the soundtrack of Nehru’s speech as part of the plot to make the audience aware of the timeline; the partition of India. The protagonists, a Hindu, a Sikh and a Muslim, sit around and chat casually until the conversation is brought to an abrupt end as the radio airs Nehru’s *Tryst with Destiny* speech. Though they listen to the speech keenly, their expressions reveal that none of them understood the charismatic and regal English of the leader in any way that mattered to them. Soon, they lose interest and Nehru’s powerful voice fades as the protagonists resume their friendly banter.

Communal violence following the partition was not the only problem that Nehru, as the first Prime Minister, had to deal with. Illiteracy, poverty and social inequality awaited his attention. As Nehru juggled with portfolios in the ministry, depending on the issues that managed to capture his attention at a given period of time, cartoonists were also busy.

¹⁶⁴ Deepa Mehta is an Indo-Canadian filmmaker who is famous for her Elements Trilogy, *Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998) and *Water* (2005). She is also known for converting Salman Rushdie’s famous novel *Midnight’s Children* into a film in 2012.

¹⁶⁵ *Earth*, released in India as *1947: Earth*, is a 1998 film directed by Deepa Mehta as the second in her Elements Trilogy. The film is based on Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Cracking India*, originally published as *Ice Candy Man* (1988). It was India’s official entry for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. *Earth* tells the story of three protagonists of different religions and straining relationship during the period of the partition of India in 1947.

K. Shankar Pillai's *Shankar's Weekly* started publishing in 1948, when Indian politics began to get more interesting. Nehru's focus on nation-building based on nationalism, secularism and democracy and his goals to set up a strong economy and society through the path of socialism provided a great hope for a nation that was waking up from 'long slumber' under the colonial yoke. It was a time for cartoonists to flourish. Nehru as the first Prime Minister, turned out to be a favourite subject of Indian cartoonists. Shankar's school of cartoonists, Kutty, O.V. Vijayan and Abu Abraham had migrated to New Delhi, the epicentre of Indian politics. R.K. Laxman had started cartooning in Bombay. If Shankar 'spared nothing' while cartooning Nehru, Laxman gave him a solemn, sometimes melancholic, look. O.V. Vijayan's portrayal of Nehru was often symbolic, focusing more on the issues Nehru had to deal with. Kutty, on the other hand, was a detached on-looker. Each of them specialized on portraying Nehru and his policies from different vantage points.

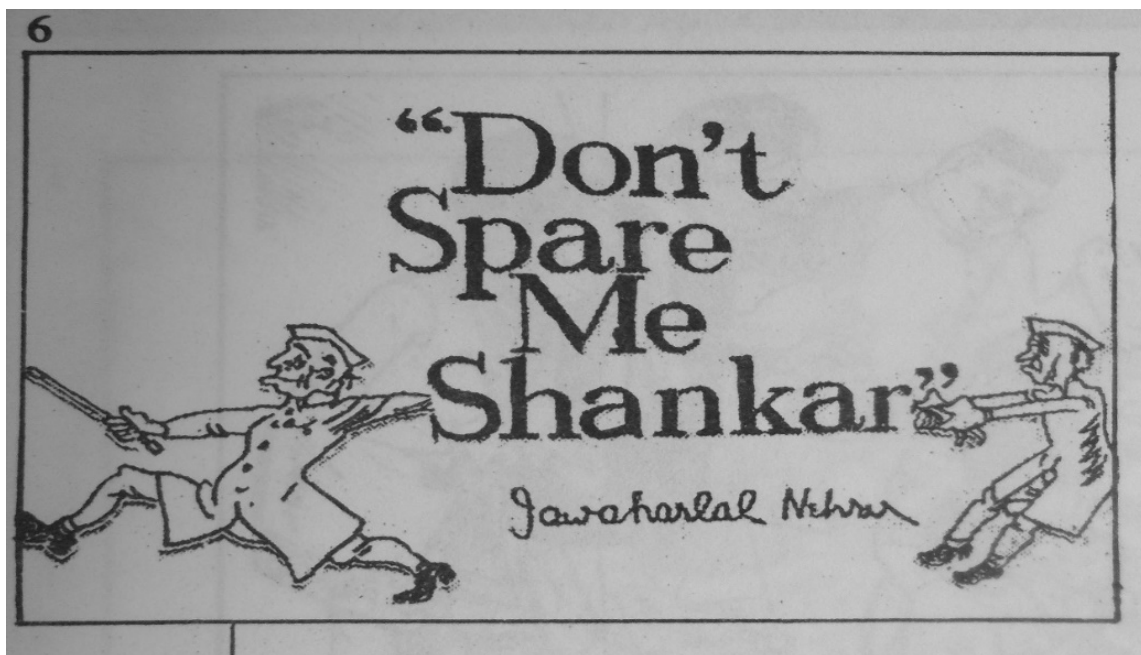


Figure 34 Shankar's Weekly.
Source: *Shankar: The Doyen of Indian Cartooning*

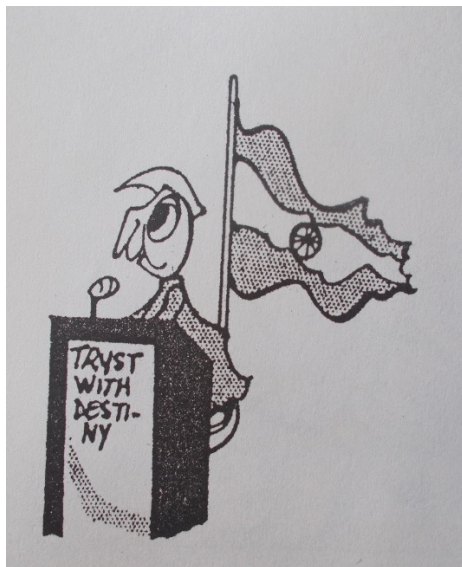


Figure 35 O.V. Vijayan
Source: A Cartoonist Remembers



Figure 36 R.K. Laxman
Source: Laxman Rekhas

From the linguistic reorganization of the states to the threat of wars with bordering neighbours loomed large in the free India. While Nehru struggled with inventing a new idea of India, it had to constantly clash with the need for a new national economy if India was to cater to the needs of an ever increasing population. With 25% of males and 8% of females noted as literate in the country, India had to go a long way forward to social stability. Despite years of campaigning by Gandhi, untouchability prevailed in the rural India and gender inequality was beyond any sort of measuring. Proving prophecies of an impending eclipse of Indian democracy false, Nehru's government trudged on a variety of issues. Almost all of the chief cartoonists of the time have lampooned Nehru's government and his ability to multi-task in a ministry that soon saw a series of changes and drop outs.

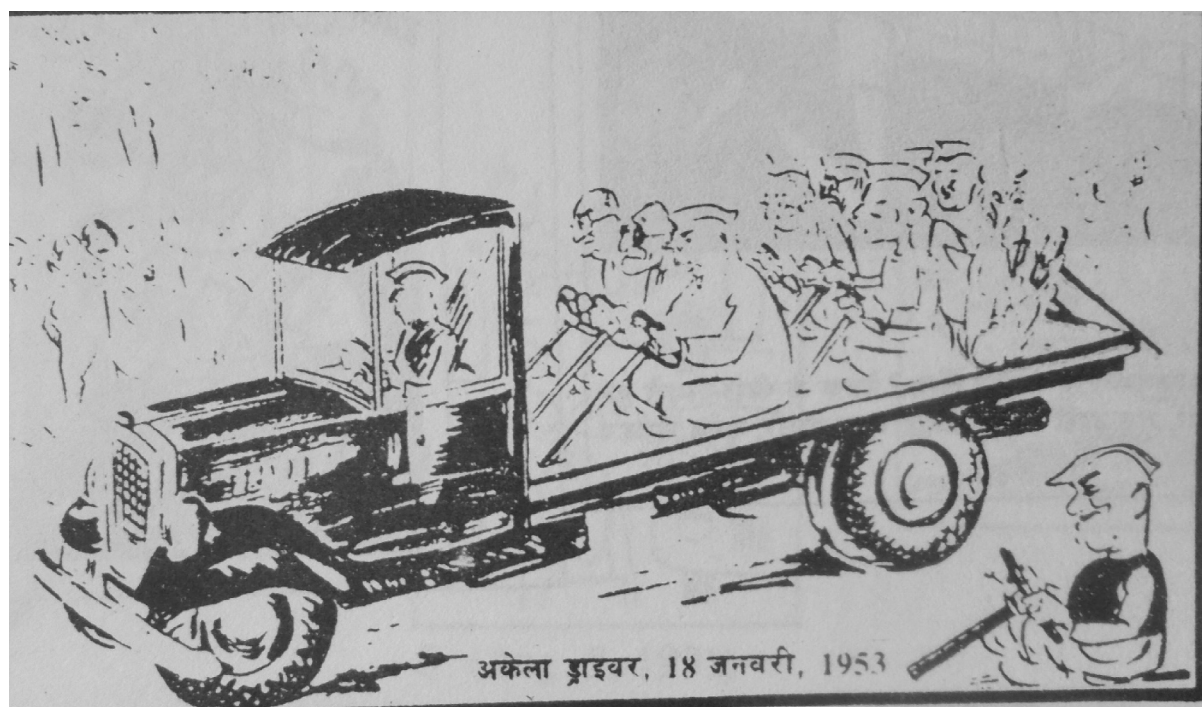


Figure 37
Shankar's Weekly, 18 January 1953

Not only did Nehru assumed the post of the Prime Minister, he also handled the External Affairs portfolio along with Ministry of Scientific Research. During his third ministry (18 April 1957 – 2 April 1962), Nehru took on the title of the Finance Minister for a brief period upon the resignation of T.T. Krishnamachari¹⁶⁶ and also created a new portfolio, Department of Atomic Energy, under him.

Despite a war with Pakistan in 1948, on the Kashmir issue, Nehru's foreign policies were considered to be upright. Along with similar-minded leaders of newly independent nations, Nehru founded an organization called The Non-Aligned Movement¹⁶⁷ (NAM). The new bloc of nations under NAM stood separately instead of aligning themselves with the US Bloc or the Soviet Bloc of nations in the cold-War era. But, looking from the context of the contemporary Indian cartoonists, it was his confidence building measures with the neighbor China that made Nehru famous. The Panchsheel Treaty, or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, drafted first in 1954 between India and China formed the strong foundation upon which Nehru's idea of how the post colonial nations should form their ties. The first agreement between India and China on trade in the Tibetan region was viewed as a welcome step towards peace generally, but on the contrary, relationships between India and China deteriorated towards the early sixties resulting in a war in 1962. Shankar's series of cartoons on India – China relations chronicled the contemporary

¹⁶⁶ T.T. Krishnamachari, the first Minister of Finance of independent India, resigned from his post on 18 February 1958. The Mundhra Scam, popularly recalled as the first big scam in independent India, was raised in the parliament by Feroz Gandhi, who revealed the involvement of the finance minister and his personal assistant in the sales of fraudulent shares to LIC by a Calcutta based businessman named Haridas Mundhra. T.T. Krishnamachari resigned accordingly but came back to the ministry later, upon his re-election, and remained a minister without a portfolio for a while until he was given the Finance Ministry again in 1964.

¹⁶⁷ NAM was founded in Belgrade in 1961. The founding members included Indonesia's first president Sukarno, Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah, Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yugoslavia's president Josip Broz Tito, along with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. It later developed from the initial stages and went through several break-ups. Primarily formed as a bloc against the Cold-War, it even faced an existential question as the Cold-War ended. But, currently with 150 countries in its membership, NAM continues to find importance as a bloc representing major countries in the Asian and African region.

circumstances that led to the war and also the how Nehru handled the situation as a Prime Minister. It is also interesting to notice the change that Shankar brought in to the portrayal of Nehru from 1954 to 1962, when Nehru ‘felt betrayed by China’¹⁶⁸ by the end. When all the talks and diplomacies failed and an obvious aggression from China became an imminent threat, a section of people in the Congress and the country’s media in general began questioning Nehru’s functioning as the Prime Minister. Despite projecting India-China friendship in almost all the world forums and supporting China’s military action in Tibet, Nehru’s decision to give assylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959 when the revolt staged by Tibetans¹⁶⁹ against the Chinese occupants failed, the hard earned trust built between India and China crumbled. The Indian political scene was experiencing a certain amount of disillusionment as well with the third Nehru ministry forming the cabinet. Though the Indian National Congress under Nehru won a landslide victory, Congress and India was reeling from issues such as the Linguistic re-organization of states and the increasing prices etc. Nehru’s handling of the External Affairs ministry and his support of V.K. Krishna Menon who was the minister for Defence complicated things further in the Indian parliament where debates on whether India-China relations were going the right way. Nehru’s decision to give political assylum to the Dalai Lama and his refusal to set up a government-in-exile seemed like a wise move at the time but only worked at antagonizing the Chinese leadership further. Late 1959 saw the Chinese opening fire at an Indian border post, killing and capturing soldiers and the early 1960s saw the Chinese premier Zhou EnLai visiting India. The decision to let officials of both countries sort out

¹⁶⁸ Crocker, Walter. *Nehru A Contemporary’s Estimate*. New Delhi: Random House India, 2009. Print.

¹⁶⁹ Though also known as the 1959 Tibetan Uprising, the 1959 Tibetan Rebellion was the first of its kind massive armed conflict between the Tibetan rebels and the People’s Liberation Army in the Kham and Amdo regions of Tibet over China’s socialist land re-distribution policies. Though perceived as a Tibetan region, Kham’s ties with Lhasa were totally deteriorated by the time of the Chinese aggression in 1951 but soon, they became disgruntled with the Chinese as well resulting in wide uprising against the PLA. In the aftermath of the Rebellion, close to 87,000 people were killed and the Chinese control over Tibet increased.

the issues before another meet between the premiers was taken in 1960. Ramachandra Guha¹⁷⁰ summarizes the effect of the Chinese attack on the Indian conscience,

‘India took a long time to recover from the blow to its self-respect, and perhaps it was only the victory over Pakistan in the Bangladesh war, in which China and USA were also supporting Pakistan, that restored the sense of self-worth. Nehru never really recovered from the blow, and his death in May 1964 was most likely hastened by it. Worse, at the pinnacle of his outstanding career he had to face attacks from political opponents who would never have dared otherwise. He was forced to sacrifice Krishna Menon, his long-time associate and defence minister. The policy of non-alignment, which he had nurtured with such care, seemed for a while unlikely to be able to withstand the body-blow delivered by a friend. The irony was that it was derailed by a socialist country and not by a capitalist power. Right-wing forces and pro-West elements loudly criticised Nehru. They used the opportunity to block a constitutional amendment aimed at strengthening a land ceiling legislation. The Third Plan was badly affected and resources had to be diverted for defence. The Congress lost three parliamentray by-elections in a row and Nehru faced in August 1963, the first no-confidence motion of his life.’

Shankar cartooned the development of India and China relations in more detail than any of his contemporaries. The Krishna Menon factor, the blind trust of Nehru over the concept of socialism that China too shared, the Panchsheel pact etc were all subjects of the numerous caricatures that *Shankar's Weekly* brought out.

¹⁷⁰ Chandra, Bipin., Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. *India After Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2008. Print.



Figure 39
Shankar's Weekly

Shankar lampooned Nehru's shock over the annexation of Tibet by China, in this cartoon published in *Shankar's Weekly* on November 5, 1950. Nehru's said he was 'extremely perplexed and disappointed at the Chinese Government's action.'¹⁷¹ Shankar's cartoon portrays a shocked Nehru watching a Tibet ran over by Chinese army while US President Harry Truman and the Secretary of State Dean Acheson laughing at his back saying, "We told him so." Shankar's cartoon here works as a critique that even though ample warnings were in the air, Nehru paid no attention to them regarding China's plans about Tibet, which they always thought belonged to them racially and geographically. In the end he responded by citing history; that China had politically annexed Tibet several times in the past! While a section of India watched the Chinese taking one step closer

¹⁷¹ Rajaram N.S. "Nehru and the China-Tibet Blunder". *Indiafacts.org* April 1, 2015. Web.

to India, Nehru was impervious to the threat and choose to continue with his international policy-making regarding a faraway Korean crisis.



*Figure 40.
October 17, 1954
Shankar's Weekly*

Even Nehru's first visit to China in 1954 was seen by Shankar with a bit of scepticism. He drew Nehru embarking on his journey as the world leaders watched with different looks on their face. In the cartoon, US Secretary of State John Dulles carry a bomb, accompanied by Pakistan Prime Minister Mohammad Ali with a knife while Winston and Churchill and Georgy Malenkov watches with a frown. Calling it the most important foreign visit of his life, Nehru met with the

Chinese leaders Chairman Mao Zedong and Prime Minister Zhou EnLai and discussed various issues. In his recently de-classified *Note on Visit to China and Indo-China*¹⁷² Nehru remarks,

‘Chairman Mao referred to the age-old association as well as the new friendship between India and China. Both countries were struggling for peace. They had had more or less common experiences in recent history and both countries needed peace to reconstruct their economies as both were industrially backward. The Chairman considered that India was industrially somewhat more advanced. But both countries were in this respect backward and had large populations. Industrial development had to be achieved quickly in both. Given peace, it might take China about four Five Year Plans, i.e. 20 years or so, to become an industrial country with foundations laid for a socialist economy. China, therefore, was anxious for peace. But some countries, notably USA, were obstructing this process. USA was occupying, or helping in the occupation, not only of Formosa, but many islands very near the Chinese mainland.’

Nehru’s and Mao’s discussion on the matter reveals the reason why it was important for the two newly independent countries to be working together in a post-colonial, post-world war world and how peace and stability¹⁷³ in the region is much preferred over territorial disputes. Shankar went on to immortalize many more of the historical moments, often lampooning a paranoid Nehru, seemingly confused about the impulsive moves of China.

¹⁷² Nehru, Jawaharlal. “Notes on Visit to China and Indo-China”. Wilson Center Digital Archive. Web

¹⁷³ Mao’s paranoia about keeping China’s territorial integrity was evident from the minutes of the Nehru-Mao conversation that happened in Beijing in 1954. He is seen to have commented thus, “The alleged US fear is truly excessive. It has advanced its defence lines to South Korea, Taiwan and Indochina, which are so far away from the United States and so close to us. This makes our sleep unsound.”



*Figure 41.
May 29, 1955.
Shankar's Weekly.*

The above given cartoon was Shankar's interpretation of Krishna Menon's return from the much important Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung in April, 1955. The time was such that India's overt support to China was raising eyebrows in the West and as a result they started seeing India's Non-Align Movement as a natural aligning with Communist China. Krishna Menon as the special envoy of Nehru was tasked with bringing the alliance closer with the Panchsheel norms. The cartoon is captioned as 'Krishna Menon has returned from China. Has he brought Mao or Zhou?'. While a thoughtful Nehru looks puzzlingly at the unopened suitcase of Krishna Menon, US President Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Anthony Eden watches from behind the curtain.



Figure 9.
September 20, 1959
The Himalayan Stunt

1959 saw a series of border violations by the Chinese Army near the Indo-Tibetan border. Despite writing several official letters to each other, India and China accused each other of violating the disputed border. Nehru lamented that he did not have any problem with Tibet. Shankar's cartoon portrays Nehru with a stick watching over the boundary between India and Tibet, while the masks of the protector gods of Tibet look back from the hills. Shankar's cartoons on the India-China relationship takes a more serious tone from here onwards, shedding the lampooning once in a while to coat them over in overt symbolism, and at times, unswervingly transferring the message without direct hints of humour.

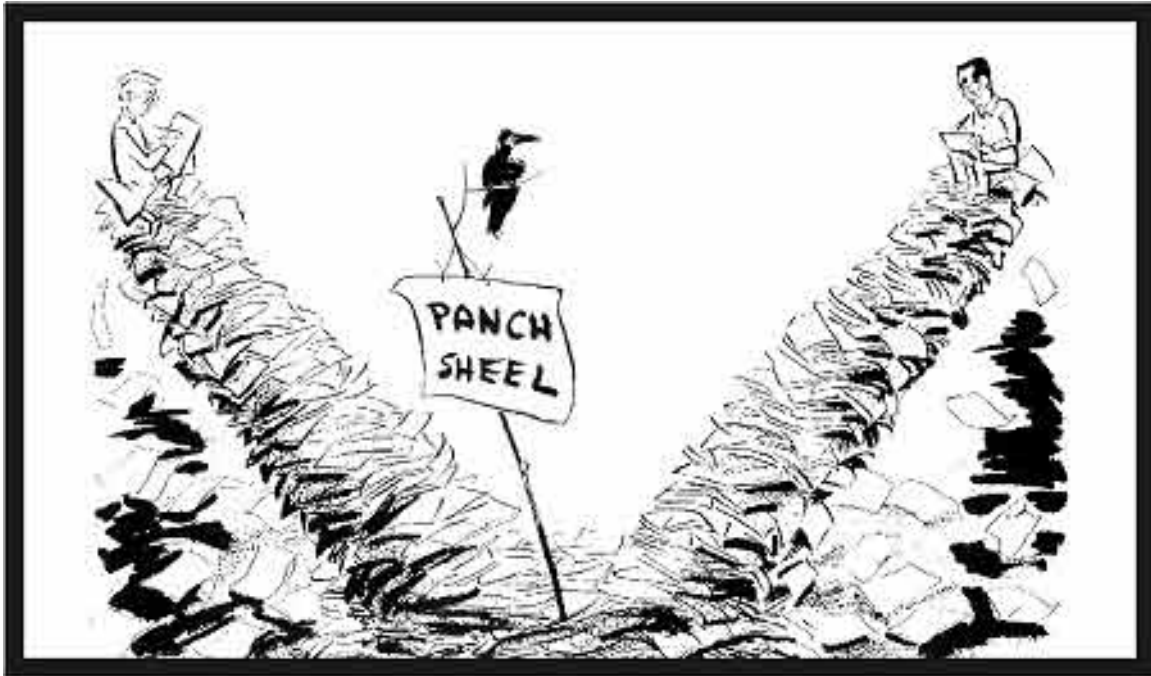


Figure 10.
November 1, 1959
Shankar's Weekly
Pen Friends

As agreed upon earlier, Zhou EnLai and Nehru worked out the details of the Panchsheel Pact, which was described as ‘the agreement between the Republic of India and the People’s Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet region of China and India’. While the violation of border by the Chinese Army continued to happen, a helpless Nehru shown as sitting on a pile of papers with Zhou EnLai on the other side, both working on the terms and conditions of the Pact, with the scarecrow of Panchsheel sits in the middle. The regulations of the pact required India to accept Tibet as a region belonging to China and not as a sovereign state. This

invoked a lot of noise in India with leaders like J.B. Kripalani¹⁷⁴ calling it a treaty ‘born in sin’ as it was the first international treaty that recognized China’s sovereignty over Tibet.



Figure 11.

November 8, 1959. *Shankar's Weekly*.

“The Prime Minister said India was ready to face the Chinese challenge. He also warned against hasty action.”

Shankar’s criticism of Nehru’s policy on China continued, as the latter seemed to be dichotomous about what to do with increased Chinese incursions. At times, Nehru said India was ready to face the Chinese challenge and at other times, he admitted that caution was required before we take hasty action. The cartoon depicted two Nehru’s; one ready to go out and punish and the other pulling the first one back from doing so. The subtle humour in it reflected the position Nehru was in. His confidence in China and the relationship he was trying to build with it was drawing

¹⁷⁴ Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani was renowned Congress leader who later joined the Praja Socialist Party. He has been part of freedom movements and later even as a critique of the Nehru-Patel nexus and the Emergency proclaimed by the Indira Gandhi government.

opposition from both the Congress and the people. In short, the underlying confusion in the cartoon stated truly the situation the country was leading to in a few years of time. Shankar's cartoon determined the popular belief of the period that Nehru, while maintaining the McMahon Line¹⁷⁵ was the international border between India and China, did nothing to prevent it.



Figure 12.

November 20, 1960

Shankar's Weekly

Shall Not Go Unnoticed

Shankar's *Shall Not Go Unnoticed* was another one of his cartoons that targeted the stance of Prime Minister Nehru on China and the border disputes. The cartoon portrayed the main players of the contemporary Indian cabinet, Krishna Menon, Lal Bahadur Shastri, S.K. Patil, Morarji Deasai and Govind Ballabh Pant lead by Nehru, marking a blackboard with the number of Chinese

¹⁷⁵ The Simla Accord of 1914 between Britain and Tibet, determined McMahon Line as the international border between India and Tibet. However, after the annexation of Tibet by China, the validity of the line is disputed by the latter and has caused border disputes between India and China resulting into a war in 1962. The line is named after Sir Henry McMahon who surveyed the boundary and determined the border line.

violations into the Indian airspace and territory while Chairman Mao and Prime Minister Zhou EnLai look on from across the border. The cartoon is nothing but a serious criticism of the Nehru government's inadequate measures to protect the territorial integrity of the nation. While a portion of the national think-tank believed that the Chinese were buying time by having talks with the Indian authorities and at the same time constructing roads and rail networks in the border regions for a faster mobilisation of their armed forces, Indian side of the border still lacked proper roads and other facilities.

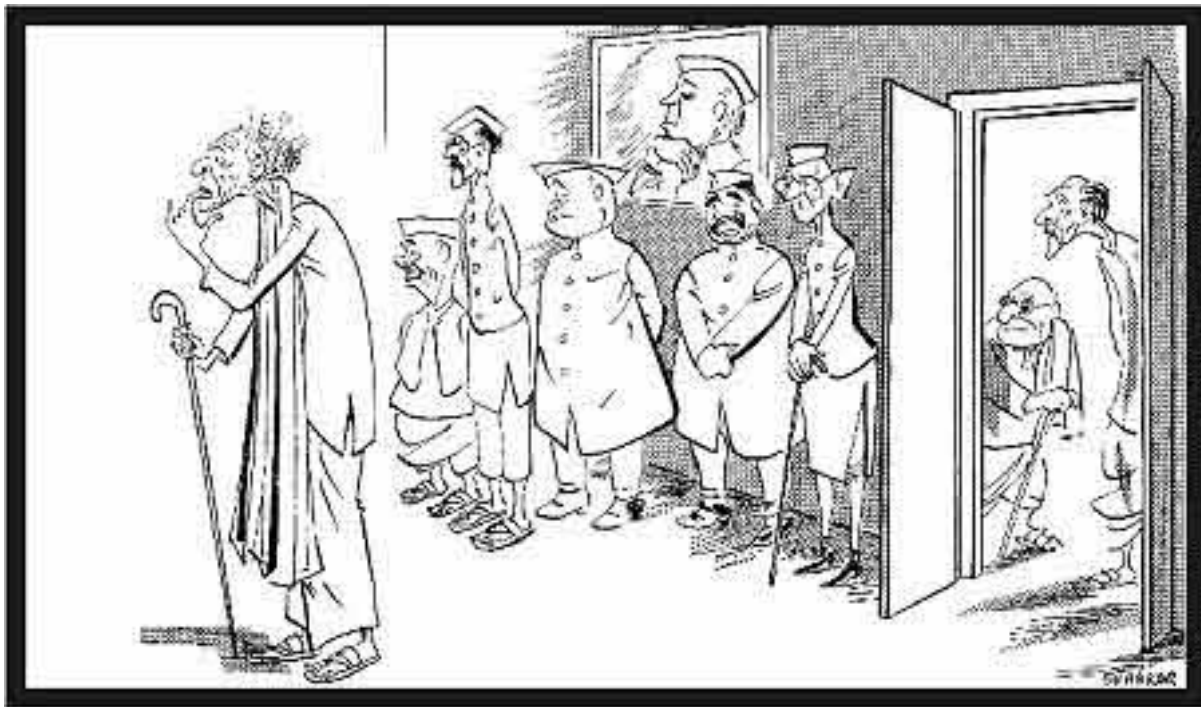


Figure 13.
November 4, 1962
Shankar's Weekly
To Go or Not To Go

On 20th October 1962, China attacked India and the trust that Nehru was building up for years collapsed. China, very strategically opened two theatres, one in the Western front near Aksai Chin and the other, in the Eastern border near the Nathula Pass. The blatant aggression from China

put the Indian armed forces to a back foot and soon many Indian forward posts were overrun by the Chinese. When an overwhelmed Indian people looked fearfully at a war imposed on them, a confused Nehru pondered about removing Krishna Menon from the post of the defence minister. The cartoon by Shankar featured a thoughtful and seemingly old and tired-looking Krishna Menon pondering over his resignation while stalwarts of the Indian cabinet such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gulzari Lal Nanda, S.K. Patil, Jagjivan Ram and Morarji Desai looks on. C. Rajagopalachari and J.B. Kripalani also can be seen, waiting outside the room while a portrait of Nehru on the wall ponders along. Though the Chinese withdrew after a month of launching the attacks after the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou EnLai's proposal of ceasefire and peace talks, Nehru sacked Krishna Menon and remained Prime Minister.

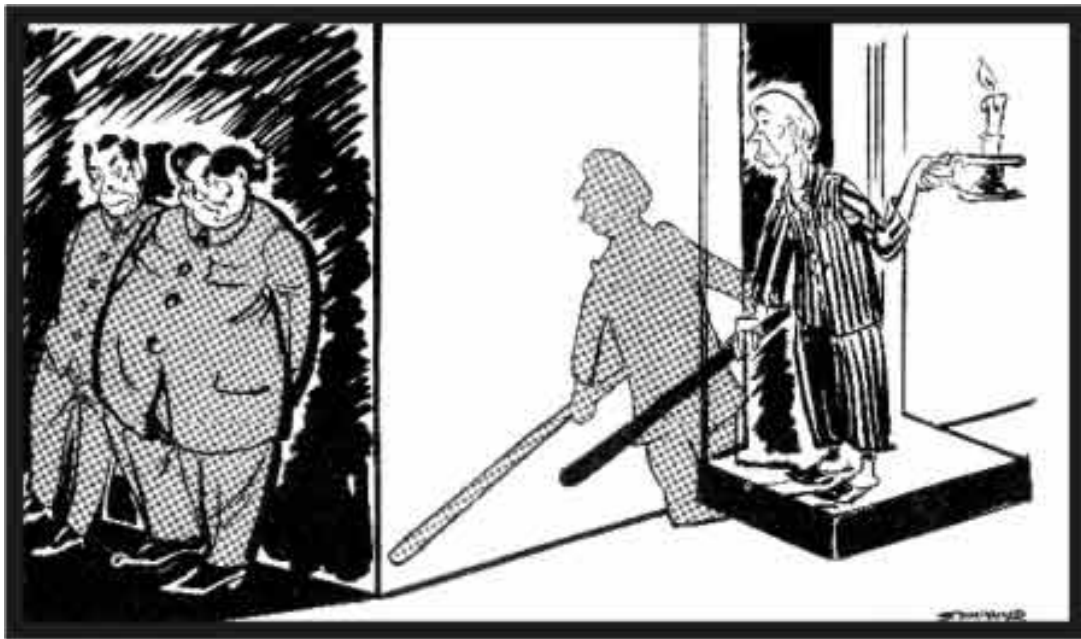


Figure 14.
August 4, 1963
Shankar's Weekly
Logistic Lie

Shankar's 1963 cartoon portrays Nehru as a paranoid old man, sleepless over the fear of another Chinese aggression. China kept denying the heavy built up of troops across its side of the border and countered the Indian allegations of border trespass with its own allegations regarding the Indian army. While this may be one of the last cartoons of Shankar regarding the Indo-China relations and Nehru's stance regarding it, a later cartoon of Nehru by Shankar reveals just how weak he thought India's first Prime Minister had become.

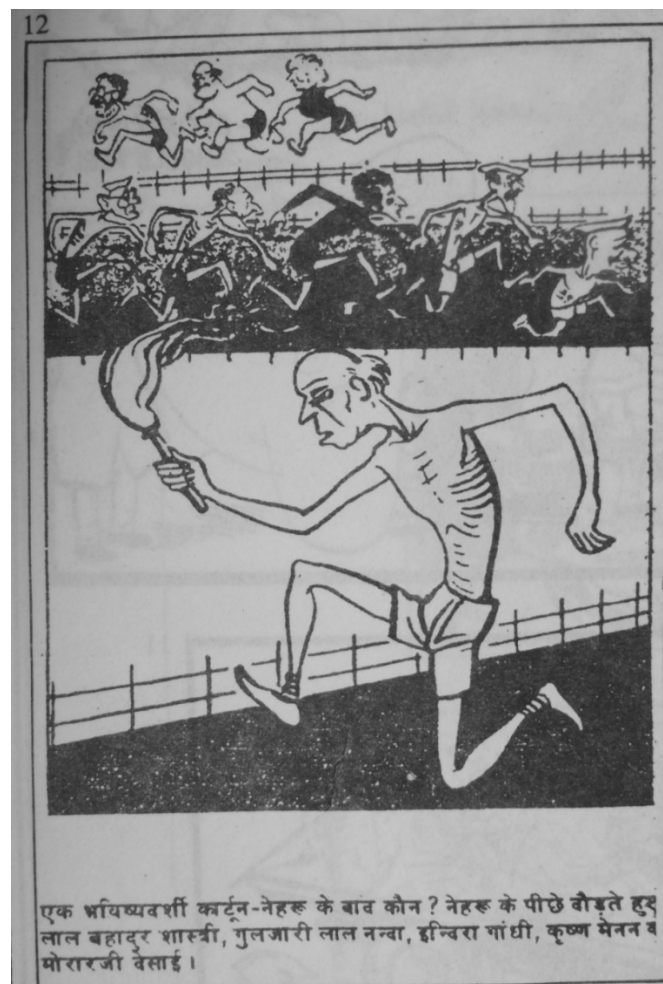


Figure 15

Source: An Anthropological Study of Cartoons in India

When the question of who will follow and become the Prime Minister when Nehru steps down arose, Shankar's cartoon appeared initiating the options in a subtle manner. In this cartoon, Nehru is seen running a marathon, surpassing the likes of Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gulzari Lal Nanda, Indira Gandhi, Krishna Menon and Morarji Desai. As opposed to Shankar's earlier portrayals of Jawaharlal Nehru, this cartoon showed an older Nehru, less energetic, looking more vulnerable and tired in a skinny look!

If Shankar's portrayal of Nehru was clear and sharp, bordering on a prophesical note, cartoonists such as O.V. Vijayan and R.K. Laxman revelled on a certain disagreement of Nehru's policies and administration. O.V. Vijayan's cartoons on Nehru were results of a communist's disgruntlement. Vijayan did not agree with Nehru's socialism and the subsequent policies that supposedly came in the wake of it. Assuming his role as a Third World cartoonist, Vijayan dubbed his profession as a call to portray 'an utterable sadness that punctuates the reality.'¹⁷⁶ So, as easy as he wonders about the poverty line as 'a sanitised use of language' and calls the grass-eating in Northern states as 'tryst with grass' as a parallel to Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' speech, Vijayan takes away the laughter from his cartoon and made them standing symbols of a faltering nation. Though he accepts that 'the dominant superstition' of cartooning is 'to raise a laugh', he raised thoughts more than laughter. Though considered by many as morose, Vijayan's cartoons were products of a time unusual to the rest of the 'democratic' world. He disliked the Indian superstition that cartoons should evoke laughter and called that tendency as something stemmed from a 'colonial liability'¹⁷⁷ to stick to the British sensibilities that we formed ours from.

¹⁷⁶ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2002. Print.

¹⁷⁷ Vijayan, O.V. *Tragic Idiom: O V Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India*. Kottayam, 2006. Print.

‘Cartoon grows; it imbibes more and more argumentative facets. This is not a growth or refinement of the craft or form. It is merely that the wholesomeness and complexity that has overtaken man’s knowledge is affecting the cartoonist too. And if this were not to happen, the result would have been the degradation of the cartoonist into mediocrity.’¹⁷⁸

So, Vijayan’s cartooning was based on his realization of himself as a Third World cartoonist sketching the contemporary times with emphasis given to the issues than the humour in it. According to him, that was his ‘historic duty’, which was ‘heavier and more meaningful than those of the cartoonists in England or America’¹⁷⁹. Hence, Vijayan’s portrayal of Nehru, Indira, Rajiv or even India, are more like shrewd observations from the point of a scepticist when other cartoonists explored situations of their subjects to find something funny or witty, or both.

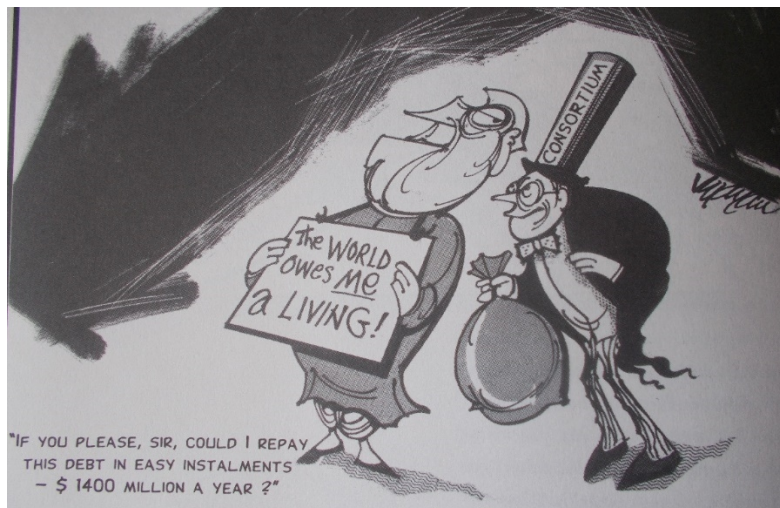


Figure 16
O.V. Vijayan
Source: *A Cartoonist Remembers*

¹⁷⁸ Vijayan, O.V. *Tragic Idiom: O V Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India*. Kottayam, 2006. Print.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid'

Vijayan's Nehru was more of a authoritative figure; a failed socialist and a clueless leader. The transformation of Nehru's figure from that of his 'Tryst with Destiny' cartoon to this later image was quick. As a loyal communist, it is evident that Vijayan expected more from Nehru's leniency towards socialism. But Vijayan's own belief in Communism went through a critical damage and by the time he started his cartooning in the post-Independent Delhi under the guidance of Shankar, Nehru's ideal world of Socialism had begun to shake.

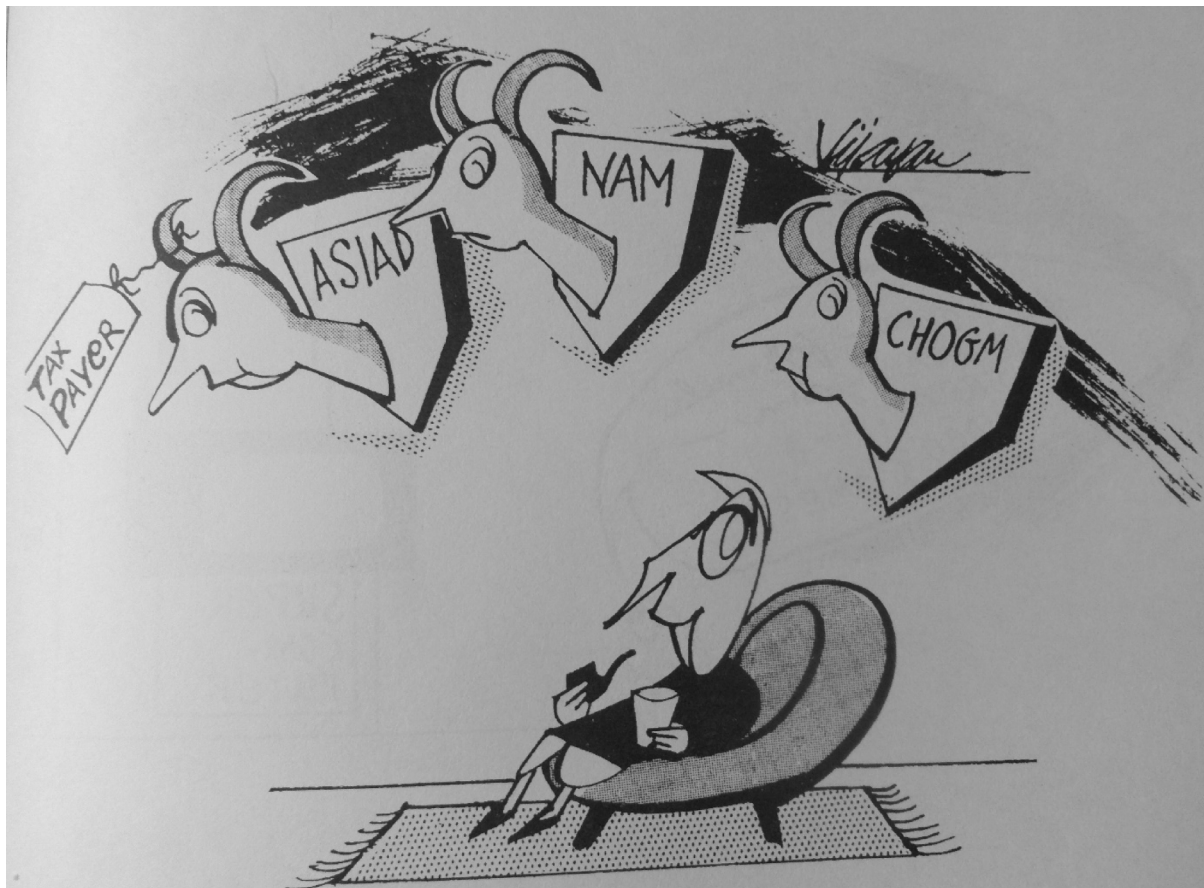


Figure 17
O.V. Vijayan
Source: *A Cartoonist Remembers*

If Shankar's cartoons were more of political nature, Vijayan localised the political effect in his cartoons. During the times of Nehru, he concentrated on the Nehruvian extravaganza and later, during the times of Indira Gandhi, he switched to cartooning the violation of democracy and

at times, the fear of the atom bomb¹⁸⁰. In the same way, Vijayan lampooned the inability of Rajiv Gandhi and termed his ideas, 'Utopian'.

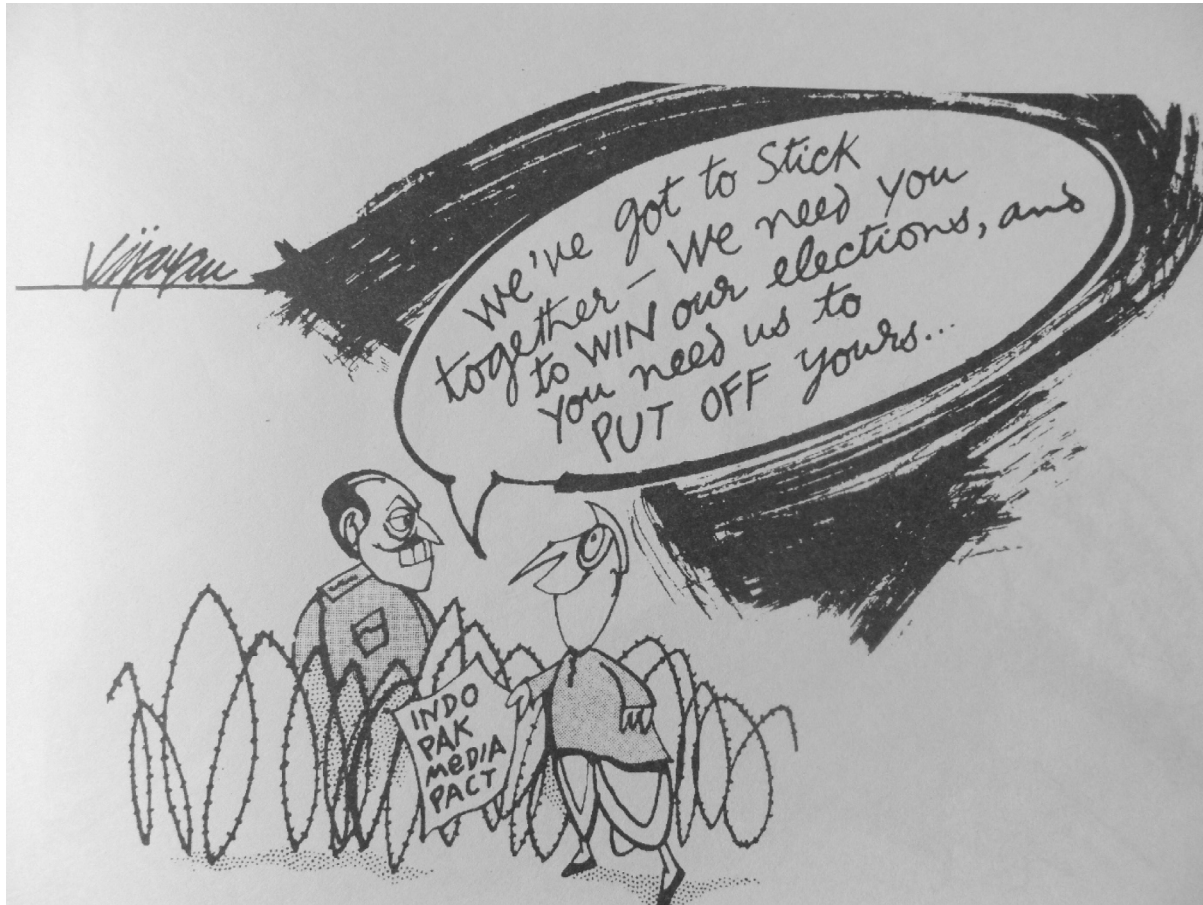


Figure 18
O.V. Vijayan
Source: *The Tragic Idiom*

Vijayan's cartoons in the Nehruvian Era often drew parallels between India and Pakistan, the two countries that got separated in 1947, following independence that set off a series of communal violence and even military aggression over Kashmir. Though leaders of both nations were the targets of his cartoons, it openly showed the situations in both the countries. The above

¹⁸⁰ India's first nuclear weapons test was conducted in 1974, codenamed 'Smiling Buddha', under the Indira Gandhi administration. Though it was called a 'peaceful nuclear explosion' by the Indian government, it evoked a worldwide fear and panic, especially among the Western powers.

given cartoon is one of the two cartoons that showed the interaction between Jawaharlal Nehru and the President of Pakistan, General Ayub Khan¹⁸¹. The cartoon emphasises the fear of each other that had developed in India and Pakistan during the years that followed the partition. Ayub Khan's presidency is known for a certain lull in the Indo-Pakistan relationship that finally resulted in the second Indo-Pakistan war in 1965. The cartoon subtly depicted how each country used the name of the neighbour for political benefits. Yet another cartoon was made during the same time-period in which Nehrus was shown giving advice to President Ayub Khan over the fence that separated India from Pakistan.

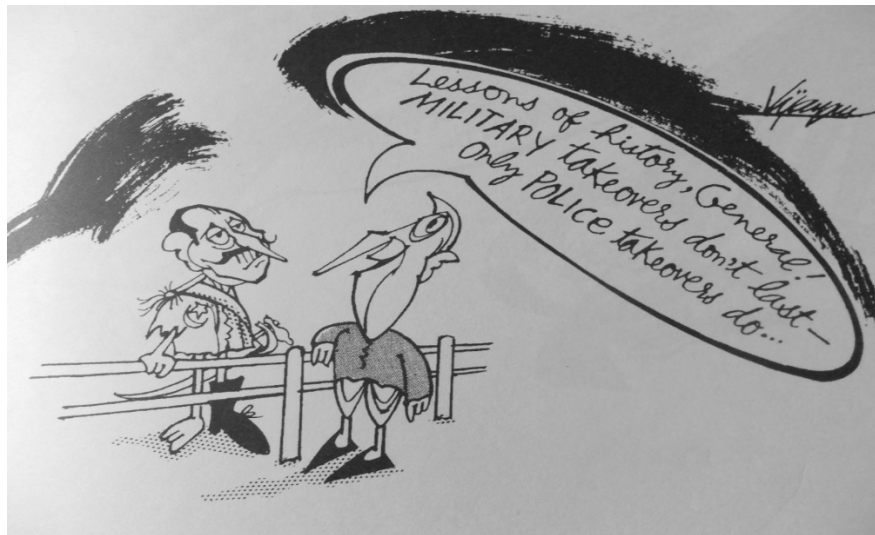


Figure 142
O.V. Vijayan
Source: *The Tragic Idiom*

¹⁸¹ General Mohammed Ayub Khan was the first military dictator who snatched power in Pakistan through a coup [d'état](#) in 1958. He served the office as a self-proclaimed President until his forced resignation in 1969. During his time, Pakistan forged alliance with the United States of America in an anti-USSR policy. He strengthened ties with China and at the same time relations with India worsened and also resulted in a month long war in 1965 at the end of which Pakistan conceded defeat. Though he is considered by many as the architect of Pakistan's economic stability for a predictable future, he is also known for beginning the Pakistani Army's influence in civilian politics. Amid widespread protests by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in late 60's General Ayub Khan resigned and handed over the power to General Yahya Khan.

In this cartoon Jawaharlal Nehru is seen giving a word of advice to General Ayub Khan, who is seen to be wearing a tired face, a tattered uniform and missing a shoe, that military takeovers do not last compared to police takeovers. Vijayan draws the parallel that independent India's experience in annexing Hyderabad and Goa were far more effective compared to the first military takeover of rule in Pakistan. It is also a hinting subtly at Sardar Vallabhai Patel terming the annexation of Hyderabad as a 'Police action'.

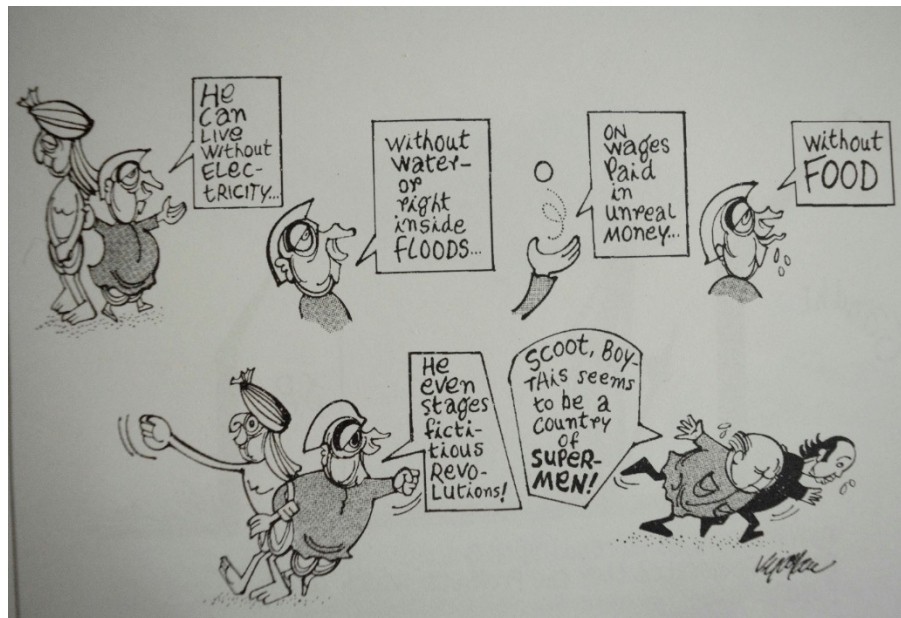


Figure 43
O.V. Vijayan
Source: A Cartoonist Remembers

Vijayan lampooned the social situation of India under the Nehruvian rule through this cartoon in which Nehru introduces an Indian declaring that he can live without basic amenities, and in mortal peril, at the same time capable of 'staging fictitious revolutions'. The cartoon shows Mao Zedong running away with Zhou EnLai, terming India as a country of supermen! This cartoon works along the typical Vijayan style dark humour which depicted what he thought to be Nehru's total disregard for his people while being paranoid about China.

