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Politics and Poetics of Representation
A semiotic analysis of Toms political cartoon

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
for award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Submitted by
Ajanthakumar K.S

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This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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AJANTHA KUMAR K.S

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Introduction

A connection between satire, cartoon and politics may seem highly tenuous. I intend to show that, that is not the case. We have here the intertwining of three venerable branches of knowledge – psychology, linguistics, and politics. One would be hard put to delineate the definite boundaries of each. Probably the part of politics is more easily distinguished from the rest than it is to distinguish between the other two.

Cartoons, everyone would agree are signs. But this only pushes the inquiry one step further for the question what a sign is cannot be answered by demonstrating that cartoons are a kind of signs.

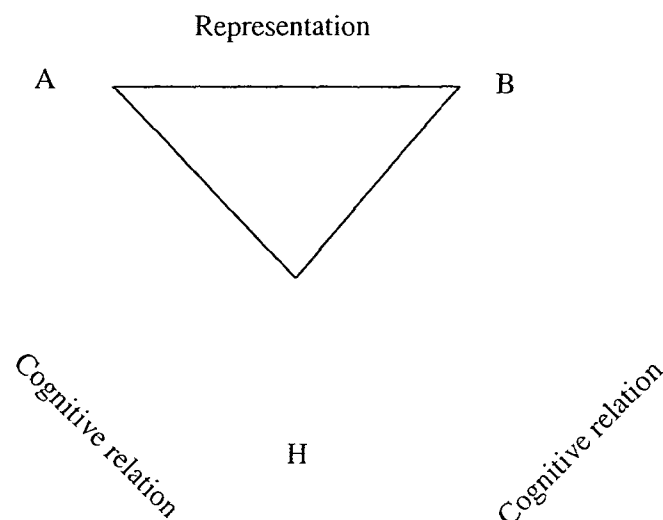
Signs are anything that represents anything. This, as a definition, would be highly unsatisfactory. Thankfully, it is not. It is only a vague approximation that can be used as a heuristic device for our inquiry. In this definition, the words that are not syncategorematic are “represent” and “anything.”

Let us first take the notion of “representation.” This notion can be subsumed under the notion of a “link,” such that “representation” we can say is a species of the general “link”. The first task that remains is to first make sure that “links” and “representation” are not identical but are related as general is to species because otherwise our distinction would prove to be superfluous if not wrong. We can clearly see that links between objects can be of different kinds. Human relations is a link that connects each person to his parents and so on to form his genealogy. Causality is a link. The fact that every body attracts every other body inversely to the square of their distance is a link between bodies. The fact that the relation of link is imposed from the outside shouldn't deter us from calling it a link.

The question whether there can ever be links between objects which are not imposed from the outside is a contestable one.

From the nature of the notion of links, it is clear that it is the most general that is capable of among objects. Now, it is quite possible that representation could well be as general as links. But this cannot be the case once we see that the different kinds of links such as causality, human relations are not kinds of representation. Thus, we have established that representation is a species under links. Now that we know what representation to be a kind of link, we need to find out what are the properties of that particular kind of link that we call representation.

Representation is a three-way link between two objects and a sentient being. (I am not here going into the issue of whether animals should also be included or not. I take it for granted that we are here talking only of human beings). We can represent the relation thus.



Here H is a human being. A and B are objects (they can be any kind – either physical or mental)

Representation then becomes a cognitive link between two objects. That is, representation is a link between two objects that is cognitively perceived by man. The relation of cognition implies that man is an inexpugnable term in the three-way relation.

This link of representation is perceived in three different ways. It can be when the link is

1. Formal
2. Associative
3. Natural

1. Formal

When the object A and B have no similarity then it is said to be formal. Examples of this kind are words of a language and the objects that those words denote. The word “dog” stands for or represents the animal dog. The word, when written consists of three letters “d”, “o”, and “g” and when spoken has certain audible features. But no part of this word either when spoken or written has four legs and barks and wags its tail. This kind of representation, where one object or thing is assigned to another thing, which is completely dissimilar, is the formal link of representation.

