SATIRE AND ITS RHYTHM THROUGH THE LENS OF CARICATURE AND CARTOON PRACTICES IN INDIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The major key factor of modern 'caricature' art has been not only constricted to only the voice of society and the political domain, neither is it still subjected to newspapers, magazines and journals, banners, templates, and posters but it is legitimated to be spontaneous equally an ambiguous 'etiology' of art practice having its inseparable bonding through 21st century as 'digital expression' as well. Caricature art has always been hands-up with its impact on the human psyche or vice-versa as well and its elongated limbs hold a tremendous grip over any fragile, discursiveness, and expectation that weakens the stimulus growth of society which can never be overlooked. This research paper - 'Satire and its Rhythm through the Lens of Caricature and Cartoon Practices in India: A Review' fundamentally has made an attempt to showcase the study of satire through caricature and cartoon art by Five eminent artists from India and their perception of this subject.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The word 'caricature' is claimed to be derived from the Italian term “Cairo”- ‘to load’, and “caricature”- ‘exaggerate’ that implies the acquisition of theme content to amplify its consequent to a greater effect. Italian siblings Annibale and Agostino Carracci executed approximately the year 1590s to their portrait works of those days, but today this genre of art has enormous popularity among its viewers globally Redman (2014). In the context of Indian history of caricature art, its myriad history says the modern-day caricature picks up momentum through ‘print media’ especially its base of Indian politics. Anjaria (2006)
Since the 1870s, the ‘British Punch’ had started to show the situation of Indian vernacular episodes in particular during colonial penetration. Interestingly, alongside the full-fledged freedom fighters, the artists’ art of caricature had come up front to be felt and realized as another visual-impact-oriented virtue that outspoken nationalist commentary via print media Mayhew (1841). The contemporary period also incorporates apart from caricature art like- illustrations and illustrators who have been promisingly flourishing all across the globe and obviously the landscapes of India.

Some very notable as well as worthy 11 (eleven) Indian artists from the domain of caricature art are- Manoj Sinha, Uday Mohite, Chetan Patil, Mehboob Raja, Shijo Varghese, Keya Mahata, Bharat KV, Prasad Bhat, Ramanjit Kaur Gabri, Varun N Rao, Shesh Kiran and so on. The advent of the 21st century has brought up numerous chapters of human life, tragedy, crisis, achievements, humor, and satire of course since the time when the progenitors well before the civilization had ever been nomenclature equally sprouted. Retrospection says to search for the root from where we started that is before the invention of any scripted language, any word or digit, human expressions had to rely on the representations marked on cave walls, stone ceilings, and rocks which have been in existence since then to till date cartoons and caricatures Black (1971). The most important discourse is the linear, figurative, symbolical, geometrical representations, and commercials in expressing the individual’s own self. Here in this Research paper five (05) eminent Indian caricaturists’ and their representational works loudly pervading satirical sense and rhythm by commemorating - R.K. Laxman, Satish Acharya, Abu Abraham, K. Shankar Pillai, and Maya Kamath are known for their incredible contribution to the domain of cartoon and caricature art expounding multiple issues of socio-economic and political agendas. The idea behind selecting the above-mentioned five artists by the present researcher(s) to delineate the litigious artworks through the spectacle of satire, which were based on political agendas as well as having its versatile social impact.

2. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Etiology- it configures elaborating a/set of causation or cause to illuminate the diagnosed ailment by the investigator. (www.oed.com, Oxford University Press, © 2023 Oxford University Press)

Caricature- a kind of artist’s way of visual expression in which an individual comically exaggerates a person’s characteristics that reveals his/her identity to the spectators. Soanes (2007)

Cartoon- Dictionary means it refers to a simple drawing showing the features of its subject in a humorously exaggerated way, especially a satirical one in a newspaper or magazine. A motion picture uses animation techniques to photograph a sequence of drawings rather than real people or objects. A full-sized drawing made by an artist as a preliminary design for a painting or other work of art. Make a drawing of (someone) in a simplified or exaggerated way.