Laxman, on the other hand, was a prolific chronicler of the times starting from the Nehruvian Era to the late 90s. Although 'Common Man' as a character was in an evolving form in the beginning of the Nehruvian Era, Laxman did cartoons that chronicled the early experiences of India as a nation, especially the road blocks Nehru faced on the highway to a socialist democracy that he had envisioned.

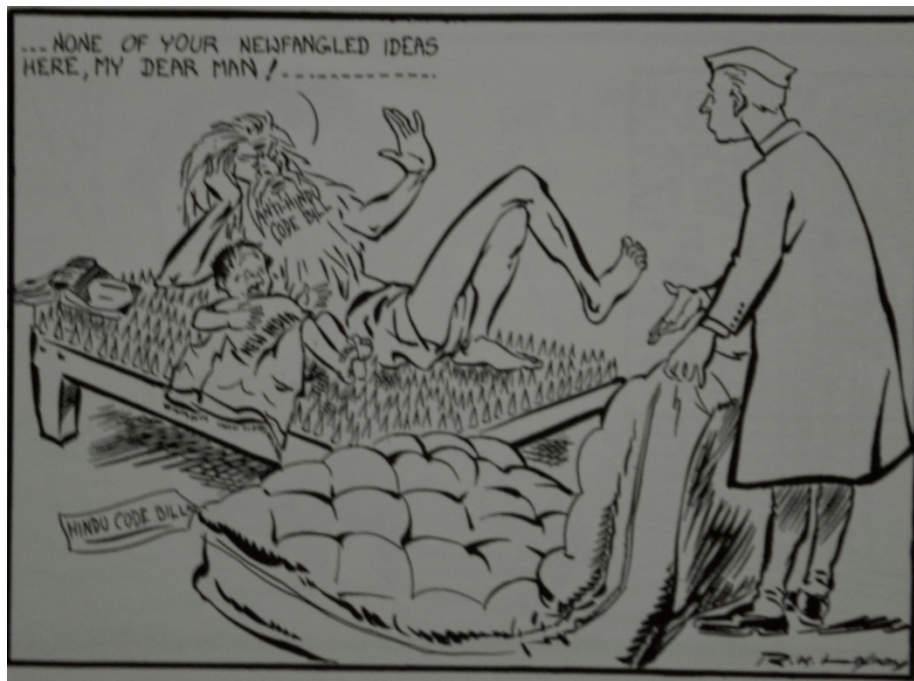


Figure 44
R.K. Laxman
Source: Laxman Rekhas

The Hindu Code Bills of 1950s had raised considerable amount of resistance both from within the government and outside. Relevant and debated even today, the Hindu Code Bills were thought of by the Nehru administration as important to unify the Hindu community of the country, as a first step to unifying the nation. Though opposed by many conservative politicians in the Parliament, the Nehru government succeeded in passing four Hindu Code Bills; The Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and Hindu Adoptions

and Maintenance Act. These were thought to be important for the development of the Hindu community but faced considerable amount of opposition and Laxman's cartoon represented Nehru giving a quintessential Indian sadhu a mattress to lie down but in turn gets turned down as the Sadhu prefers a coat of iron nails for his sleep. A 'New India' is also shown as a young boy, forced to sleep along-side the sadhu.



Figure 45
R.K. Laxman
Source: Laxman Rekhas

One of the early problems that Nehru had to deal with was the linguistic reorganization of the states. As more and more demands for separate states based on linguistic lines began to emerge, Nehru appealed to the country and the agitators to be patient while the High Power Commission for the linguistic re-organization of the states did their work to submit a report on the matter. Of the situation that he observed, President Rajendraprasad wrote to Nehru,

¹⁸²It is good that you have at last decided to finally settle this vexed question of redistribution of provinces, so that peace and goodwill may be permanently established in the country and have declared the intention of your government to appoint a high power commission for that purpose. It is rightly expected that the commission will examine this question thoroughly and dispassionately. Your advice to the people that, as India Government has decided to appoint a high power commission for the reorganization of the states, they should not now agitate for the formation of linguistic provinces, so that a calm and proper atmosphere for the workings and deliberations of the commission may be created in the country, is therefore perfectly correct. But, is it not surprising that being a party to the dispute, you do not think yourself in honour bound to observe the rules of the game? You never lose an opportunity to carry on propaganda against the sponsors of the linguistic provinces, by dubbing them as anti-national, parochial and encouraging fissiparous tendencies. You may like it or not, people are openly saying that, even if a high power commission is appointed, the issue would be determined according to what Pandit Jawaharlalji desires and dictates. The result is that people have become restless and somewhat cynical about any good resulting from your appointment and working of the commission.'

Laxman compared the situation of the country to that of a kindergarten where Nehru, the caretaker gets in to the giant cradle that is titled 'High-Power Commission', while the kids wreak havoc on each other or in general. If this cartoon portrayed Nehru as a escape artist when issues brewed in the country, Laxman also portrayed him as a strong man who refused to budge when it

¹⁸² Ghose, Sankar. *Jawaharlal Nehru A Biography*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1993. Print.

came to anti-imperialist stance. Two of the famous cartoons of Laxman which portrayed Nehru are that of the time when India had to finish off the colonial powers that refused to leave the country even after the British left in 1947; the French and the Portuguese.



Figure 46
R.K. Laxman
Source: *Jest in Time*

In this cartoon that published on 21 April 1954, Nehru is portrayed as explaining the situation to two monkeys, France and Portugal, that it was time for them to leave India. Nehru is depicted as a patient man while the colonial forces are depicted as uncouth and wild as they refuse to listen to the voice of reason. If Pondicherry under the French influence proved easy to deal with, Goa under Portugal refused to budge to the pressure of the Nehru government. Nehru managed to get the French to handover Pondicherry by 1954 but situation in Goa worsened and escalated into an international diplomatic mess when Portugal sought the support of the United Nations to keep their territories in India. Pro-Indian struggles in Goa were dealt with in a harsh manner as Nehru struggled to achieve a peaceful annexation of Goa.



Figure 47
R.K. Laxman
Brushing up the Years: A Cartoonist's History of India

This cartoon that published on 16 December 1961 came in the wake of Nehru's comment in the Parliament that he wished to find a peaceful solution to the Goan issue. Despite all the diplomatic efforts, India seized Goa by force¹⁸³ in a series of air, sea and land invasions by the end of 1961.

¹⁸³ The India-Portugal dialogue on Goa started on 27 February 1950 and it took 12 years of coercion and diplomatic talks before India decided to annex Goa through military aggression. António de Oliveira Salazar, the Portuguese Prime Minister refused to give up the claims on Goa and in 1957, asked for the United Kingdom's help in the matter before approaching Brazil for opening dialogue and the United Nations for a collective intervention.



Figure 48
R.K. Laxman

Source: *Brushing up the Years: A Cartoonist's History of India*

Perhaps the last of the Laxman cartoons on Nehru may have been the one on Indo-China relationships prior to the war in 1962. This cartoon featured the famous character common man as the P.A to Nehru. If Laxman portrayed Nehru as a strong leader in the cartoons related to the annexation of Goa, the Nehru portrayed in this would cut a sorry figure, oblivious to the increasing border violation of China. The cartoon has Nehru instructing the 'common man' to type out a 'strongly worded polite note' as a reply to the Chinese aggression while Mao Zedong and Zhou EnLai in military uniform tunnels into the room, carrying a rifle.

The Nehruvian Era ushered in a lot of change in the form of policies but failed when it came to translating them to the daily lives of the masses that Nehru kept a sway upon. The Five Year Plans, the beginning of industrialisation, political and geographical consolidation of the nation etc were weighed in against widening disparity between the different social sections and religious and linguistic groups. Bipan Chandra says,

‘¹⁸⁴Nehru also failed to build institutions and organizational structures to implement his vision or policies or to mobilize the people behind them; he created no social instruments and this led to a general weakness in execution of his policies and ideas, and was a major reason for the shortcomings in the implementation of the land reforms, the execution of the Community Development project and the management of the public sector.’

Cartoonists and cartooning thrived during this period as the colonial subjects were replaced by Indian ones and the policies and priorities of the new leaders were worthy of a cartoons. Media enjoyed the new freedom as Nehru gave an indirect mandate to Shankar, ‘Don’t spare me, Shankar.’ Though varied in style and technique, cartoonists took the opportunity to work as a critique of the newly formed democratic government and the results were a great wealth of cartoons. However, the post-Nehruvian Era brought in a sort of political crisis. Lal Bahadur Shastri, who became the Prime Minister after Nehru’s death had to deal with a stressed government and a tattered military along with a stagnant economy, nearly nil industrial production and slowed down agricultural production. The initial months of Shastri administration were criticised by many as indecisive and directionless. The government also gave into panic when Pakistan decided to

¹⁸⁴ Chandra, Bipin., Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. *India After Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2008. Print.

attack India with the confidence that Indian Army was in shambles after the Chinese attack of 1962.



Figure 49

Bal Thackeray

Source: *An Anthropological Study of Cartoons in India*

The above given cartoon by Bal Thackeray¹⁸⁵ shows depicts the Prime Ministership as a bed of iron nails and Lal Bahadur Shastri is being led to it ceremoniously by leaders such as Kamaraj, Morarji Desai, Krishna Menon and Nijalingappa, a group of senior Congressmen nick-

¹⁸⁵ Bal Thackeray worked in *The Free Press Journal* and the *Times of India* before launching his own Marathi magazine in 1960, *Marmik*, which he used for political purposes. However, his cartooning continued.

named as The Syndicate. Contemporary issues such as price rise, Kashmir unrest, Non-Alignment Policy, border disputes, Chinese aggression, Goa, Pakistan etc.

The war with Pakistan was the ammunition that Lal Bahadur Shastri required to be independent as the Prime Minister. In a decisive victory over Pakistan in 1965, Shastri proved his leadership before agreeing to the mediation by Russia for a ceasefire. After signing the Tashkent Declaration on 4 January 1966, Shastri passed away on 10 January, in a rather mysterious way, paving the way for Indira Gandhi to rise to power, both in the Congress Party and in the political scene of India.

2. The Indira Era; the Emergency

Indira Gandhi's rise to the post of Prime Minister was seen by many as a desperate attempt by the Syndicate¹⁸⁶, a group of senior regional Congress leaders, as a move to counter Morarji Desai's bid for the top post. Though Morarji Desai was much more senior, he was feared by the Syndicate to be intolerant and a supporter of right wing ideals. Having bypassed Morarji Desai once to place Shastri on the top job, the Syndicate hoped to do it once more and succeeded in finding the right candidate in Indira Gandhi, whom they thought to be easier to control and pose as a well-liked figure by the people for being Nehru's daughter.

¹⁸⁶ The Syndicate, an informal group of senior Congress leaders formed in 1963, wielded enormous power in the party during the post-Nehru years. It consisted of K. Kamaraj, the Congress President, Atulya Ghosh from Bengal, S.K. Patil from Bombay, N. Sanjeeva Reddy from Andhra Pradesh, and S. Nijalingappa from Karnataka.

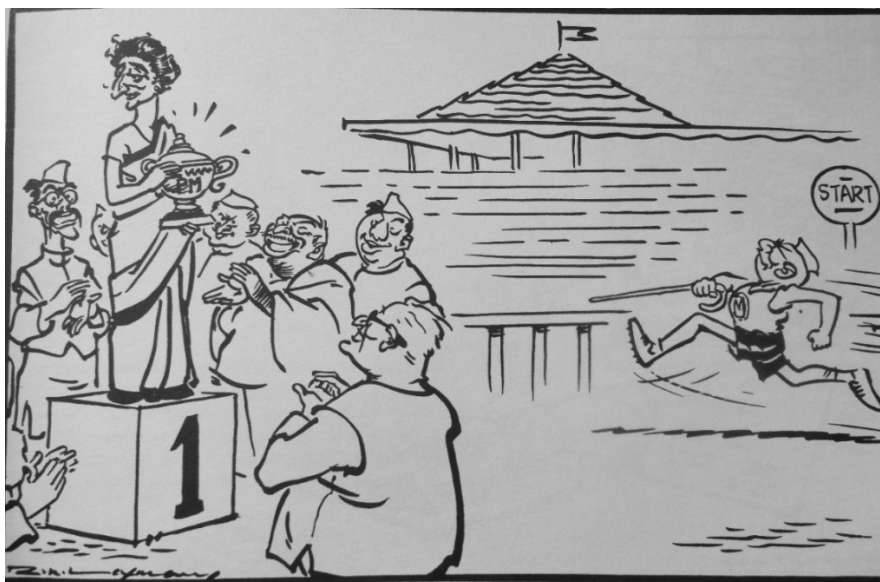


Figure 50

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Laxman's cartoon portrayed the Congress infight regarding the selection of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister, with Morarji Desai's refusal to withdraw from the race even after the former was given the seat.



Figure 51

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Indira Gandhi did not just inherit a Congress party divided on opinions. She inherited a country victorious in a war with its neighbour but devastated its economy doing so, a slowed down industrial production and several states suffering from famine and drought. Above all, simmering rebellions in Punjab and the North East were gaining momentum, putting the government on a backfoot. The wars with China and Pakistan of 1962 and 1965 respectively, and the increased threats from an alliance between both these countries had led to a steep rise in military expenditure under the Shastri government. Resources from Five Year plans were diverted to adjust these measures thusby putting great pressure on an already collapsed economy. Indira Gandhi's controversial decision to de-value the Rupee to adjust export-import revenue had caused a rift between her and party leadership. All these measures led to a widespread discontent against the government. Increasing economic disparities between the various classes were causing a great deal of turmoil finally leading up to popular agitations in many states, often turning into violent shutdowns. Strikes and massive protests often affected industrial production and market. This paved the way for the opposition, which was mostly silent during the pervious administration, CPI(M), Jan Sangh etc to ridicule the government in which ever way they could. Indira Gandhi and the Congress, divided on policies and ideals crawled up to the 1967 general elections sparring with the opposition and the general public on issues from unemployment to cow salughter¹⁸⁷, a recent communal development raised by the Jan Sangh in 1966. The 1967 elections, in the twentieth year of Independence, granted Congress another victory despite regional parties and the opposition working out alliances against it. It also granted Indira Gandhi a certain kind of

¹⁸⁷ Though the ant-cow slaughter agitation had its roots in the 1893 riots, the 1966 one was the first in independent India. On 7 November 1966, a mob of Sadhus (Hindu holy men) demanding a ban on slaughter of cows marched to New Delhi and attempted to storm the parliament. When that was foiled, they went on a rampage through the capital, setting fire to the residence of K. Kamaraj, the then Congress President. Indira Gandhi took a firm stance saying, 'This is not an attack on the government. It is an attack on our way of life, our values and the traditions which we cherished.'

supremacy in the party as what was known till then as the Syndicate failed to reach the parliament¹⁸⁸. She also compensated for the weakened position in the parliament by tying up with Morarji Desai and giving him the position of Deputy Prime Minister. Despite this move, the situation in Congress continued to deteriorate further and finally leading to a showdown between the existing working committee members of the Syndicate and Indira Gandhi. Morarji Desai, who was the Finance Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister became disgruntled with Indira Gandhi's decision to nationalise banks. The Ten-Point Programme, radical ideological stance adopted by the Congress Working Committee was the turning point in which split of 1969 happened. The Ten-Point Programme included social control of banks, nationalization of general insurance, state trading in import and export trade, ceilings on urban property and income, curbs on business monopolies and concentration of economic power, public distribution of food grains, repaid implementation of land reforms, provision of house-sites for the rural poor, and abolition of princely privileges. However, the right wing members in the Congress working committee was now taken over by Morarji Desai and President Nijalingappa and they pitched for a radical programme which emphasised on private enterprises and foreign capital. They also wanted stronger ties with the West, especially the United States. In the domestic front, they demanded a suppression of the Left and protest movements with the intention of garnering the support of the landownes in rural areas.

¹⁸⁸ K. Kamaraj (Tamil Nadu), Atulya Ghosh (West Bengal) and S.K. Patil (Bombay) failed from their constituencies in the general elections, leaving Nijalingappa and N. Sanjeeva Reddy, the only ones in the so-called Syndicate.

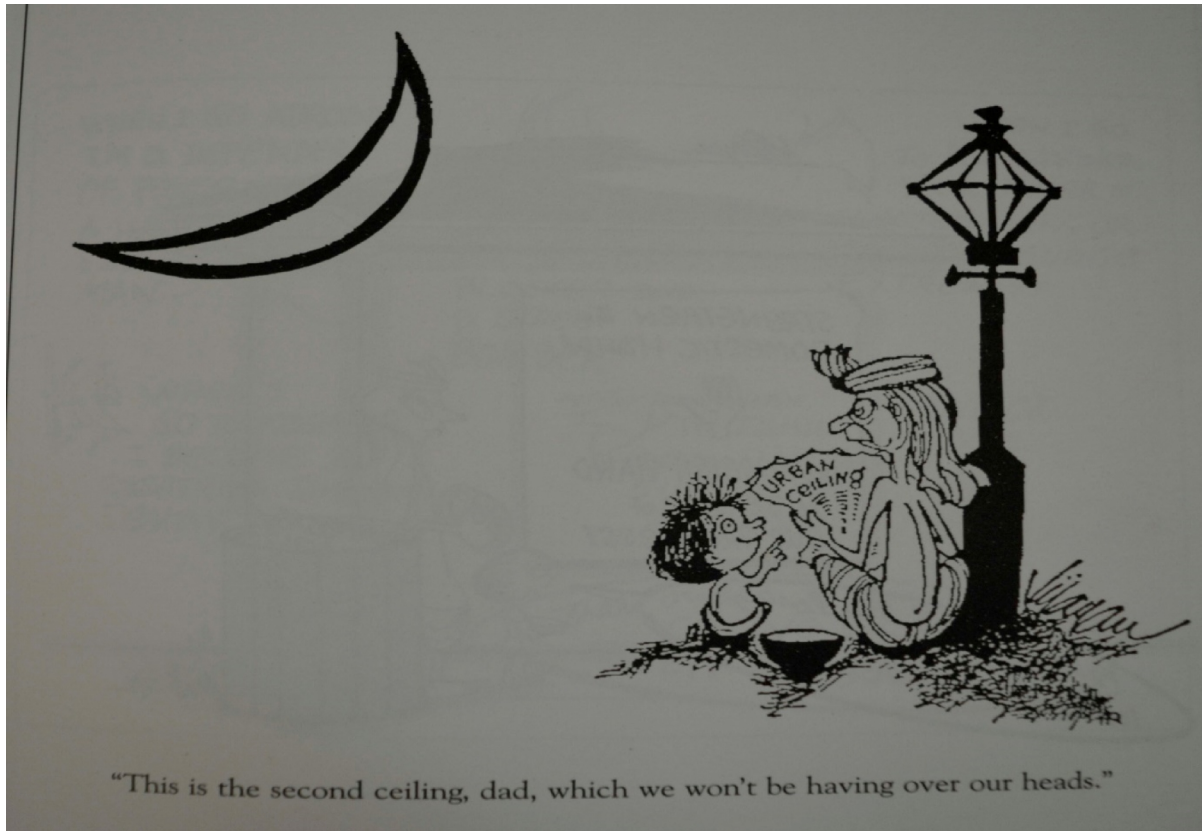


Figure 52

Source: *A Cartoonist Remembers*

O.V. Vijayan's cartoon on the Ten-Point Programme's 'ceilings on urban property and planning', is one of the few that features the quintessential characters the Father and the Son, deliberating if the move is going to create more homeless people in the country. With a section of the Congress rooting for the Programme and the other trying to subvert it, the Ten-Point Programme successfully became the cause for a split of Congress in 1969¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁹ Indira Gandhi's sacking of Morarji Desai as the Finance Minister that speeded up the fight between the two factions. After assuming the role of the Finance Minister herself, Indira Gandhi nationalised fourteen major banks and announced that she will withdraw the privy purses for the royal families. The populist moves improved her status amongst the masses and the Leftist opposition parties. The spat between the Prime Minister and the Party continued regarding who will be nominated for the post of the President of India as both had their own favourites. On the 12th November 1969, the party ousted her from its membership on accounts of indiscipline. Indira Gandhi



Figure 53

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Laxman's cartoon on Indira Gandhi pelting the Congress Headquarters showed her as taking the fight to the opposite faction's camp.



Figure 54

Source: Brushing Up the Years

floated her own faction openly, calling it Congress (R) and the Syndicate faction came to be known as Congress (O). Indira Gandhi retained the majority with 220 MPs standing by her.

At the same time, Laxman also perceived her as a strong figure, capable enough to get what she wanted. She is portrayed as toppling a chess board while playing a game with a Maharaja, symbolising the power of democracy over aristocracy.

Because she relied on a coalition government, Indira Gandhi, with hopes of achieving a better result, called for elections one year early in 1972. The opposition Congress (O) with the help of Jan Sangh and SSP (Samyuktha Socialist Party) declared themselves as a Grand Alliance against Indira and launched a slogan – ‘Indira Hatao’ (Oust Indira). To counter that, riding on the support of her new populist schemes and stable policies, Indira launched her campaign slogan – ‘Garibi Hatao’ (Eradicate Poverty). Riding on a pro-Indira feel in the nation, Mrs. Gandhi won the election with a two-third majority in the parliament¹⁹⁰.

Despite her rising popularity, during the campaigning of the 1971 elections, Congress (O) had alleged that Indira Gandhi was aiming at upsetting the democratic foundation of the country. However, no one thought of the allegation to be of a certain prophetic nature, as Indira Gandhi countered the allegation by saying that she could never think of destroying a ‘sacred trust given to our generation by men like Gandhiji and Nehru.’¹⁹¹ Laxman’s cartoon on the opposition’s allegation had made an impact for its underlying message that a certain amount of personality cult around Indira Gandhi had started growing in her faction of Congress around that time.

¹⁹⁰ The Grand Alliance formed against Indira by the Syndicate and Morarji Desai acknowledged defeat in the elections while CPM, CPI and DMK garnered more seats than before. CPI and DMK allied with Indira Gandhi’s Congress forming a huge majority in the Parliament, enabling her to amend Constitution, if the need arose.

¹⁹¹ Martyrs, Nina ed. *Laxman Rekhas*. Mumbai: Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd, 2005. Print.



Figure 55

Source: Brushing Up the Years

O.V. Vijayan on the other hand had concentrated on critiquing the election promises that Indira Gandhi had showered on the common people of India. His contempt for populist schemes and slogans find evidence in his cartoons of the time.

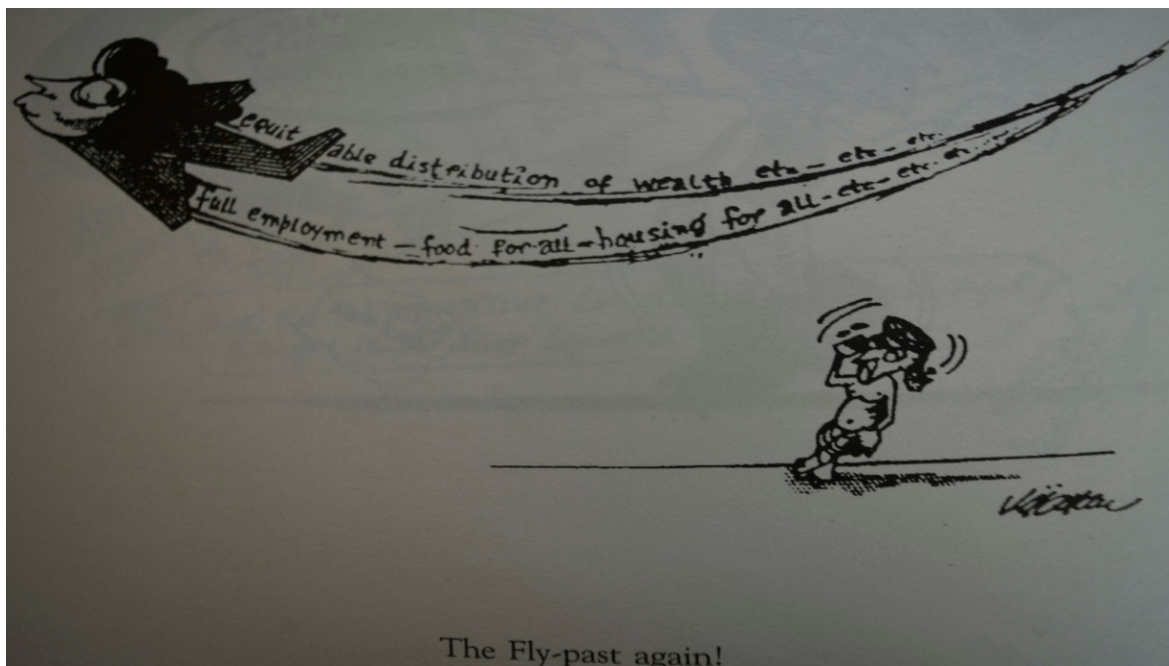


Figure 56

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

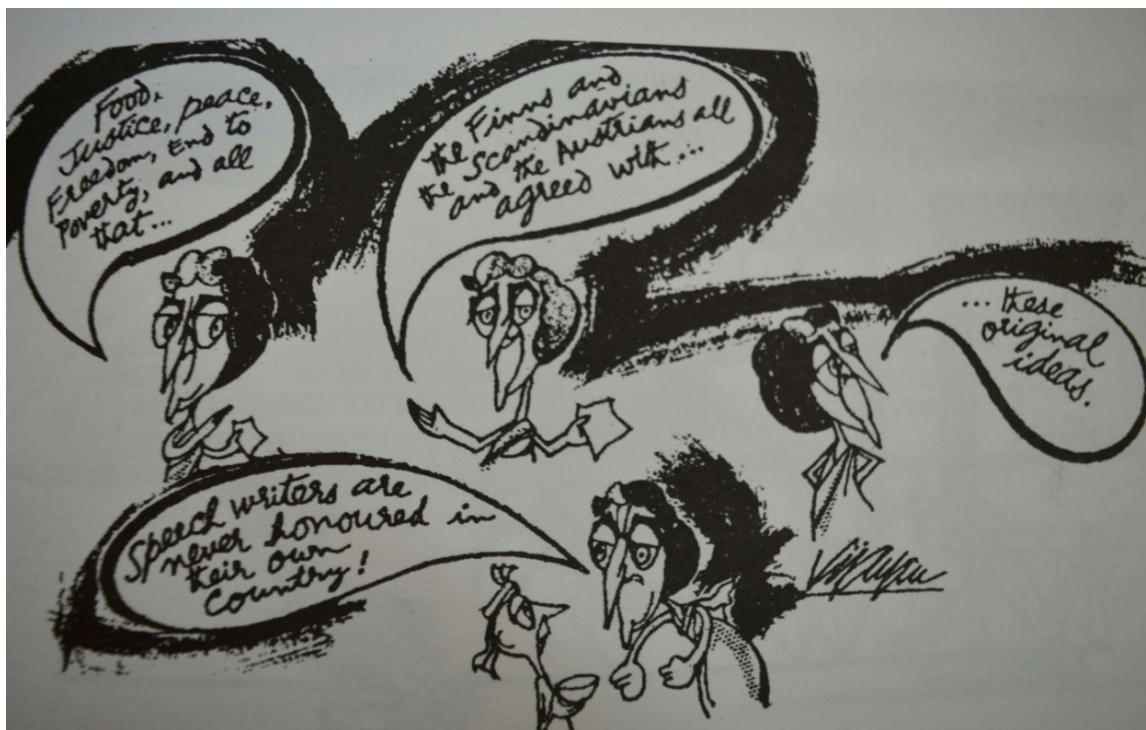


Figure 57

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan's numerous cartoons targeting the election promises of various political parties over the years probably began from the general elections of 1971.

3. The Indira Era: J.P Movement

After elected to become the Prime Minister for a second time, Indira Gandhi was greeted with the issue of East Bengal, a part of Pakistan, which was under tyrannical rule from the political leadership of West Pakistan. The freedom movement which was gaining momentum in East Pakistan and the subsequent flow of refugees to India had started making international headlines. Pakistan and China, with the help of the USA had started attempts to malign the Indian leadership for insurgencies in Bengal. After months of raising the issues in international platforms and readying the armed forces, India responded by helping out the Bangaldeshi freedom fighters led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to seize power in East Pakistan. While fighting wars at two fronts, East and the West, Indira also succeeded in bringing Pakistan to table for peace talks which culminated in the Simla Agreement of 1972¹⁹². Expectations of the general populace had piled up by the time central government settled down after the Liberation of Bangladesh. Sticking to the promises she made during the election campaign, Indira Gandhi's government nationalized the general insurance which was followed by the nationalization of the coal industry. In 1973, The Foreign Exchange Regulation Act was passed. The Planning Commission also drafted a five year plan in 1973 aiming at a 5.5. growth rate in the national income. However, many of these plans did not have much of an impact on the growing number of poor in the urban as well as rural areas.

¹⁹² The Simla Agreement signed between Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a resolution that paved the way for further talks between India and Pakistan in an attempt to better the bilateral relationships. It declared that both countries will 'settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations.' It also decided to do away with a third party involvement in doing so. The Simla Agreement also accepted the contemporary border line between India and Pakistan as LoC (Line of Control) and that 'neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations.'

The general feeling of the people are reflected in the O.V. Vijayan cartoon of the time when Indira Gandhi said that poverty was largely becoming a universal issue.

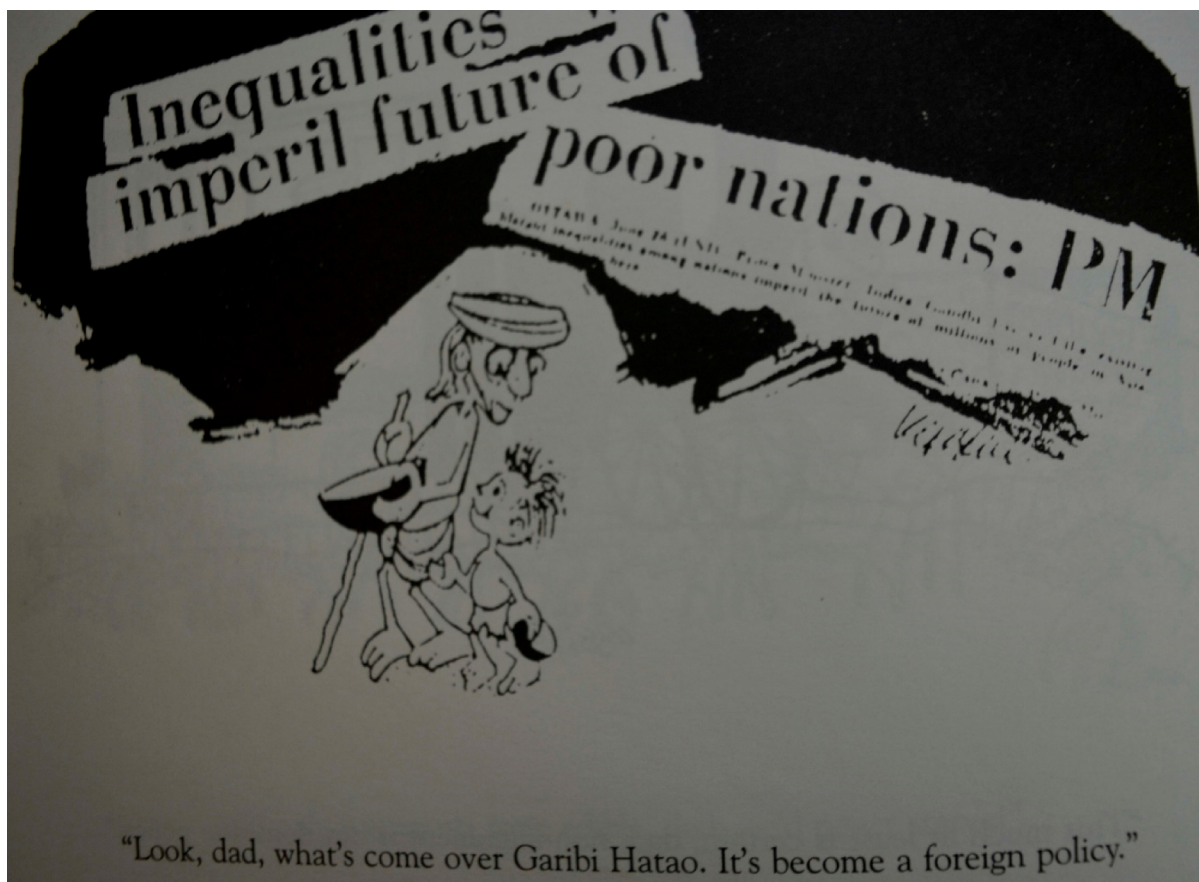


Figure 58

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan's cartoon was made in response to a statement that Indira Gandhi had made in 1973¹⁹³, '... if anybody tries to say that poverty can go in my lifetime or during my tenure as Prime Minister, it just cannot. It has very deep roots.'

¹⁹³ Ali, Tariq. *The Nehrus and the Gandhis*. London: Pan McMillan UK, 2005. Print.

The slowing down of industrial production which began during the later phase of the Nehruvian Era and continued relentlessly during the time of Lal Bahadur Shastri had refused to change for good. The annual rate of industrial production had come down to about 3.3 percent in 1965-70 from the reasonably better 9.0 percent in 1961-65. Though the food production saw a great increase in the beginning of Indira Gandhi's second term, failure of monsoons and a subsequent drought in 1972-73 brought in a colossal shortage. India, which relied on hydro electric power projects faced huge electricity shortage due to the lack of rains and as a result heavy industries suffered a slowing down of production. All of these contributed to a general discontent that was growing amongst the middle classes by 1973-74 culminated into many nation-wide protests, demonstrations, *bandhs* etc. Particularly in U.P and Bihar, the law and order situation worsened further. In U.P, many units of Provincial Armed Constabulary revolted and clashed with the army resulting in several deaths. Meanwhile in Bihar, the minister for Railways, L.N. Mishra was killed in a bomb blast resulting in further deterioration of the law and order situation. It was in the wake of these incidents that the J.P Movement began to strengthen. Agitations in Gujarat in January, 1974 that occurred over rise in the prices of essential commodities immediately took a violent turn and lasted more than two months. The protestors clashed with police in several cities and towns and educational institutions and government as well as private offices remain closed. The agitator's demand for the removal of the ministry was finally accepted by the Centre when the assembly was dissolved and a President's rule was imposed on the state. Gaining inspiration from this, a similar movement began in Bihar in March, 1974. Though the protests against the state government was started by students of various universities and institutions, it soon garnered support from common people and most importantly, the opposition parties. The agitations received a leader in the form of Jayaprakash Narayan, who had earlier gone into political retirement. JP, as

he was widely known, called for 'Total Revolution' and called the government a corrupt machinery intended on looting common people. He asked the students and people to paralyze the government and gherao the state assembly until there was a change in the situation. Entered the popular agitation with the experience of organizing Bhoodan Movement¹⁹⁴ and the Sarvodaya Movement¹⁹⁵, J.P, a socialist leader had grown disgruntled during the earlier term of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister. As early as 1967, he had expressed the radical idea of having the army take over as the rulers of the country if the present political system could not ensure political stability. With the entrance of J.P, the mass agitation against the government got an unexpected but experienced leader and turned into a country-wide agitation, backed by many opposition parties in order to bring the government down from what he alleged to be a totalitarian regime.

¹⁹⁴ Bhoodan movement was a voluntary land redistribution movement started by Vinoba Bhave in 1951 in Andhra Pradesh with the intention of persuading wealthy landowners to donate some part of their land to farmers and landless people.

¹⁹⁵ Sarvodaya Movement was based on the Gandhian ideal of social upliftment. It was widely used in the post-Independent India by freedom fighters and Gandhians alike for bringing justice, progress and upliftment to all the stratas of society, especially in the 50s and 60s.



Figure 59
Source: Brushing Up the Years

Congress, in turn, started accusing J.P and the opposition of attempting to subvert democracy. In fact, all of the J.P Movement's agitation programmes such as bandhs, satyagrahas, processions, speech gatherings etc were perceived by the Congress and its supporters as methods to destroy a democratically elected government. J.P's declaration of holding elections all by himself to elect a 'People's Assembly' and make a parallel government in Bihar was not very well received by those at the power. The paranoia in the central government about the J.P movement was apparent in the cartoons of the time.



Figure 60
Source: Brushing Up the Years

In this cartoon, R.K. Laxman draws the parallel between J.P.'s claims and how they were perceived by the Congressmen of the time, spreading the paranoia at an alarming rate while J.P. sits holding a placard which says 'Save Democracy'.

In yet another cartoon, Laxman plays on the same paranoia of the Congress when J.P. decided to cozy up to the Naxalbari Movement. Laxman's cartoon portrays the Communists in the jungles of Naxalbari as a dragon as J.P. walks vigorously to it. Indira, with a group of Congressmen, watches while one of them says with confidence that J.P. will soon be asking the center for help, indicating that there was no way J.P. would be able to rein in the Communists.



Figure 61
Source: Brushing Up the Years

O.V. Vijayan's cartoon on the Congress allegation of J.P.'s attempt to subvert democracy came with his famous character – the Father – featuring in, voicing the sentiment of a Bihari commoner while trying to weigh in the stand of the Communists, who were supporting the Congress and Indira Gandhi at that time¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹⁶ The Communist Party of India split in 1969, with CPI and CPI (M) emerging as two factions. Before the split, its attitude towards the Congress government under Shastri was of an ever-changing one with mistrust laid all over. However, the pro-people attitude of Indira Gandhi brought them to support Congress during the initial years of the Indira rule and continued through her second term, leading up all the way to the Emergency. The Indian Communists of the time believed that the J.P Movement was to be thwarted at any cost in order to bring stability of government which would ultimately prove beneficial to the people of India.

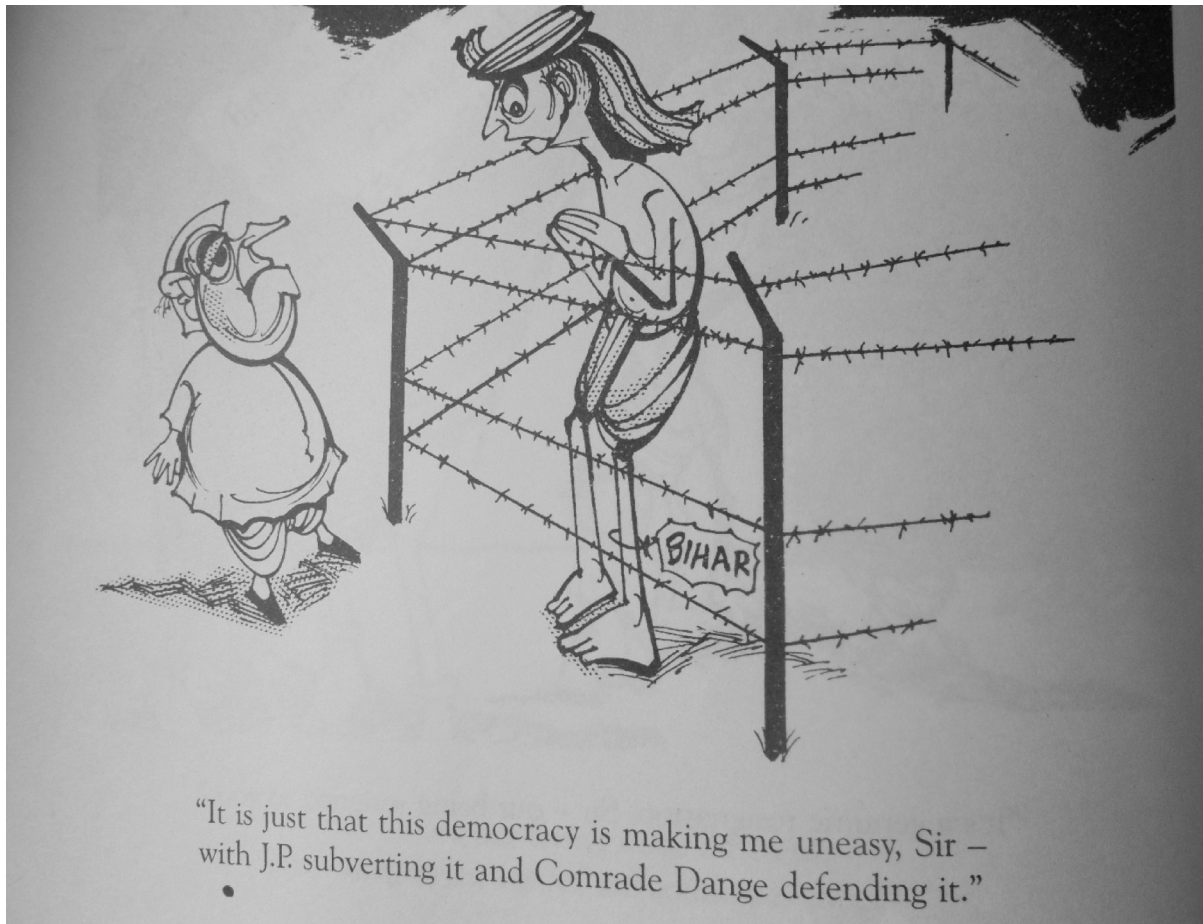


Figure 62

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

J.P and the Movement was one of Vijayan's favorite subject of the time. Even as a cartoonist who harbored Communist sentiments, Vijayan's dilemma about the political situation seemed obvious from his cartoons. It, to an extent, matched that of the above mentioned character from his cartoon. He wrote later,

¹⁹⁷It is, in fact, the task of the cartoonist, which takes it well beyond the salon and polite entertainment. The West, with nearly a century of stable institutions, could afford salon humour; I cannot, even if my fellow cartoonists think

¹⁹⁷ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2002. Print.

they can. The cartoon is an attribute of democracy; but mine is a precarious island democracy, whose shores are being licked up by erratic waters all the while. On this insecure perch, do you expect me to laugh—or cry?’



Figure 63

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India



Figure 64

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

It is the changing image of J.P that both Vijayan and Laxman tried to portray most of the time. Both cartoonists concentrated on translation the Congress paranoia and the mass hysteria centered around J.P, the phenomenon of the time. From ‘subverting democracy’ to the image of a ‘Fascist’, for letting right-wing parties like Jan Sangh¹⁹⁸ be a part of the movement, J.P constantly changed his tactics to bring down the government. Vijayan’s presentation of J.P as a liberator, forming him as a figure that emulates Gandhi in posture and style, contrasts starkly with Laxman’s vision of J.P as just another social activist aiming to control the politics of the country. Vijayan often drew J.P as a Gandhian figure, trying to make sense of Gandhian principles in a country where Gandhi, though respected as the Father of the Nation, was becoming an ignored idol. Vijayan’s four cartoons leading up to the immediate reason to proclaim Emergency are in fact due for a proper scrutiny. Chronologically looked at, they together form a picture that is easily understandable for an enthusiast of history, years later. Vijayan believed himself to have grown ‘in dissidence¹⁹⁹’. His disagreement with the government, the policies and the rhetoric originating from both the rulers and the opposition is evident in his cartoons, especially the ones related to the Emergency.

¹⁹⁸ The Jan Sangh and its student wing, ABVP, played a crucial role in the later stages of the J.P movement. While some way, the right-wing effectively hijacked the movement towards the end of it, it is said that that allegation was somewhat true with the top ABVP leaders of the time infiltrating into the Chhatra Sangharsh Samitis (CSS) with RSS in tow. There were even reports of clashes between SYS (Samajwadi Yuvajan Sabha) and RSS/ABVP Nexus to take control of the CSS in districts with the formation of parallel CSS to counter the ones that were already formed.

¹⁹⁹ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2005. Print.

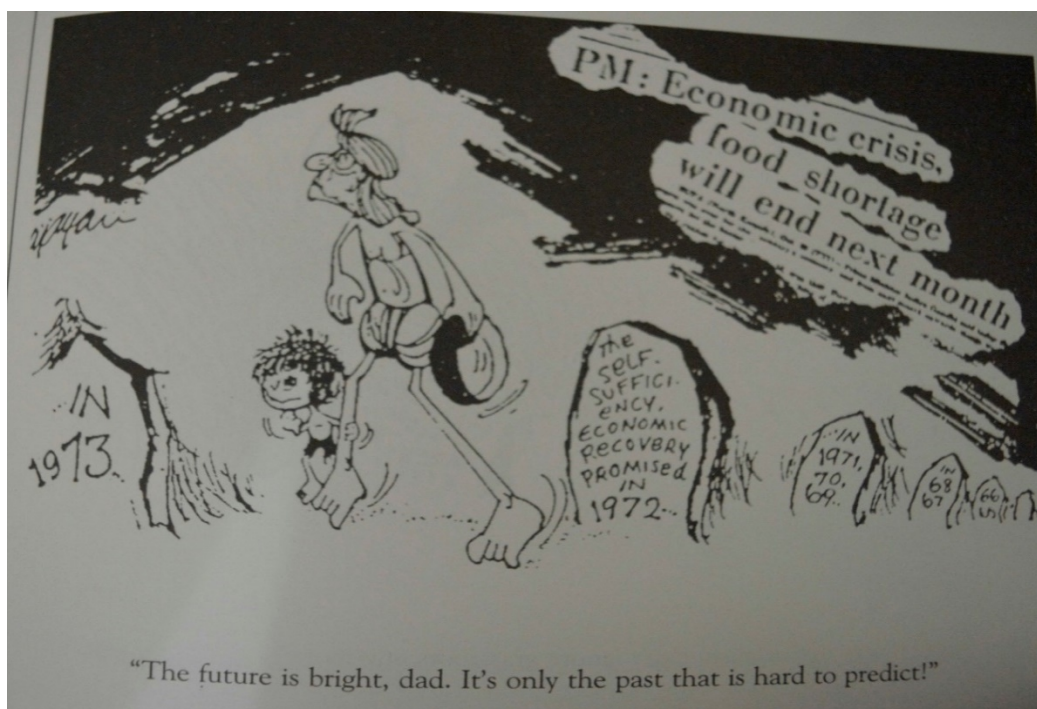


Figure 65

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India



Figure 66

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

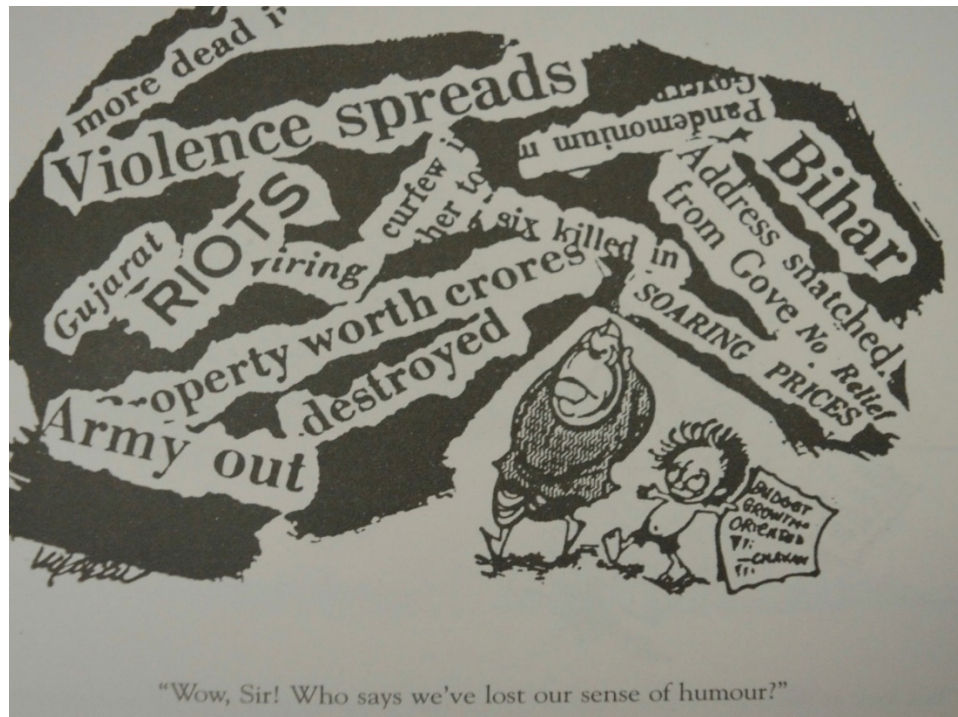


Figure 67

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

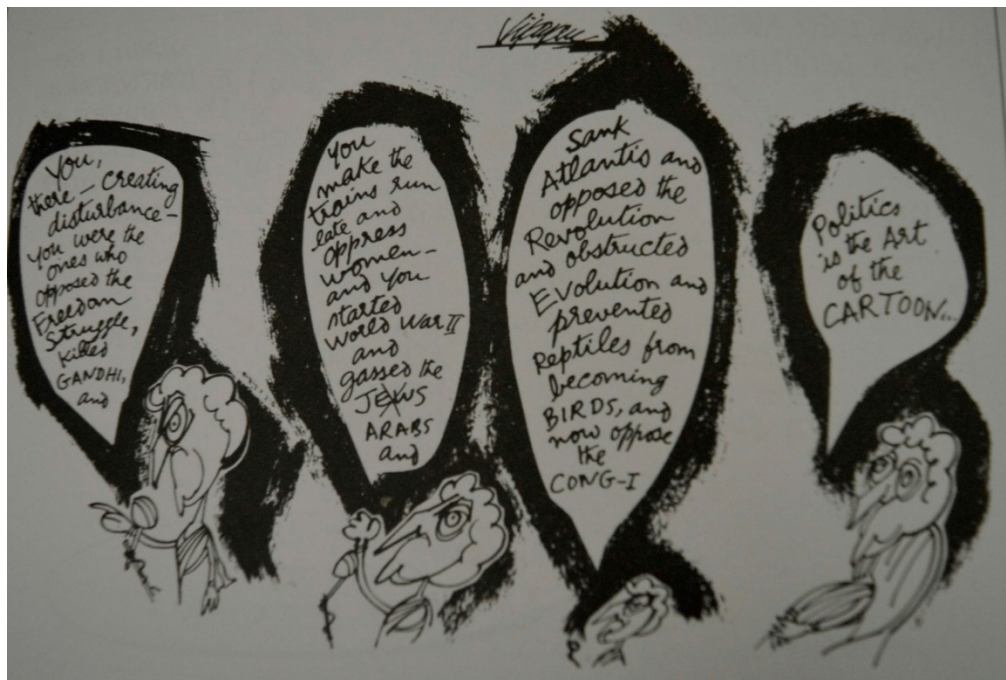


Figure 68

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

The four cartoons, two featuring Indira Gandhi, and the rest voicing the sentiments of the common people, outline the political situation of the times. The first one has the famous Father and Son duo walking past milestones of governmental promises. As usual, the cartoon is a commentary on the news given along in print: 'PM: Economic crisis, food shortage will end next month.' Having seen or heard such promises before, the father-son duo walks haplessly in to a milestone named 1973. The son's comment that 'the future is bright' and the past being 'hard to predict' invokes a certain hopelessness rather than humour.