2. Associative

For me, mathematics may mean the humiliating experience of incomprehension but for you, it may

mean the uplifting feeling of liberation. To both of us, they represent two different things. This link of representation is conditioned by our own past experiences. This link is produced by our mental associations which is this kind of link associative.

3. Natural

When I draw a tree, it naturally represents a tree. The picture tree and the actual tree have certain similarities which are obvious such that we at once know that the picture tree represents the natural tree. This kind of natural link between two objects is what makes us call this kind of representation natural.

The purpose of the foregoing analysis has been to no other purpose than to find out if cartoons can be called signs in any way. Cartoons *are* signs and this can, hopefully, be seen once we understand that cartoons are a *natural* link of representation between objects and the link is a cognitive one.

Satire and Politics

An effective running of a democracy requires not only universal suffrage but an active interest in the political issues which shape the destinies of the people. Issues should be keenly debated, hotly discussed and amicably concluded. Such was the case, in a primitive form, in Greece where the commoners would go to the forum and hear politicians and the educated public discuss problems of

politics. But now, we have newspapers and television. Many in India are not educated enough to read newspapers and many in India are not rich enough to buy televisions. In such a case there is a danger of people immersing themselves in their daily routine and forgetting their role as a political member of a country. There isn't a greater danger to democracy than ignorant citizens.

To move people away from the lethargy of ignorance to the light of reflection takes effort and time. But is here that satire has a unique role to play that no other can play. It doesn't require the following of intricate arguments to understand humour. The insinuating language of satire drives the point further than the critical language of studied observation. If satire reaches the hearts of the people quicker, then satirical cartoons reach the wider. One can say that cartoon is the lowest common denominator.

A cartoon, to paraphrase a famous quote, speaks a thousand words. It is in the instructive aspect of cartoons that Toms cartoons play a huge role in society of Kerala.

Introduction to the characters

Toms, perhaps the most celebrated and popular cartoonists in Kerala, because of the themes that he introduced which especially had struck and caught the popular imagination, something that persists even today, had a beginning which could be traced through his own cartoon characters, Boban and Molly. Boban and Molly, the central characters of his cartoons were his neighbors who used to come and tease him with their special mannerisms which Toms would later develop to analyze the various political and social aspects of Kerala which he found was latently corrupt with its crude parliamentary politics and the rigid hierarchies of gender and caste, to which he is a part and do not escape his own prejudices and presuppositions, which is a part of the larger insensitivity that are prevailing in the

public and private spheres of Kerala. When his understandings and subtle satires about the politics which is rooted in Kerala's society can be appreciated to a certain level we can see that his own social prejudices are not baffled.

Tom's beginning as a cartoonist is much more accidental and he explains this in his introduction to the 50th anniversary of the first publication of his cartoon series. Most of his characters are from his real life experiences whom he would use to analyze various political and social developments that take place in Kerala's societal and political life, especially in the central part of Kerala.

Boban and Molly, the central characters (aged around 10 years), are used as icons by the cartoonist, so as to launch his sometimes direct and sometimes indirect attacks on the developments around him, which results from the particular consciousness and socialization of the "grown ups" with whom these children would confront with their innocent questions emanate from their "childish nature" for these children could be used to ask questions which would be simple in meaning but enough to embarrass the "grown-ups". Since the characters are in their childhood, there is the possibility of questioning those happenings from the perspective of a common man, which he utilizes to the maximum.

The dog, another character, often works as a replica of the children and it is often present in most of the boxes where the children are.

Chettan(Ittunna), the Panchayat President, is the representation of a common farmer from Central Kerala, who is not very sensitive both politically and socially. Many a times, his understandings of caste is expressed through this character.