Satire- Dictionary meaning it refers to the use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.
3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Due to the advent of social media, it propagated various dimensions including visual arts and culture, simultaneously art expertise and even amateur art practitioners started to crawl along with the current. On the one hand, social media and the internet have been tirelessly amplifying vibrant cartoons and caricatures along with the aesthetics embedded in them and day by day provoking the lesser-known and well-named names of the artists who are rendering their sensational services in cognitive notions. Bhattacharya (March)

On the other hand, the acceleration of the unsavory and vulgarity of many illustrations has been an alarming threat to the viewers as well as to the art world as well. Because vulgarity always instigates a tendency to eject- aesthetics, humor, freedom of expression, social message, and morality leading to severe banishment.

The subsistence of cartoons, caricature art, and graffiti is the only way to justify satire in visual arts.

4. REVEALING SATIRE THROUGH CARICATURE AND CARTOONS

Cartoons in general juncture, are mostly seen as easily accessible but lesser discussed topics apart from art appreciators, and art researchers. The intruding reach of cartoon works acts like icebreakers in collaboration with- humor, happiness, and fun which is capable of uniting the spectators through visual communication. Essentially the cartoon and caricature works were framed or designed in such a way that every folk irrespective of- rich or poor, literate, or illiterate, deaf or dumb can have the taste. Even before, if cartoon and caricature is to be studied through the lens of the term ‘satire’ then very much ebullient to have some understanding of satire. Bricker (2022)

Satire

Satire is a genre or a form of human expression in the domain of literature and art where the application of humor, or ridicule to expose and criticize the obtrusive as well as persisting stupidity of socio-political and economic issues as well as keeping a hawk eye surveillance to the contemporary instances too. Satirists play a substantial role in highlighting the human behavior, nature, and persisting deformities that have been rising up unchecked, equally accountable for wriggling the truth, dissolving the ethics, morality, and values, some obtrusive sentiments are intentionally ignited to mislead the people in disguise towards a folly consciousness. From another perspective, satire is all about deconstructing into fragments for reconstructing it into a new entity and discourse. The statement like- “amuse and abuse” Pauwels (2012) can be bifurcated into two ways-

1) To attack or improvise censure of vice and evil in the society.
2) To venture the rhetoric and dramatic irony to influence its critique.

Satirists, as well as artists (cartoonists and caricaturists), take these as the privilege to show the mirror reflection transpiring the real phase of the past and present of the society. There the use of irony, mockery, and amusement has so much to transact with public influencing through visual communication. ‘Natya-Shastra’ of Bharata Muni embodies one of the most ancient remarkable literary works of Bharat Muni, where the nine (9) rasa in accordance to his perception of Natya Shastra categories of human emotions were dictated through these nine elements
of art, known as Nava-Rasa which elaborates the aesthetical relevance and correlation in Indian art, these are- Erotic, Comic, Pathetic, Furious, Heroic, Terrible, Odious, Marvelous, Quietist. So, the second rasa which is Comic or ‘Hasya’ plays a significant role among the Nava-Rasa in expressing human emotion aesthetically by virtue of cartoon and caricature art Dasgupta (2011). So, it is literally justified that without indulging the principles of Rasa theory the subsistence of satire through representational art is possible is more than a question. Chakraborty & Chowdhury (2021)

5. FIVE EMINENT CARTOONISTS IN INDIA

The advent of the 21st century has brought up numerous chapters of human life, tragedy, crisis, achievements, humor, and satire of course since the time when the progenitors well before the term civilization had sprouted ever. Retrospection says to search for the root from where the journey had started i.e. before the invention of any scripted language, word, or digit, human expressions had to rely on the representations marked on cave walls, stone ceilings, and rocks which have been in existence since then to till date cartoon and caricatures. The most substantial discourse is the linear, figurative, symbolical, and geometrical representations and commercials in expressing the individual’s own self. Hasan (2007)