The quintessential pessimism of Vijayan at work is evident from the next cartoons as well. Indira Gandhi's controversial nationalization of banks, and her posture, challenging *Comrades* to be with her while the cartoonist predicts a 'dictatorship of the secretariat' is on the horizon. Indira Gandhi holds a file titled 'Follow up Measures'. The next cartoon is even more interesting as Vijayan fills the canvas with the chaos that defined the year preceding the proclamation of the Emergency. A collage of news reports divided by thick strokes indicates that all is not well; Violence spreads, Property worth crores destroyed, Army out, Gujrat Riots... etc. While these issues are being ignored, Finance Minister Chavan²⁰⁰ terms the budget 'growth oriented.' The child retorts, 'Wow, Sir! Who says we have lost our sense of humour?'

Perhaps the sharpest cartoon on Indira Gandhi from that time may have been the last one in the list by O.V. Vijayan. This cartoon shows the transition of sense to senseless in the accusations aired by Indira Gandhi against those who opposed her government. From 'opposing freedom struggle' and 'killing Gandhi' to 'sinking Atlantis' and 'preventing reptiles from

²⁰⁰ Yashwantrao Chavan was made Finance Minister by Indira Gandhi in 1970 and later in 1974, he was also given the portfolio of External Affairs. After the Emergency, when Indira Gandhi lost her seat, Chavan was made the Opposition leader.

becoming BIRDS', Vijayan lampoons the deterioration in the seriousness of allegations that one group hurls at the another.

The Indira Era: The Emergency

On 12th June 1975, the Allahabad High Court declared Indira Gandhi's election to the Parliament invalid. A petition had been filed earlier by Raj Narain, a candidate that Indira Gandhi defeated in the 1971 general elections, that the Prime Minister had won the election through corrupt campaign practices. The judgement of the court made Indira Gandhi unable to contest in parliament elections for six years and therefore made her prime ministership invalid. Coincidence played a major role when the results of the Gujarat Assembly elections came out on the same date. Despite Indira Gandhi's massive campaigning, Congress suffered a defeat in the hands of a coalition of anti-Congress parties²⁰¹. These incidents revived the anti-Indira movement when it had slipped into a dull period. The J.P Movement strengthened with the now enlivened opposition demanded an immediate resignation of Indira Gandhi. However, her party gave her full confidence and support and asked her to not resign since the elections were due in eight months. The Supreme Court verdict²⁰² gave Indira Gandhi temporary respite but the opposition's demand for her resignation strengthened further. With increased agitations planned in the capital with most of the opposition leaders attending, Indira Gandhi proclaimed a state of Internal Emergency on the morning of 26 June under article 352 of the Constitution of India. It suspended the fundamental rights and civil liberties and at the same time promised that normalcy would return as soon as the

²⁰¹ The coalition consisted on Congress (O), Jan Sangh, BLD led by Morarji Desai. This coalition also had the backing of Jayaprakash Narayan.

²⁰² Indira Gandhi's appeal to the Supreme Court, asking for a stay on the verdict of the Allahabad High Court was heard by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer. Justice Iyer gave a rather confusing verdict which conditionally stayed the verdict of the High Court but refrained Mrs. Gandhi from participating in Parliamentary affairs and drawing salary as an M.P until a full bench of the Supreme Court was able to give a final verdict.

conditions were better for it. The Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) was implemented under which a multitude of opposition leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Atal Behari Vajpayee etc were arrested. It also banned what it termed as extremist organizations such as RSS, Jamaat-i-Islami and CPI (ML). Bipan Chandra summarizes the beginning of Emergency²⁰³,

‘A series of decrees, laws and constitutional amendments reduced the powers of the judiciary to check the functioning of the executive. The Defense of India Act and the MISA were amended in July 1975 to the detriment of the citizens’ liberties. In November 1976, an effort was made to change the basic civil libertarian structure of the Constitution through its 42nd Amendment, putting an end to the judicial review of a constitutional amendment, because it was said that the judiciary was obstructing pro-poor socio-economic measures such as land reform legislation in the name of defending fundamental rights, it was laid down that there would be no limitation whatever on the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution. Fundamental rights were indirectly emasculated by being made subordinate to an expanded version of the Directive Principles of State Policy embedded in the Constitution.

Thus, the emergency concentrated unlimited state and party power in the hands of the prime minister to be exercised through a small coterie of politicians and bureaucrats around her.’

²⁰³ Chandra, Bipin., Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. *India After Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2008. Print

While Indira Gandhi maintained that the Emergency was declared to preserve and safeguard democracy from the hands of those who are ‘masquerading as its saviour’²⁰⁴, the government issues a White Paper in the parliament titled, ‘Why Emergency?’²⁰⁵. It read,

‘Some political parties with fascist leanings had combined with a set of frustrated politicians to challenge the very basis of democratic functioning and to destroy the country’s self-confidence. They campaigned in the name of democracy to paralyze the national economy, to subvert democratic institutions and create anarchy and chaos in order to overthrow the duly elected government.’

Thus, the Emergency was installed in place and a new machinery was at work. It brought in a strict era of censorship imposed on newspapers and magazines and all other types of media. Editors were given strict rules and regulations to abide by. Anything from news pieces or cartoons were subjected to strict scrutiny of the censoring authority and if they were perceived as objectionable, strict measures were taken to remove them. The same censorship was in effect for all reportings of parliamentary proceedings as well. The Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matter Act²⁰⁶ was passed in February 1976 to give legal validity to all acts of censorship by the government. The introduction of this act set off a series of closures in the

²⁰⁴ Arun Shourie. “J.P: Misappropriation.” *Mainstream*, 20 October 1979, p-13. Web.

²⁰⁵ It was issued in the parliament on 21st July, 1975 to eradicate any doubts about the government and the Emergency.

²⁰⁶ The Ordinance provided for the prohibition of the printing or publication of any, specified matter for a temporary period not exceeding two months where such prohibition is necessary for preventing or combating any activity prejudicial to the interests of sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or any activity involving or likely to involve, or culminate in, incitement to offences. The Ordinance also provided for demanding security from keepers of presses and publishers and editors of newspapers found guilty of being concerned in the publication of objectionable matter as defined in the Ordinance. Provisions were also made in the Ordinance for preventing the circulation and distribution of objectionably matter. The main purpose of the Ordinance was to prevent the use of the Press for encouragement of violence, sedition and other offences and for the publication of obscene or scurrilous matter and the definition of "objectionable matter" has been strictly confined to this purpose.

publication industry starting with the popular *Shankar's Weekly*, a prominent magazine reserved for satirical cartoons and political commentary. Other magazines such as *Everyman's* Jayaprakash Narayan, *People's Democracy* published by the CPM etc. stopped publishing, before they were shut down. *Mainstream*, a popular magazine of the intelligentsia of the time, published by leftist Nikhil Chakravartty also shut down though he had earlier taken a pro-government stance during the J.P Movement.

In December 1975, the government decided to shut down the Press Council of India²⁰⁷ with effect from 1st January 1976, and to set up a new code of conduct for the press. The government controlled All India Radio and Doordarshan, thus by providing a different point of view of the Emergency already to the people. Forcing other private owned newspapers into the government line continued in to the year as the government wanted to control news of protests and other anti-governmental programmes from reaching the people. Laxman's pre-Emergency cartoon, which published just before it was proclaimed, says it all.

²⁰⁷ Press Council of India was set up in 1966 by the Parliament to safeguard the freedom of press in the country and also for maintaining and improving the standards of press in India.



Figure 69
Source: Brushing Up the Years

Media during the Emergency

Controlling the media was one of the first things the government did, after proclaiming the Emergency. It treated the press carefully, as Freedom of Press is not clearly mentioned in the Constitution. It falls largely within the fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution as mentioned along with “freedom of expression”. However, the article 19 of the Indian Constitution states that the ‘states shall be authorized to make any law restricting the exercise of the freedom of speech in the interest of the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign countries, public order and decency and good conduct.’ The states can also restrict press freedom in order to check slanderous articles and promotion of disaffection towards or contempt of court. The curtailing of freedom of

press by the Indira Gandhi government had its basis in these clauses of the Constitution. With the absence of private channels in the horizon of India's TV viewing, the state was in sole control of the radio and Doodarshan, the only channel. That only left the newspapers and magazines to be controlled. With the successful merger of several of the independent news agencies into one, named Samachar, Indira Gandhi virtually control the re-distribution of news in India. However, keeping tab of every bit of news and censoring them were mammoth tasks that required the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to work hard. The government also bargained with several newspapers about government sponsored advertisements, major source of revenue for many newspapers. These advertisements were given to a newspaper or magazine only if it agreed to comply with the new censorship rules and regulations.

O.V. Vijayan accepted the arrival of the Emergency by producing a rather cryptic cartoon of Indira Gandhi beckoning the congress flock back to her.

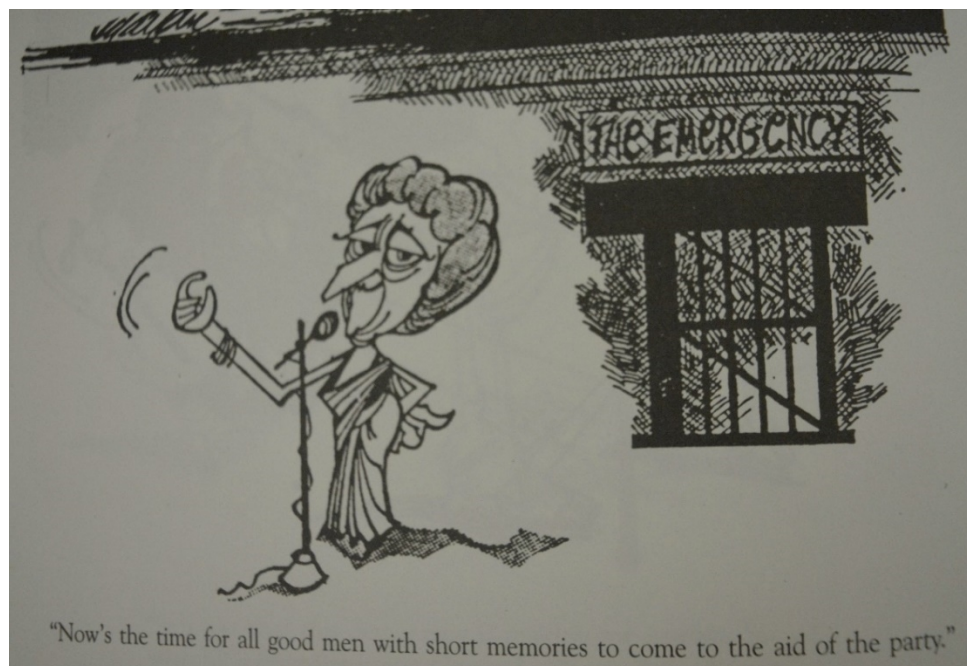


Figure 70

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

As mentioned before, Shankar Pillai bid adieu to the cartooning scene by closing down his iconic *Shankar's Weekly*. The last issue of *Shankar's Weekly's* cover page had the weekly's icon on horseback, riding out in style, while all the characters he ever mocked and criticized, stood watching. The title read – 'Parting – Not Without Sorrow'. The final editorial of the Weekly said²⁰⁸, 'Dictatorships cannot afford laughter because people may laugh at the dictator and that wouldn't do. In all the years of **Hitler**, there never was a good comedy, not a good cartoon, not a parody, or a spoof. From this point, the world and sadly enough India have become grimmer.'



Figure 71
Source: Shankar's Weekly

²⁰⁸ K. Shankar Pillai. "Farewell". *Shankar's Weekly*. 31 August 1975. Web.

R. K. Laxman and O.V. Vijayan did numerous cartoon on the Emergency, though a major share of it was refused by the censor board. Vijayan wrote about the corrosion of democracy and the fear of a cartoonist,

²⁰⁹I recollect the day of the Emergency; the hacks who produced the quickies after '77, called those the dark days, but I found them the most lucid days of education. One evening in 1975, in New Delhi's Press Club, I joined two senior members of the profession for a drink, and was mortified listening to a most serious debate on the chances of democracy in Portugal. When on June 26, I told my editor in Madras that I was quitting, he was concerned and asked me to stay on and comment on innocuous subjects; I did not leave in a spirit of bravado but in humility, at my sheer inability to locate this innocuous subject. Brothers in the profession did apparently manage to locate some: in the first weeks of censorship, in its abjectness and debasement, I found our newspapers carrying cartoons on the Lebanese crisis. One might as well have drawn cartoons on the Wars of the Roses.'

Vijayan's famous cartoons on the Emergency were images without words. It probably would have been a clever way of protesting the censorship, curtailing of civil liberties or the Fundamental Rights. His earlier cartoons with specific patterns of drawing people, especially political leaders of the time, changed and Vijayan assumed a new level of drawing; a more callous yet clever way of depicting the day to day affairs without failing to implant the terror of the times. These cartoons were devoid of his usual characters or themes. Vijayan's other favorite theme was 'the Bomb'; his many cartoons on India's entry into the nuclear world revealed an underlying fear

²⁰⁹ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2005. Print.

of it in a leftist cartoonist's mind. The wordless cartoons on the Emergency went even beyond the level of 'the Bomb Cartoons' by rejecting the very grammar of cartoons.

The man in uniform was one character that repeated in the Emergency cartoons of O.V. Vijayan. Suggesting a certain authority, often leading forces, this character is shown to have a order-obey mentality which is often acknowledged by his followers. In this picture, the authoritarian figure commands his troops to follow, a symbol of dictatorship, with the troops following, each one of them obeying their muscle memory yet indulged in sheer sexual fantasies.

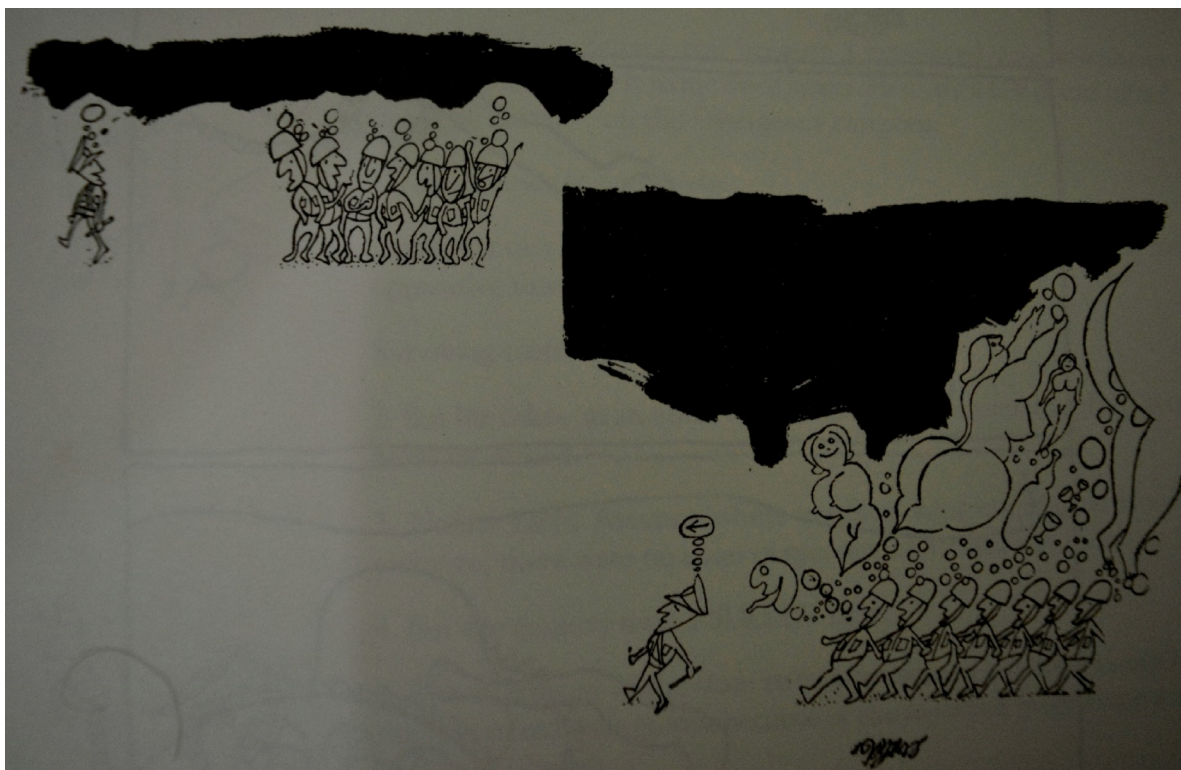


Figure 72

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

In yet another cartoon, Vijayan focuses on the same theme; the condition of the masses in a dictatorship. According to Vijayan, they are meant to do only thing; obey! In the cartoon, a man

with a crown orders a group of humans to remove their heads. They obey him instantly and the happy crowned man orders them to follow him. They follow him, headless! The image brings out the fear of being enslaved in a non-democratic society where the ruled are expected only to follow the orders with no liberties of any kind allowed for them. Vijayan's wordless images with encrypted dystopian messages are carefully crafted to reach out even after decades.

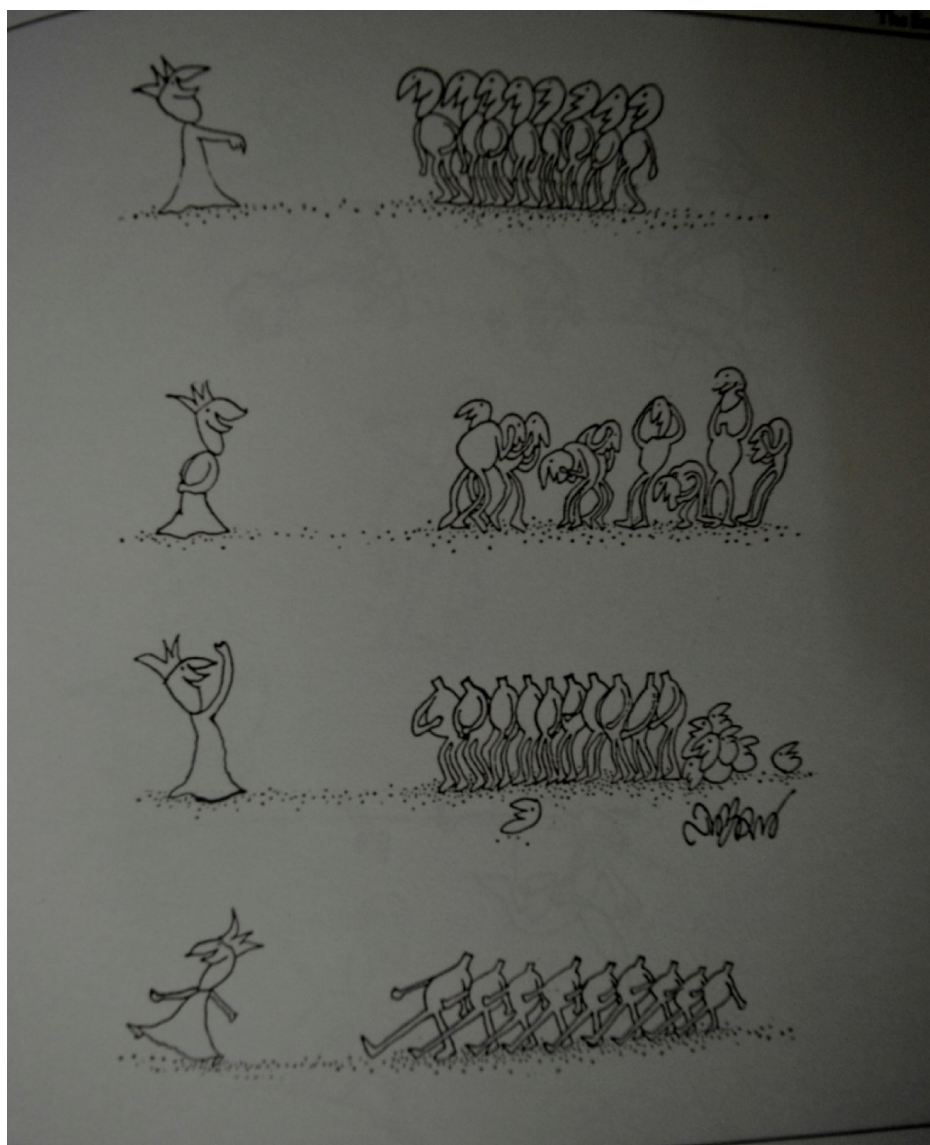


Figure 73

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Another cartoon by Vijayan portrays the man in uniform again, shooting a flower. He runs away in fear when the same flowers start growing from the stars pinned on his shoulder. Totalitarian regimes destroying the symbols of freedom, only to be absconding from them later, is what Vijayan presents in this cartoon, in a prophetic tone.

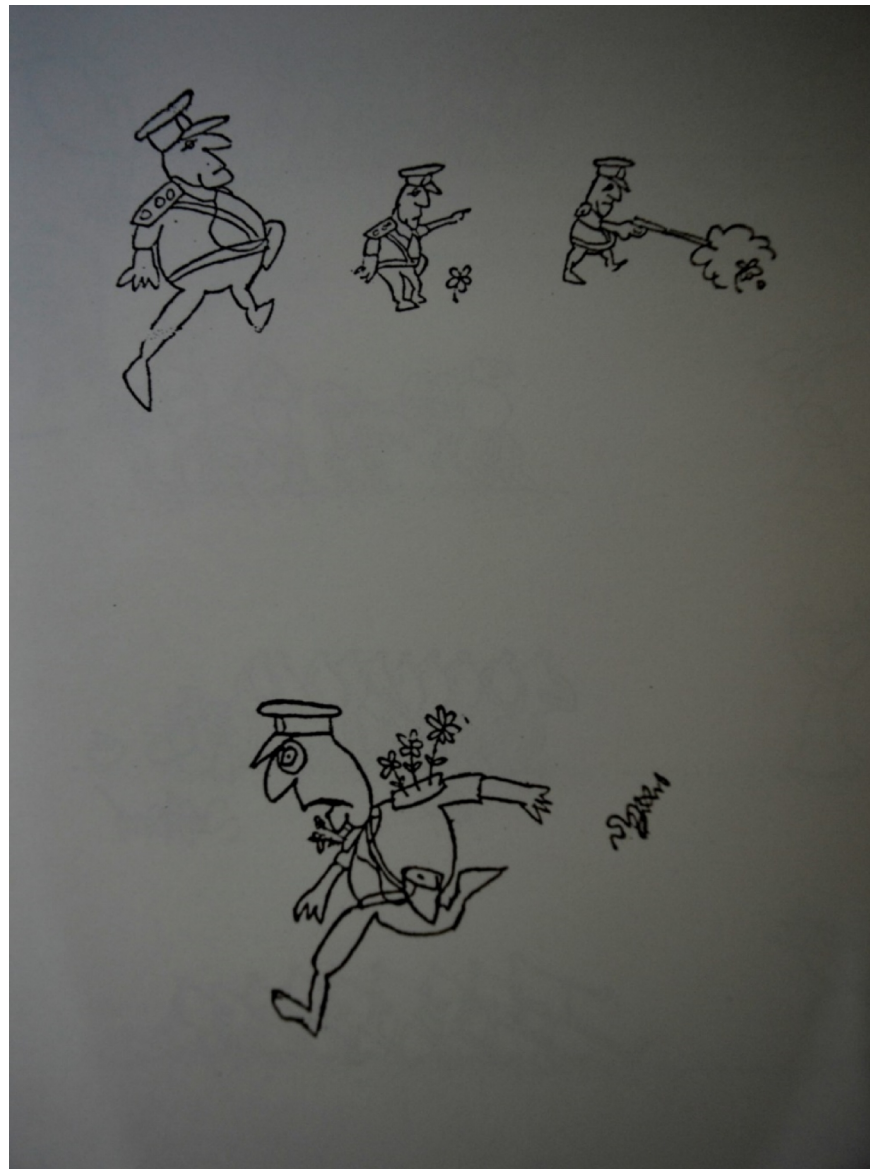


Figure 74

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

In this cartoon Vijayan draws the symbiotic relationship between the ruler and his tool; the enforcer. One works for the other and gets rewarded. The medals-for-kills formula that works even in democracies are presented here. It is probably reminiscent of the Rajan case²¹⁰ in Kerala during the Emergency.



Figure 75

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

²¹⁰ The controversial Rajan Case is about a missing student, P. Rajan, in the Regional Engineering College, Calicut during the heights of Emergency in Kerala. He was reported missing but was arrested by the police allegedly for Naxal related activities. Naxalism was at its peak in Kerala, coinciding with the police brutality during the Emergency, making the state police, a brutal force against Naxals. After his arrest, Rajan was taken to a police camp and was tortured for information during which he died and the police disposed off the body. His father T.V. Eachara Warriar, who filed a habeas corpus suit to find his son, brought rajan Case to the limelight.

Vijayan's cartoon takes reference from the mythology that the world might one day be swallowed by a dark serpent, causing its end. The apocalyptic theme presents the world being swallowed by a serpent in a police uniform, radiating helplessness and fear.



Figure 76

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Yet again, Vijayan embarks on an abstract idea of prisoners of the state being sent to the moon. A notion as old as science fiction-apocalyptic fiction of the 70s, the image may actually be a cartoonist's fear of being sent away into oblivion.



Figure 77

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan's cartoon shows a battle tank, as a symbol of oppression, pointing its gun at a hungry child. Chasing the child away, the gun barrell eats the food! Though not directly related to the Emergency, this cartoon belongs to the same genre of Vijayan cartoons in immortalizing the contrast between a social issue and a tyrannical symbol.

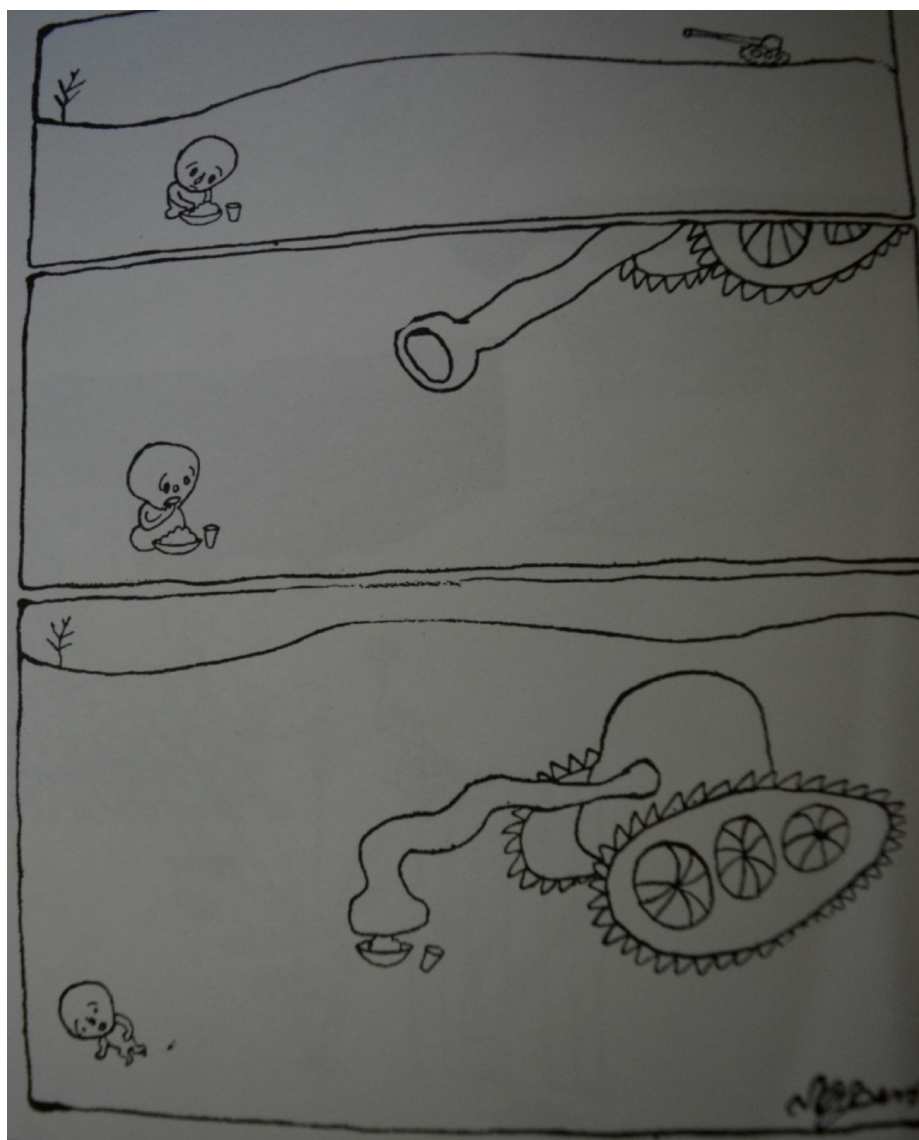


Figure 78

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Symbolically representing the nuances of power relationships, this cartoon by Vijayan portrays a ruler, enchanted by the feathers of a peacock asks for them to be taken out. The soldier obeys and the peacock is jailed. The king wears the peacocks in his hair and dances in front of a naked and jailed bird!

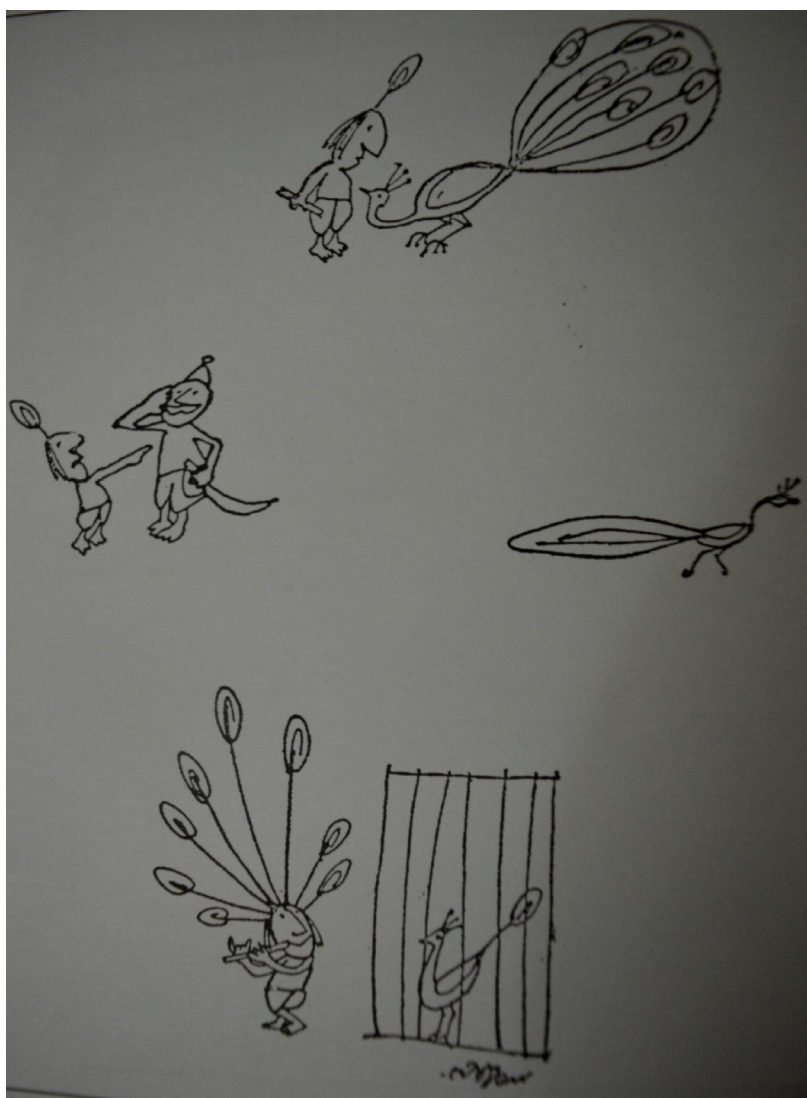


Figure 79

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

R.K. Laxman being more prolific than Vijayan had more of his cartoons banned during the ordeal of the Emergency. Even when he ‘decided to play safe’, some of Laxman’s cartoons were banned because obscure meanings were perceived out of it,

‘²¹¹Despite my care and humbling myself abjectly before the censors, Delhi found some of my cartoons violating the rules. Immediately my name was removed from the state censorship list and put on the list supervised by the Central censor board.

After this change, even the simplest sketch showing a fat fellow slipping on a banana peel was not passed! Some timid, illiterate clerk played safe and banned my cartoons, fearing they might contain hidden meanings which might have proved beyond his intelligence, or he gave his own interpretation to them and censored them himself.’

Laxman’s cartoon on the U.S President Gerard Ford’s visit to India being cancelled was censored by the authorities for fear that it was insulting to the nation and the U.S President. In fact, the cartoon was made to lampoon the President, who kept falling during that time²¹². The cartoon showed a group of men working on a net to be attached to the steps of a plane so that even if the U.S President fell while getting down from his plane, his safety will be of importance to the host country.

²¹¹ Laxman, R.K. *The Tunnel of Time*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998. Print.

²¹² Most Americans of the period thought Gerard Ford as a clumsy, dim-witted Klutz if newspaper reports are to be believed. His popularity went downhill when he pardoned Richard Nixon. He once slipped through the stairs of Air Force One, making the country laugh. Also, comedian Chevy Chase on the Saturday Night Live used to impersonate President Ford, making dumb statements accompanied by clumsy actions. The rest of the world also started believing the American media’s portrayal of Gerard Ford when he actually hit a ball into the gallery, hitting a lady in the head!



Figure 80

Source: Brushing Up the Years



Figure 81

Source: Brushing Up the Years

The above given cartoon was a witty exposing of the amount of corruption in government offices. It also lampooned the fact that during the Emergency, officers got transferred more often than usual. The censors removed the cartoon fearing that it was anti-government.



Figure 82
Source: *Brushing Up the Years*

This was one of the cartoons of Laxman that was banned for presenting India in a bad light during the Emergency. Laxman claims this cartoon to be depicting the situation in the UK of the time but the authorities thought it was an indirect lampooning of the Indian situation.

This cartoon, though banned during the Emergency, gained much popularity in the post-Emergency era and even made it to the cover page of Laxman's cartoon book *Brushing Up the Years – A Cartoonist's History of India: 1947 to the Present*²¹³.

²¹³ Laxman, R.K. *Brushing Up the Years – A Cartoonist's History of India: 1947 to the Present*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2008. Print.



Figure 83
Source: Brushing Up the Years

The common man is seen to have buried his face under a newspaper, looking for some real news. Evidently, he is not satisfied with the abundance of good news that seems to have filled the pages of the newspaper. This cartoon is a take on the Indian media for complying to the terms of the government by reporting only good things about it.

In another cartoon, Laxman placed the 'common man' in a push cart for babies to be pushed around by a congressman saying, 'No, not yet! It's still risky for you to be on your own!' The cartoon showed no relaxation in the Emergency even when 1976 dawned on the people.

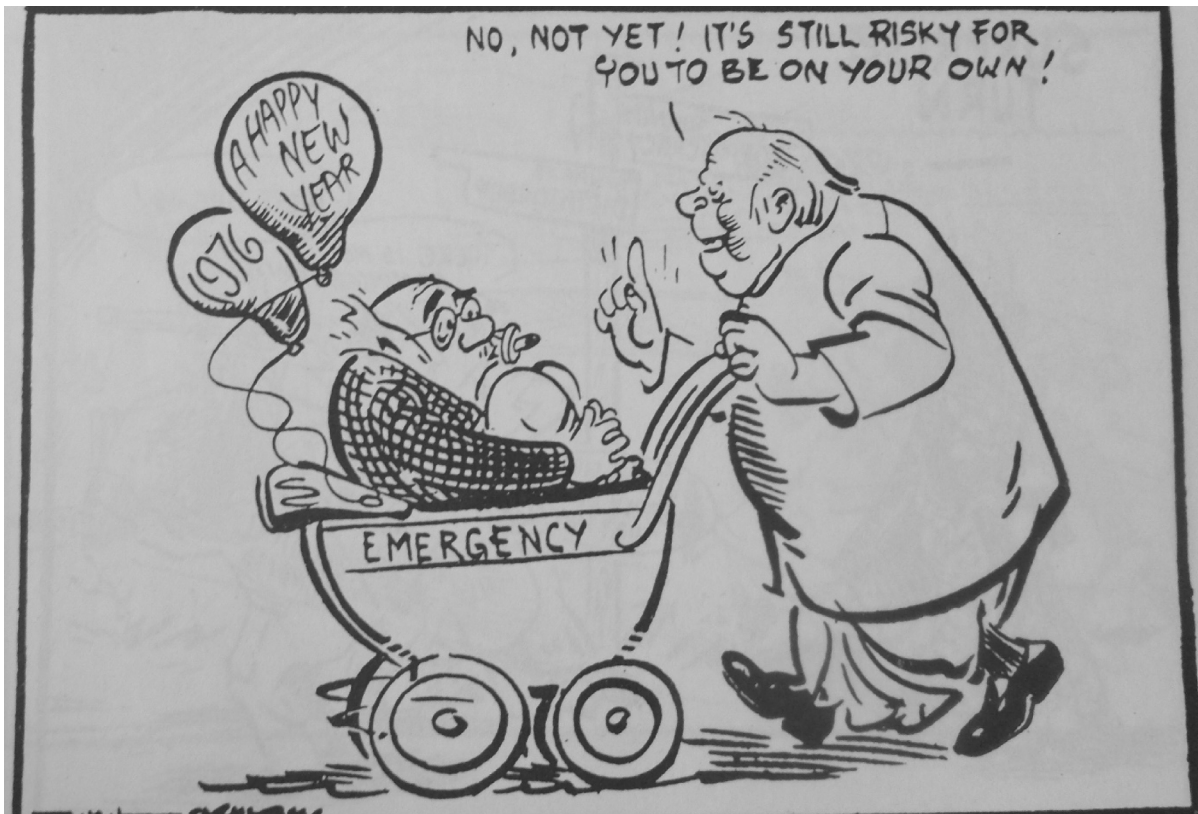


Figure 84
Source: Brushing Up the Years

The most menacing factor about the Emergency period was the emergence of Sanjay Gandhi²¹⁴ as an alternate power bloc inside the Congress. Sanjay Gandhi first came to the national political scene in 1971, following a controversy regarding Maruti Motors Ltd; a pet project of the Indira Gandhi government to produce a ‘people’s car’. Sanjay was placed at its head despite his lack of experience, sparking allegations accusing Indira Gandhi of nepotism and corruption. However, the public focus soon turned into the Liberation of Bangladesh and the subsequent war with Pakistan and the issues related to Maruti Motors Ltd remained ignored. Following these issues, Sanjay Gandhi became active in politics, finally making it to the Executive Committee in

²¹⁴ Sanjay Gandhi was the youngest son of Indira Gandhi. During his active years in politics, he was speculated by many to follow in the footsteps of Indira Gandhi to become the leader of Congress Party.

1975. From then on, he became the head of the Youth Congress, creating his own fan base filled with sycophants which provided him with unlimited power and loyalty. Sanjay was personally responsible for growing numbers in the Youth Congress which rivalled the mother party by the end of 1976. Later critics of the Emergency would attribute the Youth Congress under Sanjay Gandhi with the fascist measures undertaken during the 19 months of tyranny. Sanjay was, in fact, meddling with the affairs of the ministries even before the Emergency was proclaimed. Coomi Kapoor²¹⁵ writes that Sanjay tried to muzzle I.K. Gujral²¹⁶, the then minister for Information and Broadcasting, to give a 'spin to the news' aired through AIR and Doordarshan. Like L.K. Advani, then with the Jan Sangh said, 'The press was asked to bend and it chose to crawl.' Cartoonists of the time was no exception. Though hunted during the Emergency, several cartoons made of Sanjay came out post-Emergency, featuring Sanjay or lampooning his utopian plans.

²¹⁵ Kapoor, Coomi. *The Emergency: A Personal History*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2015. Print.

²¹⁶ Gujral was later removed from his portfolio at the behest of Sanjay Gandhi for being too soft with the media enterprises. The new minister V.C. Shukla was a Sanjay supporter who worked according to orders coming from the Youth Congress leader, which included cutting off power supplies to prominent newspaper offices and printing units.

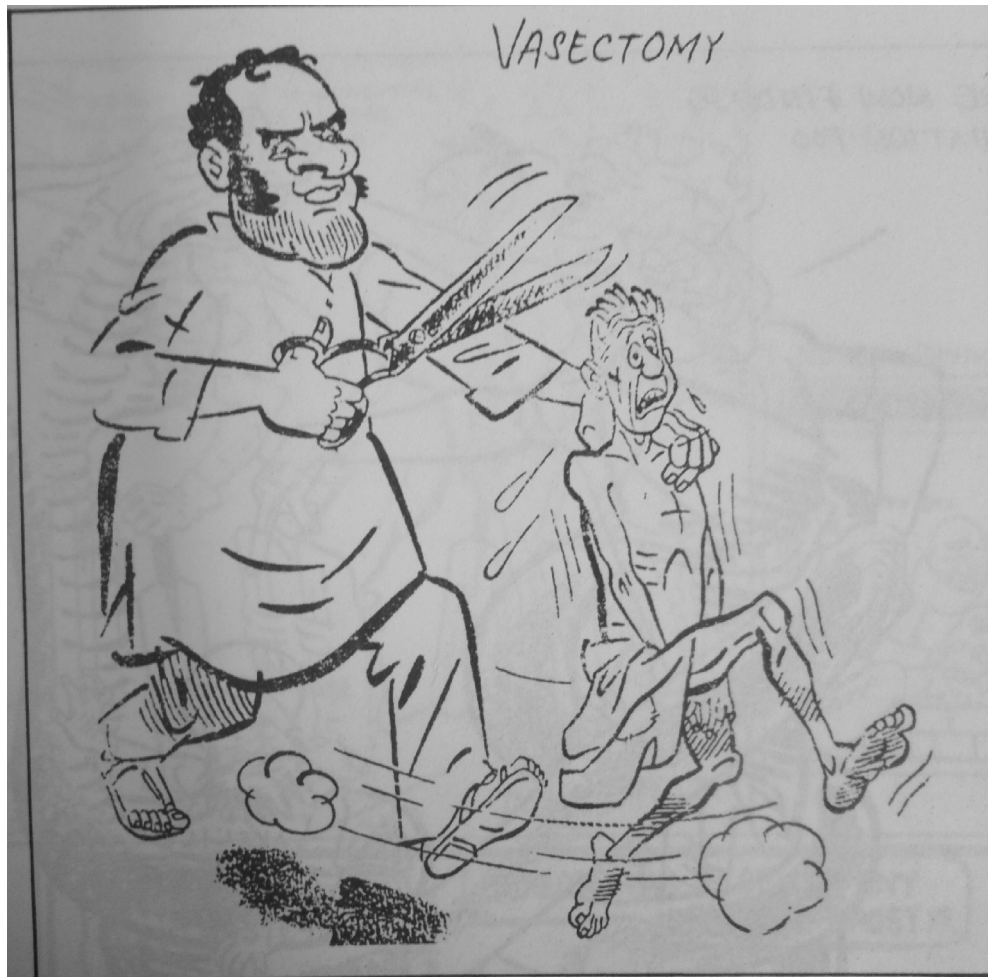


Figure 85

Source: An Anthropological Study of Cartoons in India

Titled 'Vasectomy', this Bal Thackeray²¹⁷ cartoon from 1976 was a blunt one, cutting to the chase and presenting the atrocious family planning scheme that Sanjay Gandhi ran through the Emergency period. In the backdrop of the 1971 census, it was generally understood that improved medical care in India had brought down the death rate sharply from 47.2 to 17.4 per 1000. However, this resulted in a steady growth of population and Sanjay attributed that to rising unemployment

²¹⁷ Bal Thackeray belonged to a rarity; he was both a cartoonist and a politician. He preferred to be called a political cartoonist, having started out in the Free Press Journal as a contemporary of R.K. Laxman. Bal Thackeray started his own journal *Marmik* to support the Samyuktha Maharashtra Movement and subsequently got into politics along with it. Though Thackeray supported the Emergency, his publication *Marmik* was banned.

and all the other issues that haunted the Congress government. Sanjay Gandhi believed that the government efforts to control population was not effective and there had to be a new way; forced sterilization! The government forced people from all strata of society to undergo sterilization, sometimes, even through threats and rewards.



Figure 86

Source: The Common Man Watches Cricket

Laxman's cartoons on the same issue features a doctor who is 'tasked with meeting a certain number of quota to sterilize' retorts to an inquiry commission that he persuades the people to go away to other parts of the country. 1976 also saw a lot of protests and violence between various groups and the Police in connection with the sterilization programmes. From 330 vasectomy operations per day, by 1977, the figure grew to a 5644 per day in an average.

Abu Abraham's cartoon during the Emergency, showing a helpless President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, signing ordinances while soaking himself leisurely in a bathtub sparked a bit of a controversy by asserting the fact that the President, being appointed by Indira Gandhi would do anything to stay being the President.



Figure 87

Source: www.primepoint.in

Abu also lampooned the twenty-five point programme of the Congress and the meekish acceptance that the CPI gave it, through another one of his famous cartoons. It showed a man lying on a bed of twenty five spikes while holding a placard which says 'Long Live the 25 Point Programme'.



Figure 88

Source: www.primepoint.in

Though it curtailed civil liberties and freedom of press, the immediate months that followed the proclamation of Emergency proved that it was accepted by the people to an extent. The intelligentsia remained hunted and there was a general hostility towards the government as most of the population did not really understand the changes the government intended to bring through the numerous amendments and tweaks it did to the Constitution. Immediate crack down on the continuing public protests and anti-governmental programmes made the public feel like the chaos had ended. Drastic action was taken against smugglers and those who indulged in black market and these measures brought down the prices of essential commodities to an extent. With increased power, Indira Gandhi went on to implement her pet projects like the land re-distribution for the poor, revision of minimum wages of agricultural labour, increase in industrial production etc. These actions of the government made the people accept the Emergency in a rather peaceful manner. However, the honeymoon of the changes brought in by the Emergency did not last long as a general disillusionment started creeping in to the mindset of the people. The Sanjay factor

may have contributed to it in a major way. The authoritarian ways in which he drove his policies home soon started a series of protests and violent clashes between the people and the police, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Policies like slum clearance to beautify cities and towns and forced sterilization of the population to control population explosion created an atmosphere of fear which worked against the government.

Two of Laxman's cartoons of the time created quite a stir later as they were not published, not suprisingly. One showed Gandhi sitting in the clouds, reading the newspaper and wondering what is happening to his country. The other signified rising popular agitations against the Emergency. Indira Gandhi, along with Sanjay and other cabinet mmembers are seen running from a mob.



Figure 89
Source: The Times of India



Figure 90
Source: Brushing Up the Years

On 18 January 1977, Indira Gandhi announced that general elections will be conducted in March and that press censorship would be removed along with removal of all bans that were in place with the imposition of the Emergency. In the election conducted in March, Congress under Indira Gandhi was defeated with Mrs. Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi along with many other prominent leaders losing their seats. Laxman's two cartoons of the incident, which was published, and was widely acknowledged shows how the public sentiment was aptly translated into visual representation.

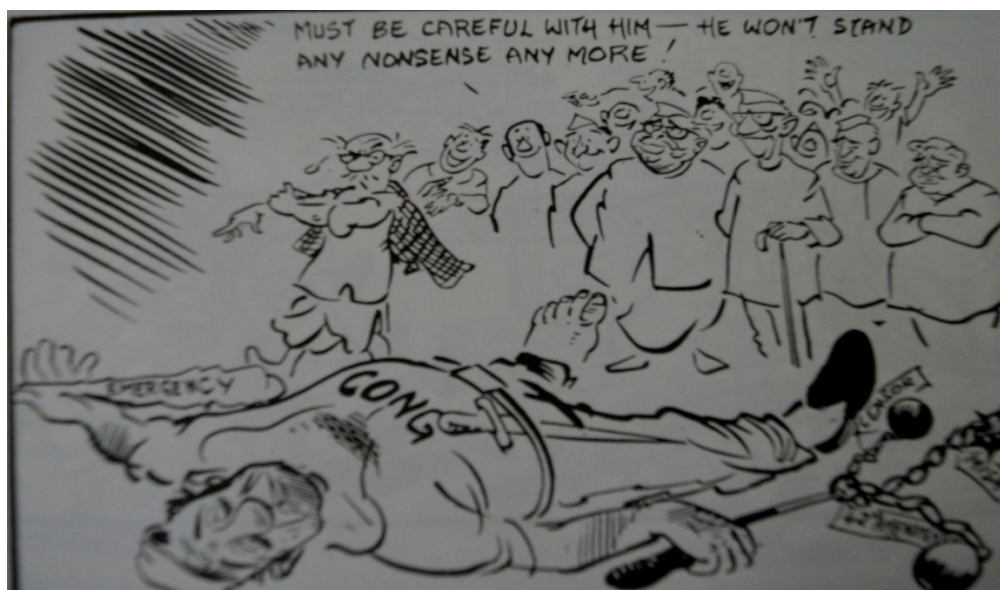


Figure 91
Source: Laugh with Laxman



Figure 92
Source: Laxman Rekhas

4. The Janata Party Interlude

The new government by Janata Party, a coalition of Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal (BDL), and Socialist Party, rode on a sentiment of anti-Indira and anti-Emergency, and was headed by Morarji Desai²¹⁸. Though they had a majority in the Parliament, the coalition that the Janata Party was, soon started disintegrating. Due to infights, the party did not concentrate on the developmental promises it had made during the campaign and as a result, the rural poor in North and Central India which voted for the party began to suffer. The prevailing social tensions between the upperclass landowners and the Scheduled Caste labourers in North India transformed into violent clashes. By the beginning of 1979, there were reported mutinies in the police forces and even certain sections of the paramilitary.

While R.K. Laxman parodied the government with his hilarious cartoons, one can see O.V. Vijayan turning more cynical in his approach. Together, the two major cartoonists of the time did an array of cartoons, storing the images of the brief Janata Party interlude in the collective memory of the public forever.

Laxman's cartoon portrayed Janata Party as a wooden slab balanced on a cliff with one side carrying Morarji Desai and the other side carrying Charan Singh. The partymen are shown as running to both sides, trying to determine which one is safer. While Desai sits obstinately, Charan Singh sticks one leg out, indicating that he might get out of the alliance. It showed the creeping up

²¹⁸ Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister at the age of 81 after vying for it since Nehru's demise. The elders in the coalition, J.B. Kripalani and Jayaprakash Narayan chose Morarji Desai over other aspirants, Jagjivan Ram and Charan Singh. They also elected N. Sanjeeva Reddy as the President, after an attempt to do so failed way back when Indira Gandhi was consolidating power in Congress.

of infights in the coalition that was formed with no ideology other than a blatant hate for Indira Gandhi.