Appi Hippi, another important character, represents the political disagreements of the cartoonist, particularly his disenchantments with the Hippy culture of the 70's. He presents this character as an extreme womanizer but at the same time tries to make use of this character to make sense of the unemployment keeps growing in Kerala..

Through the character Chettathy, the gender consciousness of the cartoonist becomes visible. Provided that this character is analyzed critically one would be able to draw that the masculine prejudices of the cartoonist himself falls very clearly into the picture where one can say that the cartoonist himself is not escaping the social life of Kerala which is highly patriarchal in its nature.

Nethavu, (Leader) is used as the icon for the corrupt parliamentarian. This character has been developed from the features of the various politicians, a sum total of their image, and thereby launches his attacks against the parliamentary politics of the political parties in Kerala without any discrimination.

Vakeel (Lawyer) is presented as the father of Boban and Molly, through whom he depicts the financial state of the Middle Classes in Kerala. Toms, perhaps the most celebrated and popular cartoonist in Kerala, because of the themes that he introduced which especially had caught the popular imagination, something that persists even today, had a beginning which could be traced through his own cartoon characters, Boban and Molly. Boban and Molly, the central characters of his cartoons were his neighbours who used to come and tease him with their special mannerisms which Toms would later develop to analyze the various political and social aspects of Kerala which he found was latently corrupt with its crude parliamentary politics and the rigid hierarchies of gender and caste, to which he

is a part and do not escape his own prejudices and presuppositions, which is a part of the larger insensitivity that are prevailing in the public and private spheres of Kerala. When his understandings and subtle satires about the politics which is grass rooted in Kerala's society can be appreciated to a certain level we can see that his own social prejudices are not baffled.

Chapter 1

Semiotics and its Theories

An Introduction to semiotics

Semiotics deals with a code (sign) which is loaded with a cultural or historical meaning. In the present era communication or the strategies behind the communication is the key factor to regulate the world. In that context the codes which appear in the textual or in the visual form are derived from historically or culturally attributed nodal points. One of the broadest definitions is that of Umberto Eco, who states that, “Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands in for it. Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth; it cannot in fact be used 'to tell' at all. I think that the definition of a 'theory of the lie' should be taken as a pretty comprehensive program for a general semiotics”¹.

From this we can infer that semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘sign’ in every day speech, but of anything which ‘stands for’ something else. In a semiotic sense, sign takes the form of ‘words’, ‘images’, ‘sounds’, gestures’ and objects².

¹ Eco, Umberto, *Theory of Semiotics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 7

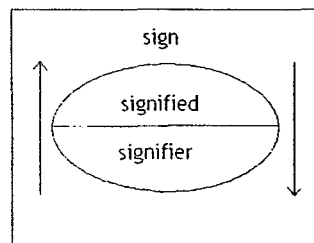
² Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics: the basics* 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 2

The semiotic imagination was begun with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) *Course in General Linguistics*, (his lectures published in 1915 after his death by two of his students). This work is a cornerstone in the academic strata of linguistics. This linguistic turn influenced enormously structuralism, post structuralism and cultural studies.

Saussure used the word "semiology," instead of semiotics, which is derived from the Greek word for 'sign'. He used the word to describe a new science which he saw as 'a science which studies the life of signs at the heart of social life'. In his work he discusses *what goes into a sign, what are the laws that govern them, etc.* According to him, linguistics would be but a part of the overarching science of semiology, which would not limit itself to verbal signs only³.

Saussure introduced what is called a 'dyadic' or two-part model. He defined sign as the coalesce of a 'signifier' (signifiant)) and a 'signified' (signifié).

Signifier means the forms which the sign takes and the signified means the concept it represents.



³ Crystal, David,. *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language.*(Cambridge, England: Cambridge University press. 1987)

The relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as signification. And this is represented in the Saussurean diagram by the arrows.

In this dyadic model, the signifier and the signified have always its own meaning. He states that “you cannot have a totally meaningless signifier or a completely formless signified⁴⁵. “a linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern.