Cartoons in general juncture are mostly seen as easily accessible but lesser discussed issues apart from art appreciators, freelancers, and researchers. The intruding reach of cartoon works acts like icebreakers in collaboration with humor, happiness, and fun which are capable of assembling the spectators through a salient language of visual communication. Interestingly, the cartoon and caricature works were designed in such a way that every folk irrespective of rich or poor, literate, or illiterate, deaf or dumb can have the taste of it. The socio-political-economic issues infuse the cartoon works which reflect the persisting situation of society and country and help a great deal in pervading the deformities globally. Issues such as gender, inequality, environmental issues caused by human interventions poverty, and crisis. The insight and cartoonist can be assumed from their understanding and perception in visualizing the issues and summarizing the pertaining issues by the virtue of ‘satire’ without being biased. Goswami (2016)

As history says- the first person ever who experimented with the caricature that created an aura of inquisitiveness and curiosity was none other than Leonardo da-Vinci. Glen Bushinski, a professor of political science elaborated that Leonardo da Vinci “experimented with physical appearance to capture the elements of beauty and in the process used outward appearance to emphasize or relay inner qualities of the personality” Sarangi (2021). Some eminent Indian caricaturists’ like- R.K. Laxman, Satish Acharya, Abu Abraham, K. Shankar Pillai, and Maya Kamath are known for their incredible contribution to the domain of cartoon and caricature art expounding multiple issues of socio-economic and political agendas.

1) R.K. Laxman (1921-2015)

Rasipuram Krishnaswami lyer Laxman became popular for his brother R.K. Narayan’s book- ‘Malgudi Days.’ Laxman probably started for the first time ever of his father on the floor of his house which fascinated his mother who was more than a delighted spectator and announced to let it be on the floor undisturbed for the people to come and see her son’s creation. His experience of caricature in school was not a pleasant one as he was disgraced by his teacher because of sketching of a Tiger and literally punished him until he could be able to convince them that it was a mere
unlike correlation. These were the prime as well as a very evident source of the effulgence of his entry to the genre of caricature art since from a very tender age.

His very popular comic strip entitled “You said it” published in the Times of India ‘common man’ remains common in his cartoon works which represent the commentary of a common individual. In his biography ‘The Tunnel of Time’ R.K. Laxman shares, how mundane things attracted him as an inspiration to create artworks out of objects that appeared to him outside of his windows- crows, dry twigs, birds, lizards, and several other postures of so many objects which reflected more to his visionary perspective of analyzing the visuals as a representation in signature style Sarangi (2021). Despite being a student of economics, his caricature works of the early 90s were on LPG connoting not petroleum gas but nudging with his illustrations silently on Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization through his voice of caricature on the socio-economic issues, sufferings of the poor folk of this nation.

Figure 1

![Figure 1](https://www.prathaculturalschool.com/post/indian-cartoonists)

R K Laxman, Mahatma Gandhi in a Post-Liberalization India


Figure 2

![Figure 2](https://www.prathaculturalschool.com/post/indian-cartoonists)

R K Laxman Smt. Indira Gandhi Comprehensively Transpiring Her Firmness in Spite of Negativities Surmounting Her from Various Ends Still Failed to Dismantle her from Winning the Elections of 1978.


Smt. Indira Gandhi comprehensively transpiring her firmness in spite of negativities surmounting her from various ends still failed to dismantle her from winning the elections of 1978. His caricaturing projection of Smt. Indira Gandhi caught up the attention of people, moreover the Indian Prime Minister allowed him to portray her every political moves doesn’t matter how critical they would be.
Satire and its Rhythm Through the Lens of Caricature and Cartoon Practices in India: A Review

Very astonishingly his caricature works of the later stages of his life were by nature mono-chromatic, and a touch of Western colour improvisation had enhanced its richness to a good effect that time he was involved with the publications of The Times of India newspaper. Laxman was invincible with his ignored critical caricatures embedded with colour which were created in the later phase of his career for the State Bank of India, which delineated the discrepancies and casual negotiation of the bank with the customers and the sloth gesture of the banking system responsible for effecting the mundane life of the country. On the contrary, he had also projected the positive phase of the bank corresponding to silence the critiques to a good effect. Laxman’s habit of observing people, their absurdities, and their appearance had obviously an impact on since his childhood days. Most of the people he met were later climbed to a myriad height with worldwide fame that pervaded aroma of their contribution to the nation, such as Smt. Jayalalithaa from Politics, South Indian musician M.S. Subbulakshmi respectively. The artist had a very intrinsic memory of the cultural heritage of Mysore as a cultural avenue because of his brother R.K. Narayan that helped a lot in culminating the art of cartooning.