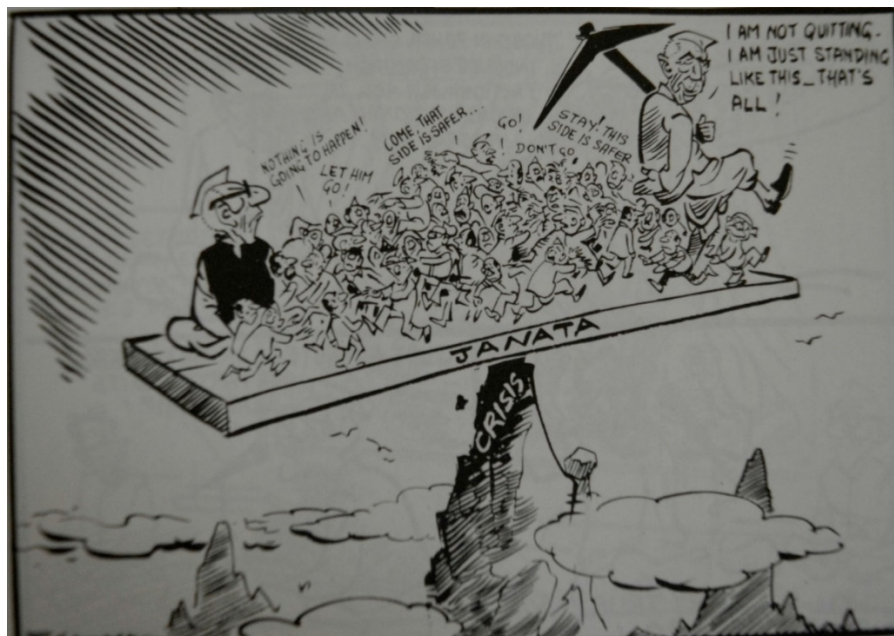


Figure 93

Source: Laxman Rekhas



Figure 94

Source: Laxman Rekhas

Another cartoon of the time which featured the Common Man and his wife showed Janata Party as a theatre with the actors constantly indulged in mud-slinging and back-stabbing. When the common man gets up, thinking the show is over, his wife tells him that it has not ended and it will start again on the arrival of another crisis.

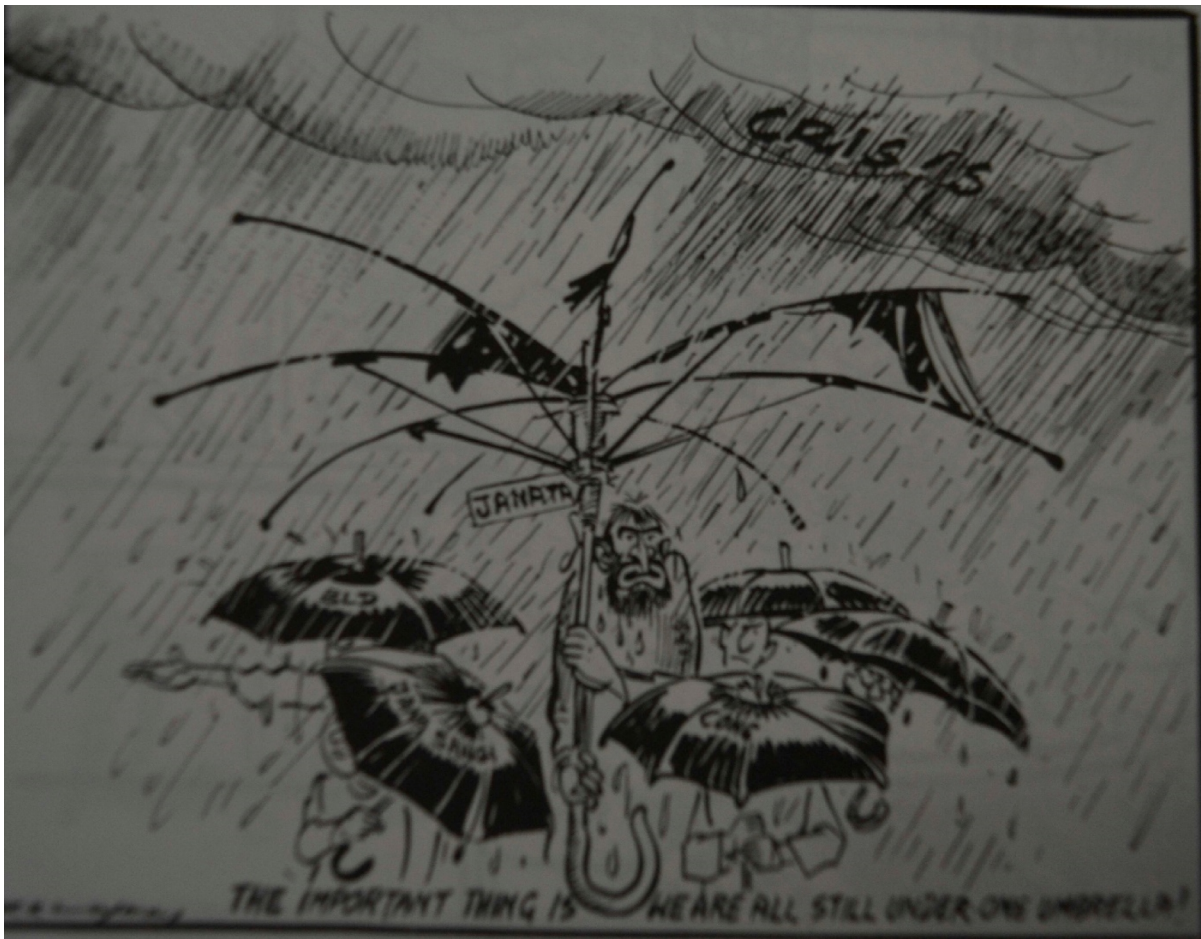


Figure 95

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Another one of Laxman's cartoons indicated that the groups that came forward with the intention of defeating Indira Gandhi now stood under a tattered umbrella while holding their own

small umbrellas. The unity inside Janata Party was disintegrating rapidly with each party wanting to head the government²¹⁹.



Figure 96
Source: Brushing Up the Years

The immediate reason for the fall of Janata government was the absurd budget²²⁰ put on the table by Charan Singh in 1979. Failing to rein in the inflation and the rising prices, the budget also increased taxes. It only gave importance to settling industries in the country but did not say how different industries should be co-ordinated to strengthen the sector. Vijayan also did a cartoon

²¹⁹ Indira Gandhi played a wild card by saying that she supports the claim of Jagjivan Ram to the post of Prime Minister. Jagjivan Ram had earlier gone over to the Janata side, forming a new party called Congress for Democracy. Indira's move created a rift among the top three of the Janata Party leaders.

²²⁰ The year 1979 also saw severe shortage of food products and kerosene with a collapse in the government distribution system. Inflation was recorded to have gone beyond 20% by the end of 1979. Severe drought followed providing no hope for a proposed renewal of the agricultural sector and in some states, there were even heavy floods, resulting in a huge hole in the exchequer's pocket.

on the subject which featured the Father-Son duo exclaiming at the news that dacoits have struck again. The Father exclaims at the news while holding a piece of paper saying ‘inflation’ and ‘taxes’. The son remarks that people are not scared of dacoits anymore and that they are petty snatchers compared to the traditional institutions like the Finance Ministry.

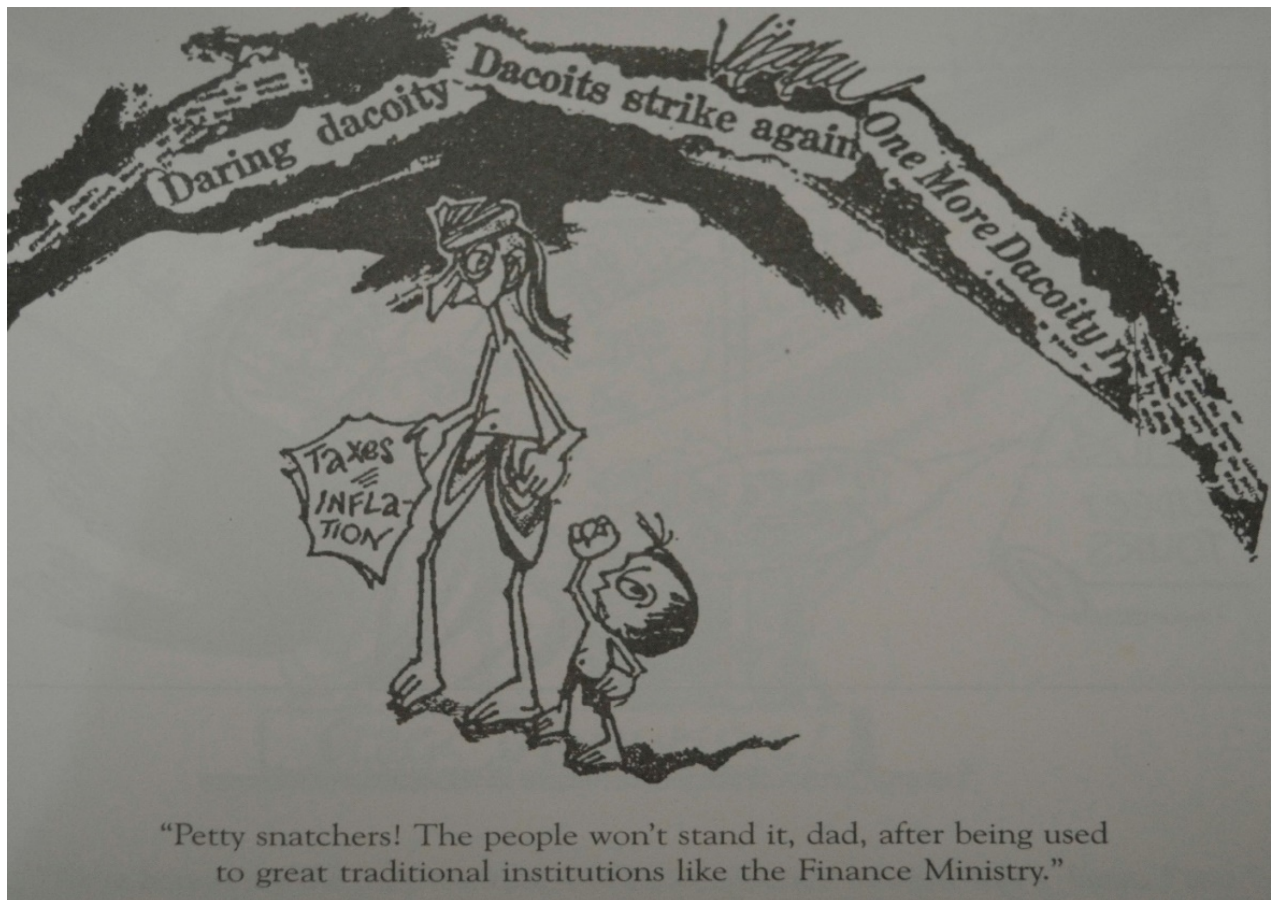


Figure 97

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

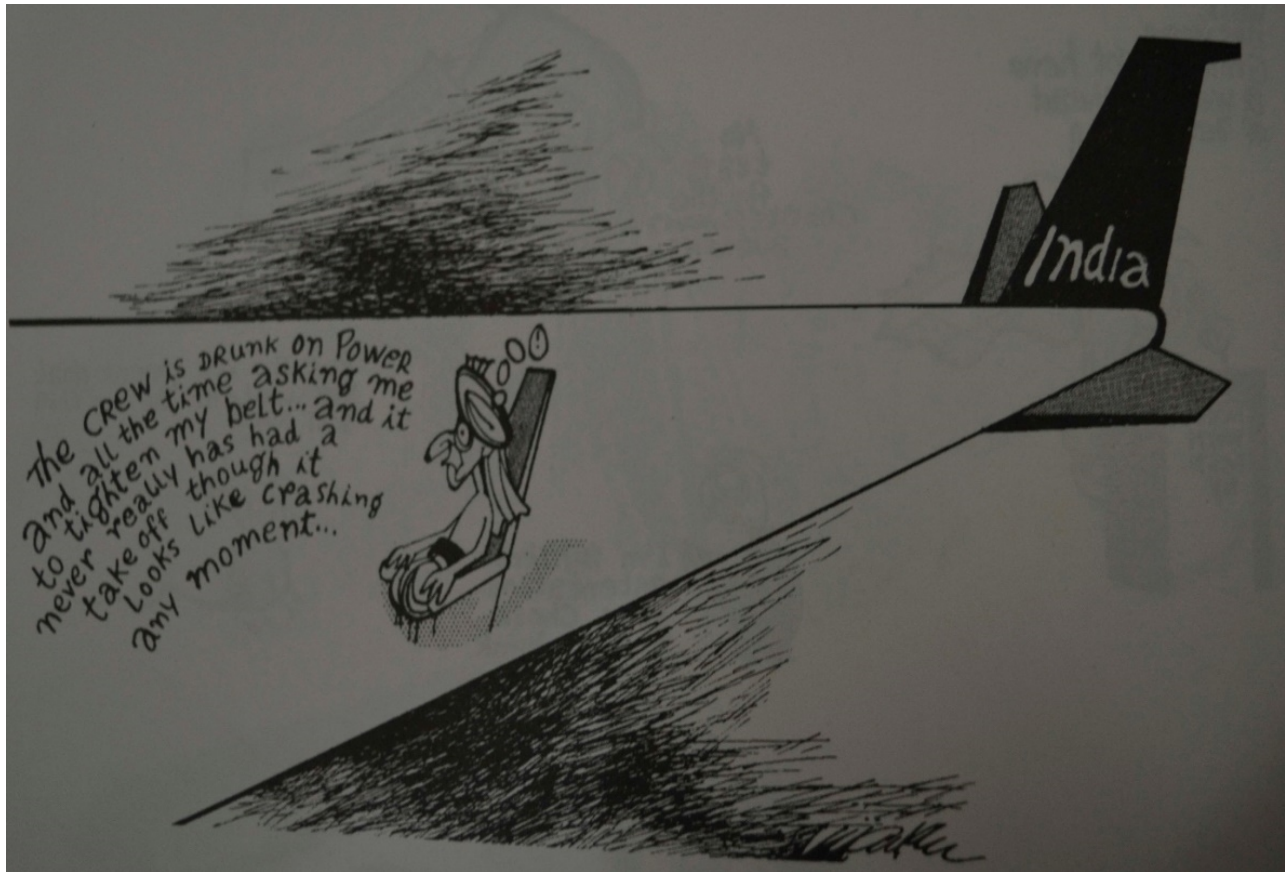


Figure 98

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

O.V. Viayan's cartoon from the same time showed the plight of an average Indian. In this cartoon, a man is shown as a passenger in a airplane (India), sitting helplessly, wondering what is going to happen to him as he realizes that he is sitting in a aircraft with the crew drunk on power, hence flying uncontrollably.

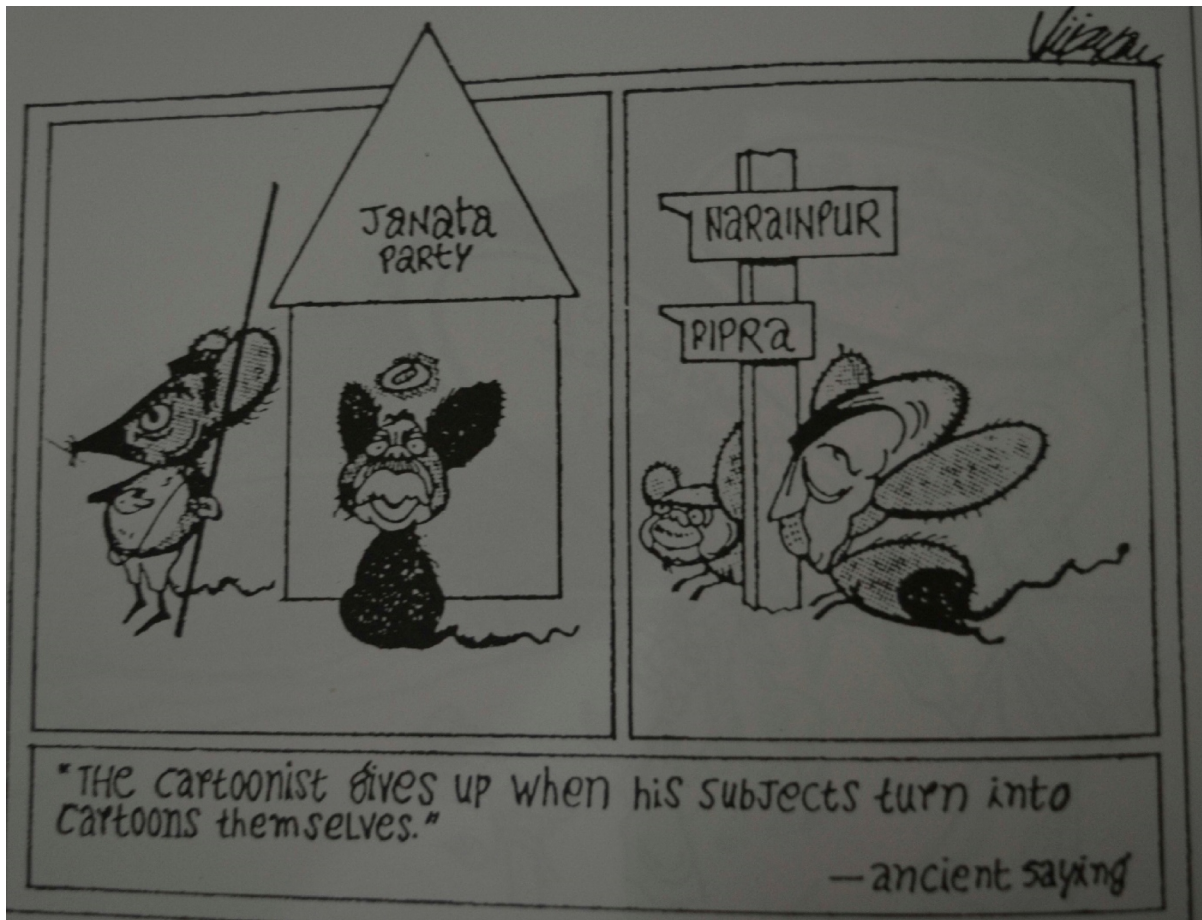


Figure 99

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan made another cartoon in the backdrop of the violences against harijans in Pipra and Narainpur in Bihar. These large-scale violences between classes became a law and order issue in the later stage of the Janata Party government and critics connected it with the government's failure to bring in the social change that it had promised. The upper class violators of harijans had an upperhand that was allegedly provided by those high up in the government system. Vijayan's cartoon noted cynically, 'the Cartoonist gives up when his subjects turn into cartoons themselves.'

Morarji Desai resigned as the Prime Minister on 15th July 1979 to let Charan Singh become the Prime Minister backed by Congress (U), Socialists, and CPI and the newly formed Cong (I)²²¹ by Indira Gandhi. However, Indira Gandhi withdrew her support to Charan Singh on 20th August and the President declared mid-term elections to be held in January 1980.

R.K. Laxman and O.V. Vijayan drew a cartoon each, again in two distinctive styles, on the same situation.

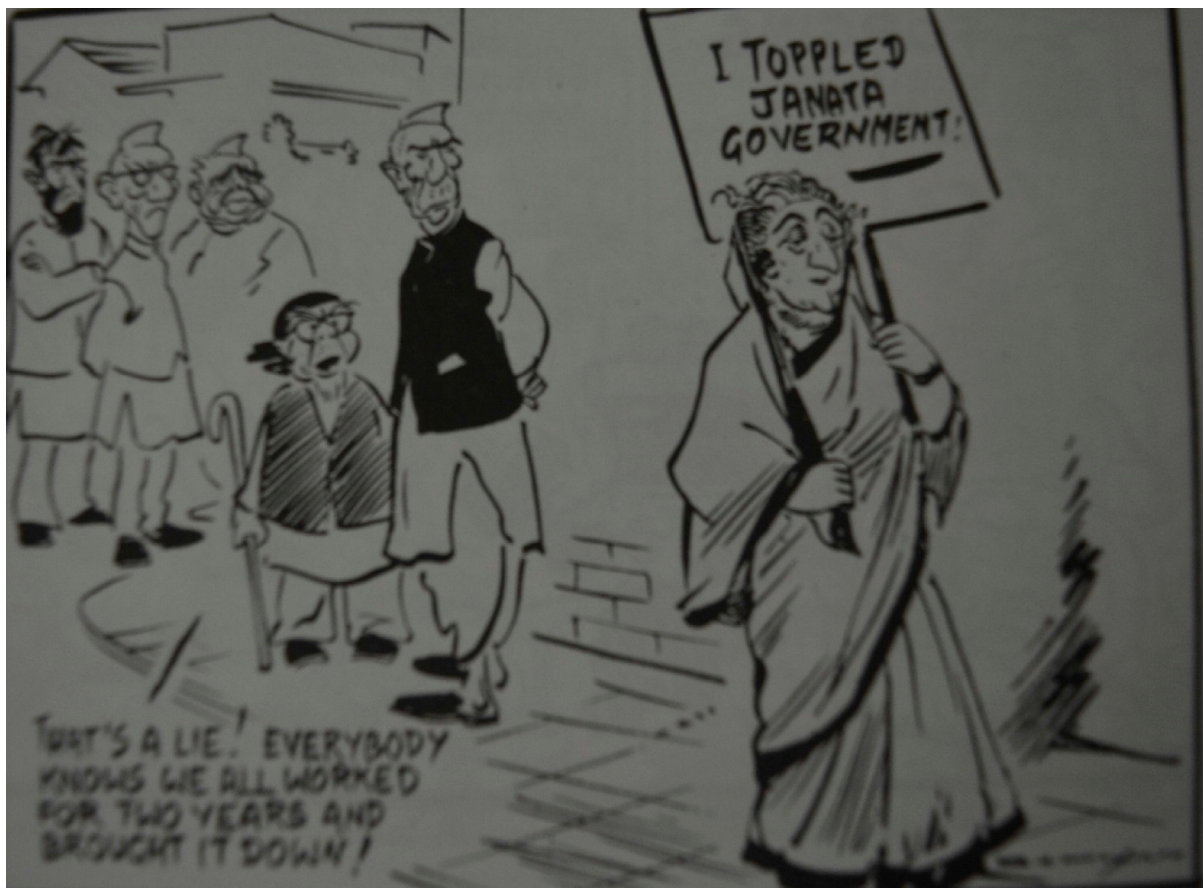


Figure 100
Source: Laxman Rekhas

²²¹ Congress had undergone a split again in January 1978 with the senior leaders Y.B. Chavan and Brahmananda Reddy turned against Indira Gandhi by branding her as a liability after the defeat two years ago at the hands of the Janata Party. Indira Gandhi split the party with the formation of Congress (I), which thrived in the state elections to come.

Laxman's cartoon showed a content Indira Gandhi passing by the Janata leaders holding a placard 'I toppled Janata Government', to which they retort by saying that everyone knows it was them who did it with all the infighting for power. Laxman lampoons them for their blinding hate for Indira which robs them off their own logic.

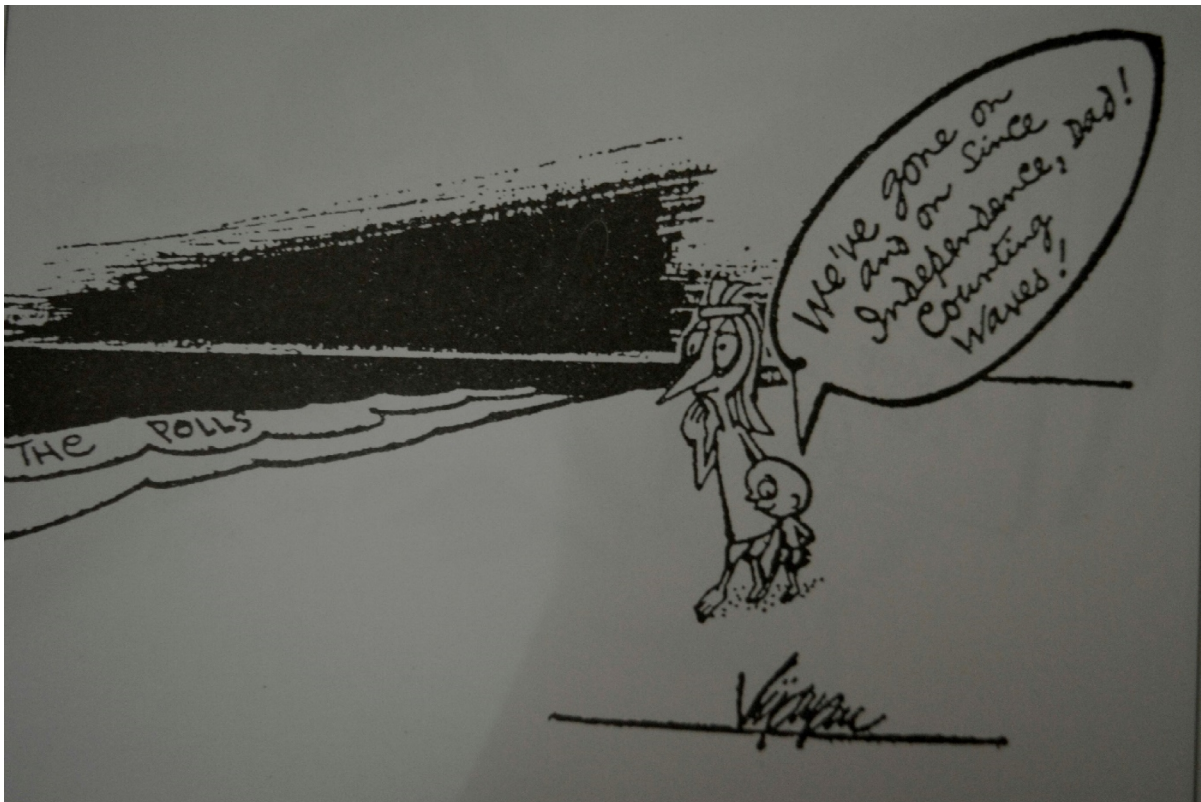


Figure 101

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

With one more general elections to the Lok Sabha in the horizon, Vijayan's cartoon featured the Father-Son duo deliberating why their situation has not changed yet despite so many elections and promises coming and going.

5. Indira Gandhi – Third Term

After thirty four months of Janata Party rule, Indira Gandhi was back again with Sanjay Gandhi in tow, who died²²² immediately after Congress came into power. Indira Gandhi brought in a reluctant Rajiv Gandhi to politics to bridge the gap that Sanjay had left behind, sparking rumours of dynasty politics. Laxman's cartoon mocking the 'reluctancy' that Rajiv showed in entering politics also lampooned the abundance of news reports which went on to describe him as a reluctant politician, taking up the mantle only as a responsibility to the country. The cartoon did have a certain prophetic nature.



Figure 102

Source: Brushing Up the Years

²²² Sanjay Gandhi died of a plane accident near the Delhi Flying Club, while performing a stunt in the sky, on 23rd June 1980.

Indira Gandhi was beginning her third term as the Prime Minister but she was leading a party with relatively new faces with less experience as political leaders. She had split the party twice, losing experienced leaders over the years to other factions and sometimes, even to other parties. The party structure was weak in many of the states it previously held governments and infights continued to happen. As a jolt to wake up to the reality, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, two states where Congress was the dominant political party before, elected non-Congress governments. Telugu Desam Party under the leadership of N.T.Rama Rao²²³ came into power in Andhra Pradesh whereas in Karnataka, a Janata Party led front came in to power. Despite this, the Congress government at the center did not really face any opposition. But the country as it was having a hard time with communal as well regional issues having risen during the reign of the Janata Party rule. The Janata Party with Jan Sangh²²⁴ as its major ally had already started a certain amount of communalisation by having a go at textbook rewritings and recruitments to Universities and the media. It had ninety MPs during the period and was a strong party in the coalition, which made it easy for them to carry on with their ideological implementation without raising much doubt.

²²³ N.T. Rama Rao, popularly known as NTR, was an actor-turned-politician in the united Andhra Pradesh. He was the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, after entering politics by forming a party called Telugu Desam Party and winning the elections to the state assembly in 1983. However, the governor removed NTR in 1984 and replaced him with Nadendla Bhaskara Rao, allegedly according to the commands of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. However, NTR retained majority and was reluctantly placed back into the post of the CM after he started making an anti-congress alignment with Janata Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Left Front and the National Conference.

²²⁴ Jan Sangh, was the political wing of the radical Hindu outfit RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), which was part of the Janata Party government from 1977-79. After the loss of power due to infights in the coalition, Jan Sangh was renewed in to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) IN 1980.

The Nellie Massacre²²⁵ in Assam and the rising militant activity in Punjab²²⁶ were the two problems that took the attention of the central government away from several other pressing matters. Although Indira Gandhi's handling of both the issues are still widely debated, it raised a doubt on the much hyped national integrity of India and posed a threat to the unity of the nation. Vijayan's two cartoons on the issues are examples as to how these issues were discussed by the media in the national level.



Figure 103

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

²²⁵ Nellie Massacre happened in February 1983 when mainstream Assamese communities clashed with 'outsiders'. The role of rioters and the purpose is still being debated but the cause was the All Assam Students Union's refusal to see the names of migrants in the voter's list prepared for a by-election in Assam. They called for a removal of the names of outsiders and while the issue was being discussed by the agitators and the government, an outbreak of rebellion happened resulting in loss of lives over 3000.

²²⁶ After the Congress fallout with Sikh religious leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, he sought to uphold the largely forgotten but debated, Anandpur Sahib Resolution which demanded greater autonomy for the Sikh-majority state. When this turned into agitation and later militancy, by a group earlier affiliated to Bhindranwale, Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian Army to enter the Sikh holy place, the Golden Temple, to subdue Bhindranwale and his followers. Codenamed Operation Blue Star, the Indian Army entered the temple, killing the militants and thus by causing a great wound to the community.

Vijayan showed the progression of Nehru's one-nation theory into Indira's version of two nation theory, lampooning the Liberation of Bangladesh and finally, the proposition of a three nation theory by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.



Figure 104

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

The second cartoon by Vijayan shows Indira Gandhi's handling of the Assam issue as she is portrayed in the role of a teacher. It is significant in one way because it was the students agitations led by All Assam's Students Union that gained the movement in Assam its momentum.

Vijayan also did another cartoon on the inability of the Indira Gandhi government to govern the country despite mounting issues that challenged democracy every day. Through this cartoon, Vijayan mocked the very rhetoric that politicians used over the years.

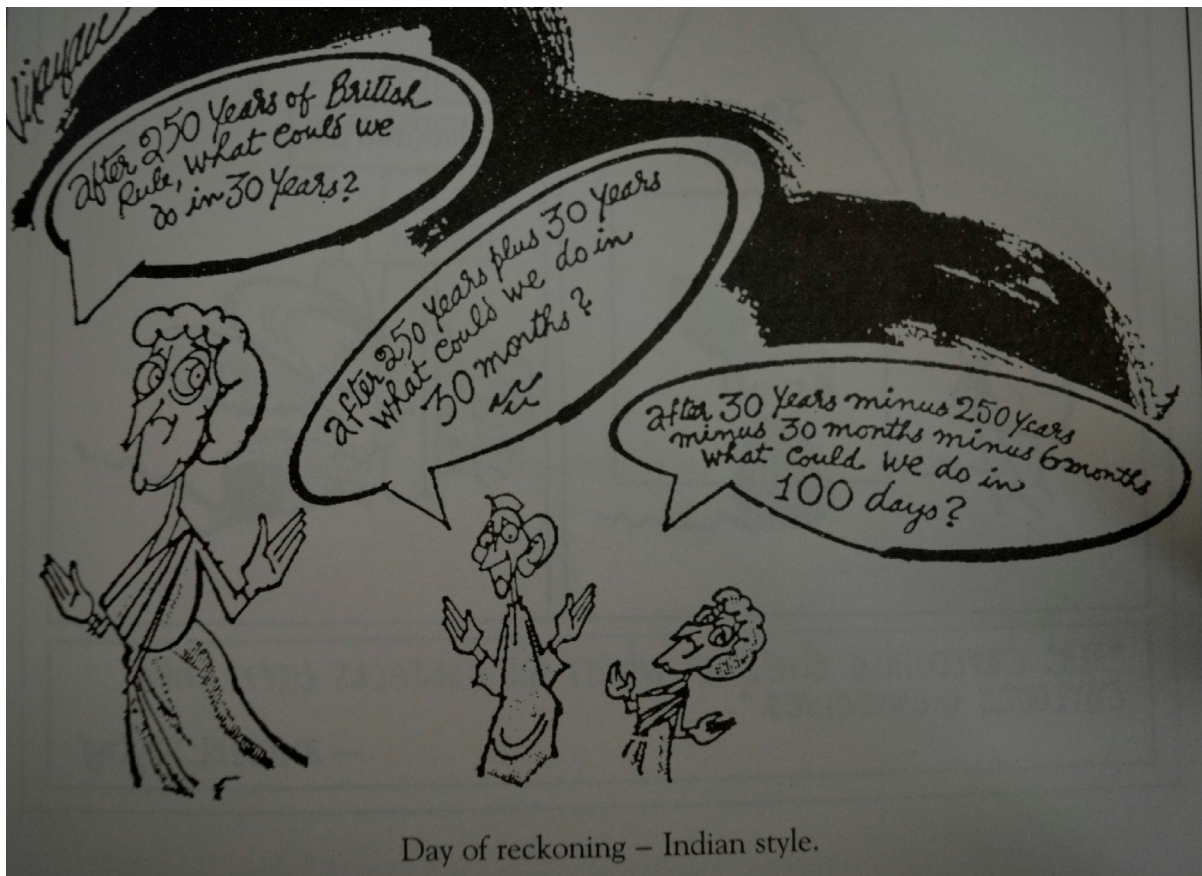


Figure 105

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan's drawing of the less than responsible state of the Indian political scene, blaming each other, forgetting the people and indulging in infights, have documented well the evolution of it over the years. Vijayan had started perceiving the Congress as the harbingers of dynastic rule. His cartoons criticising the Congress party riddled with sycophancy are numerous.

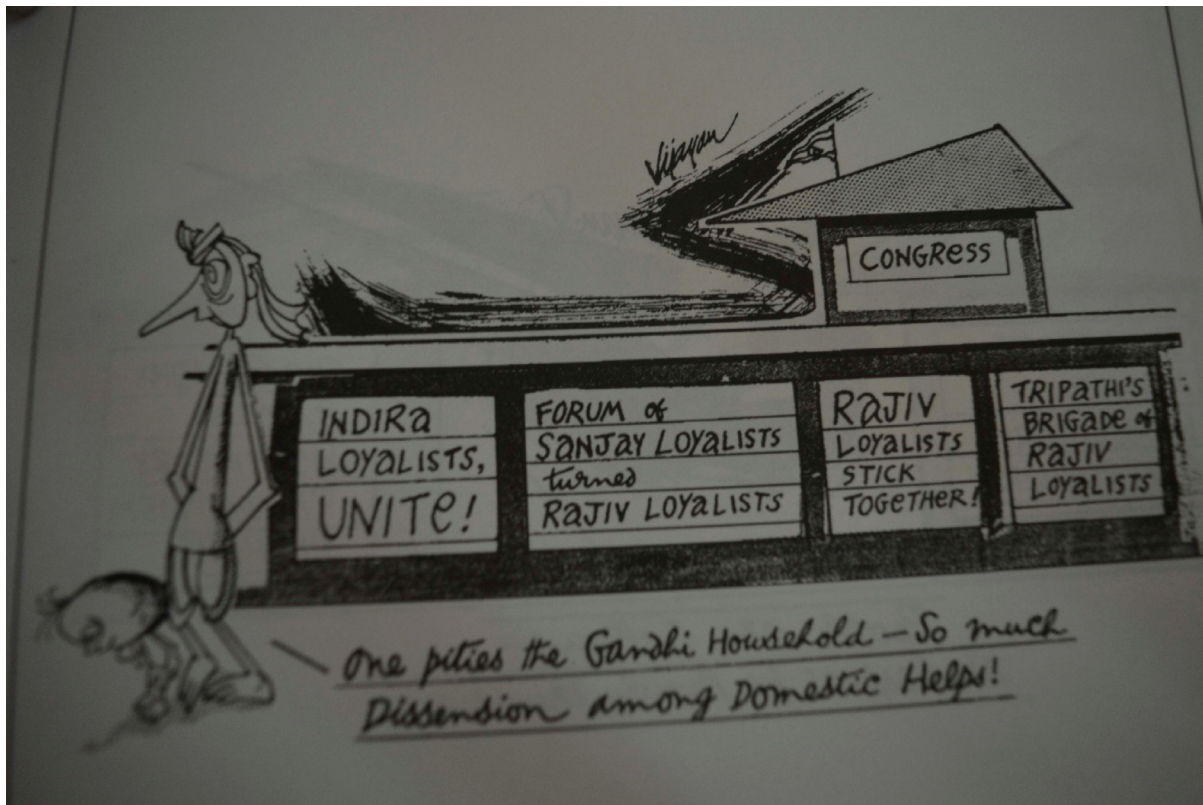


Figure 106

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

In short, Indira Gandhi's third and final term was not very promising when it came to policies or even implementation of the promises she made during the campaign. The political momentum that she gained by coming back to power was wasted on the internal issues that she had to deal with. Finally, meddling with the same internal issues resulted in her assassination at the hands of her own bodyguards on 31st October, 1984. The Congress Parliamentary Board did not waste any time in nominating Rajiv Gandhi for the post of the Prime Minister.

6. The Rajiv Era

O.V. Vijayan's best critique of the nation and the government came during the Rajiv Era. In fact, Rajiv Gandhi was Vijayan's favorite subject as he provided a lot of opportunities for the cartoonist to craft some of his best cartoons. Laxman too did a variety of cartoons on Rajiv Gandhi

but nothing like Vijayan who was probably at his prime, during the late 80s and early 90s. It is difficult to see what was it about Rajiv Gandhi that got Vijayan to sharpen his pencil. It is possible that Vijayan's dislike for dynastic tendencies has caused the making of a lot more Rajiv Gandhi cartoons than any other cartoonists did. When the Congress defended the appointment of Rajiv Gandhi as the party president, Vijayan mocked them severely.

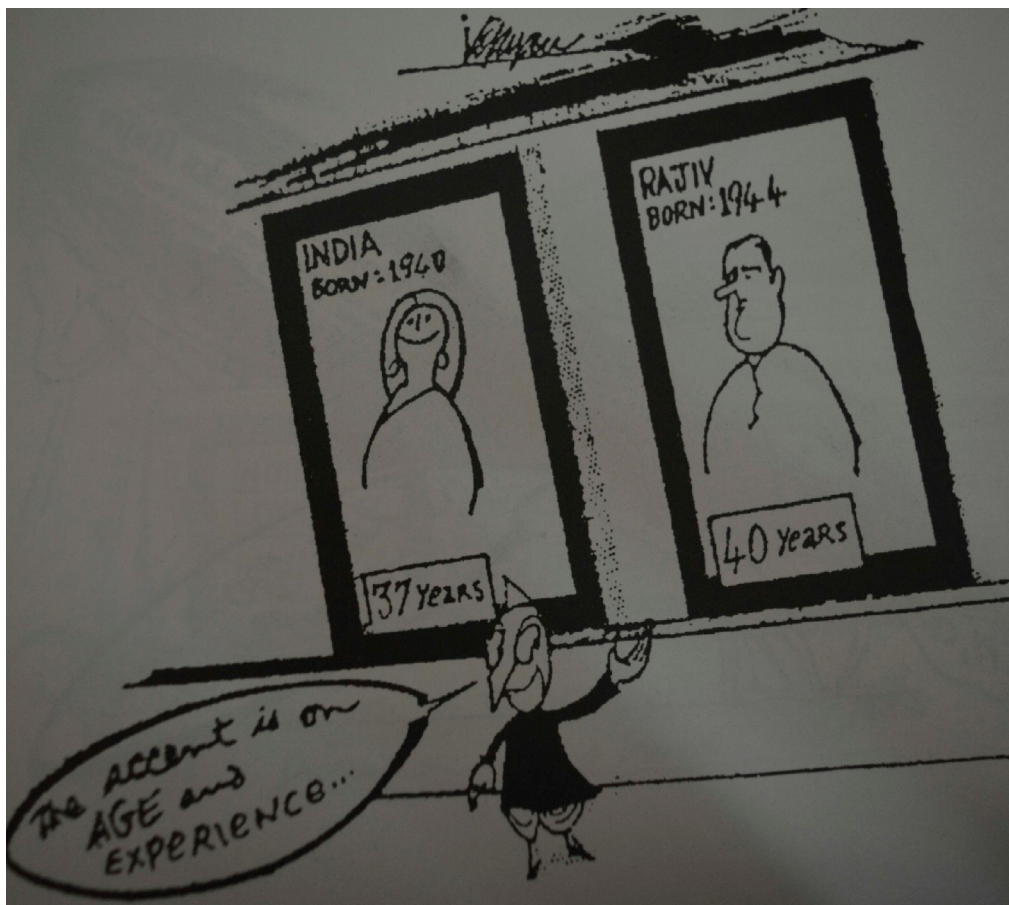


Figure 107

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

In this cartoon, Vijayan trivialized the Congress claim of Rajiv being politically and age-wise mature to handle India. This was not the only incident when Rajiv was compared by Vijayan to India. He often drew parallels between India and Rajiv, questioning and mocking Rajiv's ability to handle India that came with a million pressures and problems. As if to prove Vijayan's thoughts

right, Rajiv's term started with massive bloodshed of the Sikhs²²⁷ in retaliation to Indira Gandhi's assassination. Two weeks after assuming the Prime Ministership, Rajiv had to deal with the situation that arose around the Bhopal Gas Tragedy²²⁸ which posed a serious challenge to his management skills.

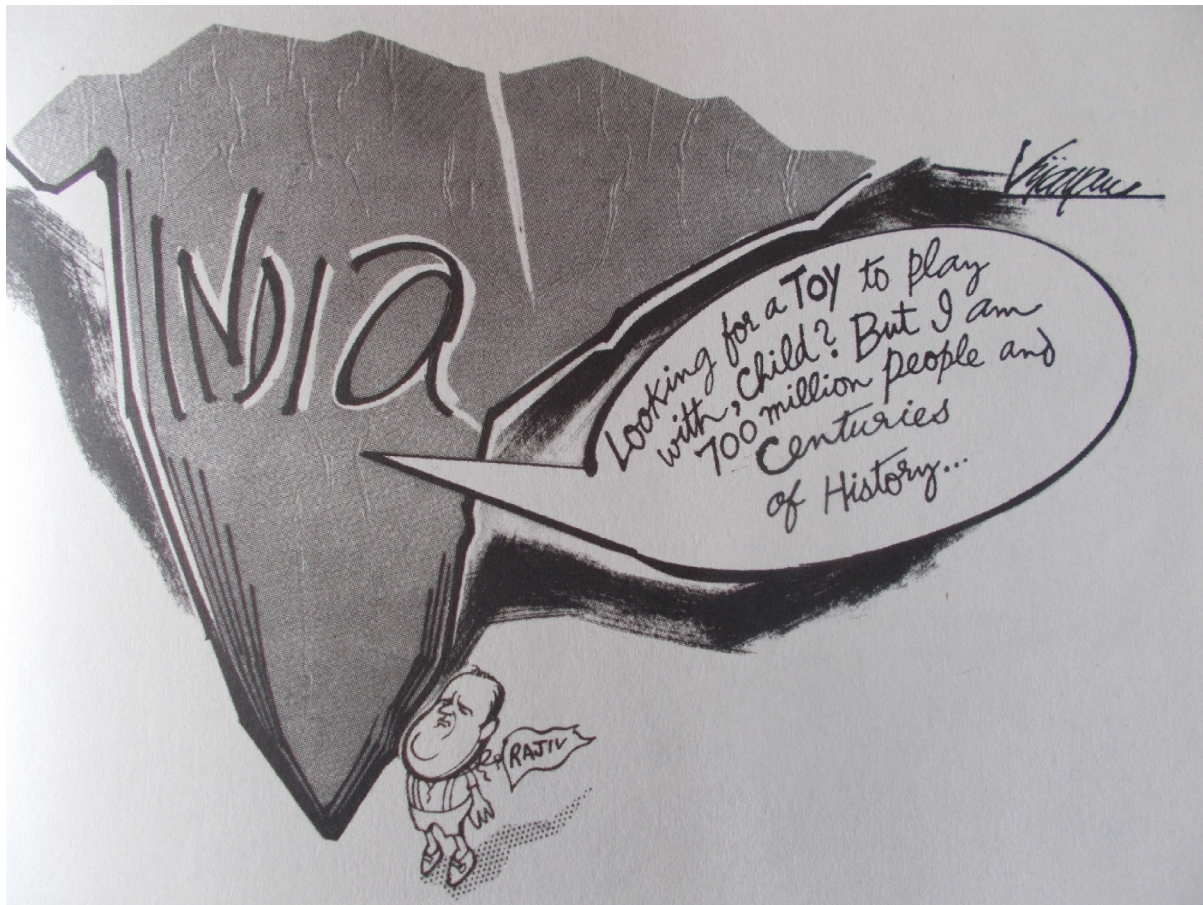


Figure 108

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

²²⁷ It is estimated that from 31st October to 3rd November, around 3000 Sikhs were killed in Delhi itself where majority of them had made home after their ouster from Pakistan and the bordering villages during the partition. It is assumed that the rioters were the lower class people for whom Indira Gandhi had allotted housing schemes. At the same time, allegations about involvement of the lower level Congress supporters were raised with none proved over the years.

²²⁸ Considered as one of the world's worst industrial disasters, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy occurred in 3rd December 1984 at the Union Carbide India Limited pesticide plant in Bhopal where a leak of methyl isocyanate (MIC) killed over 3000 (according to the government of Madhya Pradesh) people.

Rajiv Gandhi won with a major margin the elections that were held in the December of 1984. Some attributed the cause of his victory to a sympathy wave evoked by Indira Gandhi's assassination. Being from the new generation of politicians, Rajiv Gandhi decided to move forward with technology based calculations to secure the future of the country²²⁹.

Rajiv Gandhi's fervor for getting things done fast was one of the themes for cartooning him. The number of foreign trips he did as part of making India's foreign relations better was also under the scrutiny of the Indian cartoonists. Vijayan pointed out that some of them were pointless.

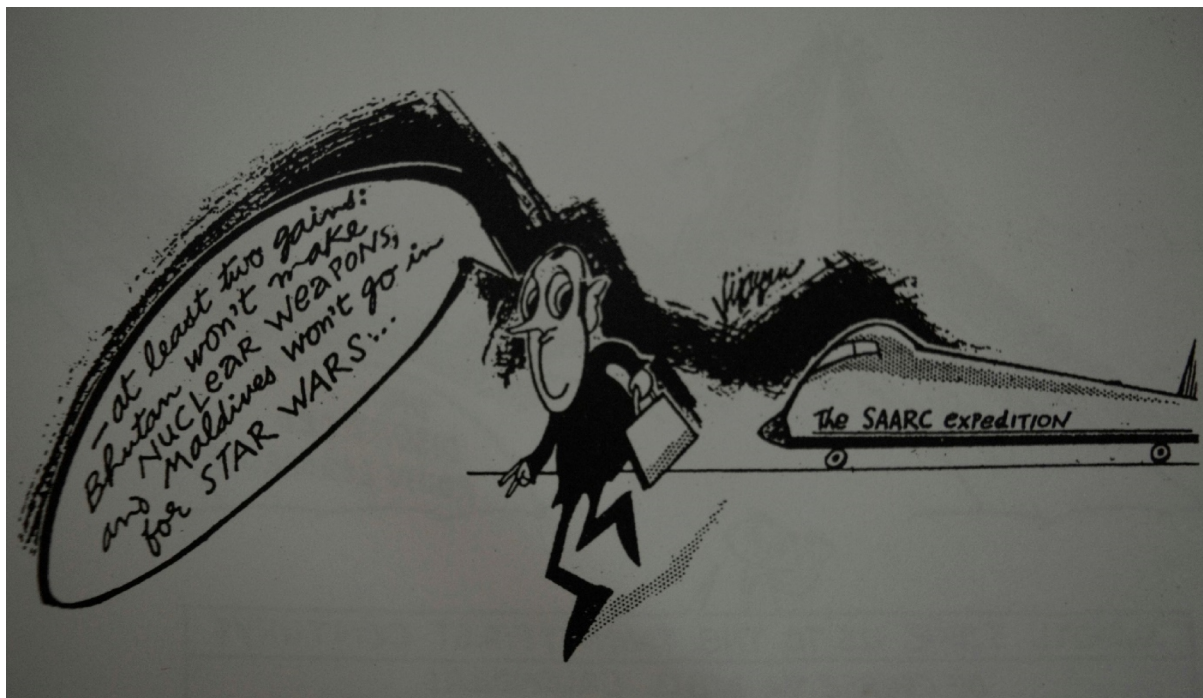


Figure 109

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

²²⁹ Rajiv Gandhi's intention was to bring India up-to-date in technology which it was lacking. Though Indira Gandhi had already started computerizing India, Rajiv's semi-liberalization economic policies brought the prices of electronic equipment down in India that it was possible to include computers in schools and higher institutions. Rajiv Gandhi's plan of six technology missions followed; it was a new idea to involve modern technology to identify and improve six underdevelopments in the country. Importance were given to drinking water, literacy, Immunization, White Revolution and telephone network.

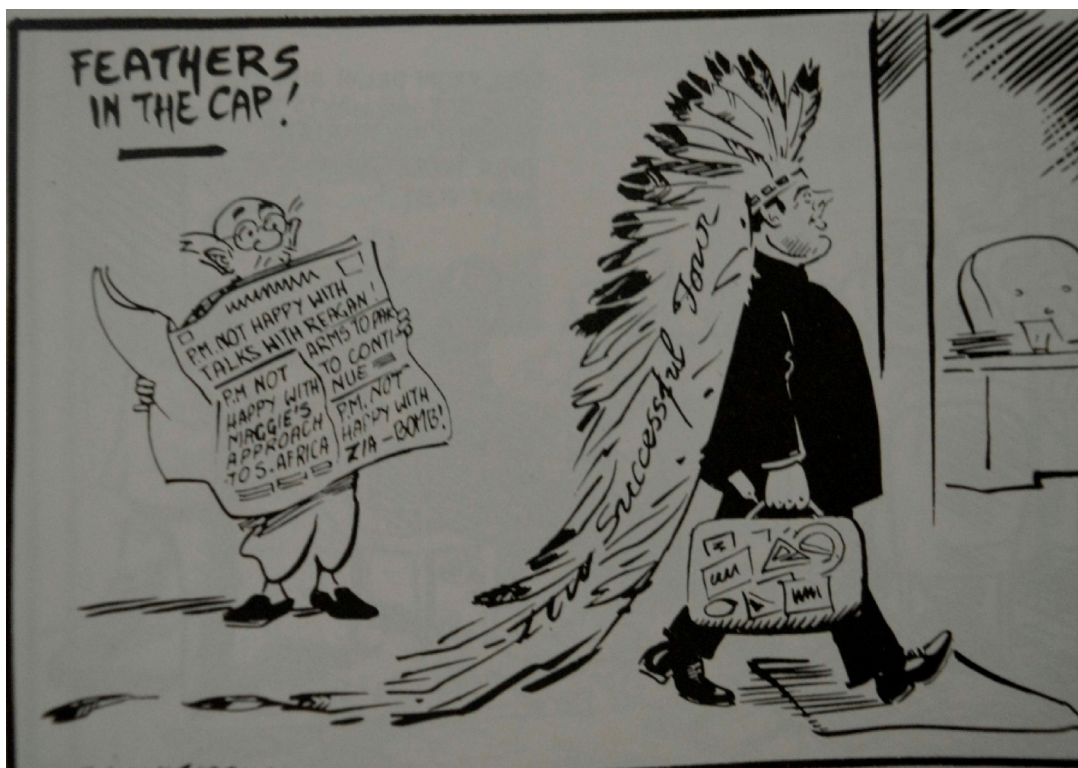


Figure 110
Source: Laxman Rekhas

Bipan Chandra wrote²³⁰,

‘Rajiv Gandhi gave a new life to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) by giving it a purpose: nuclear disarmament. He also tried to promote the idea of a G-15, a more compact version of G-77, which approximated more closely to the G-7. He placed India quite prominently on the world map, making her presence felt in a variety of forums on a number of issues. He travelled abroad on an average once a month during his five year term, even inviting snipes from political opponents about his ‘occasional visits to India’.’