Some understand the signifier as standing for the signified but Saussure stressed the arbitrariness of the sign. Saussure argued that the arbitrary nature of the sign was the first principle of language⁶. Wittgenstein understanding it in a different way, “the idea that the individual words in language name objects surrounds the workings of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible⁷.’ The arbitrariness of the sign is the generative entity behind the variety of languages. Our human mind or brain develops the meaning according to the sign and there is no universal manner to conceptualize the meaning of a sign. As the British linguist, David Crystal, puts it, “Some words do have meanings which are relatively easy to conceptualize, but we certainly do not have neat visual images corresponding to every word we say. Nor is there any guarantee that a concept

⁴ Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Bask, (London: Fontana/Collins, [1916] 1974), p.102-103

⁵Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.101

⁶Saussure 1983, op.cit, p. 67

Saussure 1974, op.cit, p.67

⁷ Wittgenstein , *Philosophical Investigations*, third edition, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 4

which might come to mind when I use the word table is going to be the same as the one you, the reader, might bring to mind”⁸.

Saussure concentrated mainly on the phonetic or the acoustic form of language. He considered the spoken form as primary and the written texts as secondary. Most of the commentators of Saussure consider the signified is a pure mental construct. “His signified is not to be identified directly with a referent but is a concept in the mind – not a thing but the notion of the thing.”⁹ The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer’s psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a ‘material’ element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept”¹⁰. For Saussure, the signified and the signifier are purely psychological¹¹.

In the Saussurean diagram, he separates the signifier and signified with a bar but his argument about the relations between signifier and signified is inseparable and they influence each other. These two things are associated in mind. Despite this, and the horizontal bar in his diagram of the sign, Saussure stressed that “sound and thought (or the signifier and the signified) were as inseparable as the two sides of a piece of paper”¹².

⁸Crystal, David, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1987),

⁹ Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics for Beginners*, (London: Routledge Publication, 2002), p. 2.

¹⁰ (Saussure 1983, 66; Saussure 1974, 66)

¹¹ Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baski, (London: Fontana/Collins, [1916] 1974), p.12,15,65-66

Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.12,14-15,66

Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics for Beginners*, (London: Routledge Publication, 2002), p. 2.

¹²Saussure 1983, *ibid*, p.111

They were 'intimately linked' in the mind 'by an associative link' - 'each triggers the other'¹³. Some of the theorists after Saussure are reinvestigating the inseparability of signifier and signified. Post-structuralists state that the horizontal bar does not strictly separate the signifier and signified but it is blurred into each other. Scholars like John Lechte are raising the autonomy of signifier and signified¹⁴.

Meaning

Saussurean understanding about meaning was 'structural' and 'relational'. He gave importance to relationship rather than things. He didn't think there was some 'essential' or 'intrinsic' nature for the definition of signs but that the signifier and signified were relational entities. In a language system, he argued that, "every thing depends on relation"¹⁵. The implied meaning of this statement is that there is no absolute meaning to a particular sign or sign system independent to the context. In a particular sign system the value or the meaning is determined by the relationship between one sign to other with in the system as a whole.

The structuralist engagements revolve around the key idea of Saussure's relational identity of sign. So the structuralist analysis focuses on the structural relations which are functional in the signifying system at a particular moment of history. This relation is not only positive but can some times be negative also. This negative or the binary opposition

Saussure 1974,*ibid*, p.113

¹³ Saussure 1983*ibid*,p. 66

Saussure 1974,*ibid*,p. 66

¹⁴ Lechte, John , *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Postmodernity*, (London: Routledge,1994), p. 68

¹⁵ Saussure 1983,*ibid*, p. 121

Saussure 1974,*ibid*, p. 122

is the key tool for structuralist analysis. He stated that, "The entire mechanism of language... is based on oppositions of this kind and upon the phonic and conceptual differences they involve"¹⁶.