Usha Laxman daughter-in-law of the artist founder of R.K. Laxman Museum inaugurated last year in Pune had an interview with DAG, where she explained about the themes for his caricature-like calendar art (12 in nos.), corporate sector was published by the S.B.I which were indulged in the book of R.K. Seshadri who captioned- ‘A Swadeshi Bank from South India: A History of the Indian Bank: 1907-1982’ (1982). According to the artist’s statement-

“I could not read the jokes under the cartoons, which were in pen and ink by different artists with different styles, But I used to spend hours studying each and would critically judge their quality. This exercise helped me to develop a visual sense of humour and also the rudiments of perspective, drapery and human anatomy, without being conscious of these.” (R.K. Laxman, The Tunnel of Time, 1998)

In this above image, the artist Laxman delineated the extreme professionalism of the State Bank Branch where he had shown with a chart sketched on the wall of the illustrated picture a very challenging space for the rural people especially vendors to imbibe a loan from the city bank. A bank official dressed in total formal attire hardly leaving a single stone unturned to resist a village vegetable seller from sanctioning a loan in exchange for his goods (pumpkin), the scenario of rural India where the aspirants often go empty-handed from the Bank.
2) K. Shankar Pillai (1902-1989)

Keshav Shankar Pillai is considered to be the father of political cartooning in India. Began working as a professional around 1933 as well as a protagonist, especially as an illustrator in around the 1970s. On the contrary, it could be grasped that he had witnessed many substantial historical incidents in the form of Indian Independence, the declaration of The Emergency, and many devastating wars happened in the midst. John (2022)

Born in Kayamkulam in Kerala on 31st July 1902 he took the art of cartooning as a hobby, but this hobby was thoroughly detected and channelized by the Editor of Hindustan Times Mr. Pothen Joseph selected him as a campaigner for the post of staff cartoonist. He was trained in the Slade School of Art in U.K to sharpen his skills for a prolonged duration of a year. He continued his work under the Hindustan Times till 1946. He caricatured almost everyone including Mohammad Ali Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders and British Viceroyys, but probably in the year 1939 M.K. Gandhi wrote a postcard to Shankar with his admonishment written strictly against the artist not to caricature Jinnah and people of such elevation without knowing the ethics and objectives of cartooning. Mahatma Gandhi further says to Satish that not making undesirable fun with inaccurate assumptions as well as having inadequate knowledge of the same will never help him out to reach the dream height of his profession. According to Gandhi, he was damn against using vulgarity in cartoon or caricature art. That was probably the reason for the artist's departure from The Hindustan Times. Juldyz (2023)

Even Shankar projected almost 4000 cartoons of Jawaharlal Nehru whom he had a very pleasant friendship. In fact, Nehru himself made a point to Shankar by saying- ‘Don’t spare me Shankar.’ Moreover, Shankar acknowledged Nehru with this statement- ‘for helping him spot his inherent weakness. He liked to be reminded that he too was mortal. Perfection is not for any man, however powerful and highly placed he may be. Nehru had the wisdom to realise that.’
Pillai is popularly regarded as “the father of political cartooning” in India. His working style specifically intrudes into the arena of satirical caricaturing on themes such as political leaders, Viceroy’s of India, and even cartoons for small children as well. His weekly publication entitled as ‘Shankar’s Weekly’ is approximately 4000 plus cartoons of former Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru Sarangi (2021). He has been also known for his controversial weekly cartoon based on Indian politics which had brought uninvited trouble for him and shattered one of his cartoon works which demonstrates, a caricature of Smt. Indira Gandhi bending down to her knees to ask to vote for a senior village citizen which seems to be a fictitious dream to believe in for a very ordinary individual, a spot of mimicry, which is relevant even to date not a very new political diplomacy to understand vote bank politics.