²³⁰ Chandra, Bipin., Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. *India After Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2008. Print

Vijayan's impression of Rajiv Gandhi as someone lacking the ground realities of India is evident from the type of cartoons that he generated on the newest Prime Minister of India. The sycophancy that surrounded every member of the Gandhi family did not leave Rajiv too. Rajiv's desperateness to propel India to a modern country while the potential for it lay in backwardness amused Vijayan and to an extent, Laxman too cartooned on the same issue. In the initial plans and policies that he put forward, Rajiv had kept the new millennium as the deadline for achieving them. At times, Rajiv too realized the burden of the herculean task he had committed to²³¹. Vijayan cartooned one of those self-realization moments of Rajiv.

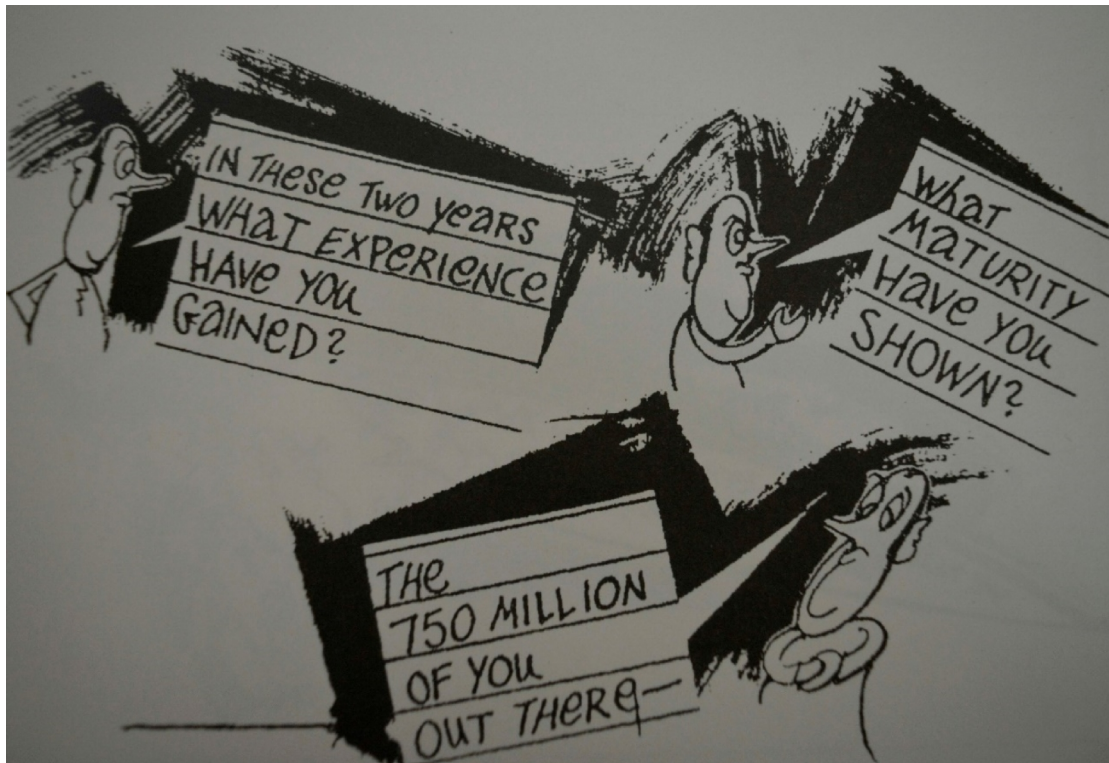


Figure 111

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

²³¹ In a Congress Committee meeting in 1987, Rajiv blamed poor planning at the grass root level for the failure of some of his pet programmes. He said that new and young minds were required to pull the country out of its old and slow mindset.

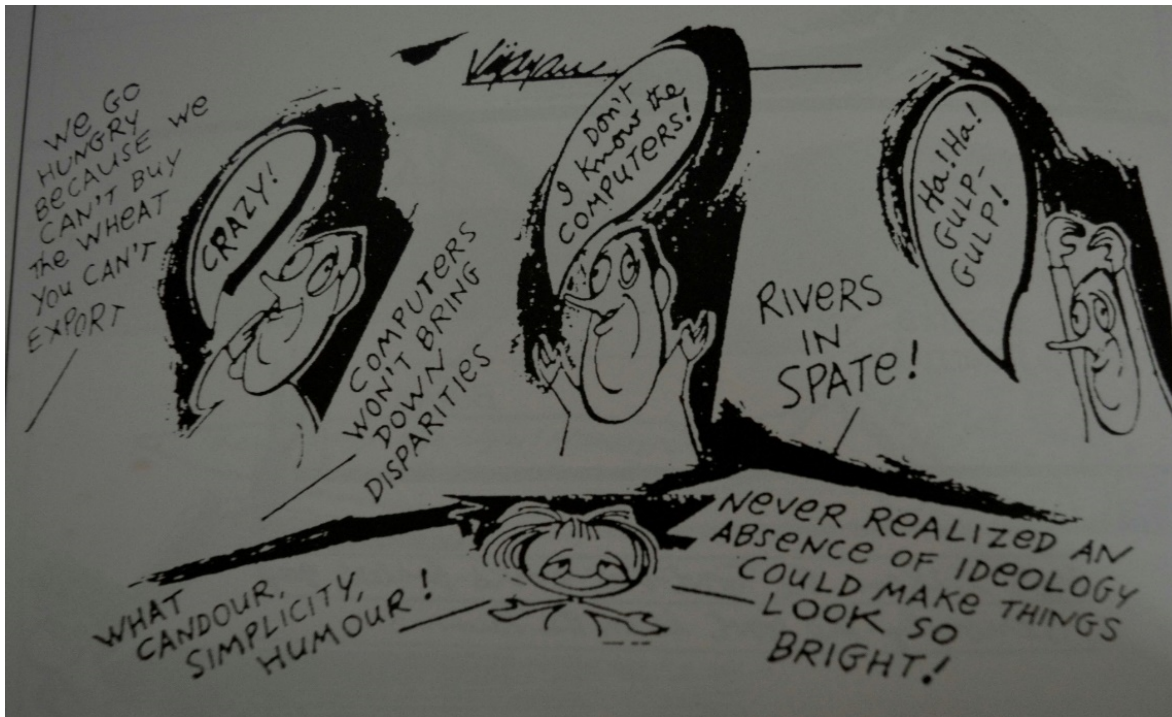


Figure 112

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

According to O.V. Vijayan, Rajiv's lack of a basic ideology about anything caused a great deal of confusion in bringing about absolute change. It was true that Rajiv thought the country to be too slow to match his pace. Laxman too lampooned Rajiv's penchant for getting things done quickly without thinking about the after effects or quality of the plan.

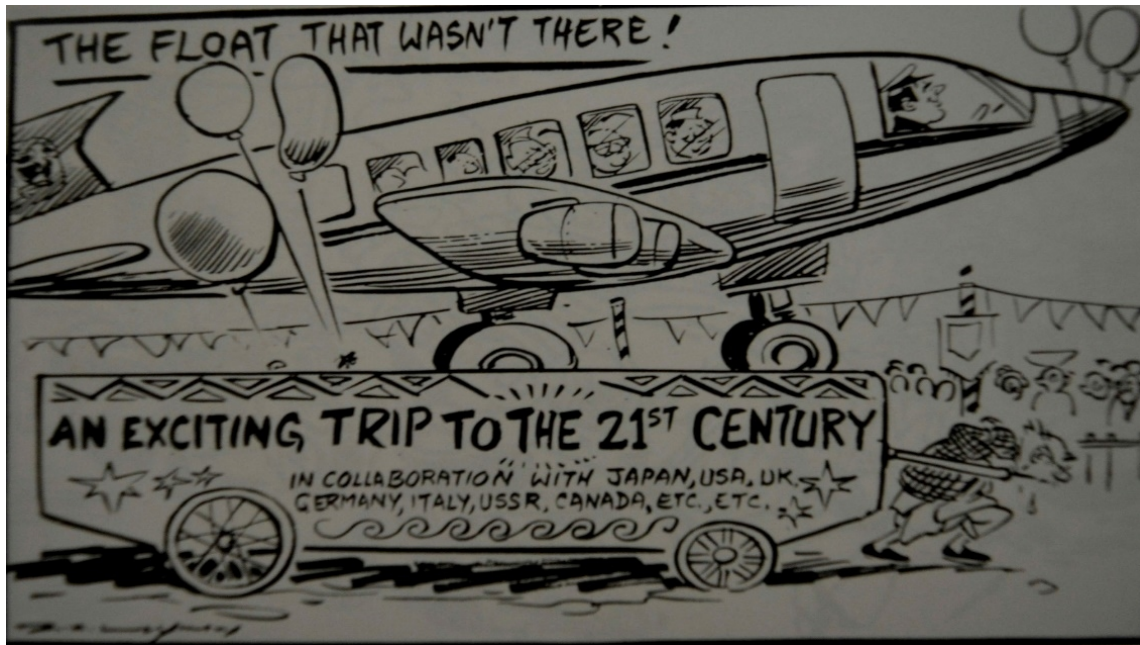


Figure 113

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

At times, some of these ambitious plans were putting a burden on the financial situation of the country. Laxman's cartoon of Rajiv sitting royally in the cockpit of a plane, as a float, indicating his ambitious plans to move forward to the impending 21st century was quite famous. The common man is seen to be pulling the float with great effort. Laxman also positively portrayed Rajiv Gandhi in a couple of cartoons about his attempt bring peace to the disgruntled states like Punjab and Assam following the early debacles during the time of Indira Gandhi. These accords that Rajiv sought invreased his image amongst the general populace while making the senior politicians crib.



Figure 114
Source: Laxman Rekhas

In this cartoon, Rajiv is shown holding hands with Harcharan Singh Longowal, the president of the Akali Dal. The Punjab Accord was sealed as a first step to peace between certain groups and states.

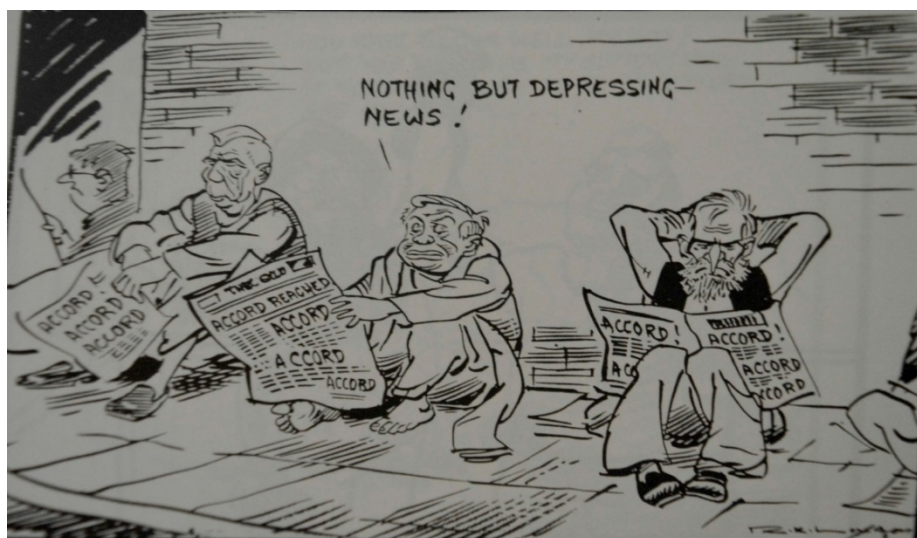


Figure 115
Source: Brushing Up the Years

But, soon these accords started failing with Punjab demanding more terms and Assam demanding immediate implementation of the accord. Meghalaya and Goa followed suit and Rajiv Gandhi had his hands full in no time.



Figure 116
Source: Brushing Up the Years

Scandals began to fill up the second half of the term of Rajiv Gandhi with first one, the involvement of an American detective agency, Fairfax²³², to investigate the illegal amassing of foreign exchange in foreign offshore accounts by Indians. Vijayan's 'kick-back' cartoons, doubting the honesty and the clean image of Rajiv Gandhi are examples of how much the government had to answer to the questions of the public. Before even the Fairfax controversy subsided fully, another controversy erupted over the government's decision to Buy two

²³² The Fairfax investigations suggested that Amitabh Bachchan, a popular actor and a friend of Rajiv Gandhi and a parliamentarian, was included in the list of names which also featured Ambani of the Reliance industries. V.P. Singh, who was in charge of the Finance portfolio was removed by Rajiv Gandhi to handle the Defense portfolio, allegedly in a move to protect some names.

submarines from the HDW shipyard in West Germany. Finding irregularities in the account, V.P. Singh ordered an enquiry into the deal. The mother of all scandals broke out with the Bofors Scandal²³³ breaking out on 16th April 1987. Vijayan's cartoons on the Bofors Scandal and the kick-back from all the deals that the government reveal how the cartoonist lost all hope in any sort of democracy.

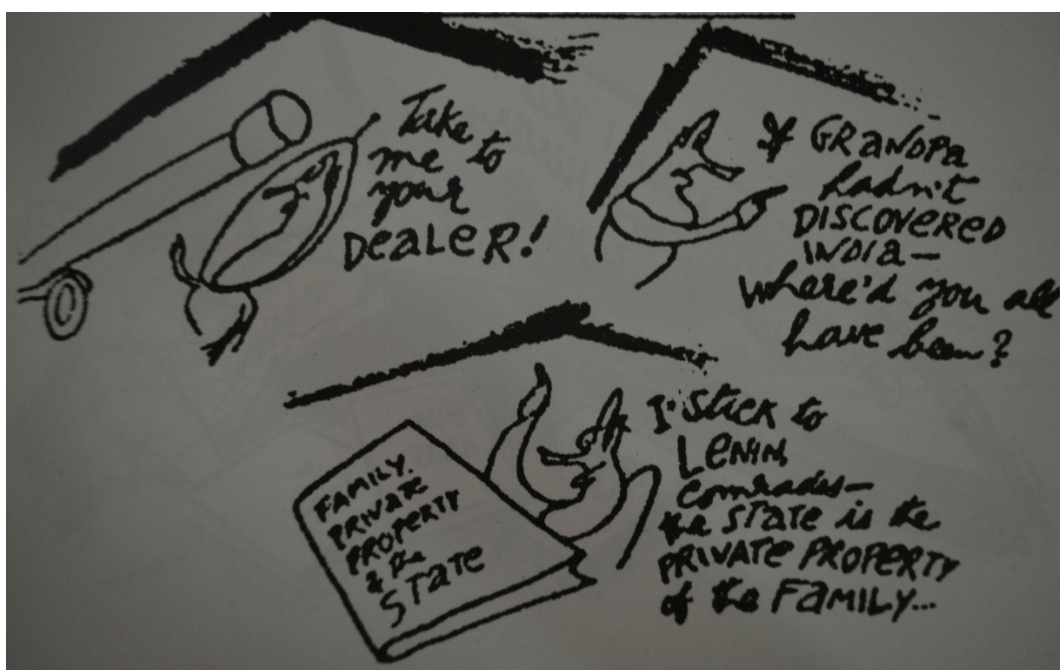


Figure 117

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan even made a comparison between the Gandhi family and the 'Bofors Family' in one of his cartoons. He termed the Bofors family as hereditary gun pushers and the Gandhi family as hereditary patriotism pushers and exclaimed that the people do not respect family privacies anymore.

²³³ Allegations appeared first appeared on the Swiss Radio that close to sixty crores of Indian Rupee was paid to the officials and leaders of the Congress government to secure the deal of 410 Howitzer guns to the Bofors company in Sweden. Soon, the news was taken up in a big way by the Indian newspapers and a call for Rajiv's resignation was made by the Opposition.

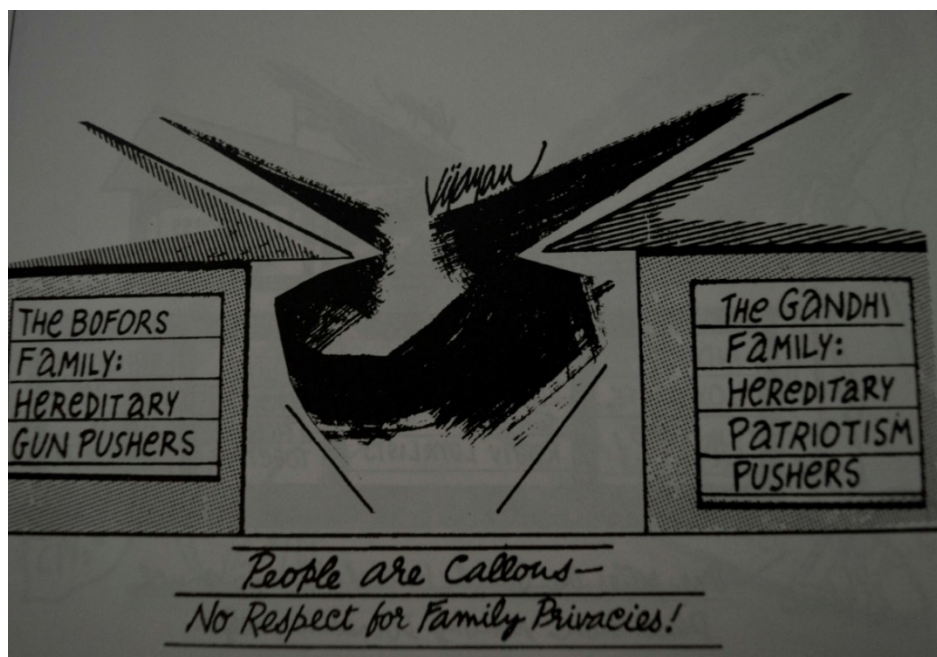


Figure 118

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

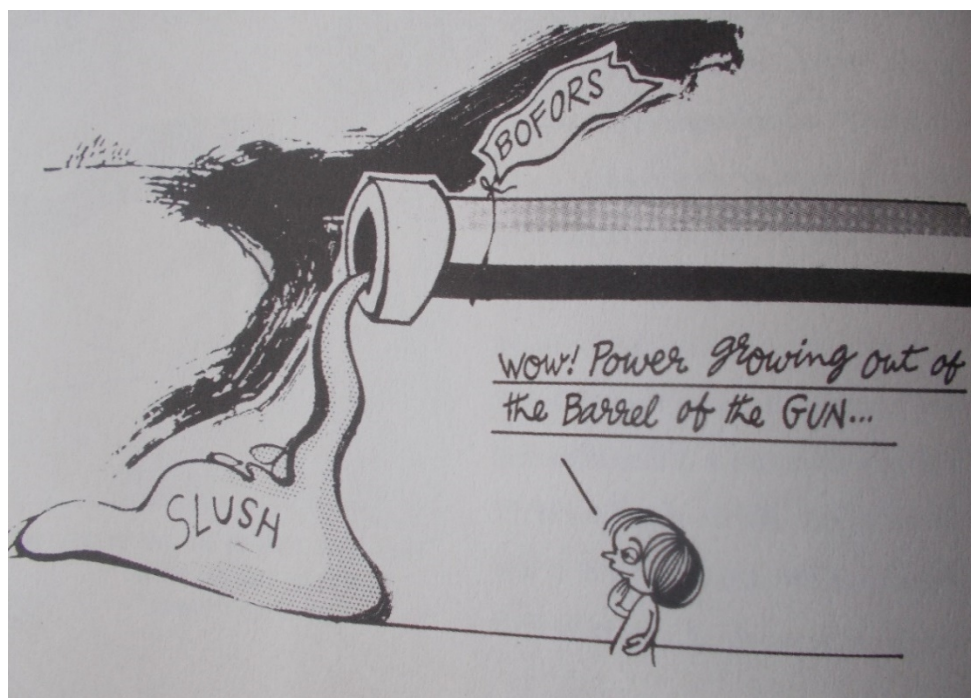


Figure 119

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

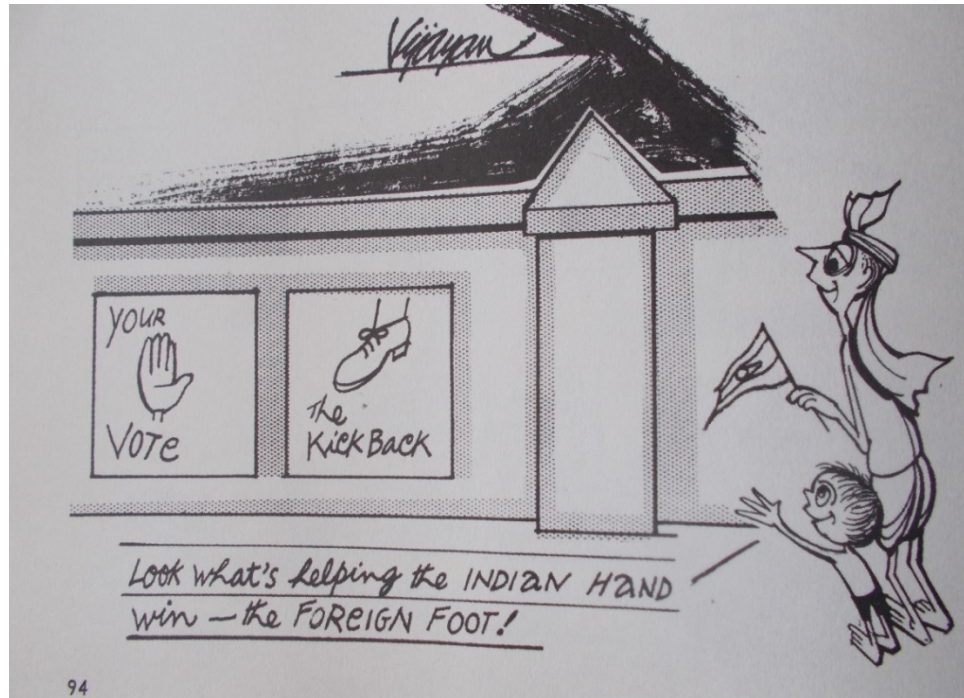


Figure 120

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

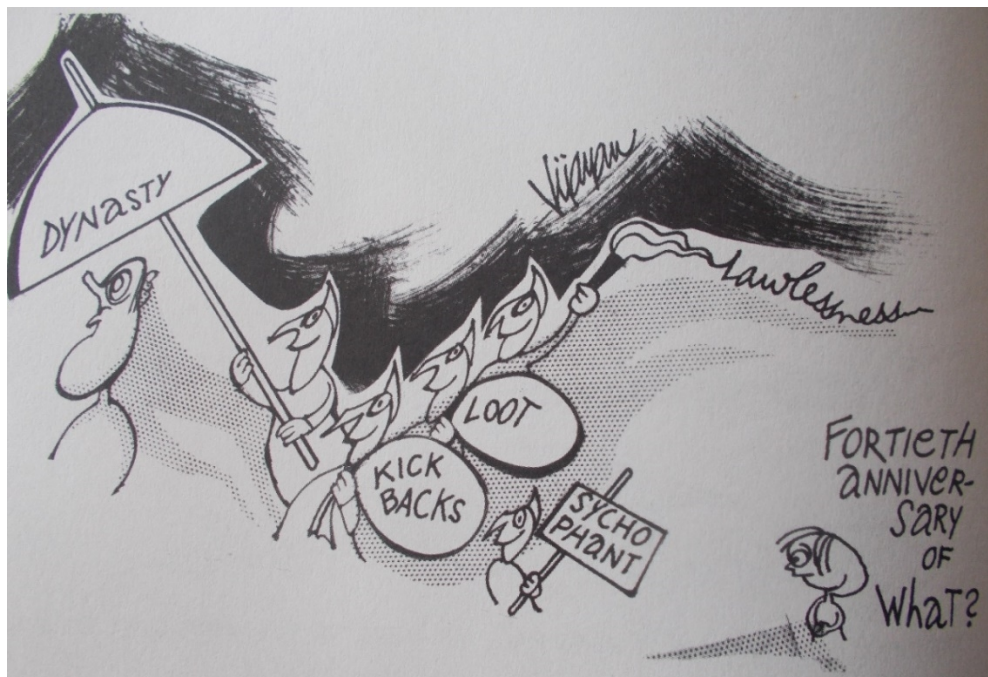


Figure 121

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

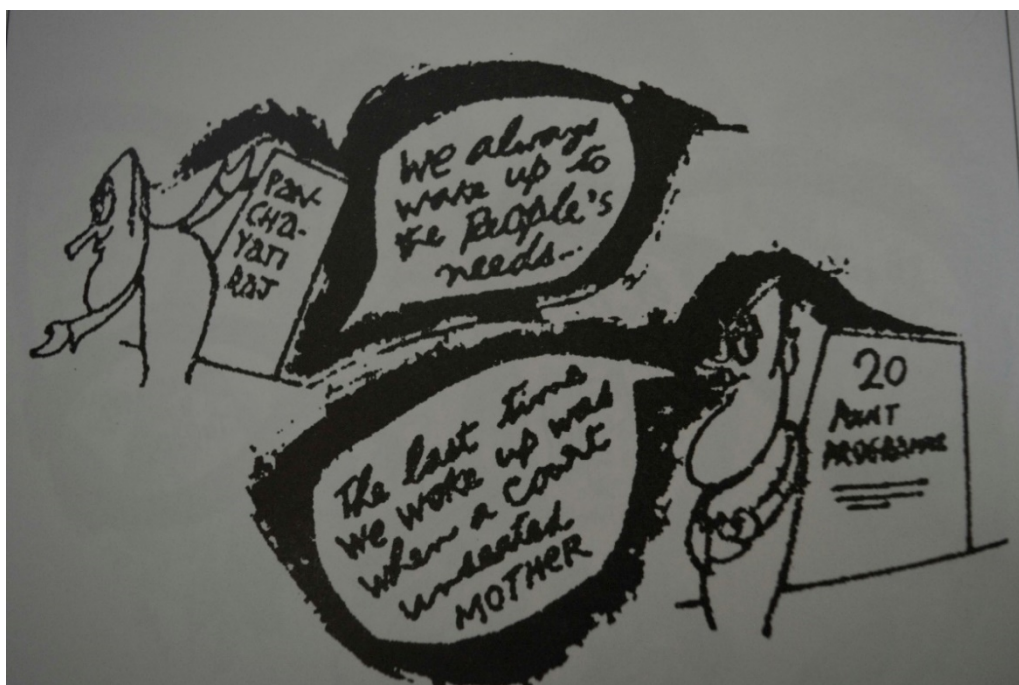


Figure 122

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

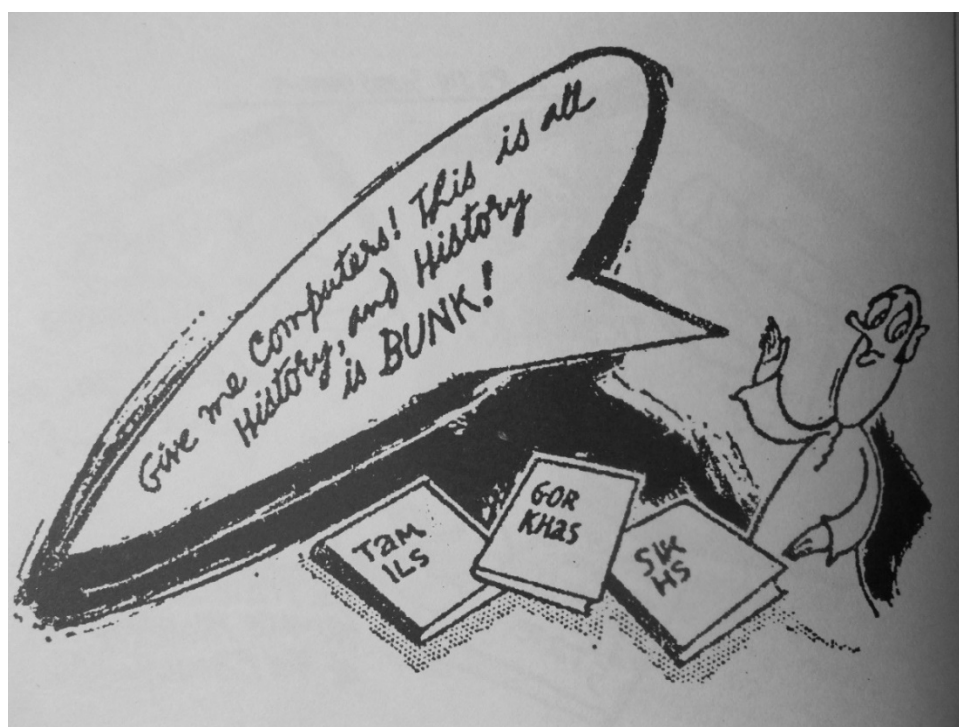


Figure 123

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

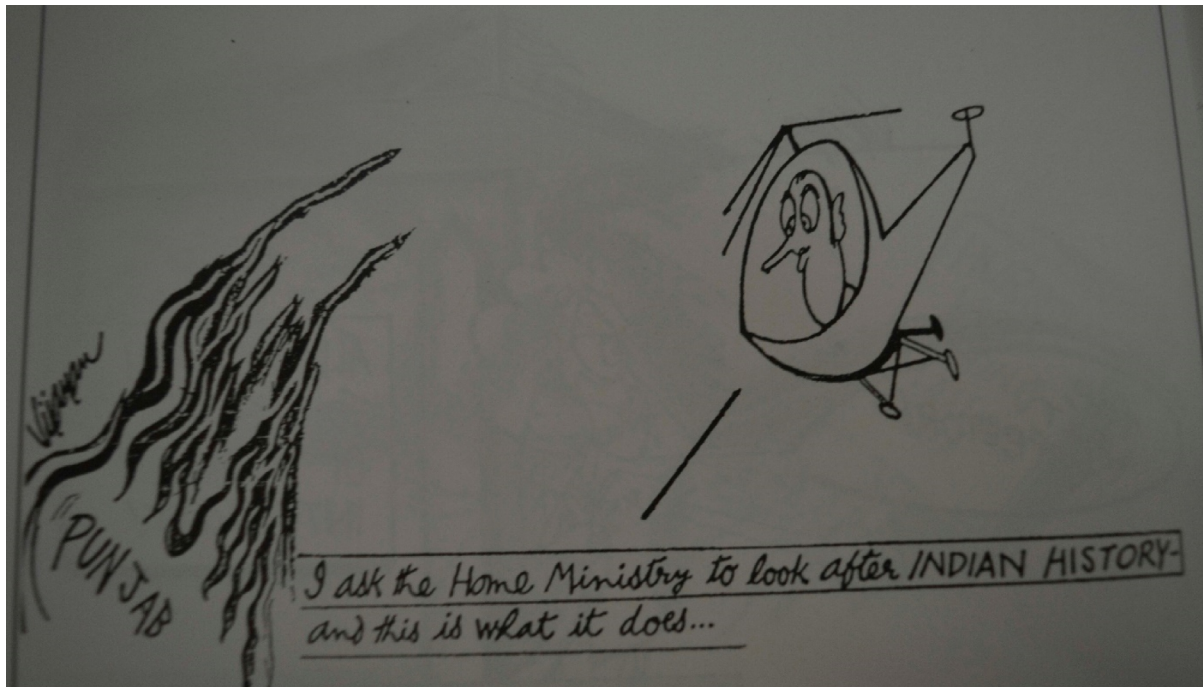


Figure 124

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Though controversies and scandals took away some colour, Rajiv Gandhi took pride in the growth rate of the GDP. His handling of the biggest drought of the decade was praised as well. But the biggest of all the messes that Rajiv Gandhi decided to meddle was the Sri Lankan Civil War²³⁴. Vijayan, with his strong anti-war morals, cartooned India's new way of meddling in the affairs of the neighbors.

²³⁴ In 1983, the Sri Lankan government decided to contain the Tamil population in the Northern part of the country by mounting heavy attacks on LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam) led by V. Prabhakaran, fighting for Tamil autonomy in Sri Lanka. Initially, Indian government succumbed to the sentiments of the native Tamils and started helping out the cornered Sri Lankan Tamils even though there was a naval blockade by Sri Lanka. Later, Sri Lanka decided to seek the help of India to settle the matter with Tamils amicably, through a peace accord and Rajiv Gandhi agreed to do that. According to the proposed accord, the North and East of Sri Lanka would be merged into a single province for Tamils provided the LTTE surrendered its arms and talk to agree on power devolutions. The talks did not take off because the LTTE did not want to surrender as they did not trust the Sri Lankan government. But Rajiv Gandhi accepted the request of Sri Lankan President Jayawardene and sent the Indian Army to Sri Lanka for keeping up the peace and implement the accord. India's plan to forcibly bring the LTTE to the talk did not materialize as fight broke out between the LTTE guerrillas and the Indian Army, which found itself in a difficult terrain.

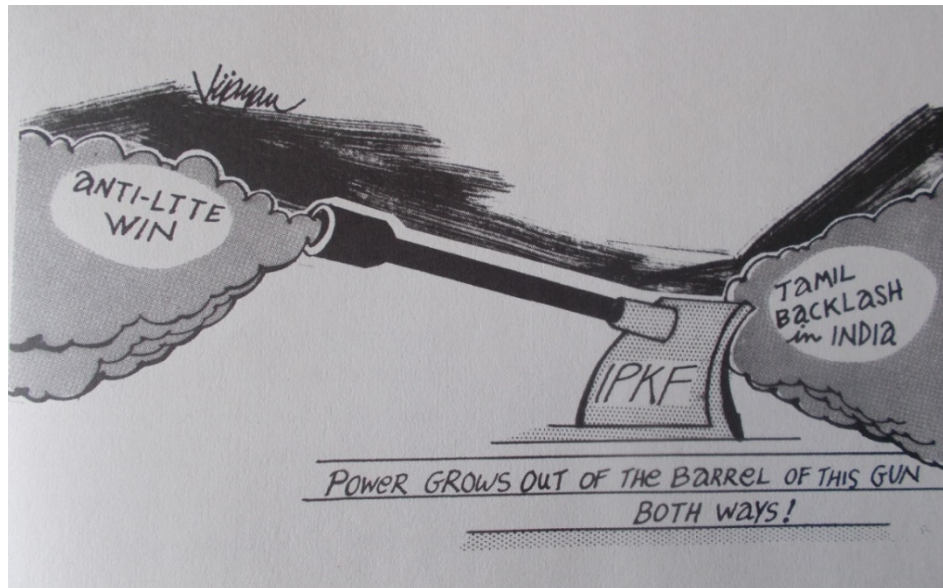


Figure 125

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

The Indian Peace Keeping Force's barrel shoots a shell and the recoil is compared to the Tamil backlash in India, by Vijayan in one of the first cartoons appeared on the issue.



Figure 126

Source: A Cartoonist Remembers

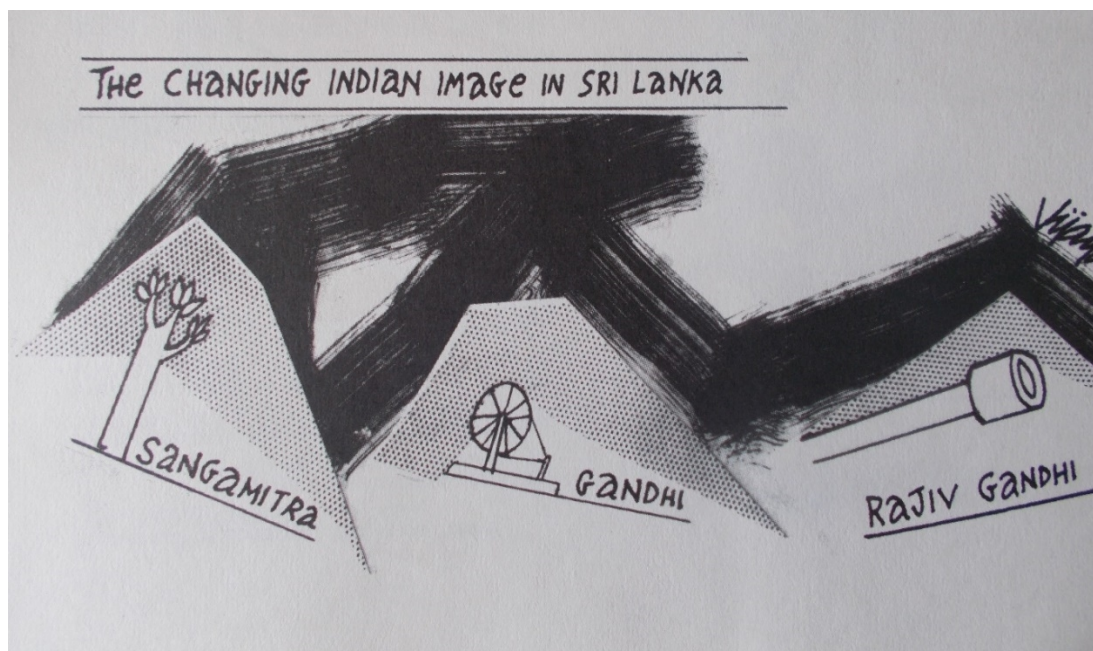


Figure 127
A Cartoonist Remembers



Figure 128
Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Giving a historical approach to the Indian influence in Sri Lanka, Vijayan drew three images. While Sanghamithra represented the sacred Bodhi tree sapling that Emperor Ashoka sent to Sri Lanka, signifying Buddhism, Gandhi's spinning wheel represented another influence and the subsequent message of self-reliance and non-violence. Finally, Rajiv Gandhi's contribution to Sri Lanka is an artillery gun, probably Boforce, making it the third symbol in the history of India-Sri Lanka transactions.

Laxman perceived the Sri Lankan situation as something created by the Sri Lankans to involve India to clean up their mess. He satirized the situation as Rajiv Gandhi trying to control the situation, which is shown as a tiger, get entangled in his own whip.



Figure 129

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Despite creating a near-perfect route map for leading the nation to the twenty first century, the involvement in scams and scandals had destroyed the image of Rajiv Gandhi government towards the end of it. The resignation of V.P. Singh over the Faifax controversy and the Bofors Scandal had helped in creating an image that Congress can never stay away from corruption. By the time elections were announced, V.P. Singh had managed to notch up an anti-Rajiv bloc²³⁵ after his resignation from Congress. This coalition, The National Front Government, came to power after the 1989 general elections, with several different ideologies bundled into one group reminding one of the Janata Party debacle. Congress still was the single largest party with 197 seats in the Parliament. O.V. Vijayan predicted a grim future for the V.P. Singh government although he did a cartoon showing the need for a non-Gandhi government. The main argument of the V.P. Singh campaign was that they were proposing a non-corrupt government. The V.P. Singh plan of campaigning against a government riddled with scandals worked out in a way as many of the leaders that rallied behind him carried with them a clean image, having been steered clear of corrupted governments in the past.

²³⁵ When V.P. Singh left Congress, he was accompanied by some dissidents like Arun Nehru, Satpal Malik, V.C. Shukla etc and they formed the Jan Morcha (People's Front) in 1987. From then on, V.P. Singh, using his anti-corruption stand, cosied up to both the Left and the BJP, trying to make an alliance. Though he condemned communalism and its rise, he often shared platform with prominent BJP leaders like A.B. Vajpai and L.K. Advani. When V.P. Singh won the Allahabad by-election against Congress, he was felicitated publicly at a function where he shared dais with Joti Basu and A.B. Vajpai together, citing a possible alliance. BJP saw this situation as an opportunity to test its strength, as a step to its path to power in the near future. In fact, from 2 seats in 1984, BJP considerably increased their strength to 86 seats in 1989, which put a lot of confidence in them about the ideology being sold in India.



Figure 130

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

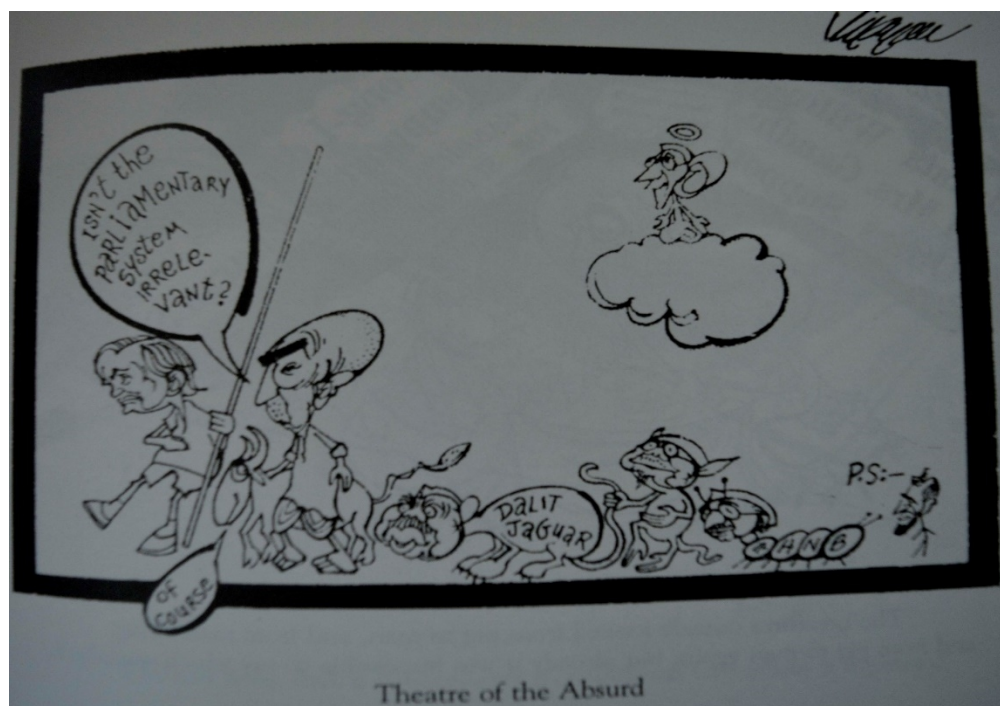


Figure 131

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

In this cartoon, Vijayan shows a multitude of characters from V.P. Singh to Chandrashekar, who became Prime Minister before succumbing to withdrawal of support from Rajiv Gandhi in 1990 and collapsing the government; A.B. Vajpayee, Devi Lal etc is also featured with a now retired Morarji Desai, sitting in the clouds and watching the whole thing unfolding in amusement.

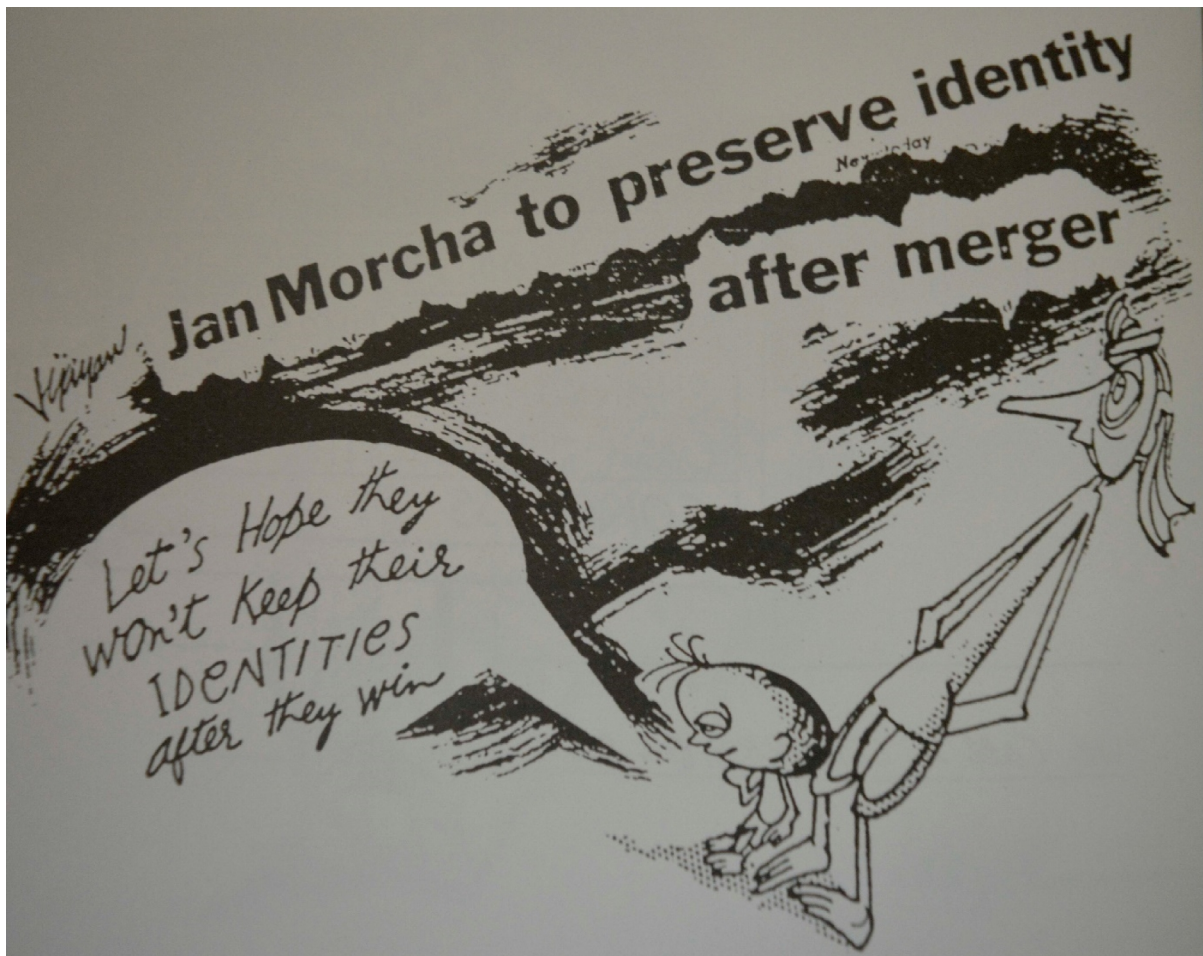


Figure 132

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Vijayan also warned of the possible fracture in a coalition government having seen how the Janata Party government worked out after defeating Indira Gandhi and making a coalition government which disintegrated before its term. In the cartoon that again featured the Dather-Son duo, the son is shown hoping that they (the parties) 'won't keep their identities after they win'.

Laxman did a series of cartoons on the V.P. Singh government, concentrating especially on the infights, and the government's concentration of keeping the coalition together²³⁶.

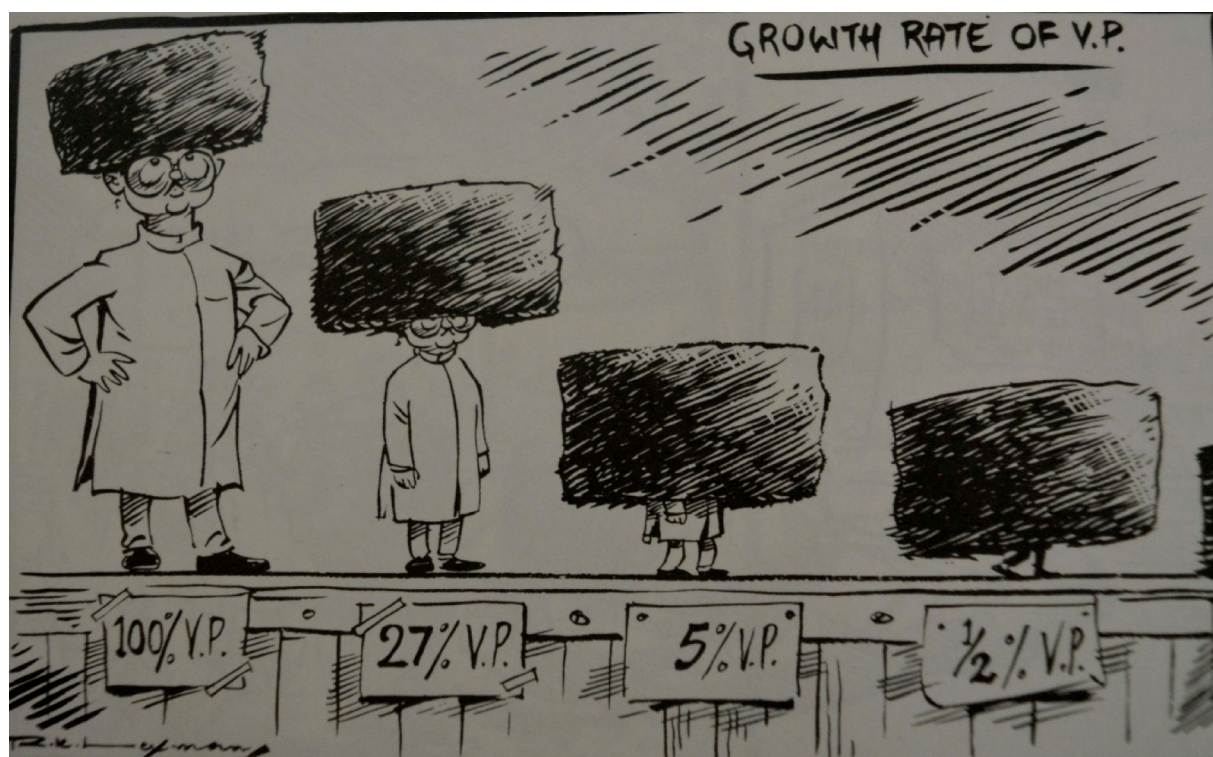


Figure 133

Source: *Brushing Up the Years*

In this cartoon, Laxman showed V.P. Singh's growth from a minister in Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet to that of a Prime Minister later. V.P. Singh is shown as wearing his typical winter cap, with the cap growing and V.P. Singh getting smaller under its burden and finally walking away with the weight of it. Laxman poses the question if V.P. Singh is actually getting away from his objectives by being too anti-Congress, allying himself with BJP? In yet another cartoon, featuring

²³⁶ Being the second non-Congress government to take office in the Post Independent India, the V.P. Singh government ran into trouble right from the beginning. Chandrasekhar opposed V.P. Singh taking the prime ministership. Devi Lal became the Deputy Prime Minister. V.P. Singh also made appointments without consulting anyone in the coalition which started off rifts. The communal fabric of the nation was beginning to come under strain as the BJP had started making noise, gaining strength from the sudden increase of seats in Parliament. The Mandal Commission brought back caste issues to the table when Advani's Ratha Yatra aroused communal tension along his path.

the Common Man and his wife, Laxman shows the infighting inside the coalition that V.P. Singh managed to notch up. Laxman points out that all the infighting has caused the opposition under Rajiv Gandhi to unite again as a single unit and now only people will have to rally behind them to oust the V.P. Singh government²³⁷.



Figure 134
Source: Laxman Rekhas

²³⁷ Devi Lal, the deputy prime minister, was removed from the cabinet by V.P. Singh in 1990, causing the rift to widen further. Threatened by a peasant's agitation planned by Devi Lal, V.P. Singh announced that the Mandal Commission suggestions will be implemented. It is said that this was to divert attention from the mounting problems inside the coalition. It only helped to create more problems in the coalition and the country in general, as the members were angry that they were not consulted. CPM was always maintaining the stance that economic criteria has to be used for reservations, not caste. Specialists argued that the Mandal Commission's method to identify the backward classes were outdated and a large number of them were actually not backward anymore because of the Green Revolution and the White Revolution bringing significant changes in the rural parts of the country. Anti-Mandal agitations rocked the Northern parts of India in the form of violent agitations, city blockades and Bandhs. BJP used this opportunity to rally people behind them through communal methods as Advani embarked on a Rath Yatra from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodhya. V.P. Singh, fearing communal violence, ordered to arrest L.K. Advani on 23rd October 1990 thus by losing the support of BJP, for his government. Soon after that, Janata Dal split and the remaining MPs demanded that Chandrasekhar be made the Prime Minister and V.P. Singh stepped down on 7th November 1990.