"The notion of value... shows us that it is a great mistake to consider a sign as nothing more than the combination of a certain sound and a certain concept. To think of a sign as nothing more would be to isolate it from the system to which it belongs. It would be to suppose that a start could be made with individual signs, and a system constructed by putting them together. On the contrary, the system as a united whole is the starting point, from which it becomes possible, by a process of analysis, to identify its constituent elements"¹⁷.

The arbitrariness of the sign is not a new thing to Saussure, and Richard cited that, Aristotle wrote about it, 'there can be no natural connection between the sound of any language and the thing signified'¹⁸. Immediate environment or the cultural contexts are attributing the meanings to the word in a linguistic category. That means the reality is represented or perceived as different in different languages with respect to their immediate environment. Leibniz and Wittgenstein claim that language is the bridge between thought and reality so one cannot have meaningful thought without symbols..

Meaning and reality

¹⁶ Saussure 1983,*ibid*, p.119

Saussure 1974,*ibid*,p. 120-121

¹⁷Saussure 1983,*ibid*, p. 112

Saussure 1974,*ibid*, p. 113

¹⁸ Richards, Ivor A , *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. (London : Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 32

About reality and language, Daniel Chandler says that, “Linguistic categories are not simply a consequence of some predefined structure in the world. There are no ‘natural’ concepts or categories which are simply ‘reflected’ in language. Language plays a crucial role in ‘constructing reality’”¹⁹.

Saussure does not propose the absolute arbitrariness of the sign because if linguistic signs were to be totally arbitrary in every way language would not be a system and its communicative function would be destroyed. For Saussure, the principle of arbitrariness is not accidental or random. Its arbitrariness is determined by the intralinguistic factors rather than extralinguistic factors.

Here Saussure introduces the distinction between degrees of arbitrariness. “The fundamental principle of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign does not prevent us from distinguishing in any language between what is intrinsically arbitrary - that is, unmotivated - and what is only relatively arbitrary. Not all signs are absolutely arbitrary. In some cases, there are factors which allow us to recognize different degrees of arbitrariness, although never to discard the notion entirely. *The sign may be motivated to a certain extent*”²⁰

The Althusserian Marxist feels the relationship of a signifier and a signified is relatively autonomous. Saussure again clarifying the point that, no one can individually choose the signifier for the signified. If it choose like that the communication become impossible.

“The individual has no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has

¹⁹Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics for Beginners*, (London: Routledge Publication, 2002), p. 6

²⁰ Saussure 1983, *ibid*, p.130

Saussure 1974, *ibid*, p.131

become established in the linguistic community”²¹. Saussure felt that any means of expression working in a society is based on the principle upon a collective habits or conventions. The whole group of systems grounded in the arbitrariness of the sign.

An alternative model

Charles Sanders Peirce was a contemporary of Saussure. He was a philosopher and a logician. He formulated his own model of the sign and of semiotics. This is not a dyadic model like Saussure, it is a triadic model. Instead of the signifier and signified of Saussure, he introduced Representamen, Interpretant and Object. “The Representamen is the form which the sign takes (not necessarily material), an interpretant is not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign and the object is to which the sign refers”²².

The main difference of Peirce’s triadic model to the Saussurean dyadic model is that he introduces a new terminology (Object) to understand the sign in a more detailed manner. The Representamen is akin to signifier and the interpretant to the signified. In Peirce’s model of sign, a traffic light sign for ‘stop’ would consist of: a red light facing traffic at an intersection (the representamen); vehicle halting (the object) and the idea that a red light indicates that vehicle must stop (the interpretant)²³. But here some addition is necessary. That is, the interpretant is not absolutely similar to the signified. It is not the concept in the mind of an interpreter, but it works itself as a sign in the mind and it

²¹Saussure 1983,*ibid*, p. 68

Saussure 1974, *ibid*, p. 69

²² Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics for Beginners*, (London: Routledge Publication, 2002), p 9