3) Abu Abraham (1924-2002)

Attupurathu Mathew Abraham marked his presence in some of the following publications such as The Guardian, Tribune, Bombay Chronicle, The Observer, Blitz,
The Indian Express etc. became popular because of his audacity of expression through the spontaneity in cartooning. His works fundamentally enable amusement and simultaneously juggle the human mind to think as well. After graduating in 1945 the artist shifted to Bombay to pursue his task as a journalist for Bombay chronicle. Corresponding to his job he also started to render his responsibility as a freelance artist for the Bombay Sentinel, Blitz, and Bharat, both the arenas of national and international. His cartoon works navigated sailing over to make their way in the international publications of Punch Magazine, Daily sketch, Everybody’s London Opinion, Eastern World and many more.

His cartoon collection dated in 1975 as Indira Gandhi during declaration of Emergency titled as ‘Games of the Emergency’ a compilation of political cartoons as well as articles pounding on the real mirror image of the Emergency strike. At the same time, he ensured his relocation to India and already drawing cartoons for the Indian Express simultaneously nominated as a member of Rajya Sabha.

The artist is known for his works which encompass the time of 1970s ‘emergency’ situation in India at the time when the cartoonists’ were literally refrained by the Government’s laws of staying aloof from anything that provokes or
propagates against the political system or any political figures. On the contrary, Abu was found indifferent and least bothered by being arrested or of being imprisoned equally for getting his cartoons published. His litigious caricature of former President of India, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was shown lying in a bathtub signing the emergency ordinance. In spite of the fact that all types of cartoons or abusive content that could have been the political chemistry were liable to be censored. Must mention quite fortunately this cartoon somehow managed to stay uncensored and later on published. Here it is given below:

Figure 9

![Cartoon of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed lying in bathtub signing the emergency ordinance.](https://www.X.com/www.m.rediff.com)

Figure 9 Abu Abraham

Courtesy [www.X.com/www.m.rediff.com](https://www.X.com/www.m.rediff.com)

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Figure 10

![Cartoon captioned: “If there are any more Ordinances, Just ask them to Wait.”](https://www.prathaculturalschool.com/post/indian-cartoonists)

Figure 10 Abu Abraham, It Was Captioned as- “If there are any more Ordinances, Just ask them to Wait.”


4) Satish Acharya (1917- present)

Indian cartoonist born in 1971 in Kundapura Karnataka, he is a self-taught cartoonist, MBA in finance but ardently chose cartooning or the field of caricature as a professional domain. He is now deeply rooted in his contribution to ESPN cricinfo, city-today, Bollywood Hungama, Sports illustrated etc. Satish published
three books- Mein, Hum & AAP in English, Cartoonishta in Kannada & Negipuggi in Kundapra Kannada. His fourth book entitled as ‘Non-Striker’ collection of very interesting cricket cartoons appeared mostly in ESPN cricinfo. Even his passion as a cricketer who himself played for the Mangalore University as an off-spinner probably helped him a lot to understand the chemistry of the game which later induced to the art of cartooning. Must mention his cartoon work paying tribute to the young Aussie cricketer Phil Hughes one of the most stylish left handed-batsman who got a severe injury and went to death from a devastating bouncer from the bowling end that went right on to hit his back of the head while playing in SCG ground. The work became so popular that brought tears to the eyes of cricket lovers, on the other hand, the cartoon art set another high example of insight rooted in a discourse of pervading and taking care of human emotion and sensitivity apart from only laughter and lampooning the incongruity.

Figure 11

![Figure 11 Satish Acharya](https://pbangalore.wordpress.com)

Figure 12

![Figure 12 Satish Acharya](https://pbangalore.wordpress.com)

His cartoon comprehends basically on the 21st-century political cartoon and is a self-taught caricaturist. His works are published in reputed journals named as ‘The Wall Street’ and ‘The Guardian’ Sarangi (2021). More ideas can be acquired through some of his dynamic caricature work on the present-day scenarios are given below-
Here is the caricature synthesized upon the strategies of the New Govt. in India.