7. The Era of Economic Liberalisation

The whole debacle of the brief coalition government ended with V.P. Singh stepping down on 7th November and finally, Chandrasekhar too on 6th March 1991, inviting fresh elections to be conducted. During the conclusion of the first phase of campaigning, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu, on 21st May 1991. The sympathy wave for Congress combined with a lack of option put them back in power at the center with P.V. Narasimha Rao²³⁸ as the Prime Minister. This marked the beginning of India's advance to the global age, at the same time battling new issues like the rise of communalism with an increased mandate in politics. With Manmohan Singh as the new minister for finance, P.V. Narasimha Rao was keen on bringing in reforms to better the economy to suit the already growing GDP. It was aimed at '239...liberalising the economy and integrating it with the world economy. The package of macroeconomic and trade policy reforms introduced in 1991 consisted of macroeconomic policy changes, changes in exchange and trade policy, devaluation of the currency, gradual dismantling of the industrial licensing system and controls, reduction of tariffs, reform of public enterprises and increasing privatisation.'

Though the reform had indirectly started during the time of Indira Gandhi in a minimal way and Rajiv Gandhi was aiming at a total reform to incorporate his targets, it was Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh who started off the radical changes in the Indian economy. The economic

²³⁸ Often referred to as 'The Father of Indian Economic Reforms', P.V. Narasimha Rao was the first South Indian to hold the position of the Prime Minister. He reversed the socialist policies followed by the previous Congress government and dismantled the License Raj, opening up the economy and readying it up for Globalisation. Rao's term as Prime Minister also saw communal polarisation of India with the advent of BJP and the demolition of Babri Masjid resulting in communal riots. Brought back to politics from a near-retirement in 1991, Rao proved to be an excellent Prime Minister but was unable to steer Congress through another election.

²³⁹ Bhalla. G.S., Gurmail Singh. *Economic Liberalisation and Indian Agriculture: A District Level Study*. New Delhi: Sage, 2012. Print.

failures of the recent years had been accumulating, creating a massive fiscal deficit and debt payment crisis which had to be avoided. Hence, this change was essential if India had to be pulled out of an impending economic crisis and Rao and Singh wasted no time in implementing policies directed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In India, the idea of liberalisation was not received well, particularly by the Left²⁴⁰, who thought relaxations would mean more foreign control of the market. The Indian population was greatly confused by the schemes of change and the rhetoric of those who opposed it did not really make any impact in the midset of the people. The immediate result of the reform was a recovery from a economic crisis. The Indian Stock Market received a large boom; from 13 percent as proportionate to the GDP in 1991, it grew to a 60 percent in 1993 and by 1995, Indian stock market registered more companies than the United States. The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the Indian markets also increased considerably in the years that followed.

Laxman's series of cartoons, progressing from the time Narasimha Rao assumed power has proved to be a cartoonic narration of the implementation of economic reforms. Other than just being sarcastic representation of the time, it also has an underlying layer of emotions such as the fear and apprehension of the economic state of the country. The Common Man definitely was worried about where all this was going. In the initial cartoons, Laxman shared the fear of those people who were kept in dark about the reforms. Surrendering the wealth of the nation to revive the economy must have seemed fearful to many. But, as soon as things started getting clear, the

²⁴⁰ The Left had conveniently forgotten that China and Russia had already done more or less the same reforms several years ago to compete with change market systems around the world. The orthodox Left continued to oppose it in various ways in the following years.

cartoonist also embarked on a cheerful lampooning, merging the prevailing social scenarios with a colourful, more luxurious one.

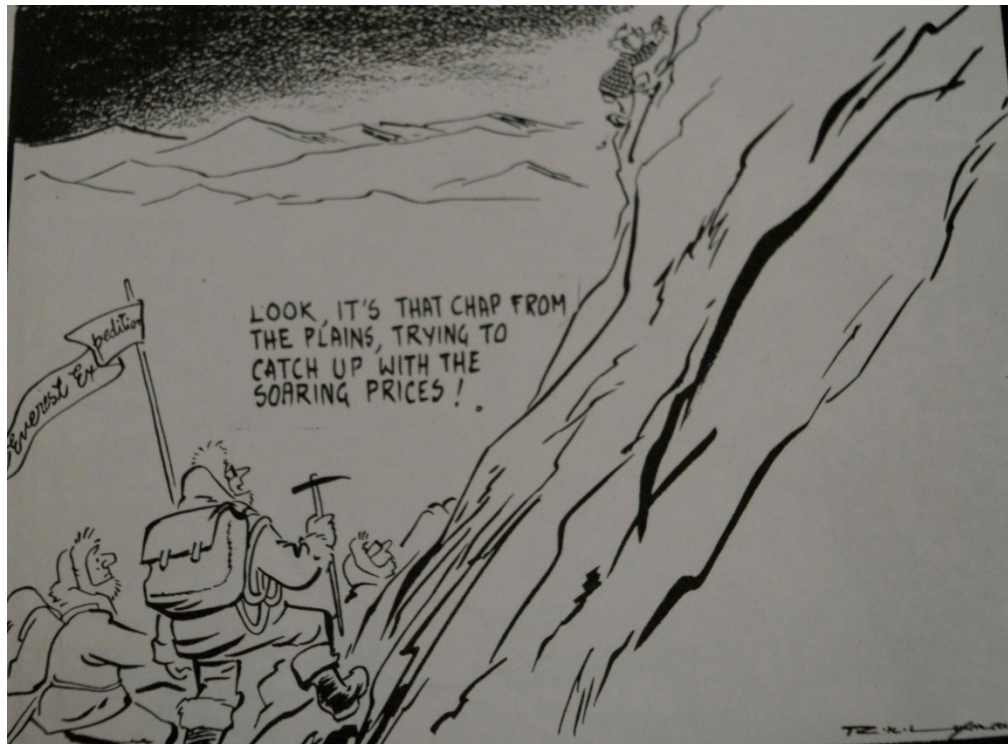


Figure 135
Source: Laxman Rekhas

Soaring prices with large-scale unavailability prevailed during the slum period when India was nose diving into an economic crisis. Laxman portrayed the Common Man as scaling the Everest in a desperate attempt to catch up with the prices rising high. The sentiment soon changed with talks of a possible overhauling of the economic system in the horizon. Narasimha Rao's appointment, breaking existing rules, of Dr. Manmohan Singh²⁴¹ had created a controversy at that time with Singh being apolitical and a bureaucrat with no experience in holding a political office.

²⁴¹ Having held several government posts from being an advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Trade to the Governor of Reserve Bank and the head of the Planning Commission before, Manmohan Singh, was appointed by Narasimha Rao as the Finance Minister in 1991 as a measure to control the damage resulting in an impending economic crisis.

But, the rhetoric on the economic crisis began achieving a positive note after Singh's appointment and later, adopted a straight path leading to Globalisation.

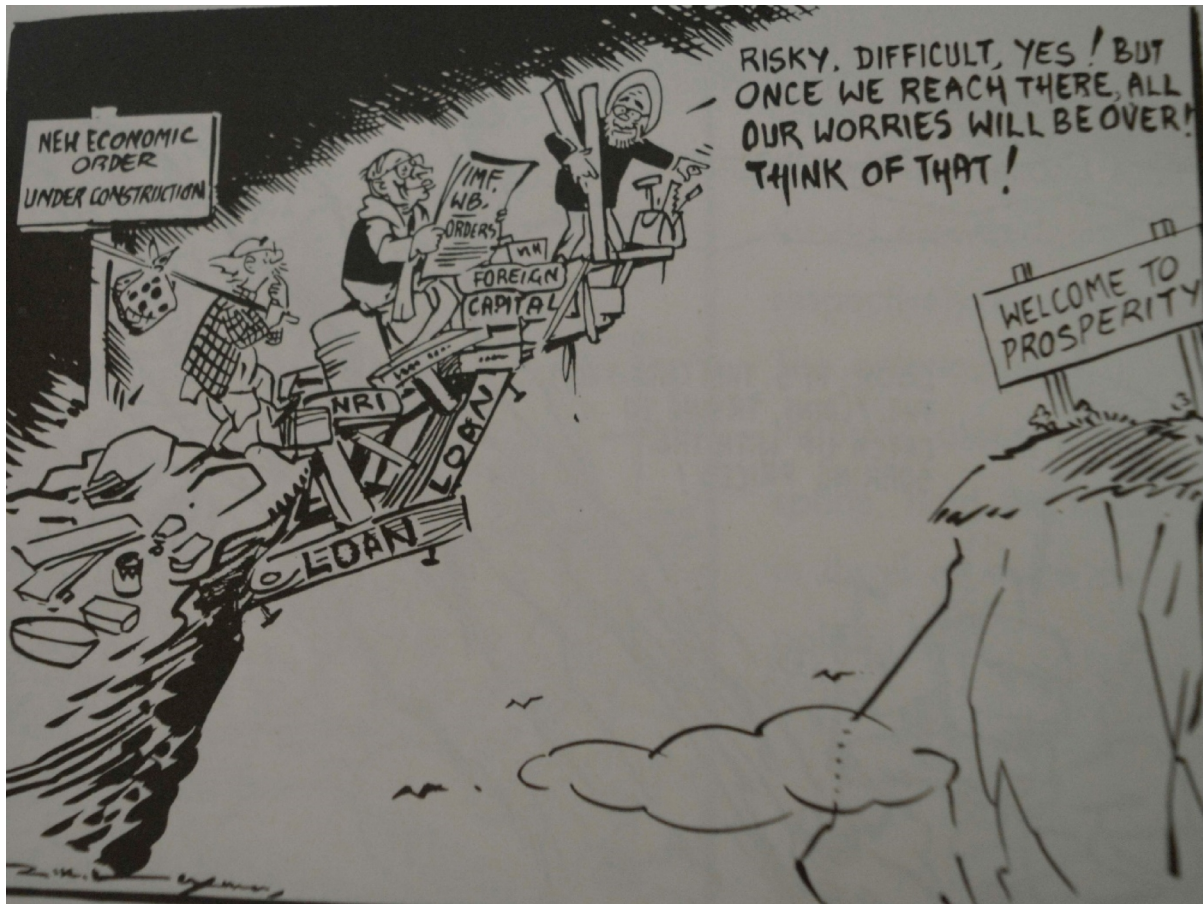


Figure 136
Source: Brushing Up the Years

Laxman's cartoon shows the Common Man following PM Narasimha Rao and an optimistic Manmohan Singh, in building a bridge made of wooden planks gently nailed together, over a cliff to reach out to another cliff which is labelled as 'prosperity'. Yet another cartoon from Laxman presented Gandhi walking through a Mahatma Gandhi Road in a Indian town where things have taken a rather fast turn around, owing to the adoption of new economic reforms. The essence of the town remains the same with a few changes in the background with multi-national food chains and its symbols adorn the cityscape. Laxman's cartoon is undoubtedly claiming that the

liberalisation will never have an impact on a rural town soul. A certain part of the argument is true in the sense that even nearly three decades after the policies were implemented, Indian towns still carry a mixture of the old look and the new, providing a collage of an India before liberalisation and an India after.



Figure 137

Source: Brushing Up the Years



Figure 138

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Laxman also lampooned the Indian Communists, for their constant opposition towards the proposed economic reforms. This cartoon showed Surjeet and Dange, as holding the CPM's redflag and croched behind the trio – Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh and the Common Man – with the intention of saving them losing their economic sovereignty.



Figure 139

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Though the government glorified the fruits of economic liberalisation, there were scopes of side-effects hidden all along. Despite warnings from Manmohan Singh to only look at the positive side, Common Man finds negative shades to the economic liberalisation policies.



Figure 140

Source: Brushing Up the Years



Figure 141

Source: Brushing Up the Years



Figure 142

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Economic Liberalisation policies of 1991 had foreign perpetrators as well. That the U.S, the World Bank and the IMF wanted India to adopt new policies and open up the markets was not a secret to anyone. The devaluation of Rupee had been done once before by Indira Gandhi in the 1960s to help with foreign exports but it had proven to be a wrong move at that time and had caused inflation.

8. The Advent of Communal Politics

With the new policies in place, the government started off in a positive note, but the communal fabric in the country which was already under a new strain with the arrival of BJP (Bharatiya Jan Sangh), the political party owing allegiance to RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), was beginning to pose a bigger threat. BJP, led by a moderate A.B. Vajpayee and a desperate and extremist L.K. Advani had already increased their numbers in the parliament, consolidating a position in which they could make or take governments. The V.P. Singh government had fallen as soon as BJP withdrew its support as a reply to L.K. Advani's arrest during his Rath Yatra²⁴² in 1990. As Jaffrelot said, ²⁴³'The electoral progress of the BJP at the general election in May-June 1991 was predicated on two factors, Mandir (temple) and Mandal.'

Prime Minister V.P. Singh had earlier mentioned in the Parliament that he was going to implement the suggestions of the controversial Mandal Commission. Advani took this opportunity and incorporated his Hindutva agenda with anti-Mandal agitation which was already brewing in

²⁴² The Rath Yatra (Chariot Trip) was the brainchild of a nexus between BJP and VHP (Viswa Hindu Parishad) which received immense welcome through the major towns of North India. It started from Somnath in Gujarat and was planned to end at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. The objective of the trip was to lay a foundation stone at Ayodhya where the Babri Masjid was destroyed earlier, by Karsevaks. Termed as the beginning of militant Hindu nationalist movement, Advani's Rath Yatra was cut short when he was arrested mid-way. The subsequent developments saw BJP withdrawing support to the V.P. Singh government causing the fall of it.

²⁴³ Jaffrelot, Christophe. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1996. Print.

several of the prominent North Indian towns in his route map. Though Ram Mandir and the re-awakening of Hindu identity was the main purpose of the Rath Yatra, Advani could muster up a certain anti-Congress feeling towards the end, before he was arrested. V.P. Singh's attempt to reach a temporary solution between the VHP and the Babri Masjid Action Committee failed when RSS pushed forward the re-building of the temple as the only solution to avoid a confrontation.

For Vijayan, the political situation of the country seemed depressing enough when the religious polarization began. He had predicted this turn of the events long back when Jan Sangh became an ally in the Janata Party government. Vijayan's cartoons looked at the electoral politics as well as the depth of the polarization and the feeble nature of the Hindutva argument.



Figure 143

Source: A Cartoonist Remembers

As early as the 1960s when Jan Sangh was formed and was vying to widen their vote bank, Vijayan did a very prophetic cartoon on their book with the noted symbol of JanSangh, the lamp, and the name of their President, Balraj Madhok²⁴⁴; Mein Lampf, reminding the readers of Hitler's autobiography, Mein Kampf!

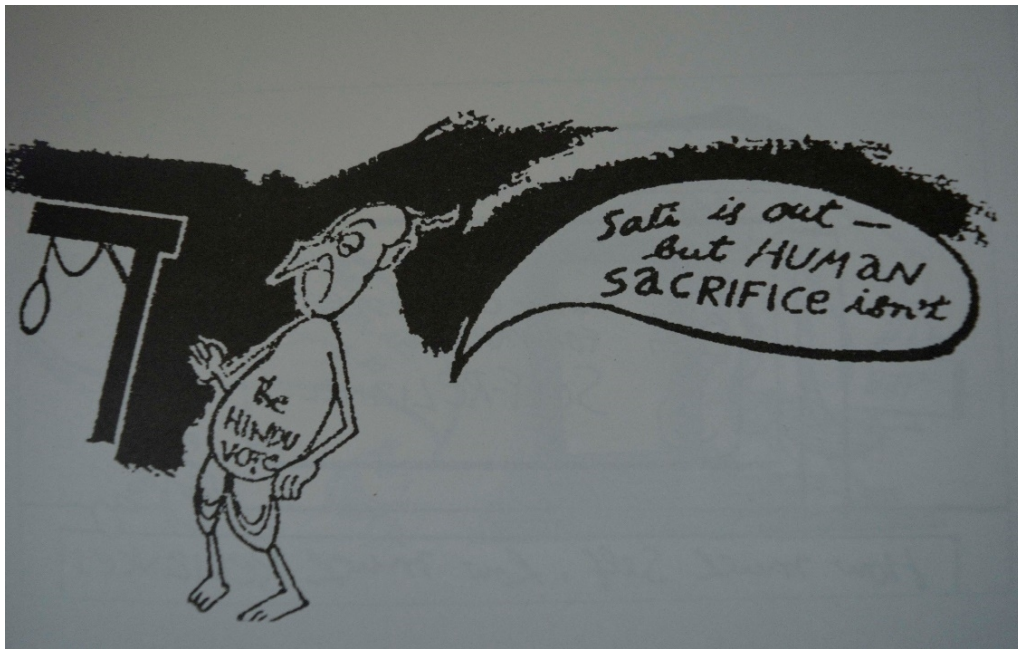


Figure 144

Source: A Cartoonist Remembers

²⁴⁴ Balraj Madhok was a president of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh from 1966-67. Ironically, he was expelled from the party in 1973, for not being standing along the RSS hard-line which was brought by youngsters such as A.B. Vajpayee and L.K. Advani. He passed away in May, 2016.



Figure 145

Source: A Cartoonist Remembers

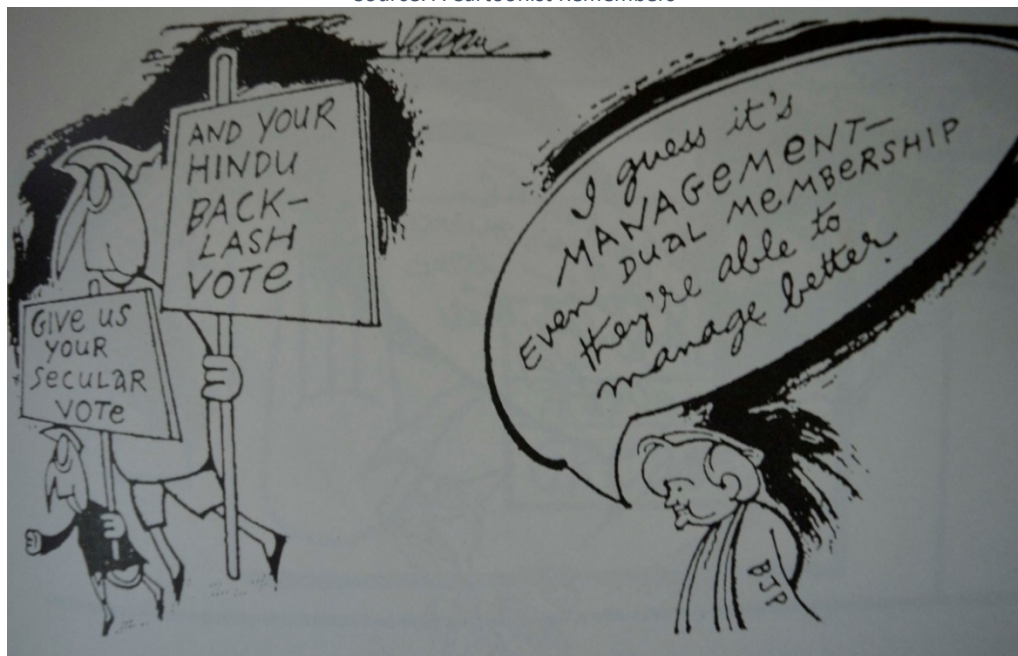


Figure 146

Source: A Cartoonist Remembers

Vijayan's two early cartoons on Vajpayee, during the times when he was trying to transform Jan Sangh into Bharatiya Janata Party, shows two prominent incidents of the time. The first cartoon is a commentary on the alliance between Jan Sangh and Lok Dal to unite with Congress (O) to make the Janata Party in 1977 to oppose Indira Gandhi's Congress.

The second cartoon is Vijayan's take on both the vote banks based on religion and the dual membership debate in the parliament towards the end of the Janata government in 1979. Jan Sangh members of the party were asked to give away their dual membership of Janata Party and the RSS. Upon their refusal to do so, Charan Singh, who had already left the party once and returned as Finance minister walked out of the party with the Socialists, ending the governance of Morarji Desai on 15th July 1979.

R.K. Laxman's cartoons on the rise of Hindutva and BJP were more straightforward than the Vijayan ones. He lampooned them, especially Advani and his efforts, by placing a crown on his head. The conservative ideology was at the receiving point of Laxman more than often.



Figure 147

Source: Brushing Up the Years

One of the first cartoons on the subject appeared on Advani's Rath Yatra. Laxman symbolises communalism as a sleeping dragon on a narrow road, blocking the path of Advani on his chariot, holding a trident to poke the dragon with. Advani justifies the act as 'a calculated risk'.



Figure 148

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Simultaneously in Mumbai, Bal Thackeray had already started an anti-minority, anti-South Indian and an anti-Muslim rhetoric after Shiva Sena started getting prominence in the local polls. The rise of Hindutva forces throughout the country was a timed one. After the 1992 Bombay riots²⁴⁵, the Shiv Sena tightened its stance on Hindutva and allied with the BJP to win the 1995 elections.

²⁴⁵ Srikrishna Commission report implicated Thackeray and the Shiv Sena for instigating violence against Muslims in the 1992 Bombay Riots.



Figure 149

Source: Brushing Up the Years

The 1991 Hawala Scam brought the attention on many national leaders including L.K. Advani, V.C. Shukla and Madan Lal Khurana as their names were listed in the diaries of hawala brokers, the Jain brothers, for allegedly receiving payments and briberies. The charges were later snubbed by the court as unsustainable.

More than it rocked L.K. Advani's political image, the Hawala Case dented the corrupt-free image of Narasimha Rao's government. Advani, in fact, continued with his role in building up the ideology of Hindutva by amassing people behind for the cause. This shift from a nationalist focus to an ethno-religious sentiment helped in catapulting BJP to the national scene in a big way although it lacked serious political support in the South. Vajpayee and Advani had realized that it was time for them to take on the Congress in the elections to come, banking on the anti-Congress

sentiment that had begun to spur. Laxman's cartoon showed that while Narasimha Rao tried in vein to control the infighting in Congress, the BJP did their homework in removing them.



Figure 150

Source: Brushing Up the Years



Figure 151

Source: Brushing Up the Years

Even though Narasimha Rao succeeded in bringing a chargesheet against L.K. Advani for his involvement in the Babri Masjid demolition incident, it did not really work against the nationalist sentiments that BJP were raising.



Figure 152

Source: Brushing Up the Years



Figure 153

Source: Brushing Up the Years

As the polling date approached there was even a steady flow of members from Congress to BJP, realizing the potential victory of them. Congress claimed that BJP cannot offer a stable government and that horse trading the members with other parties were not going to work for them. Laxman's cartoon carefully done on a play on Narasimha Rao's statement showed Vajpayee and Advani sitting in a 'stable', carefully scrutinizing lists of candidates and allies. Vajpayee, interestingly, is shown to have a name board which designates him as 'PM (in Waiting)'. In fact, there has already been consensus in the BJP that Vajpayee will be their prime ministerial candidate if they won the elections.



Figure 154
Source: Brushing Up the Years

Laxman did another cartoon on the subject, with Advani running after Vajpayee with the chair of the prime minister in his hands. Vajpayee is shown to be running away from it in fear. The

Common Man and his wife watches the whole episode from the balcony while reading a newspaper filled with crises. It was evident that whatever waited the next prime minister was not going to be anything good.



Figure 155
Source: Brushing Up the Years

It was somewhat true in the case of Vajpayee when BJP ultimately won the elections, becoming the single largest party in the parliament. Vajpayee sworn in as the Prime Minister but since the BJP failed to garner enough support on the floor to sustain a ministry, he resigned after 13 days of being Prime Minister. But Vajpayee proved to be a zealous Prime Minister in the limited days he remained in the office. This cartoon by R.K. Laxman shows the plight of Vajpyee despite the things he achieved.

After Vajpayee could not form a government, H.D. Deve Gowda formed a majority with the coalition, United Front, in 1996. Following the footsteps of the previous coalition governments, this too suffered from infights and ego-clashes and finally, Deve Gowda stepped down to make way for Inder Kumar Gujral as Prime Minister. BJP, under Vajpayee and Advani, campaigned relentlessly throughout this time, amassing allies. Advani managed to bring aboard Mayawati (BSP leader in Uttar Pradesh) and Jayalalitha (AIADMK leader in Tamil Nadu) but months down the lane, both alliances fell out. Meanwhile, defections from Congress to BJP continued as usual.



Figure 156

Source: *Brushing Up the Years*

Even after fielding Sonia Gandhi and building up seemingly secular connections with regional parties, Congress lost again to BJP in the general elections conducted in 1998. Vajpayee returned to power a second time and two months later, India detonated a nuclear device in Pokhran,

heralding its entry in to the list of countries capable of weaponizing nuclear energy. In an act that was seen domestically as a boost for pride, India was showered with economic sanctions by the Western countries. Laxman's cartoon agreed to the Congress spokesperson Salman Khursheed's statement, in response to the detonation of the nuclear device, that the BJP was trying to use the tests for political ends rather than to enhance the country's national security.



Figure 157

Source: Brushing Up the Years

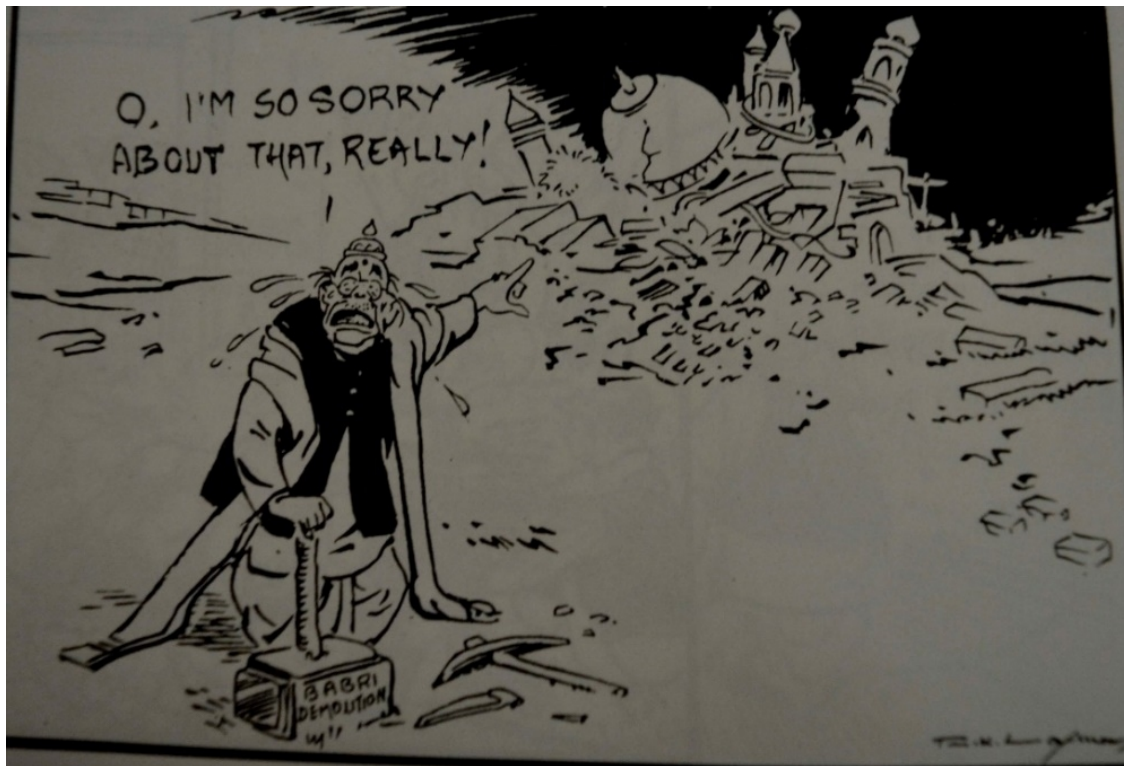


Figure 158
Source: Brushing Up the Years

In yet another cartoon, Laxman mocked Advani's act of apologizing for his involvement in the demolition of Babri Masjid; an act that devastated the shabby yet venerable communal fabric of the country. For a while BJP was doing everything well enough and on time. The Pokhran II and the Kargil War had certainly raised the nationalistic fervor in the country and riding on that, BJP won a comfortable victory in the polls of 1999.

Conclusion

Indian cartoonists such as Vijayan, Laxman and Abu Abraham have, on several occasions, pointed out the differences between the Indian tradition and the Western tradition of cartooning. Whereas the Western cartooning flourished and evolved under the freedom of democracy for a longer period, Indian cartooning struggled through long years of imperialism and the restrictions

that came with it. Though giving space to cartoons in a daily or a magazine had become a tradition by the beginning of 1900s, it was expected of a cartoonist to restrain himself from overt lampooning, an offense which will put the newspaper's survival at risk. As briefly mentioned before in the first chapter, strict censorship laws in place to regulate the local press only enabled the cartoonists to be smarter, more evasive. Laxman lauded the political cartoonist of the Colonial period,

‘²⁴⁶He kept his ideas to broad symbols so as not to annoy any person or question any policy. Thus his cartoons abounded in monsters, angels, tigers, lions, snakes, jackals and elephants. There were, of course, the celebrated bulldog and the lion to represent the British rulers. A dove eyed suffering angel represented Mother India, otherwise known as Bharat Mata.’

If the First World War and the years following up to The Second World War, coinciding with the arrival of David Low, gave the British cartooning a fresh push, the Indian struggle for Independence gave our cartooning a temporary momentum, which was immediately stolen by the demand for War news. It can be said that a new tradition of cartooning arose when India got its freedom. Be it Shankar Pillai or a lesser known Lakshman or Kutty of the period, Indian cartoonist certainly was a different human than a Western one. Post-War period in the West and the United States gave importance to international politics more,²⁴⁷ especially the power politics in a post-war world and re-building. At the same time, in India, cartoonists were given ample opportunities to play critiques to a democratic government, building a nation out of princely states and linguistic

²⁴⁶ Laxman, R.K. *The Common Man Watches Cricket*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998. Print.

²⁴⁷ Taking a fresh look at the cartoons in New Yorker between 1945 and 1964 would reveal that the number of cartoons on American society and politics were less than that of the ones that were produced on the power balance of the contemporary world politics and the American part in it.

and ethnic units. Caroonists thrived under the newly given freedom. They spread out and established their styles. Laxman made Bombay his home just as much Shankar watched the day-to-day politics unravelling at Delhi. Vijayan wrote of Shankar once, ‘²⁴⁸He had his quaint prejudices and exuberances, but beneath them Shankar carried a private flamboyance of experience; it was not always that you worked with one who straddled historical transits, and even rarer, with one who could make epic gossip out of them.’

Even then, Vijayan disagreed with Shankar’s way of cartooning. For Vijayan, Shankar’s perception of incidents probably looked less political. Vijayan, slowly assimilating himself to the new persona of a Third World cartoonist, did not believe the straight-forward caricaturing that Shankar did. Walking with the giants and being part of a movement was not enough for Vijayan believed in picking them apart with questions and traumas that haunted the real world. So, when Shankar caricatured the impending danger from China as an international problem, Vijayan’s cartoons often focused on a leftist intellectual’s dilemma and how the question of patriotism or ideology mattered to them when a country worshipping their ideology attack a country they live in. When Shankar caricatured Nehru with elegance that he believed Nehru should carry, Vijayan presented Nehru as a confused romantic with unrealistic notions of India. He wrote, ‘²⁴⁹We were post-Independence cartoonists, young men who tended to invest the heros of the freedom struggle with carnival largeness. Yet we were better analysts of news, which gave our cartoons an edge the maestro disapproved of.’

Nearly all cartoonists of the time, especially Laxman and Vijayan, agree that the cartooning of the period was an exhilarating task. In a less formal way, both agree, through their writings

²⁴⁸ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2002. Print.

²⁴⁹ Vijayan, O.V. *A Cartoonist Remembers*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2002. Print.

later, that they had to go against the tradition that Shankar had already perfected and placed. Though Laxman acknowledged Shankar for bringing cartoon to an important position in Indian journalism, he thought Shankar's cartoons lacked the contemplation that its readers were supposed to have. Laxman wrote in his introduction to the *The Common Man* series, 'His ideas were the kind which induced an instant guffaw rather than provoked a moment of contemplation and laughter.'

Vijayan was sharper in his disbelief in the existing system of cartooning. His cartoons, lacking of humour in the traditional meaning, were taken as rather serious one. He believed that a Third World cartoonist's responsibility placed him at a difficult situation where he was forced into keeping a colonial liability of continuity with humour, which the conditions of India did not offer.

'Having spent the preceding years²⁵⁰ not in Nehru's Delhi but in an outlying satrap where atavism had begun to corrode the democratic make-believe, I was disturbed by Shankar's advice. "Don't hit hard, these are men to be pitied. Laugh generously." The maestro was entering a timewarp blithely unaware of the change, and presuming the graces of the declining Empire would endure in a raw native liberty.'

Vijayan, taking in his responsibility as a chronicler of time and democracy, looked upon plain humour in cartoons as an element that made them look like posters. For him, the only way was to adopt a black humour. He compares it with a 'virtuous rebellion like satyagraha' which makes it respectable amongst the readers. That cartooning is a rebellion is the understanding Vijayan, as a cartoonist reached.

²⁵⁰ Vijayan joined the *Shankar's Weekly* in 1958.

Laxman, on the other hand, rather than theorizing cartooning, got into the psyche of an average Indian to understand the basic needs of him, as a citizen of a post-colony, world's largest democracy and a Third World nation battling poverty and famine. Laxman saw politics as a favorite pastime of the nation. For him, being a cartoonist meant only to represent the people or present the people with facts coated in plain lampooning. He did not face the crisis that Vijayan faced at being a cartoonist.

Indian cartoonists are to be understood through the diversity in their thoughts. The political and social arena of post-Independent India did not lack of subjects and the major cartoonists of the time thrived for a while. Cartooning, from Shankar's definition of lampooning, grew out and theorised itself into a powerful method of critique. If Vijayan's form of critique was a thoughtful more symbolised one, Lakshman's was of a more easily understood, mildly amusing one. Either methods carried powerful messages to the readers, more often, in prophetic tones. Proliphic as they were, Laxman more than Vijayan, together they created a parallel historical narration of the post-Independent India, complete with a critique's eye, encompassing all the vices and virtues of the thousands of politicians and bureaucrats that thrived in an imbalanced political environment, headed by more than ten governments and less than ten Prime Ministers. So, if one has to look at the history of cartooning in India as a post-colony, it has to be read alongside a linear and chronological arrangement of the cartoons of O.V. Vijayan and R.K. Laxman as the leading cartoonists of the time till the beginning of the twentyfirst century.

Chapter Four

Reading Political Cartoons: Memory, Nation-State, Dissent

In the second chapter, we examined a detailed history of popular culture with emphasis upon the origins of political cartoons. The third chapter was intended as a continuation of the second, understanding the historical importance of political cartoons when presented along with the contexts that spurred their creation. However, it is important to understand political cartoons through their space in the Cultural Studies. In order to do that a reading of them is required. In this chapter, I intend to examine how some of the key terms of contemporary cultural studies can be assimilated into the study of political cartoons as part of popular culture. Cartoons as a mode of remembering is one way to understand them. In this chapter we shall argue that, a cartoon made at a particular point of time in history, representing or responding to a certain event or person, can work as a social/cultural totem. Once it is established that cartoons are products of culture and often understood based on the individual memories of the perceiver, I commit the latter part of the chapter to looking at cartoons as a critique of the nation-state and form of dissent.

1. Political Cartoons and Translation

Some consider cartoons as a young art, compared to all the other media practices. Considering the rich and long history as given in the second chapter, it is impossible to believe so. However, the wide acceptance and the odd oppositions that the tradition of cartooning received in its course of history shows nothing but the fact that it is a very well tested art. It has survived dark times as

well importance of epic proportions. When political cartoons were considered as the topic of this research, two questions were the key to the initial stages of it.

2. Can cartoons be considered as translation of a charged political thought?
3. Can cartoons be considered as a translation of the time?

Cartoons by default are associated with humour. Though a few like O.V. Vijayan and Jeff Danzinger²⁵¹ operated on the lines of dark humour to get their opinions across, most cartoonists find their comfort in irony, satire, parody and sarcasm. This makes cartoons difficult to translate. As I have mentioned in the second chapter, P.K.S. Kutty's cartoons were made in English and translated into Bengali as the Ananda Bazaar Group he worked for operated dailies in those two languages. But mostly, translating cartoons remains a tedious job due to the different levels it operates. The visual format remains the same and the dialogue or the commentary is the only translatable item but if it is a humorous statement, translation becomes an effort. Often, it may not even strike the same message that the original carried so effortlessly. Though translating humour is a major focus of study in Linguistics and Translation Studies, scholars have always differed on the topic when it comes to translating cartoons because there are several issues that stand in the way. First of all, applying theories of translating humour to cartoons would be based on the assumption that all cartoons are humorous. It is wrong to assume so since cartoons of political nature might deviate from the usual sense of humour to a thought-provoking, sarcastic language often induced with puns and wordplay. Secondly, cartoons also work on visual terms, engaging the reader beyond the realms of words, making it a combination of visual and the verbal.

²⁵¹ Jeff Danzinger is an American cartoonist working for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Victor Raskin²⁵²'s Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH) was later revised in collaboration with Salvatore Attardo²⁵³, making it the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)²⁵⁴. According to Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humour, jokes or verbal humour may be broken down in to six parameters or Knowledge Sources as he called them; Language, Narrative Strategy, Target, Situation, Logical Mechanism and Script Opposition. Neal Norrick argues that GTVH absolutely 'disregards slapstick, sketches, caricatures, cartoons and the like, but it also excludes more jokes and related facets of humour than one probably initially imagines.'²⁵⁵

So, one can see the limitations of linguistic theories of humour in translating cartoons or comics. But can cartoons be perceived as an intersemiotic translation of a political thought? If one has to take the primary definition of translation from the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*²⁵⁶, Cartoons can indeed be considered as translation. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, translation is defined as 'to change or convert from one form, function or state to another.' Michel L. Fayol argues,

‘²⁵⁷Written language is not the only mechanism for translating cognitive representations into another format. Ideas can also be expressed in gesture, sign language, art, architecture, dance and bodily motion, music, drama, and mime.

²⁵² Victor Raskin is a professor of Linguistics at Purdue University and the author of *Semantic Mechanisms of Humour* and *Ontological Semantics*. He is known for his Linguistics theory of humour.

²⁵³ Salvatore Attardo was Victor Raskin's student and has contributed to Raskin's script-based semantic theory of humour making it the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH).

²⁵⁴ Attardo, Salvatore. *Linguistic Theories of Humour*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994. Web.

²⁵⁵ Norrick, Neal R., and Delia Chiaro, eds. *Humor in Interaction*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009. Web.

²⁵⁶ Morris, William. Ed. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1976. Web.

²⁵⁷ Fayol, Michel, Denis Alamargot and Virginia W. Berninger., eds. *Translation of Thought to Written Text while Composing – Advancing Theory, Knowledge, Research Methods, Tools, and Applications*. London: Psychology Press, 2012. Web.

These modes of translating ideas into different media are not mutually exclusive. For example, the legendary French maestro, Georges Pretre, used bodily motion and gesture both to coordinate the other musicians in real time and to dramatize the musical ideas.’

Though radical translation theorists and scholars consider language itself as translation, there are some who would consider that theory as an unnecessary broadening of the term. Jakobson’s²⁵⁸ definition of intersemiotic translation explains translation from one semiotic system to another. For example, a novel (written form) made into a film (visual art) can be seen as a translation, according to Jakobson. But even this fails to explain how an original visual art such as a cartoon or a painting can be treated as a translation. Writer and translator Jeffrey Green’s explanation probably brings the idea closer to clarity. Green tried to change the equations of how translation works traditionally by giving translator an important position in it. According to him, normally the equation would be like this:

$$^{259}\text{‘WRITER} \rightarrow \text{TEXT} \leftarrow \text{TRANSLATOR} \rightarrow \text{TRANSLATED TEXT} \leftarrow \text{READER’}$$

But, in an attempt to justify the thought process that generates the translation, he reconstructed the equation to this:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{‘WRITER} [\rightarrow \text{internal “text”} \leftrightarrow \text{internal “translator”}] \rightarrow [\text{“translated”}] \\ &\text{TEXT} \leftarrow [\text{internal “translator”}] \rightarrow [\text{“translated text”}] \leftarrow \text{READER’} \end{aligned}$$

²⁵⁸ Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translation Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

²⁵⁹ Green, Jeffrey M. *Thinking Through Translation*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2001. Web.

Green further explains his thoughts on the matter based on his experience as a translator.

‘This model implies that writers “translate” something mental into text and that readers “translate” texts in to something mental, an implication that is difficult to handle in any empirical way. It also implies that the translator is doing something explicitly that every reader and writer does implicitly, though in a skewed order. It does seem that something mental and not verbal must exist before texts are written and after they are read. When we have written something, we believe we have organized and expressed ideas and impressions that existed in our brains before we wrote. For we might have used other language or another language entirely to express them. Similarly, as readers, we feel that we are storing up ideas and impressions nonverbally, for, after reading, we can express some of these ideas and impressions in our own words, even in a language other than the one in which the text was written. However, the writer’s “internal translator,” which converts preverbal material into words is largely inaccessible to us, as is the preverbal material.’

To consider the thought process that translates into a work of art, taking a look at Heidegger’s metaphysical conceptual approach to translation can be of help. Based on his study of Heidegger’s theory, Gentzler argues that language is a translation of a thought.

²⁶⁰Translation becomes understood in terms of returning to the pre-originary, of allowing the virginal experience of language to occur. In order to speak of original speech, to think the “Other” in Foucauldian terms – i.e., pre-metaphysical

²⁶⁰ Gentzler, Edwin. *Contemporary Translation Theories*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

thought – one must *do* a translation. Translation is viewed as action, an operation of thought, a translation of ourselves into the thought of the other language, and not a linguistic, scientific transfer from something into the present.’

There have been many attempts to translate cartoons. I have mentioned in the second chapter, how Kutty’s cartoons used to be translated into Bengali to be published in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. Though O.V. Vijayan did his cartoons in English and wrote extensively in Malayalam, a few of his cartoons were translated into Malayalam later. His cartooning period in Malayalam produced a lot of cartoons which were purely visual in nature with no written language. They were understood be cartoons in Malayalam only by looking at his name in the corner, which was written in Malayalam, as opposed to the English signature he used to scribble in his cartooning days for the *Shankar’s Weekly*, the *Patriot* and *The Hindu*.



Figure 159

(Translation: വരൂ സഖാക്കളേ നമുക്ക് സോവിയറ്റ് യൂണിയനും അഫ്ഘാനിസ്ഥാനും കളിക്കൂ)
Source: Kaumudi, 2007.

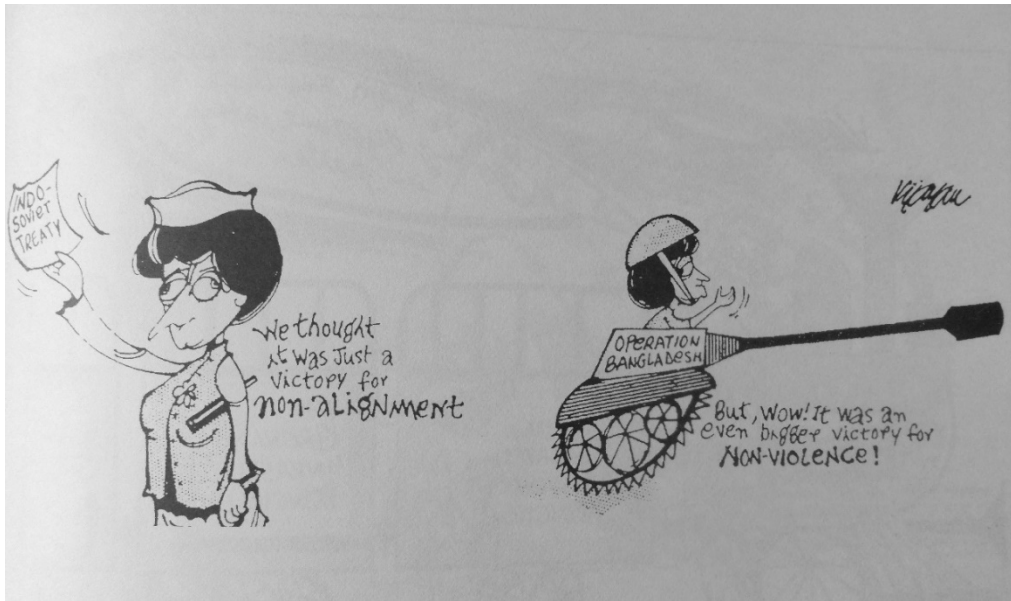


Figure 160

(Translation: ഞങ്ങൾ കരുതി ഇത് ചേരി-ചേരാ നയത്തിന് വിജയമാണെന്ന് പക്ഷെ ! ഇത് അതിലും വലിയ വിജയമാണ്, അഹിംസ !)

Source: Kaumudi, 2007.

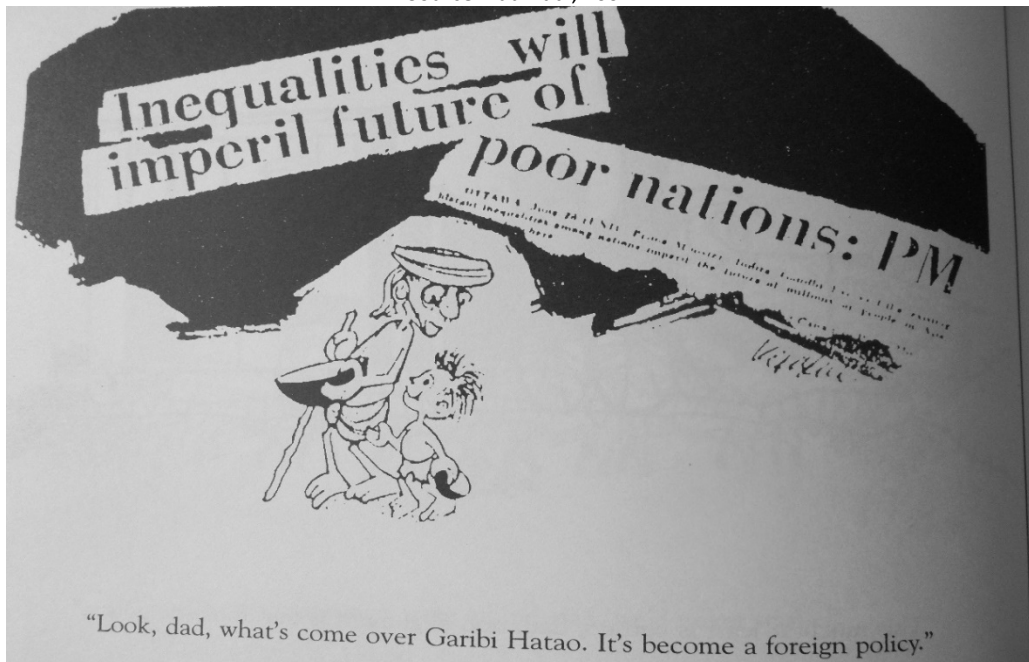


Figure 161

(Translation: നോക്കൂ, അച്ഛാ, ദാരിദ്ര്യ നിർമ്മാർജ്ജനത്തിന്റേ എ സംഭവിച്ചു എ അതൊരു വിദേശ നയം ആയിരിക്കും)

Source: Kaumudi, 2007

What triggered these translations? They were part of an article²⁶¹ on Indira Gandhi and how O.V. Vijayan caricatured her regularly. Bringing it to Malayalam readers, K.K. Venu embedded some of the English cartoons of O.V. Vijayan in the article, with the Malayalam translation given underneath, thus by giving the readers both versions. However, there has been no further attempts to translate more cartoons in to Malayalam.

The third chapter is an example of how cartoons are seen as translation of the socio-political events of the time of its creation. But to perceive them as translations, they have to be put in a specific context, along with the incidents that provoked the cartoonists to produce them. Also, distinctive styles and symbols employed by the cartoonists have to be understood.

2. Political Cartoons: Reading Laxman, Reading Vijayan

Though seem like a mundane task, the reading of a political cartoon has so much more to it than a passive glance and a careless laugh. To understand a cartoon, it has to be presented with its context. In fact, I consider them as translations of a socio-political moment in the historical timeline of a nation-state. To see them as translations, it is inevitable to take a look at the symbols, characters, language and even the situations of each cartoons under study. They are meant to ‘grab attention and seek the engagement of the reader on the issue portrayed through humour²⁶².’ Each cartoonist operates on a different wavelength, portraying the society they understand in their own way. They see the political happenings and assess the response to it from their respective position the very society they inhabit. Laxman in Bombay (now, Mumbai) and Vijayan in New Delhi were the products of two different cultures and believed in two different ideologies and targeted two different sections of the society. But, regardless of their differences, both came up with their own

²⁶¹ K. K. Venu, “Vijayante vara: Indira Gandhi”. *Kaumudi*. Vol 5. 2007. Print.

²⁶² Martin, Randy. Ed. *The Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. Web.

central characters through which they unfolded perspectives and threw opinions. Both stayed in their stances throughout their career and lampooned the political class of India in two different styles and left the decoding for the generations to come. It is not my intention to teach how to read a political cartoon. But I would take a look at the distinctive styles of both Laxman and Vijayan as a stepping stone to fasten the further dissemination of cartoons as a part of Culture Studies.

What matters in the study of cartoons? As I have mentioned before, it is everything from symbols to situations can matter in the study of cartoons. The cleverness of a cartoonist is to employ this all in one frame to send the message across. Laxman and Vijayan, two of the cartoonists I have based my study upon, treated these characteristics differently. While Laxman paid more attention to the details, Vijayan overlooked details but concentrated more on exaggerations of the subject's features. One cannot find Laxman's characters to be too exaggerated. Laxman himself admits that his initial cartoons had too many characters filling up the space in an attempt to represent a multicultural India.

²⁶³In the early days, I used to cram in as many figures as I could into a cartoon to represent the masses. Gradually I began to concentrate on fewer and fewer figures. These my readers came to accept as representatives of the whole country.

...eventually, I succeeded in reducing my symbol to one man: a man in a checked coat, whose bald head boasts only a wisp of white hair, and whose bristling moustache lends support to a bulbous nose, which in turn holds up an oversized pair of glasses. He has a permanent look of bewilderment on his face. He is ubiquitous.'

²⁶³ Laxman, R.K. *The Best of Laxman: The Common Man in the New Millennium*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print.

Even after the introduction of Common Man as a mute spectator to all the events unfolding around him, Laxman continued to include as many characters as possible, filling up the frame with interesting detail helping to understand the cartoon in better ways. Taking a look at the characters that Common Man had to cross in the streets, he the most common of them, will help in understanding the Laxman's style better. Khadi-clad Netas are the most recurring characters of all and the favourite target of Laxman's humour. They are often accompanied by a bureaucrat or a private secretary either offering a help in understanding a situation (a drought or a case of under-development) or explaining the predicament he is in. Government officials come as another Laxman favourite, often portrayed in bad light, as a corrupt and degenerate lot, with serious faces carrying a disinterested look and a potbelly, signifying their lazy, haphazard attitude towards work. In some they are shown as over-worked, honest men but in a poor dress code to signify the message that honest officials live within their means of earning since they do not accept bribes.

A lot of cartoons also have the Peon as a character, often uttering the dialogue, wearing the colonial dress code of white clothes and a white turban. In most cartoons, they just prohibit entry to an unapproachable Neta's office or the hallway to some ministry. In some cartoons, they simply sympathize with the way of the world, mostly agreeing that '²⁶⁴things don't work that way'. Pavement-dwellers are another set of recurring characters in the Laxman cartoons, often appearing in the way of the Common Man during his strolls through the city. Forming an essential part of the cityscape, they are sometimes shown as politically aware beings, passing comments on the Union Budget and how it is going to affect them or about the latest cultural development of ordering food through a website (if they had a computer), catapulting the already bewildered look of the Common Man to higher levels. There are also times when Common Man goes to the rural India, featuring farmers

²⁶⁴ Laxman, R.K. *The Best of Laxman: The Common Man Takes a Stroll*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print.

and desolate villagers. Sometimes it is with a Neta visiting his constituency or with a minister doing a 'drought-visit' or announcing a flood-relief programme. One of the cartoons of Laxman portrayed a couple of men in a drought-hit village where one remarks to the other: '²⁶⁵Now we are starving anyway! Why can't we call it a protest fast? Then, perhaps, the government will get us food!' Through this one single cartoon Laxman showed the pitiable situation, lampooned the protest methods prevalent in the country and criticized the fact that government took interest in force-feeding those indulging in protest-fasting instead of finding a permanent solution.

Policemen, often helpless with alarming increase in crime rates, are another set of characters that are common in the Laxman universe of cartoons. From road-side constables to muzzled inspectors and overwhelmed-looking jailers, they are often used by Laxman to indirectly target the netas who contest from jails, or perceive policemen as their personal henchmen. Other than showing the degenerate system of Indian polity and society the policemen are spared the usual Laxman lampooning. In one of the famous cartoons of Laxman, two jailers are shown engaged in a serious discussion in which one tell the other, '²⁶⁶More coming! Unless we set free pick-pockets, thieves, smugglers, etc. we can't accommodate company chairmen, directors, bankers, ministers etc.'

Quirky wives are yet another set of repeating characters. Wives of politicians and government officials and when the opinion has to be made from the common people's side, the wife of the Common Man also make appearances. These appearances are however quirkier responses than the usual ones but considerably low in number. Common Man's wife makes most number of appearances this way, probably because the Common Man does not want to lose his

²⁶⁵ Laxman, R.K. *The Best of Laxman: The Common Man in the New Millennium*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print.

²⁶⁶ Laxman, R.K. *The Best of Laxman: The Common Man Watches Cricket*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print.

image as a mute spectator of events. Netas' wives are generally shown as greedy women, persuading their husbands to get more bribes in form of cash or gold. They even get the policemen perplexed sometimes with less than intelligent questions. More than once, they are even portrayed as characters who speak without knowing the implications it can have later. For example, in one of the cartoons where the Common Man is visiting a politician, visibly tired and sitting on a chair, his wife besides him explains rather humorously, ‘²⁶⁷Luckily he happens to be a veteran politician, he is able to stand the humiliation, insults, disgrace, he is subjected to.’

The last set of characters are one broad category of celebrities; film stars and cricketers. Though Laxman portrays them as a debauched section of the society with regard only for money and not for the society they live in, there are exceptions in which they are made fun only for their silly pretensions. Cricketers worrying about losing autograph-seekers and advertisement deals instead of a series or a place in the team is an often approached theme in the Laxman cartoons. One of his cartoons even portrayed a cricketer returning to the pavilion because he forgot his bat. The increasing number of scams and betting cases in which cricketers were booked under provided Laxman with many situations. Also, more than personally targeting any film stars, Laxman just targeted their induction into political parties. The central themes that formed the daily cartoons of Laxman were ones that affected the middle-class of India. The classes that were below poverty line were deprived of such thoughts and the classes that were above the middle-class never were affected by these common worries. Corruption, price-rise, climate, development and the lack of connection between the representatives and the people were the most explored themes in Laxman cartoons. In short, Laxman's cartoons were seen as a voice of the emerging middle class of India.

²⁶⁷ Laxman, R.K. *The Best of Laxman: The Common Man Takes a Stroll*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print.

Laxman also used a variety of symbols to accompany these most-explored themes; ambassador car for representing *netas* was one of the most used symbols in his cartoons. Also the drought cartoons invariably featured leafless trees with a lone crow²⁶⁸. Two of his major cartoons had the Indian Airlines' mascot 'Maharaja' with a begging bowl, sporting a poor look, to show the airline suffering from loss. The Laxman cartoons of city life most often had heaps of garbage featured in the background. If not that, haphazard attempts at construction work delayed for too long and making it difficult for the population. Another less explored common symbol in his cartoon was the mechanical looking security guard with a rifle, accompanying *netas*, signalling the threats against those in power.

O.V. Vijayan's cartoons, on the other hand, adopted a completely different style of narration. Vijayan's cartoons did not follow the detail of the characters nor did it employ symbols as much as Laxman did. In fact, they were cryptic texts following an indirect method of humour. As I have mentioned in the first chapter, Vijayan adopted black humour and labelled political cartoons as 'tragic idiom'. It is important to see what Vijayan has to say about the functioning of the cartoons and the role of humour.

²⁶⁹A cartoonist should be in a position to question any and all notions.

When this is done, the scope of cartoon becomes infinite. It could be comedy, it could be sorrow and at times it could be discussion or philosophy. Similarly, there should not be stipulations or conditions regarding the style of cartoons. Relevance is equal for academists like David Low and those who stylize by fully distorting

²⁶⁸ R.K. Laxman was fascinated with observing and drawing crows and he had once conducted an exhibition of his crow cartoons.

²⁶⁹ Vijayan O.V. *Tragic Idiom – O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2006. Print.

facial features. Whatever be the style, what is being said should not be idiocy. The cartoon which evokes laughter through idiotic statements is the enemy of humour. What it really evokes is inferiority complex and the deep sorrow emanating from it.'

Vijayan caricatured the features of his subjects more than Laxman did. He concentrated more on the body parts and their peculiarity than the whole aspect of a subject. For example, Nehru was portrayed with hanging cheeks and round eyes and Indira Gandhi was often featured with her nose pointed and extended further from her face. Even Rajiv Gandhi, whose looks were not distorted much by Laxman, was not spared by Vijayan; he was shown with child-like features and oval eyes! Jayaprakash Narayan was drawn as a tall figure with long legs and resembling Gandhi, though J.P. was a known socialist. While including a group in the cartoons, Laxman gave each of them a different face while Vijayan gave them all the same face. Perhaps it can be seen as a silent protest against the sycophancy culture of the political parties towards their leaders, especially in the Congress, that was getting predominant in the times but Vijayan, whenever he drew crowds around a leader like Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, did that by giving everyone the same face. It can be seen as a deliberate act, robbing them of their identity as individuals by giving them a collective identity of opportunistic followers waiting for their time to rise up to prominence.

The *Netas*, who were a prominent characters in the Laxman cartoons are put to extensive use by Vijayan too. Only, Vijayan drew them shorter, resembling dwarves, compared to the other characters in the frame, wearing Gandhi caps and clad in Khadi, the iconic dress code of the Indian politicians. Balloons and texts also contributed a lot to the cartoons of Vijayan. Often the balloons (boxes where the text was written) formed as big as the characters, sometimes bigger, filling up the frame. The text was always handwritten, often illegible, as opposed to the printed texts that

Laxman employed in the bottom of his cartoons. Even elements of Cubism can be found in the way Vijayan drew his symbols. He constructed cubic objects drawn in a way to achieve a 3D effect; coffins, memorial slabs, buildings, statues etc. were often drawn with a low-angle perspective, making them appear towering over the characters. Also distinctive was the thick brush strokes in the corners around the main text of the cartoon. It is a deliberate attempt to achieve focus and clarity to the main subject, by putting them in a box and bringing the attention of the reader to that.

In the use of symbols too, Vijayan was absolutely careful. His most recurring symbols were cautiously crafted and strategically employed. Airplane was one of the most recurring symbols; a skinny, rural Indian villager sitting in an airplane, wondering who is piloting it and what his fate is going to be is one of the finest example of all the cartoons that this symbol was used. Rajiv Gandhi was often portrayed with an aircraft in the frame, alluding to his background as a professional pilot and his current predicament as the pilot of a country that did not connect to his advanced sensibilities. Likewise, battle tank was employed along with Indira Gandhi. Vijayan's anti-war stance as a cartoonist and a thinker might have been the reason why he disagreed with the two wars – The Liberation of Bangladesh War and the subsequent war with Pakistan - that Indira Gandhi fought. There was another symbol that was carefully created; the extended, demanding hand! Representing the election symbol of the Congress, this symbol was widely used for Indira Gandhi too, for her dictatorial tendencies and the constant demands she made of her followers. The parliament was yet another symbol that was widely used in Vijayan's cartoons. Vijayan also employed 'giant boots' as a symbol of oppression in his cartoons, particularly during the period leading up to the Emergency. Boots marching towards distance or trying to crush a human being or even, a *neta* trying to reason with a giant boot were some of the cartoons that Vijayan had done.

Cannon is another recurring symbol that Vijayan has employed on a number of occasions; the Bofors Case during the early Rajiv Gandhi period and the completely visual, no-text cartoons that he had done during the late stages of Emergency extensively used cannon as a symbol.

I have discussed the characters that Vijayan created – the Father and the Son – in the second chapter of the thesis. Though not as recurring as the Common Man in the Laxman cartoons, Vijayan used these characters in situations when he had to show the helplessness of the common people. By people, Vijayan meant the downtrodden masses, not the middle class which was the intended target of Laxman. Though it is highly unlikely that any of Vijayan's cartoons ever reached the people he constantly worried about, even middle-class Indians may not have found them very digestible. While Laxman provided a certain amount of humour through his cartoons, Vijayan's were more of a thought-provoking nature, occasionally inducing serious deliberations instead of going with the typical 'funnies' attitude that cartoons were known for in the West. I would like to argue that Vijayan's constant use of black humour and dark portrayal of the socio-political world was an attempt to strike a separate path for Indian cartooning; a new way for the third world cartoonists to tread on.

3. Political Cartoons and Public Memory

As mentioned in the previous chapter, political cartoons, if arranged in a chronological order, and presented with the contexts, can be seen as a translation of the times. I had based my study on the cartoons of Shankar Pillai, R.K. Laxman and O.V. Vijayan, three cartoonists with three distinctive styles. If Shankar represented the generation and style of David Lowe, R.K. Laxman formed the core of a new generation of cartoonists in India with his calculated and inexhaustible creativity. O.V. Vijayan, was the odd one out with his conscious understanding of

the Third World and forming his cartoons accordingly with an intent to place Indian problems on a popular platform. How these cartoonists with their critiquing of the nation, reflect and work out the political change in the country, is the question which I have attempted to answer in the previous chapters.

If examined carefully, the history of cartooning as an art would reveal the fact that it was not considered an art at all in the beginning. It was more like a jest in the 16th century Europe; a party trick meant to amuse people who were willing to be caricatured. The fact that the early practitioners of it were celebrated artists of the time did not change the status of this art. It took nearly two more centuries to perfect it to a weapon to criticise, to lampoon, or even to offend! What must have caused the act of caricaturing/early cartooning, to be looked down upon? Cartoons defy the very Aristotelian-Plato era definition of art; that, nothing is an artwork, unless it is an imitation. It should be noted that cartoons, or caricatures as they were called initially, were the first of art forms to have rejected the ‘classical idea of art’²⁷⁰, making it one of the first of art forms to have felt the heat of ire from those who decided on the quality of art. Cartoon as an art form were in existence before Cubism²⁷¹ or Expressionism²⁷² made its impact in the 20th century, defying the long sought notion of art. So, first from the stern advocates of classical ways of representation and

²⁷⁰ Classical use of the art had a broader idea; anything that required a skill was considered as an art in ancient Greece. Medicine was an art as much as painting or poetry was. So, Plato’s or Aristotle’s theory of art combined all that we think are art today, as something that imitated something else. Based on that, other skill-based arts took a back seat. In short, X is an artwork only if it is an imitation.

²⁷¹ Cubism, considered one of the most influential art movement of 20th Century, was pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque along with Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris etc. The early proponents of Cubism rejected the existing concept that art should ‘copy’ nature. They chose to walk away from the traditional methods of perspective. Instead, they chose to emphasize the two dimensionality of the canvas, understanding its limitations. In this methods, the subjects are reduced and fractured in to geometric forms and re-aligned within a shallow, relief like space.

²⁷² Expressionism originated in Germany in the early 20th century. It uses distortion and exaggeration for emotional effect. In this style, the artists would attempt to stay away from objective reality to present subjective emotions and responses.

later, from those who were offended by it, the conception and the evolution of caricatures to cartoons was a tumultuous one.

Political cartoons are representational art. If the neo-representational theory of art is to be taken into account, a work of art necessarily possesses the property of aboutness. That, in order to count as an art, it must have some semantic content. In short, the new-representational theory of art suggests that a work of art should have a subject about which it expresses something. For example, Sophocles' Athenian tragedy *Oedipus Rex*²⁷³ has as its subject, fate, about which it expresses the opinion that fate cannot be changed whatever may come. Likewise, *Mein Lampf* is a cartoon by O.V. Vijayan which has its subject, Balraj Madhok's book, about which it expresses the satirical opinion that Jan Sangh ideology is essentially Fascist in nature. While being representational in this way, a political cartoon is also a mode of remembering. Being a product of a specific time, and being produced as a response for a specific person or an incident, a political cartoon absorbs the properties of the time to be archived. In order to understand a political cartoon as a text, once it has become a document of history, the readers of it need to be familiar with the context in which it was constructed; a social/political incident. It is that incident which is the source of the memory, about which documents such as text books, memoirs, photographs etc. were produced. What makes political cartoons different from all these is that it is a quick response to something, made for satirical purposes. Hence, it's a part of 'social memory.'

Aby Warburg²⁷⁴'s efforts in understanding the workings of memory lead him to develop the notion of 'social memory'. He argues that social memory can be understood as the

²⁷³ *Oedipus Rex* is the second of the three Athenian tragedies by Sophocles, the other two being *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*. It is thought to have been first performed in 429 BC. It is regarded as Sophocles' masterpiece.

²⁷⁴ Aby Warburg (1866 – 1929) was one of the first to work on the concept of Memory, whose works have constituted the theoretical base of present day Memory Studies.

‘transmission of primitive and ancient motifs to later societies’. According to Warburg, a particular work of art represents the life of the period and it needs and to interpret it, a later society will need to reconstruct the connection between artistic representations and the social experiences, taste, and mentality of a specific society.

If Jan Assman and Aby Warburg concentrated only on asserting a theoretical base for memory and understanding different types of it, scholars such as Alon Confino and Jacques Le Goff analysed the connections between history of memory and the methods of it. Confino in his essay²⁷⁵ writes,

‘There is also a great advantage in thinking of the history of memory as the history of collective mentality. This way of reasoning resists the topical definition of the field and, conversely, uses memory to explore broader questions about the role of the past in society. The history of memory is useful and interesting not only for thinking about how the past is represented in, say, a single museum, but also about, more extensively, the historical mentality of people in the past, about the commingled beliefs, practices and symbolic representations that make people’s perceptions of the past. This kind of history of memory should aim at “reconstructing the patterns of behaviour, expressive modes and forms of silence into which worldviews and collective sensibilities are translated. The basic elements of this research are representations and images, myths and values recognized or tolerated by groups or the entire society, and which constitute the content of collective psychologies.”’

²⁷⁵ Confino, Alon. “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method.” *American Historical Review*. (1997). Print.

The understanding of ‘collective memory’ is based on another aspect; politics of memory²⁷⁶. Though, understanding politics of memory through images can look like an illustration of history, it has to be analysed as a reflection of contemporary society and its culture. William Hogarth’s paintings and satirical engravings are now analysed as part of understanding the Eighteenth century England though some of them were produced in an effort to lampoon certain practices of the upper class and the noble English society of the time.

How do political cartoons, being part of the other art, help in re-constructing a history of the nation-state? Cultural Studies, especially in the past few decades, with the emergence and spread of Memory Studies have used several methods for contesting the past. In fact, it is the need of the present to constantly re-invent the past to make sense of it. As part of the studies related to memory, the past, with its many forms of representations, such as songs, memoirs, autobiographies, images etc. are being dissected to re-interpret or even subvert the past. In India, with its rich history of popular culture and its influence on the people, using of images from the past is definitely one way to make sense of it. Political cartoons are a creation of the time; instant yet carefully constructed to carry a message to those who care to glance at it. With cartoonists enjoying celebrity status in the post-colonial India, and cartoons being part of everyday topic and even social and political upheavals, they make an interesting research subject, especially when India had a brief period in the past in which this popular form of art was denied its freedom. It is exactly these kind of memories that play a major part in the study of political cartoons as they are and can be considered as a tool for reproducing memory. Cartoons are part of ‘mnemo history’ or

²⁷⁶ Politics of Memory is about the political means by which events are recorded and remembered. It is also about why they are recorded and remembered or even abandoned by certain groups or those in power. In short, the studies in politics of memory centres on how and why politics shape collective memory and how different they are archived from the actual occurrences.

“history of cultural memory.”²⁷⁷ They not only create public memory but also produce publics of memory. The events that happened recently in India, the controversies regarding age-old political cartoons and even the Anna Hazare movement²⁷⁸, had made people aware of a situation in the past, generating scholarly articles and even television talk shows. Past suddenly became a conversation topic, be it a Nehruvian-Ambedkar one or even the anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu. In fact, some even compared Anna Hazare’s confrontation with the UPA government to that of the J.P. Movement against Indira Gandhi’s second term as Prime Minister, which led to the infamous Emergency. But, one single episode in the history of a country cannot be subjected to scrutiny by means of political cartoons. A certain amount of continuity is necessary as history is a process in the making. Memory, reconstructed through political cartoons as cultural symbols left behind, should retain continuity for history to make sense. The question of how memory is constructed in the midst of a lot of existing perspectives often is posed in Memory Studies. But, memory cannot be seen as a tool of truth. It is what is made sense of at a certain time and is preserved accordingly. Making changes to any such memory would be for ideological purpose and it still can become an object of study. If oral histories which were widely changed according to audience and place and time, could be taken in as earliest available versions of historical narratives, cartoon can certainly be considered as a popular form of historical narrative as they are immediate and sharp reactions to historical-political issues. Katharine Hodgkin says,

²⁷⁷ A notion borrowed from Jan Assmann as discussed in Novetzke, Christian Lee, *History, Bhakti, and Public Memory: Namadev in Religious and Secular Traditions* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009) XI-XII

²⁷⁸ The anti-corruption movement of 2011 led by Anna Hazare saw a series of demonstrations, protests and meetings across India. The main agenda of the movement was to establish a strong legislation and enforcement against political corruption. By the end of 2011, the movement shifted its base to New Delhi, challenging the central government to make a law against corruption.

²⁷⁹If individual memories are constructed within culture, and are part of cultural systems of representation, so cultural memories are constituted by the cumulative weight of dispersed and fragmented individual memories among other things. We may ‘remember’ the 1960s, or the Second World War, in our own lifetimes; but it would be impossible to remember them without seeing them in the framework established subsequently of what a given decade or *event* means. And what it means is itself an occasion for cultural struggle.’

So, as socio-cultural representations with a political edge to it, political cartoons are very much part of the memory studies. Scholars of memory studies often associate with it places of memory where it is preserved; museums, monuments, postage stamps, etc. As another signifying practice, political cartoon works as a mode of remembering. It carries with it not just an opinion on something but a fragment of memory, a situation, and the public’s response to it. Halbwachs²⁸⁰ saw history and memory as ²⁸¹‘two opposing ways of recalling the past’. While history has always been accepted as the authentic version of the past, memory, due to the many sources from which it is obtained and codified serves as one of the many accounts. So, if a cartoon is accepted as something that signifies a public memory, all the recent controversies regarding cartoons on Ambedkar and the anti-Hindi agitations are justified in a certain way because as something inciting a memory, they are susceptible to re-interpretation even if it is a wrong interpretation.

If public memory helps in constructing national identity, The Indian situation is that of many regional and communitarian memories contesting pasts alongside the few chosen and

²⁷⁹ Hodgkin, Katharine, and Susannah Radstone, eds. *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*. London: Transaction Publishers, 2006. Print.

²⁸⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, the French philosopher and sociologist, is best known for his initial works in Collective Memory.

²⁸¹ Phillips, Kendal R. ed. *Framing Public Memory*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004. Web.

hegemonic memories that concern the whole nation. For example, if the Emergency still exists in the mind of the public in many forms, there also exist a range of regional narratives about the impact of it, contesting the movements and memories that defined it in an Indian national level. If Kuldip Nayyar's *The Judgement* constitutes a national narrative, T.V. Eachara Varier's *Memories of a Father*²⁸² is a regional account of the horrors of the Emergency in Kerala. While wars and constitutional crises culminating to the suspending of civil liberties contribute greatly to individual and public memories, it is the carriers of these memories that deserve the attention of the scholars. How do they help one to remember the past? A great many things affect these carriers throughout the evolution of time. Every time a memory is reconstructed, it becomes a new one, different from the period of the making of the carrier. Thus, a 1962 cartoon by Shankar depicting a bewildered Nehru might give new images and ideas on each study. If in 1962 it meant that Nehru did not anticipate the Chinese attack on India, in 1972, it may establish a meaning that Nehru was confused about how to deal with the situation. A 1982 re-interpretation might suggest that Nehru was a weak prime minister towards the end of his reign. Thus, over the years, the carriers of a particular memory might provide various interpretations or get translated differently.

Other than igniting certain memories and interpretations, cartoon is largely contextual. Its complex method of communication, combining the visual and the verbal to create a message is generally decoded by taking into account the circumstances that provided for the idea behind the cartoon, to be precise by historicizing them. If that is the case, then it is easy to argue that political cartoons are just a commentary of the times and are irrelevant to consider in a larger context. But in a democracy, they can be seen to wield a greater power; the power to shape opinions. Cartoons

²⁸² Translated from the Malayalam original *Oru Achchante Ormakal*, Prof. Varier's book is about his missing son Rajan, an engineering student, who was illegally arrested by the police for questioning related to Naxal activities in Kerala during the period of the Emergency.

carry the same media function to form public opinion and influence those who care to look at them and understand. Through the careful and clever naming of the character as ‘Common Man’, Laxman shaped the opinions of his readers; from price rise to tainted ministers and cricketers and even the frivolity of general elections, Laxman’s cartoons definitely played a major role in shaping the public opinion in India. A close study of the ‘You Said It’ cartoon series of Laxman would reveal that it always dealt with a dominant issue of the time, indirectly and often with a touch of humour but always making a point. The multitude of characters ranging from a village elder to a rural station master or a disgruntled government clerk to a defected *neta*, formed opinions amongst the urban readers of the *Times of India*, catapulting Laxman to the position of one of the most liked cartoonists of India.

It is the duty of a cartoonist to form opinions. In fact, that was one of the first duties cartoonists ever had to accept during the time cartoons were used as tools for propaganda. Turning the favor of the populace for or against a side was one of the initial duties of a cartoonist. A cartoon cannot happen without a point of view often satirical. In that it is kind of statement on the contemporary society, politics and people and most often than not it is critical of the received notions in a society. Critiquing the nation, government or the people came as part of the strengthening of the democratic process all over the world. If cartoons were used as one of the vehicles of propaganda in Nazi Germany, David Low was doing exactly the same in England, in favour of democracy as opposed to the dictatorship that was re-defining the geographical boundaries of Europe. Coincidentally, in India, Shankar had begun his work gently critiquing the British Raj and favouring the nationalist movement of the time. In the previous chapter, when the cartoons were presented along with their context, they worked as part of a narrative making sense of history to the reader. If the same cartoons are presented independently, the meaning may differ,

resulting in a number of perspectives. Political cartoons are not always completely visual. In fact, they are accompanied by texts, comments, labels etc., helping the reader in understanding the correct context. A study of Kutty's cartoons would reveal that he made less use of messages for a majority of his cartoons were meant for publication in both English and Bengali. On the other, O.V. Vijayan extensively used messages and newspaper clippings in an attempt to present his cartoons with contexts that he intended to target. The freedom of the political cartoonist to present his/her subjects in any light, setting and form is evident from the lavish use of humour, hyperbole, stereotypes etc. This freedom provides the political cartoonists with a certain sense of creative feeling that is beyond the limits of a historian or a photographer. Apart from giving them the role of a chronicler, this freedom also provides them with the power to shape and mobilize an opinion among the masses. While a photograph cuts a direct message, a cartoons sends a message along with a thought, deliberately provoked by the cartoonist. In that sense, it has to be asserted that political cartoons are more than just for a 'quick-glance' and if presented with their contexts work as source materials for researching the way public opinion was shaped in a given point in time in history. Even then, how a political cartoon is understood as an image in the basic level has to be explained.

The reading and understanding of political cartoons happened way before the turn, in the latter half of the twentieth century, towards an image-oriented culture. The mass media that defines today's world is largely dependent on pictures. When iconomania – addiction to images – was diagnosed in the 1950s, political cartoons were already at its zenith, enjoying a certain renewed status contributed by the political mayhem from two world wars in the decades before. So, it is almost impossible to associate political cartoons, or cartoons in general, with this image boom. But, cartoons are received like any other images. While an abstract art in museum may not really

signify anything in particular, an ontological reality or a definite message a cartoon does carry a commentary or a message. Unlike a techno-image²⁸³ which aids theories or data, a cartoon works with a social responsibility and as a political statement or thought. In order to understand the cartoon as an image, one has to take in to account two things; the physical part of it and the abstract part of it. Together, it produces the meaning. However, this is just the communicative part of the cartoon. Culturally, a cartoon is much more significant as it is a representation intended to send a message across to the people about a particular issue in the political as well social timeline of a given geographical location. As I have mentioned before, every image is perceived differently by different people at different times. A political cartoon is no different than other images in this case. Though distorted intending a certain amount of amusement, a political cartoon's message stay intact if the context is also given with it. Articles regarding history or politics of a bygone era often add punch to it by adding the political cartoons from that time. Given without the context, they may mean nothing to someone who does not possess the historical knowledge necessary for the decoding of the cartoon. But, memory contributes a lot to the reading of a political cartoon from the past. As it was mentioned before, collective memory is one of the cultural factors that endows to the understanding of images. Scholars of memory argue that 'no one's individual memory exists in a vacuum²⁸⁴'. In fact, it is influenced by 'the whole material and intellectual life of the society²⁸⁵'. In their article²⁸⁶ Martin J. Medhurst and Michael A. Desousa give memory a very important place in the development and arrangement of a cartoon,

²⁸³ A term coined by Vilem Flusser, Techno-images refer to maps, diagrams, models, building plans or computer simulations made to aid the understanding of a particular study, theory or research. It is based on the idea that people tend to understand things better if aided by visual representations.

²⁸⁴ Boehme-Nebler, Volker. *Pictorial Law: Modern Law and the Power of Pictures*. London: Springer, 2011. Print.

²⁸⁵ Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Web.

²⁸⁶ Medhurst, Martin J., and Michael A. Desousa. "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse." *Communication Monographs* 48 (1981): 197-236. Web.

‘The cartoonist constructs his frame in such a manner as to compress into a single image the various streams of cultural consciousness from which he has drawn his idea. Readers of political cartoons are not, therefore, processing a single, simple image when they place an interpretation on a caricature. Instead, they are unpacking one or more layers of available cultural consciousness which the cartoon has evoked from them. Cartoons “work” to the extent that readers share in the communal consciousness, the available means of cultural symbology, and are able to recognize that shared locus of meaning as expressed by the caricature.’

According to them, cartoons function by ‘compressing and condensing’ memory. But, it is not the induction of memory in to cartoons that enthuse them as theoreticians but how they are received by multiple readers,

‘The reason political cartoons are often interpreted in widely divergent manners is because different readers are resonating with different layers of the culturally-induced message. The cartoon does function enthymematically, but different readers probably construct different enthymemes from the visual information supplied. Given the general topic, one reader fills in one part of the memory trace, another reader a quite different part. Both are “correct” insofar as the cartoon is a compression of cultural memories, though both may not have been intended by the artist.’

This explanation by Medhurst and Desousa probably explains why controversies happen regarding political cartoons. From the Mohammad cartoon controversy to India’s own Ambedkar cartoon controversy, it is the matter of different readings based on different cultural memories at play.

Individual memories are always tied up to collective memories of a group or a society and are often subject to changes or modification due to contact with newly acquired information over various means. In a highly charged political environment, an individual's memory is subjected to different collective memories battling with each other to be the correct one. But collective memories are not objective as memory also suffers the same position as that of history. Just like there are many histories, there are many memories. They can be re-constructed to suit social and political purposes and even for propaganda. The recent efforts by the governments formed in several states by Right Wing political to belittle the legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru in an attempt to re-write a different history of India is one of the best examples of how history and memory can be manipulated. Though cartoons employ both history and memory in a different way, they are a necessary combination in the understanding of a cartoon.

4. Political Cartoons: Parodying the Nation State

Ernest Renan²⁸⁷ once called nation 'an everyday plebiscite²⁸⁸.' Renan's was largely an outburst at the way post Franco-Prussian war Europe was engaging itself in the redefining of their boundaries based on the ethnographic distribution of the European landscape. In his speech, delivered at Sorbonne in Paris, Renan criticized the way national boundaries were re-drawn based on culture, race or language. He argued that nationhood as a concept was beyond all this and a nation is an amalgam of more than one race or language believing in a 'will to live together.' The concept of nation has been under scrutiny for a long period of time and so has nation-state. At a time when terms such as 'nation', 'nationalism' and 'nation-state' are constantly being used and

²⁸⁷ Joesph Ernest Renan was a French scholar and writer. He has written extensively on nationalism and national identity.

²⁸⁸ Renan, Joseph Ernest. "What is a Nation?" *Becoming National: A Reader*. Ed. Geoff Eley and Donal Gregor Suny. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Web.

abused in a systematic way, it is only fitting that I attempt to look at political cartoons as a critique of the nation-state.

What exactly is a nation-state? A proper definition of the modern nation-state was perhaps given by Max Weber when he said that it is a ‘human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.’²⁸⁹ Perhaps Daniel Chernilo’s explanation might explain what a nation-state is today.

²⁹⁰The study of the history, main features and normative legacy of the nation-state has proved complicated for the social changes at large. During the past two centuries, the nation-state has been deified and demonized in equal measures; been declared born and dead many times; been regarded as a modern as well as a primordial form of social and political community; been conceived of as both a rational structure and an imagined/imaginary community; created as much welfare as misery; been equally a source for political democracy, cosmopolitanism and ethnic cleansing; co-existed with empires, colonies, blocs, protectorates, city states and other forms of socio-political organization; gone through experiences of unification, totalitarian terror, occupation, division, and then re-unification; and been legitimized around ethnic/racial, republican, monarchic, liberal, democratic, federal and even class principles. Yet, despite – or more possibly owing to – all this variation, the nation-state succeeded, to an important extent at least, in presenting

²⁸⁹ Weber, Max. “Politics as a Vocation.” *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

²⁹⁰ Chernilo, Daniel. *A Social Theory of the Nation-State*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

itself as a solid, stable and untimely the necessary form of social and political organization in modernity.

Primarily considered as a European concept and a product of modernity, a nation-state is held together by a government, common laws, geographical boundaries and the belief of the people that they share all of that and a common history. India, before the advent of the western imperialists, was a thousand different Kingdoms, dynasties and provinces at times brought under Empires, co-existing in a physical landmass, the sub-continent, which was later unified through a long domination of British Imperialism and Colonial laws. Independent resistances in the beginning and a collective and organized resistance in the later stages formed a certain sense of nationalism amongst the people of India otherwise divided on linguistic, ethnic and caste lines. Even in the post-Independent era, India is divided into states based on linguistic and ethnic lines yet works as a single identity of 'being Indian', a feeling commonly re-asserted through a variety of 'national' symbols. Daniel Chernilo's explanation of the current position of the term 'nation-state' reveals how abstract it is. Often it is read in terms of the 'nation' and the 'state' in it, which are arbitrary in their own terms. They get more elusive when terms such as 'nationalism' and 'patriotism' enters the discussion. However, they are all interconnected and a discussion of one would invariably lead to the others. In the case of India, it is inclusive of all the cultures and regional languages to form an essentially *Indian* identity. In this way, some cultures can become hegemonic or dominating. National ideologies can have regional extensions and even ethnic representations to be inclusive to form the 'greater' position. As Justin Wolfe says, ²⁹¹we should conceive the nation as a continuous process of struggle over the legitimacy of the state and the meaning of popular

²⁹¹ Wolfe, Justin. *The Everyday Nation-State: Community & Ethnicity in Nineteenth Century Nicaragua*. Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 2007. Web

sovereignty.’ If Weber’s definition is analyzed further, it can be seen that the use of the word ‘monopoly’ gives the state a certain legitimacy to use power/force against the subjects. The use by any other individual or group to resort to such an act would be considered violence and thus illegal. Weber’s essay describes the evolution of nation-state from its monarchical period to modern vote politics. According to him, modern party politics involves parties competing with each other for power through organized campaigns to attract votes. Weber considers modern political representatives as individuals with no politics but only vested interests and the will to garner more votes through capitalist means. He also points out the evolution of a class of highly professional labourers called bureaucrats to enjoy a higher status in the society. So, Weber primarily saw the nation-state as something that is based on the power struggle between the rulers and the ruled. Thomas Hobbes’ understanding of the nation-state differed from that of Weber’s. According to Hobbes²⁹², at the beginning of the state formation, there existed a state of war which forced every individual to surrender their freedom to a sovereign²⁹³ who would lead them out of it.

Though political cartoons do not directly question the idea of either nation or nation state they squarely criticize the way a nation state is being run by the ruling elite. They also, critique the contemporary nature of it. In a way they work as indirect critiques of the of modern day nation-state as they are occupied and run by ruling elites of society unconcerned about the masses. The ideas of nation and nation state have been made defunct by these classes. Cartoons unravel and parody this state of affair.

²⁹² Holton, Robert J. *Globalization and the Nation-State*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011. Web.

²⁹³ Ancient Rome used to surrender civil rights to a sovereign during the time of civil war so that the chosen person could resolve the problem and then resort the state back to its democratic features. However, it was not uncommon that they captured power for small intervals in the history of Roman Empire. Cornelius Sulla and Julius Caesar and ultimately Octavian Caesar are examples.

The American politician William Tweed²⁹⁴ is known to have responded to cartoons targeting him as this: ‘Stop them damn pictures! I don’t care so much what the papers write about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see pictures.’ More than their ability to formulate and spread an opinion, it is the offensive nature of the cartoons that make it one of the most potential critiques of nation-state. Celebrated Australian cartoonist Pat Oliphant said about that the ‘²⁹⁵someone will always be offended’ because as cartoonists their business was to be a ‘vehicle for pointed and savage opinion.’ What matters in a nation-state constantly struggling with its issues of keeping its identity together is how it is represented to those who help constitute it. The voice of opinion and the making of it becomes a rather unwanted activity if dissent is what is caused by it. Cartoons often are voices of dissent. It is the nature of its directness and the artistic independence that enables cartoons to become the critique. According to Benedict Anderson ‘²⁹⁶print languages laid the bases for national consciousness.’ As I have mentioned in the first and the second chapter, political cartoons have played a major role in keeping the national conscious awake by working as propaganda during the time of major wars and in the post-World War world, it had conveniently developed and adapted itself to a medium capable of producing and shaping opinion. The role of cartoons in early America to help with the hegemonic case of white Americans have been discussed by human rights specialists in the recent years.

‘²⁹⁷Although not politically homogeneous, turn-of-the-century American political cartoons featured figurations of racial difference that circumscribed the

²⁹⁴ William Tweed was responding to a cartoon of the famous American political cartoonist Thomas Nast, drawn in August 19, 1871, targeting him and his men for allegedly stealing 200 Million dollars from the City Treasury.

²⁹⁵ Hess, Stephen., Sandy Northrop. *American Political Cartoons*. New York: Elliot & Clark Publishing, 1996. Web.

²⁹⁶ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 2006. Print.

²⁹⁷ McClennen, Sophia A., Alexandra Schultheis Moore. *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016. Web.

nation as an imagined community. Various forms of print-capitalism, to follow Anderson, may have fostered national consciousness by stimulating their readers' awareness of "hundreds of thousands, even millions" of "fellow readers, to whom they were connected in print". By inviting a horizontal imagining of sameness while invoking a hierarchy of racial difference, political cartoons demarcated the inside/outside of the nation. If the visual translation of near others into alien terms bolstered nativist arguments for racial exclusion, the translation of the humanity of distant others into domestic terms legitimized the interventionist posture of an imperial United States. By drawing the racialized "borders" of the gatekeeping and empire-building nation, cartoons introduced a mass-mediated mode of geopolitical literacy to the American public.'

The Indian nation-state is an even more difficult term than its European or American counterpart to engage. Though there is a general understanding that the British rule made a united India under the crown, the present Indian nation-state is the product of Patel Scheme as Brian Keith Axel would call it. The humongous task of shaping and merging the many Indian states into a single identity began immediately after the gaining of the freedom. The Indian states '298 lost their formal "identity"' and India supposedly 'became one integral, uniform, and "federal" entity.'

But later, inside India, religions such as Sikhs and Muslims have raised nationhood of theirs in the past. The demand for Khalistan and the Nawab's decision to proclaim Hyderabad as an independent country from India were examples of such attempts to create a nation inside a nation based on religion. They even have to, at times, contest with the Hindu Nationalist's views

²⁹⁸ Axel, Brian Keith. *The Nation's Tortured Body*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001. Web.

of India as a nation only for Hindus. Brubaker²⁹⁹ says that the word nation can also be used as a way of asserting ownership of the polity by a group.

³⁰⁰...the category 'nation' can also be used in another way, not to appeal to a 'national' identity transcending ethnolinguistic, ethnoreligious, or ethnoregional distinctions, but rather to assert 'ownership' of the polity on behalf of a 'core' ethnocultural 'nation' distinct from the citizenry of the state as a whole, and thereby to define or redefine the state as the state *of* and *for* that core 'nation'. This is the way 'nation' is used, for example, by Hindu nationalists in India, who seek to redefine India as a state founded on *Hindutva* or Hinduness, a state of and for the Hindu ethnoreligious nation.'

According to O.V. Vijayan, 'the responsibility of an Indian cartoonist is heavier and more meaningful than those of the cartoonists in England or America³⁰¹.' Amongst the cartoonists considered for this research, Vijayan's cartoons comes close as critique of the Indian nation-state. If Laxman was the day-to-day chronicler of the social life of the nation, Vijayan was more of a critique of the nation as a whole, his cartoons concentrating on the social as well as political integrity of the nation, emitting a certain amount of pessimism about the idea of nation itself. To consider cartoons as a critique of the nation-state, one has to look at how cartoonists featured the elements that constitute a nation state. Vijayan constantly targeted the government machinery, the electoral system, the economy and the defense mechanisms in place through his cartoons, indirectly emitting a certain idea that his idea of a nation goes beyond the conventional senses of

²⁹⁹ Rogers Brubaker is an American sociologist who has written extensively on nation, nationalism and citizenship.

³⁰⁰ Rogers Brubaker. "In the Name of the Nation: Reflections of Nationalism and Patriotism". *Citizenship Studies*. Vol. 8, No. 2, June, 2004. (115-127). Web.

³⁰¹ Vijayan, O.V. *Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2006. Print.

it. Laxman, on the other hand, mastered the art of 'the Indian scene', making his cartoons a sociological study of the Indian population, through their everyday worries and hinting at political causes of those worries in a strong manner.

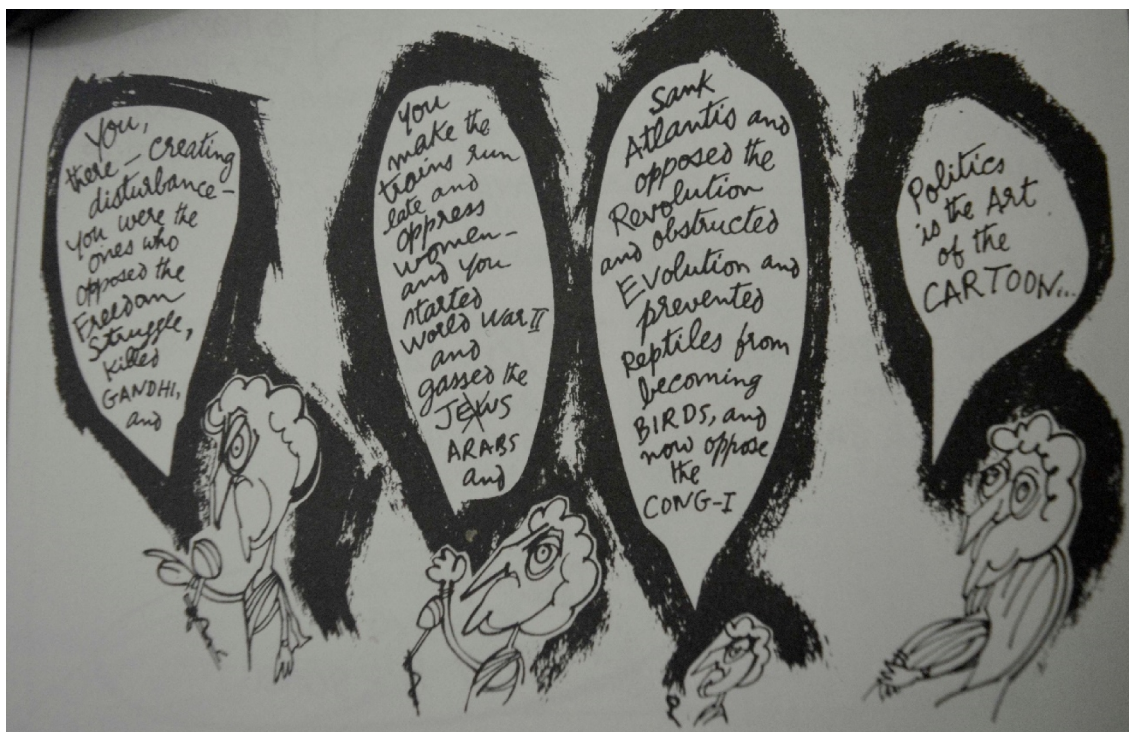


Figure 162

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

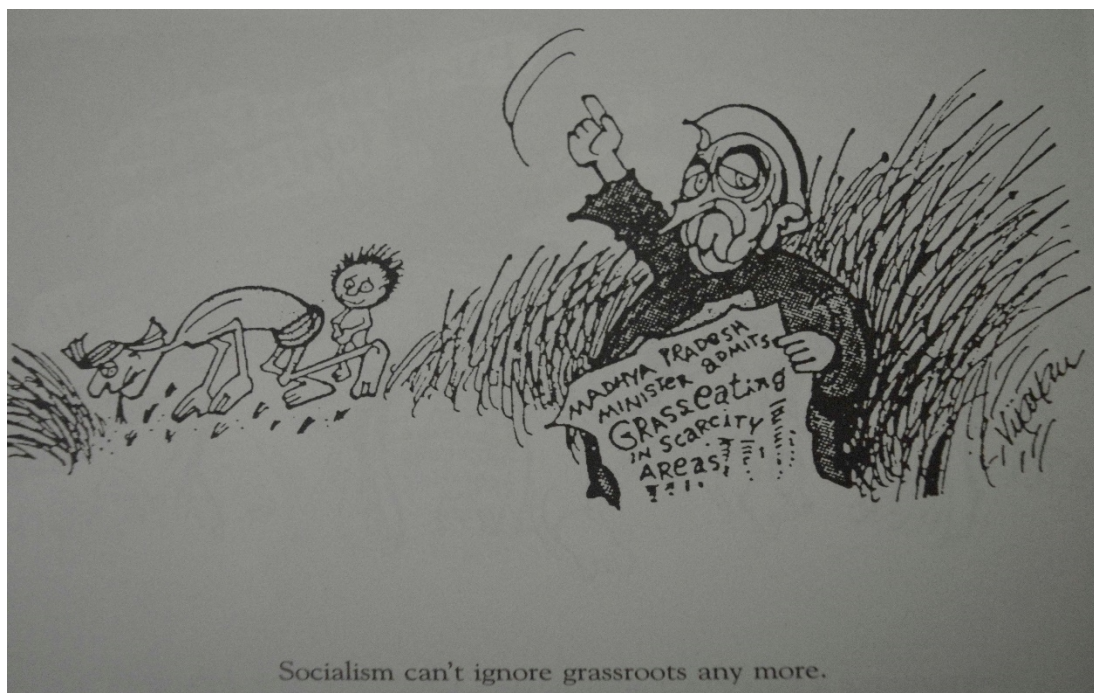


Figure 163

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

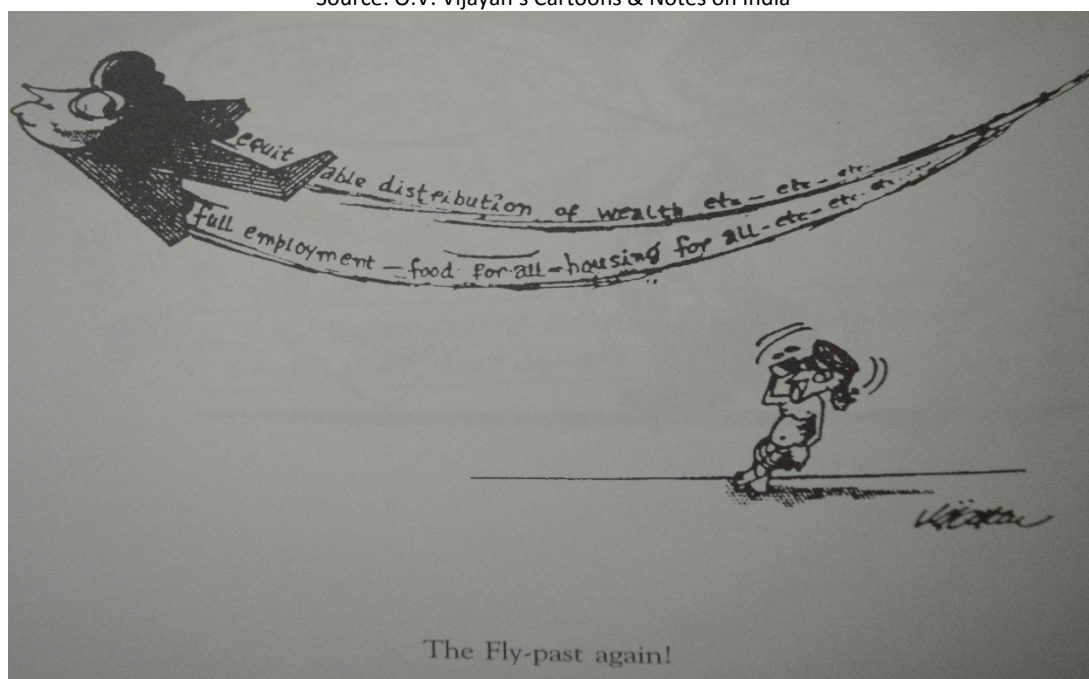


Figure 164

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

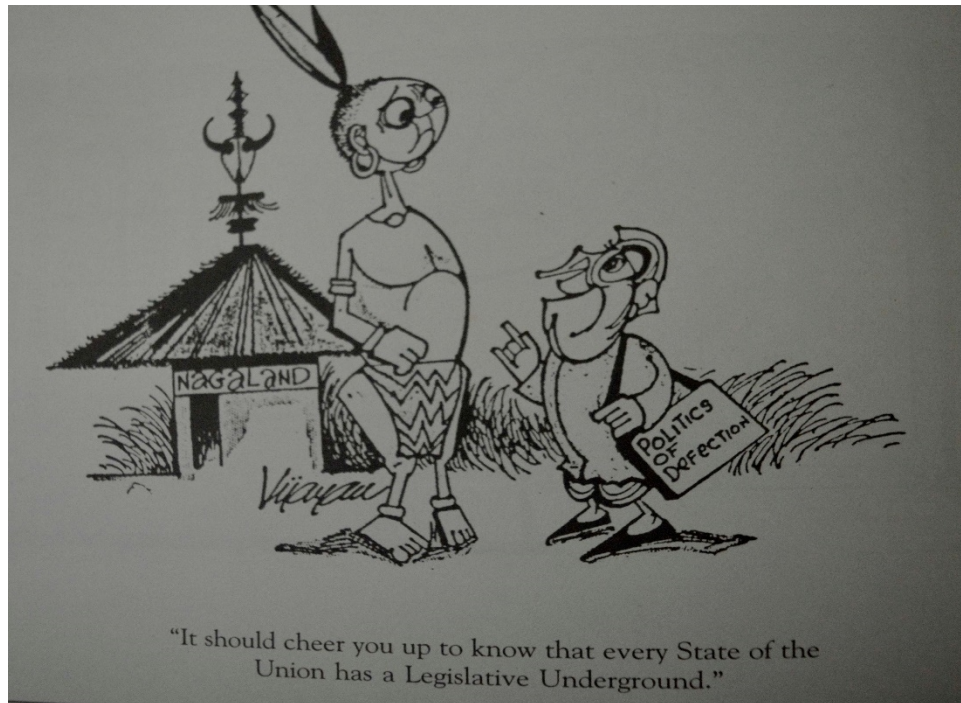


Figure 165

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

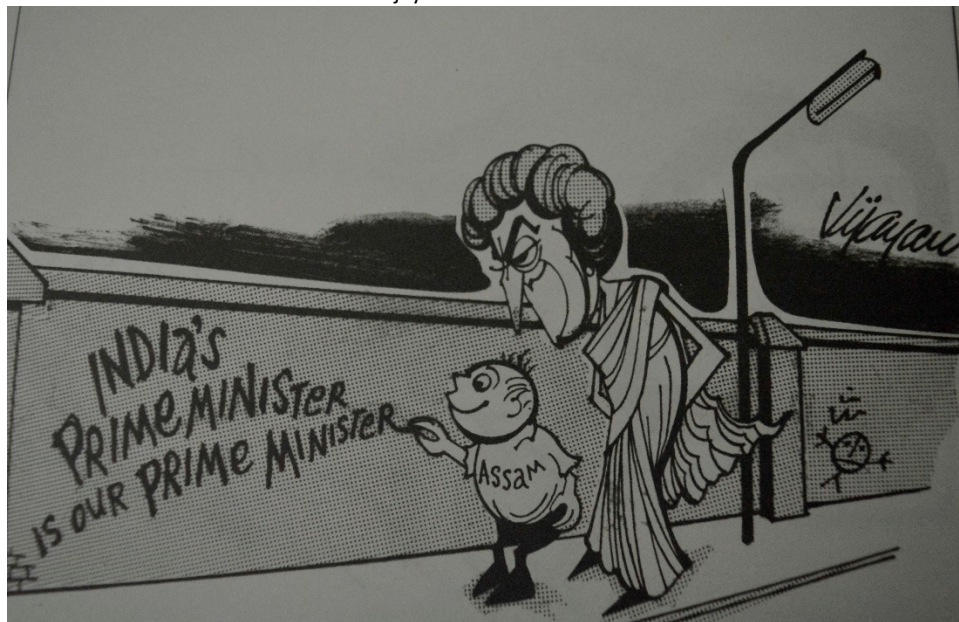


Figure 166

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

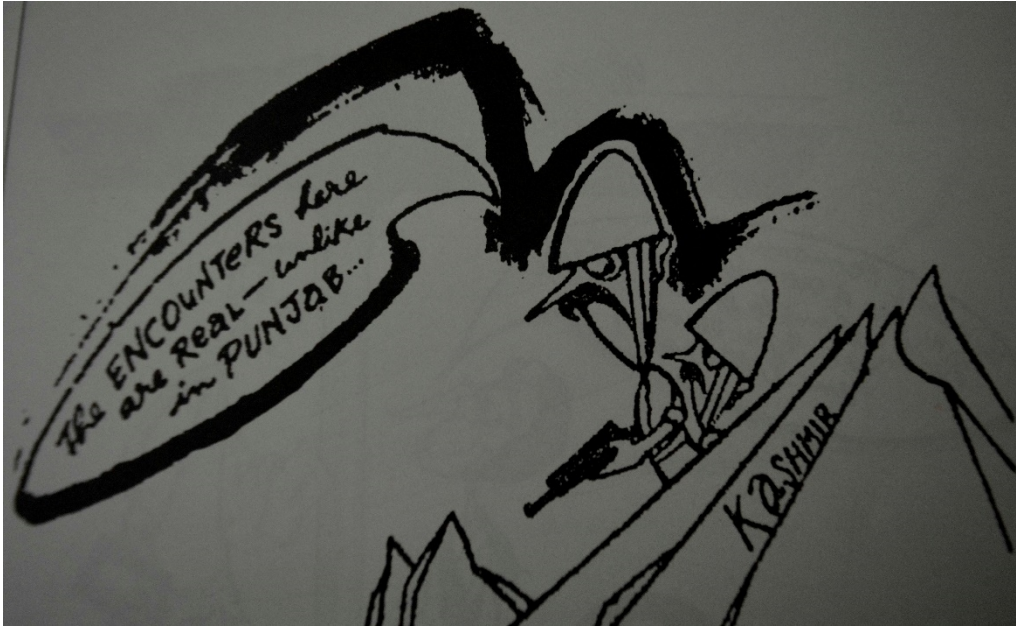


Figure 167

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Historian Charles Press is of the opinion that people have plenty of information and what they want is 'someone they trust to interpret the information for them'³⁰². At least in the case of England and America, early satirical magazines such as *Punch* and *Puck* respectively, formed opinions and actively participated in working as early critiques of the democratization process, wielding power through the satirical interpretations of events. In the beginning, cartoonists in pre-Independent India targeted the British imperialists, employing their limited freedom. But just when a new nation came into existence, its new leaders became the targets. From Shankar, whose policy was to 'gently humour them', to Vijayan, who took cartoons to a newer level of depicting pessimism towards the affairs of the state, cartooning evolved as not just as a critique of the many ideas that constituted

³⁰² Press, Charles. *The Political Cartoon*. London: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981. Web.

the nation-state but formed a strong narrative of it for the future readers to come. Vijayan's series of cartoons on the election rhetoric of the prime ministers (figure 1 and figure 3) are the finest examples of his humour, showing that the Indian people are susceptible to such rhetoric. Figure 4 and 5 are cartoons based on the issues that the state faced in its ever strained relationship with the states formed for ethnic minorities; Assam and Nagaland! Just as Herbert Block³⁰³ did in the United States, Vijayan too visualized his worries over the 'bomb' through his cartoons. Vijayan's stance against the atomic bomb and the Cold-War era fear of a possible nuclear clash between the world powers drowning the world into a nuclear winter is quite evident through some of his cartoons. He wrote as an introduction to cartoons on the Bomb.