Cartoon improvisation on the Covid-19 pandemic calamity is a tribute to Corona warriors from various departments.

5) **Maya Kamath (1951-2001)**

The worthy female artist born in Bombay, spent many years in Delhi and imbibed M.A in English literature. Her sense of drawing incarnated as a hobby initially within her during childhood and bloomed as a profession when she started her journey as an illustrator with Macmilan’s and joined as a drawing teacher at Sophia’s school. She accelerated her career as a cartoonist in around 1985 during The Evening Herald a publication of Deccan Herald group. Equally, she was apt to render her services for other Indian popular gazettes such as The Asian Age, Indian Express, and The Times of India respectively. Such a promising artist was awarded for her Environmental Cartoon for the German compilation named as- ‘Third World’.
Presently her collections can be seen in SPARROW and have been published in The World of MAYA. Must mention every year Indian Institute of Cartoonists used to organize ‘Maya Kamath Memorial Awards Contest’ for the aspirants and also for those who laid the stone of excellence in the domain of caricature and cartooning. She was the only Indian female political cartoonist who stamped her in the rank of being the only female contender till her last. Khanduri (2014)

She was one of the rarest female cartoonists of her time was among the top contestants among her other male counterparts. She displayed her pedigree by pointing out and projecting the women’s rights in India which had been cornered for a long time, simultaneously the socio-economic status of women she captioned as “Frail” which means disintegration. She diplomatically had poised the metaphoric discourse of women as an icon of tolerance and endurable, 24X7 available in terms of service in and out of the family but still under the niche of patriarchy. That’s why she might have tickled the term ‘frail’ somewhat like a slogan that has been appealing for every woman to step out from the invisible shell created by patriarchy. Her work seems to have a smearing fragrance of post-modernism.

6. CONCLUSION

The power of Pen and sketching always holds a vested strength and impact over the masses in elevating awareness through revealing the reality and rejuvenating the suppressed morality of democracy and its notions. Newspapers and magazines with illustrations always draw the attention of every age group people with a cuddling of amusement and mimicry that derives from reality. Sanathanan & Balakrishnan (2021)

So, exaggeration or distortion of form with relevant content negotiating with the burning or evident issues always seems to be crucial for being presentable with an intention of surpassing the orthodox way of representation. Moreover, cartoon and caricature has nothing to do with uneventful images, rather accuracy in terms of framing a rhythmical chronology with subtle versatility with a spark of igniting awareness with laugh works as a navigator as well as a powerful replica of the time. The rhetoric and dramatic irony to enlighten the satire through the lens of caricature and cartoon is an instrumental use of visual language. Moreover, rhetoric mode of communication ensures social actions not only for the sake of communication. Here communication deals with of empirical pedigree where subtle changes or variations are not ignored rather projected in such a way that it needs public attention.
Rhetoric cartoons are aligned with political issues that enables visual-based and language-based rhetoric, and both the media instigates the audience to sniff the pervading incongruities and persisting as well as hidden social ailments.

So, ‘Satire and its Rhythm Through the Lens of Caricature and Cartoon Practices in India: A Review’ attempted to throw some light on the imperative role of caricature, graffiti and cartoon artwork and their relevance in imparting visual language with visual-based rhetoric presentation. In fact, the role of satire becomes inevitable when there is an issue of imbibing socio-political agenda through the mirror of cartoon and caricature art in India. Sunderason (2016)

It wouldn’t be too unfair to admit that many instances from the chapters of history reveal that, the lives of cartoonists and caricaturists are full of uncertainties and grotesque or weirdness because they always involve themselves in unveiling sometimes the bitter reality, vandalism, immorality, loopholes collectively can be termed as deformities of the ambience leading to global issues or turmoil which segregates them to invoke invited life risks, physically assaults, even cyber threats which are invariably very common nowadays. Even uncountable cases of missing kidnappings, and cases of assassinations have been increasing every day, and many cases have been shut down forcefully or due to lack of media coverage.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
None.

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