³⁰⁴A Pakistani or an Indian bomb will have little combat relevance other than satisfying the fundamentalist and vegetarian hawks in the respective countries. But it most certainly will serve to impose depravity and fatalism on the subcontinent. More than all this, the greatest nuclear hazard we have to contend with is the amorality of our own scientist, hopelessly compounded with the decolonized opportunist. He matches the politician's contempt of human rights with his own affront to the eternal protoplasm.

At any given moment nearly 300 of our nuclear scientists are junketing abroad. It is to this diners' club that our unborn generations are entrusted. Perhaps they might never need that care, the end coming sooner. And when it does, we can

³⁰³ Herbert Block, commonly known as Herblock, was an American editorial cartoonist who in 1947, developed the character Mr. Atom to actively educate the world on the growth and danger of Atomic power.

³⁰⁴ Vijayan, O.V. *Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India*. Kottayam, DC Books, 2006. Print.

always go with the satisfaction that not all of it was imported, that we too had our little bombs, the underdog's densepack.'

While the government of India under Indira Gandhi, and later A.B. Vajpayee, actively pursued the goal to develop nuclear weapons, Vijayan satirized, sometimes lamented, their efforts through a series of 'bomb' cartoons.



Figure 168

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

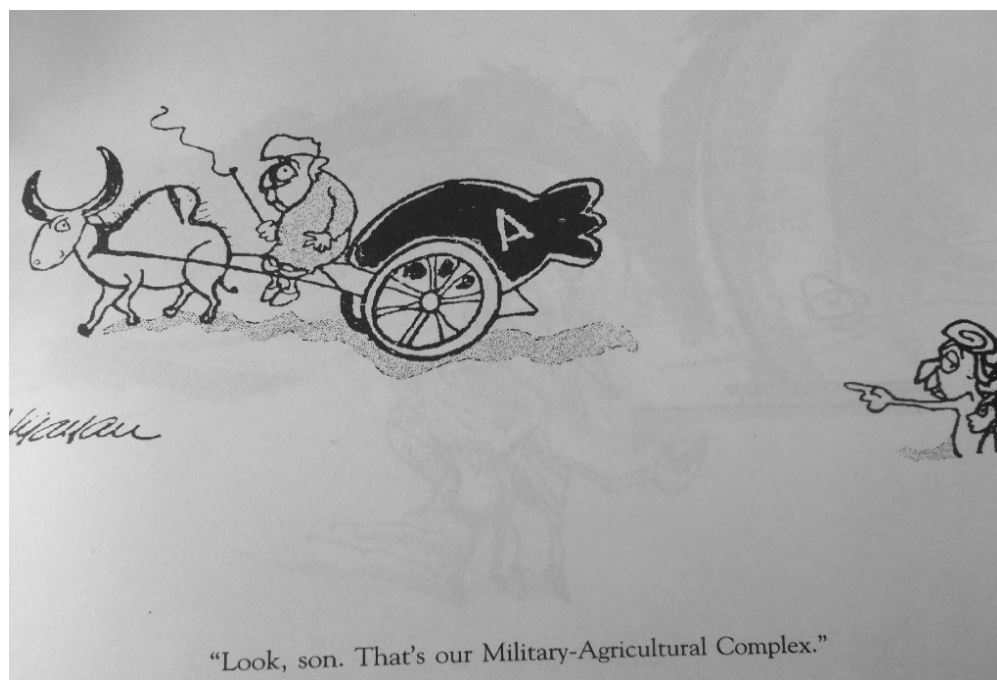


Figure 169

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

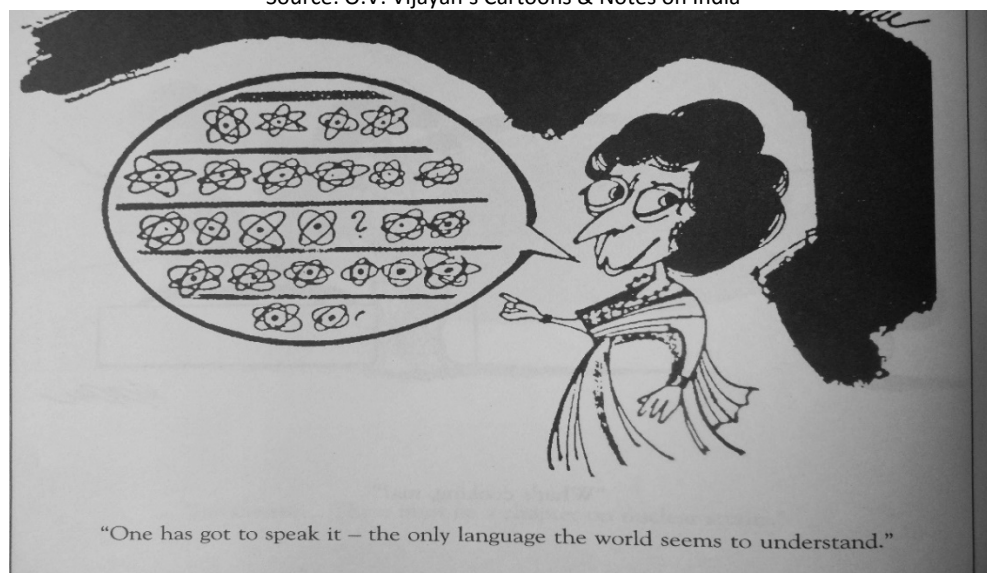


Figure 170

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

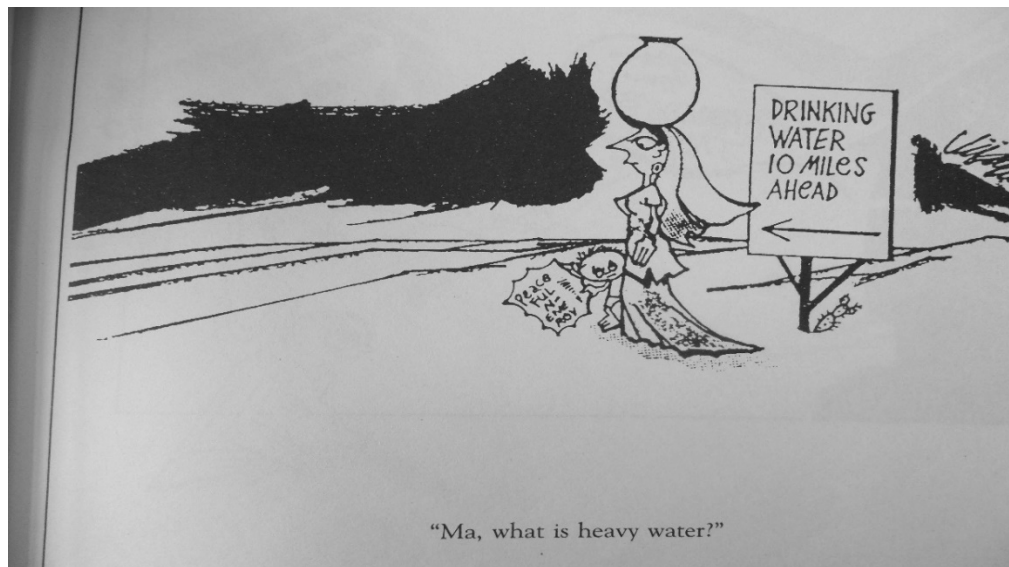


Figure 171

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India



Figure 172

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

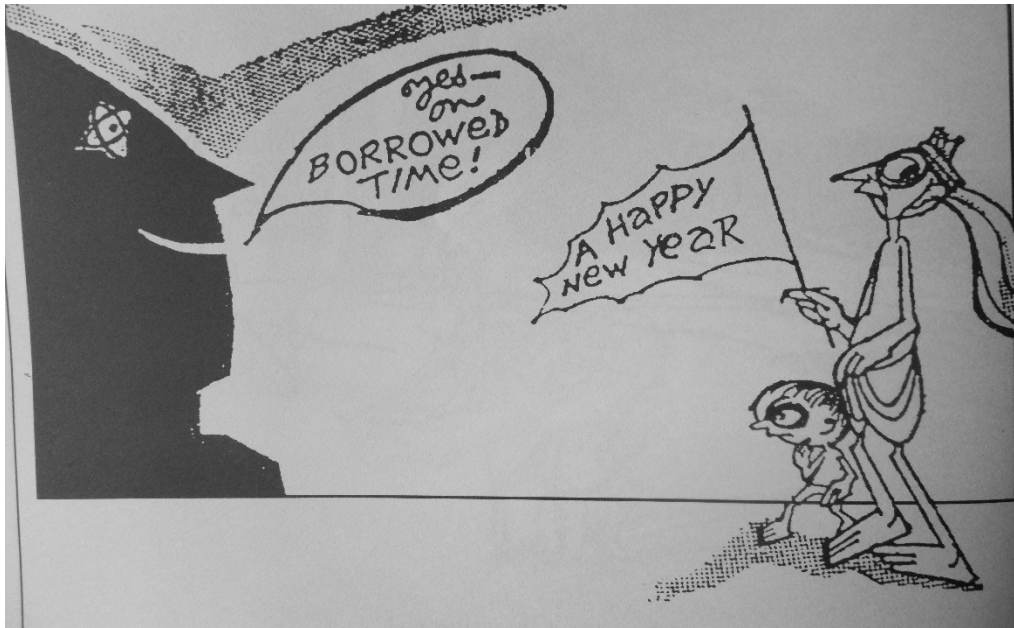


Figure 173

O.V. Vijayan

Source: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Before Nuclear proliferation became a major world policy, India not belonging to any major world bloc other than the NAM, developed nuclear weapons under the pretext that it was for peaceful purposes but clearly as a deterrent against constant threats of attacks from its neighbours. However, the arming the South Asia was one of the major issues that rocked the world power balance of the period with Pakistan joining in later with clear support from the United States. Although NAM lost its importance due to India aligning with Russia in the years to follow, the newly created imbalance was something that worried the freethinkers of the time. Vijayan's cartoons constantly explored the theme of nuclear bomb with the explicit use of the symbol for nuclear energy. The cartoon of Indira Gandhi with the balloon filled with the symbol for nuclear energy and the bottom dialogue terming it as the 'only language the world seems to understand', is an open criticism of the policies of the state regarding the atom bomb, which was already becoming a soar issue of the Cold War. Moreover, it was a question of necessity? While many in

the government and the armed forces argued that it was indeed a necessity, cartoonists such as Vijayan and Laxman, through their cartoons questioned the affordability and the need for it. Vijayan's cartoon (Figure 9) featuring a mother and a child, walking the miles looking for drinking water in a India engaged with the question of Hard Water challenges the sudden need for nuclear bombs in a country that was in dire need of basic development. Possession of a nuclear weapon was generally perceived as the ultimate security measure of the nation-state's integrity and sovereignty and hence was widely endorsed by successive governments. Later historians have argued that the Pokhran nuclear bomb tests conducted by India in 1974 may have been an attempt to salvage the prestige of the country by making Indians proud about being a nuclear capable state and Indira Gandhi hoped to buy some time with this to circumvent rising issues around her which finally led to the infamous Emergency. Criticizing the nuclear policy of the state once again, Vijayan's cartoons show Indira Gandhi explaining her stance to the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that 'Mahatma Gandhi called it the soul force.' Vijayan believed this fascination for nuclear power to be a policy against the founding fathers of the nation. Bipan Chandra writes,

‘³⁰⁵Nehru's passionate opposition to war and the threat of nuclear conflict which loomed large after Hiroshima is well known. It grew out of his experience of nonviolent struggle and his conviction in Gandhi who had resolved to make it his mission to fight and outlaw the atom bomb. Inspired by Gandhi, and supported by great intellectuals like Einstein and Bertrand Russell, Nehru made it India's role to place the goal of peace, nuclear and general disarmament before the world.’

³⁰⁵ Chandra, Bipan., Mridula Mukherjee, and Aditya Mukherjee. *India since Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print.

One of the unlikeliest responses to the Indian nation-state came from the Amul cartoons. Though not given a conventional place in the newspapers, they are indeed responses to the nation and the political, social and cultural situations it goes through. Amul cartoons are different in one way than editorial or newspaper cartoons. The Amul cartoons' primary function was to create an awareness of the brand that was Amul and promote it³⁰⁶. Creating or bending public opinion on matters regarding nation only came secondary. It started appearing as hoardings in the main parts of the country, achieving an iconic status and later passed on to the newspapers as well. However, the creators still see it as an advertisement despite having the characteristics of a political cartoon. Sylvester DaCunha said in his write-up about the origin of the Amul ads,

‘³⁰⁷Slowly, we found we were exploiting situations which were current. But topical ads pose a challenge. They need to appear immediately after the issue breaks out; else they lose their immediacy. The news of 100 runs by a cricketing hero or the crowning of an Indian Miss World needed an immediate Amul response.’

Indeed, Amul hoardings and cartoons were intended to only a section of the society; the urban, English-speaking communities were the target audiences of the giant billboards. The language of Amul hoardings consists majorly of wordplay which makes translations into regional languages nearly impossible. Though most of the cartoons involve a wordplay in Hindi too through transliterations, English remains the main language of communication along with the visual featuring the character known as ‘Amul Girl’. After exploring the Amul archives, I have selected a few of these responses to the political affairs of India and its ruling elites.

³⁰⁶ The Amul hoardings and cartoons are the product of a collaboration between Amul and daCunha Communications starting in 1966.

³⁰⁷ *Amul's India*. Noida: Collins Business, 2012. Print.

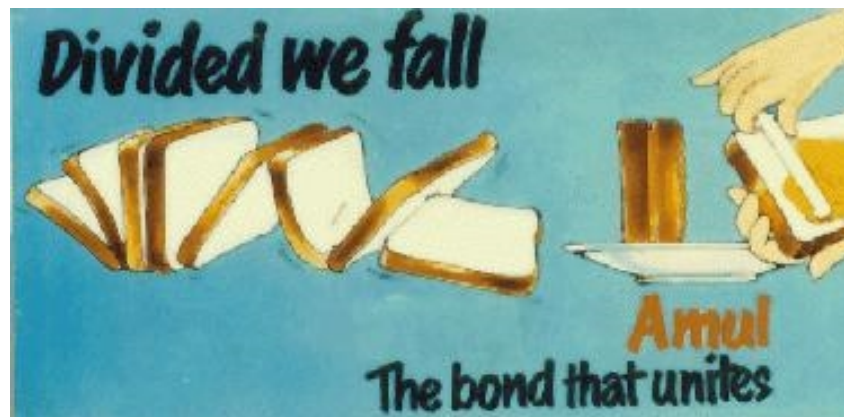


Figure 174
Issue on National Unity (1986)
Source: www.amul.com



Figure 175
On the recent move by a few to divide and create new states (2009)
Source: www.amul.com

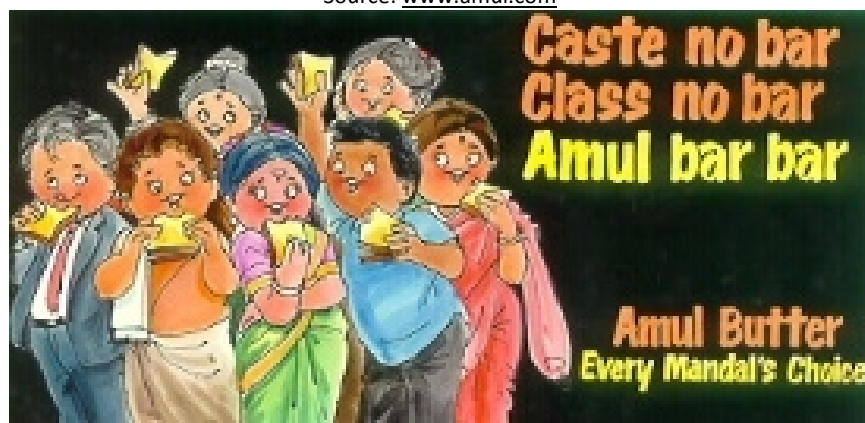


Figure 176
A reaction to Mandalisation (1991)
Source: www.amul.com



Figure 177

About Sanjay Gandhi's sterilization campaigns during the Emergency (1975)

Source: www.amul.com

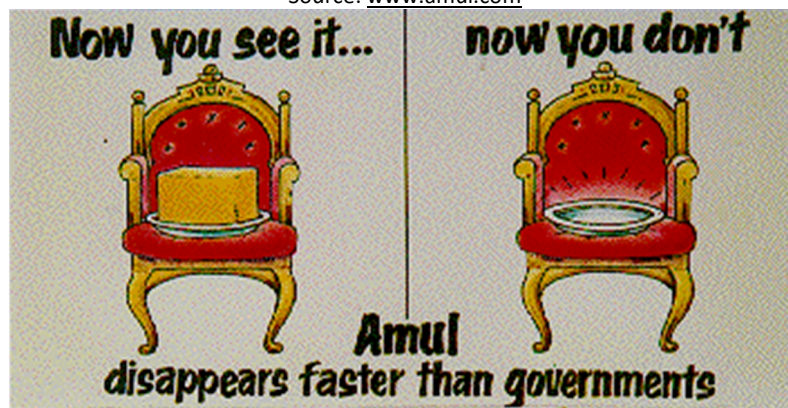


Figure 178

The rapid changes of Prime Ministers in the Country (1998)

Source: www.amul.com



Figure 179

Urging people to make the right choice during the Election period. (1995)

Source: www.amul.com



Figure 180

A take on the unparliamentarily behavior (1997)

Source: www.amul.com



Figure 181

Amul's support to the protestors in Delhi, condemning the brutal police attacks on them (2011)

Source: www.amul.com

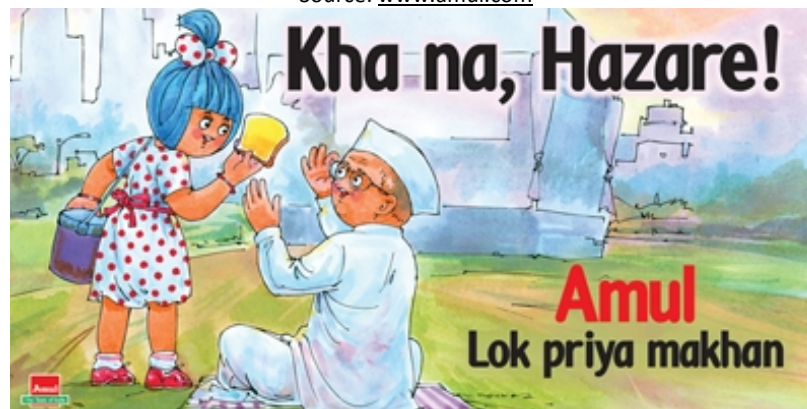


Figure 182

The Amul girl urging Socialist Anna Hazare to end his protest (2011)

Source: www.amul.com

Santosh Desai's piece of writing on the Amul cartoons/hoardings see them as one of the few 'entertainments India had in the public sphere' before the advent of popular choices such as T.V and mobile phones. He goes on to say further,

³⁰⁸The nature of the Amul intervention was often very simple. In a lot of cases, it merely observed events and pointed them out. In a lot of billboards, there is little comment. The act of being a spectator, of merely marking out the moment and presenting it in a manner that caused us to smile, was often the only role it played. Of course, there were occasions when more pointed comment was felt to be in order, but overall, Amul used the platform it had in the national consciousness with restraint, something that has no doubt helped it stay relevant after so many years. But not overplaying its hand and being led away by its ability to frame debates, Amul avoided the corrosiveness that can come naturally to the habitual commentator. Tracing Amul's journey through the decades is in many ways akin to tracing India's journey, albeit through a specific and special vantage point.'

5. Political Cartoons as Dissent

India's existence as a nation-state is understandably a paradox but a cartoonist leaves nothing behind while taking a shot at paradoxes, especially when it is about making and shaping public opinion regarding the matters of national importance, freedom of speech and even political parties. More than that, cartoons should be examined in relation to concepts of power and resistance; as a record of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in a democratic post-colony. A fully

³⁰⁸ Santosh Desai. "Amul's India". *Amul's India*. New Delhi: Collins Business, 2012. Print.

developed media and a nearly perfect cartooning arena in India has helped to keep the governments and politicians in check for all these years. As I have mentioned in the second chapter, the gentle critique that Shankar did, ended with the *Shankar's Weekly*. Laxman and Vijayan formed their style as to make cartoons look more like satirical resistances that mocked the follies of the new leaders. Vijayan was clear about his role as a cartoonist.

‘³⁰⁹Destroying illusions is the most important among the duties of a cartoonist. But whose illusions? The isolated and non-representative illusion of a citizen is only an aberration. Likewise are the groups, which are in the opposition. The vanities and falsehoods of those who occupy leadership positions in government, society, economy, etc. are the themes of a cartoonist. In essence, it means that the cartoonist will always have to function as ³¹⁰*an opponent of the establishment*. This is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. It is not to say that the profession of a cartoonist cannot be carried on ignoring this principle.’

The right to criticize or differ stems from the basic tenets of democracy, a trait we inherited from the colonial rulers. Since the dawn of the Age of Reformation, the right to differ began its round in the western societies, giving differing ideas platforms and the right to be heard. In fact it was even considered fashionable in the western polities to have debates on different ideas that went against the religious rigidity of the times before. In this apparent move towards reason, the foundation of modern age democracy can be found. John Locke³¹¹ believed that ‘a tolerant society

³⁰⁹ Vijayan, O.V. *Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2006. Print.

³¹⁰ Emphasize mine.

³¹¹ John Locke was an influential English thinker. He is known as the Father of Liberalism. Besides influencing Voltaire, Rousseau and the some of the founding fathers of the USA, he is known for his works related to epistemology and political philosophy.

it likely to be a stable one³¹². India's method of dissent had many forms; from a very violent form in 1857 riots to the Gandhian non-violent means to the Civil Disobedience movement and the mass agitation methods of the Quit India Movement, Indian people were exposed to the organized form of popular movement. There were a whole different level of dissent like street theatre, literature, creative art etc. that has its pioneers from Tagore to Aseem Trivedi. In the globalized world of today, the iconoclasm of dissent is of paramount importance. The image of President Bush evading the shoe hurled at him by the Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zaidi was probably one of the most circulated images during the time of the War on Terror. Such images of dissent strike farther and stay longer in the minds of the people and incite further thoughts of dissent. Cartoons come under the image category as well. They are a condensed combination of visual and verbal dissent and can dominate the public sphere through archives longer than their intended period of survival. As opposed to photographs which give a direct interpretation, cartoons provide a message and an opinion along with a possible hurt to the person or the group targeted. Though cartoon as a genre do not go as far as the level of political disobedience³¹³, it does somewhat the same dent to its targets if the analytical study of the recent cartoon controversies in India and abroad are taken into account. Mona Baker discussed the role cartoons played in Egypt during the protests against the government in the aftermath of the Arab Spring³¹⁴.

³¹² Nederman, Cary J., John Christian Laursen, eds. *Difference and Dissent Theories of Toleration in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996. Web.

³¹³ The term political disobedience is used by the political theorists to refer to the performance of acts forbidden by the law and the state which are consciously directed in some way against the authority of the state. In the narrow negative sense of the term, political disobedience is simply the refusal to abide by the laws and commands of the established political authorities which are objected to either in themselves, or for what they represent or permit.

³¹⁴ Arab Spring started with the Tunisian Revolution in 2010 that set off a series of often violent protests by the people against the regimes in the Arab League. Though it was anticipated that it would lead to the democratization of the Arab countries, more and more countries descended to chaos with violent clashes between the people and the military, in some places even with pro-government militia.

³¹⁵Cartoons offer analysis and criticism of actors and institutions often absent from the Western media, a deep dive into local concerns that go beyond news reportage. They capture the persistence and resilience of satirists in the face of repression. The cartoonists themselves offer an imprecise allegory of the movements and tensions at play in Egypt; revolutionaries and conservatives, secularists and Islamists, women and men.’

If Aseem Trivedi’s cartoons were not treated as dissent but as sedition, then it is to be assumed that the debate on intolerance in India had started earlier than it is thought. Lampooning the “national symbols” was not taken lightly with an anti-corruption campaign in full swing. Laxman and Vijayan’s was a much toned down form of dissent without employing the national symbols for lampooning. Laxman’s dissent came in the form of an everyday criticism of Indian life, featuring average Indians struggling under the pressure of rules and impositions that benefitted only the *netas*. Vijayan’s characters (The Father and the Son) were not the middle class ones like Laxman’s Common Man and his Wife. His were the poor, homeless, pave-dwellers that most others ignored and considered displaced in the massive movement of the nation forward. Both, nevertheless, were protests against the government policies. If the Common Man worried about extra taxes, increased fuel prices, railway ticket hikes and power cuts, Vijayan’s ‘Father and Son’ often worried about things that seemed beyond their limit of worries; international issues, cross-border invasions, ideological differences and coalition governments! In this way, the cartoons of Laxman and Vijayan worked as coded texts, embedded in its visual format, a variety of criticism against that class of people enjoying power. Understood and accepted as a democratic form of dissent, a tradition so welcomed and placed by Nehru and continued unquestioningly until the

³¹⁵ Baker, Mona. Ed., *Translating Dissent*. New York: Routledge, 2016. Web.

Emergency, political cartoons thrived unhindered despite minor attempts until the beginnings of the twenty first century, openly criticizing politicians, ministers and even the Prime Minister. But it is not possible to believe that cartoons aggravate any social or political changes. Other than being an aggressive criticism of the state of affairs, they rarely affect policy changes. But they can influence those who would mobilize masses for those policy changes. Writers, academicians and political activists could resort to cartoons to help drive a point home. Schneider said that cartoons may not provoke political change ³¹⁶but their value lie in keeping track and recording the actual and historical reality’.

³¹⁶ Schneider, J. “Speaking in Bubbles: Press Cartoons and Comics in Cameroon.” *African Media Cultures: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*. Cologne: Rudiger Koppe Verlag, 2004. Web.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Leonard Freedman's book starts with a brilliant poem, of his own making, on political satire:

“³¹⁷Political Satire, to be most effective

Is Caustic, unfair, and never objective.

With all this in mind, you may ask why I'm for it.

The answer is simple: Tyrants abhor it.”

Freedman sees political satire as a necessity where power corrupts or the corrupt wields power. In his concluding chapter, he brings the example of India as one of the most important nations that chose the path of democracy in the post-World War era, ‘opening the way for a great burst of satire in cartoons, novels, and other media.’ Studies on popular culture encompass a lot of cultural acts but political cartoons are rarely approached with care. A systematic study of it needs to explain its beginnings, its evolution through the ages and the importance it gained during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an art form, capable of mending and bending opinions in a society. How did it gain acceptance as a media practice from its position as a ‘³¹⁸low medium of illustration’ to its present form? Magazines like *The Punch*, *Puck* and all their colonial offsprings practiced cartooning as a newer form of visual persuasion. Though some treat caricature and cartoon as almost the same thing, cartoons are different from caricatures. Though it takes a lot

³¹⁷ Freedman, Leonard. *The Offensive Art: Political Satire and Its Censorship around the World from Beerbohm to Borat*. London and Connecticut: Praeger, 2009. Print.

³¹⁸ Gombrich, E.H. *A Cartoonist's Armory*. London: Duke University Press, 1963. Web.

from caricature, cartoons perform by strongly emphasising on the message than the visual form. In its further advanced forms in the late twentieth century, they began giving more space to symbols as well. Through an analysis of the origin of the art of cartooning and the status it enjoys in the popular culture of the world today, my attempt was to give the study of political cartoons a new perspective by rendering them as translations of a particular time and political incidents. I perceived them as carriers of ‘memory’.

The introduction to this thesis started off with a detailed account of the recent controversies regarding political cartoons in India and abroad. From the minor controversy regarding the Mayawati’s cartoon in 2005 to the 2015 shootings at the office of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in reaction to their publication of a series of cartoons lampooning Prophet Muhammad, the introduction chapter enters the subject line of the research; why are cartoons considered as the art of controversy? The intention of the first chapter was to give a full account of how cartooning as a political act triggers much more violent reactions than other visual art. It also presents the major research question – Can cartoons be considered as translations? Apart from showing political cartoons as targets of those who are hurt by them or scared of them, I attempted to consider them as texts of history and as translations of political contexts and opinions into visual texts. In India, the Ambedkar cartoon controversy created a long-lasting debate both in the Parliament and outside, provoking debates on some other cartoons from the past³¹⁹ as well. These debates resulted in the removal of the controversial cartoons from the NCERT textbooks but the debates on whether cartoonists should be allowed such freedom continued. The question I address was what was causing this charged attacks against cartoons?

³¹⁹ R.K. Laxman’s cartoon on the anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu and Shankar’s cartoon on Mahatma Gandhi, although the latter did not get much of an attention and fell short of becoming a controversy.

In the second chapter titled ‘Political Cartoons and/in Popular Culture’, I modestly try to understand what makes the cartoons different? One cannot simply deem cartoons as ‘harmless art’, because they generate laughter and thought and result in shaping the public opinion through influencing those who spared a moment to glance at them. The position that most newspapers have given them, along with the editorial itself, shows the power of cartoons to influence and the popularity they command. So, to understand cartoons and their power to influence the masses, it has to be looked as part of everyday culture or popular culture. The second chapter is an attempt to understand cartoons through the complexities of an ever-changing world of popular culture with its constant addressing of visual art. I tried to bring out the fact that cartooning as a popular form of art³²⁰ and the roots of popular culture began in the 1800s with the advances in print technology along with other means of mass production. Understanding popular culture and its origins help in understanding how cartoons made an entry in a massive scale. The effects of Industrial Revolution coinciding with the consolidation of British colonies resulted in cartooning as an art form reaching lands farther than Europe. As I have explained in the second chapter, several offsprings of *Punch* began in India, Australia, Canada etc. successfully taking a popular art in Victorian London to the colonies. Though cartooning in India began with the local progenies of *Punch* such as *Oudh Punch*, *Hindi Punch* etc. it is the post-independent India’s cartoon tradition that I looked at in the third chapter titled, ‘Cartoons as Translation: India through Political Cartoons’. I also looked at cartoons as visual translations of socio-political contexts, decisions, acts and issues. The issue of cultural memory and how cartoons form a part of it is discussed in the fourth chapter. In the third chapter, considering cartoons as translations as well as reading them as an act of decoding and translating, cartoons are presented along with a historical timeline of the nation and the major incidents that

³²⁰ With the introduction of *Punch* magazine and its rivals in London and later, the imitations of *Punch* popping up in the colonies of Britain.

resulted in the production of some of the iconic cartoons of the three main cartoonists of the time; Shankar, O.V. Vijayan and R.K. Laxman. This historical timeline was narrated along with the second important theme of the chapter, the Emergency, during which impositions were laid on freedom of speech. Cartoons of and about the Emergency period was given importance in the chapter with a brief account of the situation that resulted in their making. Some of them were censored and hence were made public only after the Emergency was withdrawn. It is important to look at this historical timeline not just as a way to understand cartoons as translations but to recognize the tradition of cartooning and how cartoons remained as strong voices of dissent since independence and critiqued those who were in power on a regular basis and also as voices of the masses. While a majority of O.V. Vijayan's cartoons depicted a situation from the point of view of the downtrodden, R.K. Laxman's was the quintessential voice of the Indian middle-class, an ever expanding phenomenon, both sociologically and politically. Even the characters they created – the Common Man and the Father – Son duo - represented the classes they were concerned about. A detailed analysis on the reading of the cartoons of Laxman and Vijayan is given the fourth chapter. The fourth chapter also explains how translation of cartoons can be attempted, both as translation of a thought and as translation of a situation to a pictorial art. But it's the importance of cartoons as a critique of the ruling elite that forms the crux of the chapter. I have brought in numerous examples from the cartoons of Laxman and Vijayan and also the less considered Amul cartoons/hoardings that has influenced the English-speaking Indian middle class. Amul cartoons, though started off as an advertisement gimmick, soon became important in their take on contemporary issues, often through intrinsic word-plays, wooing the attention of the public through newspapers and hoardings in public spaces. Shaping public opinion through public spaces was a phenomenon in the initial days of caricatures in Europe even though it was more or less

propaganda. Caricaturists, at the behest of political factions, often lampooned their opponents and displayed their pictures in public to get the message across through faster means. Amul hoardings followed the same principle, along with publications in twenty five newspapers including the *Times of India* and on social media such as Twitter and Facebook. From mere laugh in the beginning of this grand advertisement, Amul cartoons evolved into criticising those in power, lampooning those who indulged in corruption and shoulder-patting those who won accolades for the country. At the same time, they used this assumed role to promote the brand 'Amul'.

In order to look at political cartoons as translations, it is important to understand the aspect of memory related to them. Each of cartoons embeds the socio-political condition of the nation in its visual and the comment, which can be decoded later by someone who possess the same or a similar memory of the same situation or retrieve and restructure it. Such an effort is akin to translation as it involves interpretation. Following translation theorists I consider it: reading as translation. For example, the Emergency is a political situation in the history of the country that generates a certain amount of awful memories in the people who have experienced it. Those who did not experience the Emergency still may have memories in them from other sources. These individual memories help in the understanding of a political cartoon made in response to the Emergency though this understanding would be different for those who experienced the Emergency first hand. For them, it would be triggering a memory of a particular political incident. Those who did not experience the Emergency directly but only know about it through other sources of culture, understanding a political cartoon from the Emergency period would be different as they would consider it as a document of history or a response against the regime.

Perceiving political cartoons as forms of dissent informs the last part of the fourth chapter. It is often difficult to differentiate between critique and dissent. Many of O.V. Vijayan's cartoons,

especially those that came out as opposing the Emergency were clear examples of dissent. Even R.K. Laxman's famous cartoon of the Common Man burying his head in the ground in frustration can be seen as a sort of a dissent.

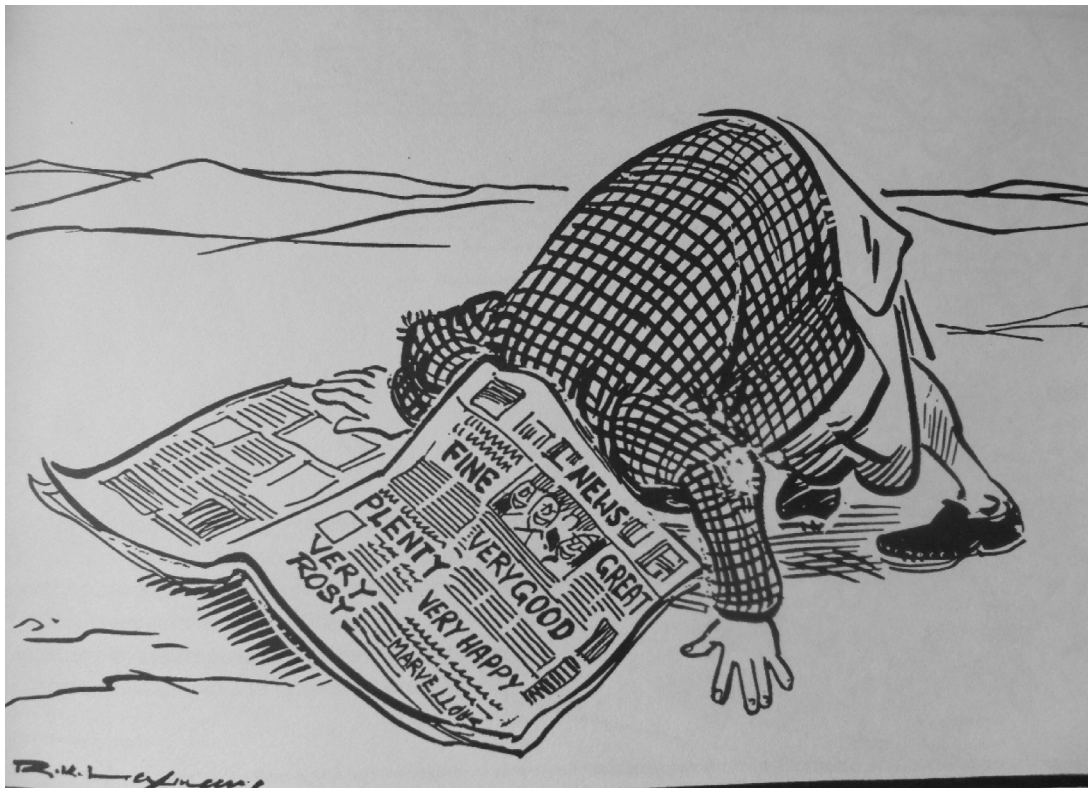


Figure 183
Source: Brushing Up the Years

Demanding the protection of freedom of speech can be seen as dissent in many countries where non-democratic governments dictate terms to its people. Democracy cannot function without taking into account conflicting opinions. In fact the recent talks on intolerance in India itself has its roots in a long-standing tradition of dissent which is not widely discussed or analysed. This is where cartoons get their importance. They subtly dissent where they could and move on to criticize, often gently, sometimes harshly, depending on the situation. That is the general mood

that one gets from the writings of Laxman and Vijayan on cartoons. Though varied in style, it can be noted that both, on different occasions, agreed on their role as commentators of the political issues of the state and their role as makers of public opinion. Interestingly enough, O.V. Vijayan is the only one amongst the two who has used the word ‘dissent’. Considering the kind of dissent that cartoonists expressed, Goldstein³²¹ says,

‘Caricatures were often denounced by governmental spokesmen and their supporters in nineteenth-century France in extraordinarily emotional and extreme language, which makes it clear that caricatures were genuinely viewed as posing a threat to the social order. Thus, in support of a proposal made by King Louis XVIII to continue prior censorship of caricature in 1822, while at the same time abolishing censorship of the printed word, legislative deputy Louis Bonnet declared that, “there is nothing in the world more dangerous and whose danger is propagated more quickly than the sale and exhibition of drawings which offend mores or laws of which manifest factious intentions.” Similarly, in 1835, when the government of King Louis-Philippe proposed reimposing censorship of caricature, which had been abolished in 1830, his minister of commerce, Charles Duchatel, told the legislators that “there is nothing more dangerous, gentlemen, than these infamous caricatures, these seditious designs,” which “produce the most deadly effect”.

Victor Navasky not only termed cartoons an ‘art of controversy’ but also shared his experiences of dealing with them as a reader and as an editor³²². His book³²³ ends with a timeline of incidents

³²¹ Goldstein, Robert Justin. *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth Century France*. London: The Kent State University Press, 1989. Web.

³²² Navasky was the editor of *The New York Times* and *The Nation*.

³²³ Navasky, Victor S. *The Art of Controversy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. Print.

in which cartoons and cartoonists were in trouble. From Charles Philippon's confrontation with King Louis Philippe over the 'La Poire' cartoon to Aseem Trivedi's arrest over the controversial cartoons during the anti-corruption movements, the timeline presents a number of incidents from around the globe. These reactions show how cartoonists belong to a feared category. *Punch* and *Simplicissimus*³²⁴ initially concentrated on social caricaturing and gave caricatures of political nature only a minimal space but that trend changed with the advent of the First World War. The politically charged atmosphere in Europe, which engulfed most of its colonies later, helped in producing equally charged political caricatures which lampooned the purported enemies. Wolfgang Hunig's book³²⁵ attempts how political cartoons from the First World War period bring a complex idea into a single image and to a related metaphor. Brian Keath-Smith says,

‘³²⁶Hunig concludes that British cartoons have a more down to earth or matter of fact character, while the German cartoons seem more poetic and erudite. British light-heartedness is used to emphasize superiority, whereas German references to mythological figures make their cartoons less direct. More importantly, Hunig finds that ‘the cartoonists encourage their readers to believe in an easy military victory rather than raise a critical voice against the war’.’

Hunig's study shows the influence cartoons and the magazines that published them had in the contemporary society. William Randolph Hearst³²⁷ is widely believed to have said, ‘You

³²⁴ *Simplicissimus* was a German satirical magazine modelled after the British *Punch*. It started publishing in 1896 and continued till 1967. It took a break in 1944 when the Second World War reached its high and stayed shut until 1954. Herman Hesse and Heinrich Mann were regular contributors to the magazine.

³²⁵ Hunig, Wolfgang, K. *British and German Cartoons as Weapons in World War I: Incentives and Ideology of Political Cartoons, a Cognitive Linguistics Approach*. London: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001. Web.

³²⁶ Keath-Smith, Brian. *The Modern Language Review*. Vol 99 July (2004), p 858-859. Web.

³²⁷ William Randolph Hearst (1863 – 1951) was an American newspaper publisher who held a great deal of control over American newspaper industry. Starting with *The San Francisco Examiner* and *The New York Journal*, he is

furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war.' Though he said that in reference to the Spanish-American War of 1898, it is commonly used now to understand the influence that media has on people.

We live in a world of ever-changing public opinion that is susceptible to change and media plays a major role in it. Though a few theorists, including Pierre Bourdieu, are of the opinion that public opinion is an illusion and that 'it does not exist'³²⁸. According to Bourdieu, media controls the public opinion by projecting a certain output, or opinion poll results, and by this it projects the illusion that 'a public opinion exists'. Though it is impossible to discredit the role of media in fashioning public opinion in democratic societies, there are often many things that help shape it. From personal experiences to casual conversations, anything could change and shape individual opinion. Individuals are part of a larger public and all the collective opinions of a certain group can be termed as public opinion. A certain kind of communication is necessary for the formation of public opinion and that is exactly what a political cartoon does. It communicates an idea, or an opinion on a certain issue or an incident, thus by directly or indirectly influencing the reader to absorb the same opinion.

Though a large amount of studies, academic and non-academic alike, concentrate on other forms of media such as TV, films, advertisements, music etc., cartoons and their role in shaping and mobilizing public opinion has long been neglected. That cartoon has its root in caricaturing is asserted in the second chapter but not much of research has been done on it. Isabel Simeral Johnson's³²⁹ essay can be seen as one of the first regarding caricaturing. Most studies either

widely attributed to have started yellow journalism and through that held the power to shape opinions in the population through the thirty plus such publications he controlled.

³²⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction*. London: Routledge, 2010. Web.

³²⁹ Isabel Simeral Johnson's essay titled 'Cartoons' published in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 1937 is one of the early critical works on cartoons, its origin and the strength of the medium.

concentrated on a particular cartoonist or an anthology of cartoons belonging to a certain cartoonist. Through this work, my humble attempt is to see them in a new light. The third chapter has been dedicated to understanding cartoons as translations by presenting them along with their historical context procured through archival research. David Low had opined that cartoons can be considered ‘as sources of history’³³⁰, I would like to argue that they can be so only if the reader knows that history or procure enough knowledge of it through archival research. If one of the cartoons by Shankar on Nehru is presented without its context, it may not make much sense to those who came after the era, because that cartoon was probably a reaction to a possible casual remark by the Prime Minister on a trivial issue. Cartoonists that came after Shankar – Laxman, Kutty, Abu and Vijayan – have followed the same example on numerous occasions. Perhaps one of the best examples can be O.V. Vijayan’s cartoon on the news of allegation that hungry farmers ate grass in Madhya Pradesh in the wake of a famine.

³³⁰ Low, David. *Years of Wrath: A Cartoon History*. London: Simon and Schuster, 1946. Web.

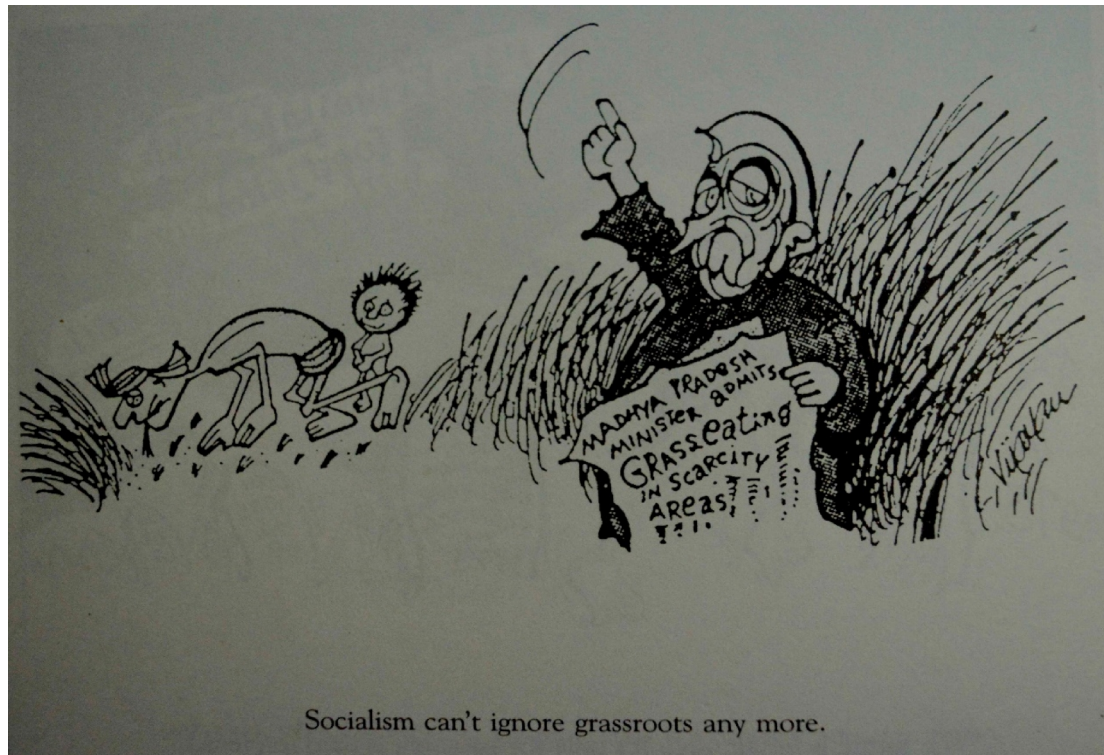


Figure 184

Source: Tragic Idiom: O.V. Vijayan's Cartoons & Notes on India

Cartoons have been made out of important news such as the food scarcity or political corruption which may or may not stay in public memory forever. Trying to understand such cartoons may not be possible without a relevant context given with it. Though the symbols employed and the text used help in getting a general idea about the cartoon, it will require a lot more information, including the context and a proper interpretation, to make it work as a source of history. While doing so, it is vital that we understand them along with their roles. The fourth chapter titled 'Reading Political Cartoons: Memory, Nation-State and Dissent' gives a detailed account of how the social and political role of cartooning as an agency is important in a democracy like India.

Cartooning as a political and social act has always faced the ire of those who were targeted. Considering the contemporary relevance and the massive circulation it receives through social media as well as the traditional publications, it is safe to assume that cartooning will remain as a crucial media culture in the coming years too. As a form of popular media, it has survived in its present format for at least two hundred years and even with the advent of internet and the professed death of newspaper, cartooning remains the same. Though technically the Nehru cartoons of Shankar and the Common Man cartoons of R.K. Laxman follow the same principles of the Old Bill cartoons of Bruce Bairnsfather and the Hitler cartoons of David Low, it is possible to find numerous differences concerning the use of symbols and the method of cartooning. But the one cohesion remains the same – the politics. The fact that Thomas Nast, considered by many as the father of American cartooning, is now described as a ‘racist bigot’ and an ‘anti- catholic’ shows that readings of cartoonists and their cartoons is vulnerable to changes. From an act of simple amusement in the seventeenth century to a political weapon in the eighteenth century and an art to be banned in the nineteenth century and finally, to a respected yet feared cultural and political art in the twentieth and the twenty first centuries, cartooning has come a long way. Hence, the scope of the study of cartoons is unlimited. My humble effort in this work has been to bring forth the importance of cartooning as a cultural and political act and the need to understand cartoons as translations.

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