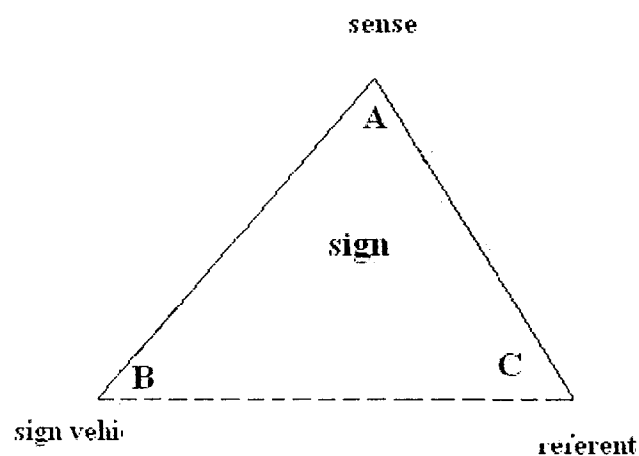
²³ *ibid*

generates more meaning. Umberto Eco uses a phrase, 'unlimited semiosis' to refer to the generation of the series of successive interpretants.

Another important difference to Saussure is that, according to saussurean dyadic model the value or the meaning of sign is developed on the basis of the interaction between the signs within the system, but here Peirce introducing a new concept, the Dialogical thought. Peirce argued that "all thinking is dialogic in form. Your self of one instant appeals to your deeper self for his assent"²⁴.

Peirce coined the terminology to represent the phenomenological distinctions between the sign itself (or the representamen) as an instance of 'Firstness', its object as an instance of 'Secondness', and the interpretant as an instance of 'Thirdness'²⁵.

The pictorial representation of Peirce's triadic model is giving below;



²⁴ Peirce, Charles Sanders (1931-58), *Collected Writings* (8 Vols.), Eds. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss & Arthur W Burks, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,), P. 6.338

²⁵ Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics for Beginners*, (London: Routledge Publication, 2002), p. 10

In this picture some unfamiliar Peircean terms are there. The first term 'sign vehicle' is the form of the sign, 'sense' means the sense made of the sign. And the third 'referent' is referring 'what the sign stands for'. In this representation, there are other significant meanings, for example, the dotted line in between the 'sign vehicle' and 'referent'. That dotted line indicates that there is no direct connection between a sign vehicle and referent. In Saussurean understanding the signified is analogous to 'B' in this picture. The inclusion of a referent in Peirce's model does not automatically make it a better model of the sign than that of Saussure. Indeed, as John Lyons notes: "There is considerable disagreement about the details of the triadic analysis even among those who accept that all three components, A, B and C, must be taken into account. Should A be defined as a physical or a mental entity? What is the psychological or ontological status of B? Is C something that is referred to on a particular occasion? Or is it the totality of things that might be referred to by uttering the sign...? Or, yet a third possibility, is it some typical or ideal representative of this class?"²⁶.

The next important thing in the understanding of semiosis is to know how the relations of signifier and signified help to categorise the sign. But Saussure didn't categorise it. Peirce firstly, categorized the sign in 59,049 types. Then he reduced it to sixty six. On the basis of the mode of relation between the sign vehicle and their referent, Peirce categorized the sign into three, Symbol/Symbolic, Icon/Iconic and Index/ Indexical. Peirce differentiates the mode of relation in this three groups of sign as, "Symbolic signs such as language are (at least) highly conventional; iconic signs always involve some degree of conventionality; indexical signs direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion". Daniel

²⁶ Lyons, John, *Semantics*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 99

Chandler gives some definition of these three groups as, “Symbol/symbolic is a mode in which the signifier does *not* resemble the signified but which is fundamentally *arbitrary* or purely conventional - so that the relationship must be learnt: e.g. language in general (plus specific languages, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases and sentences), numbers, Morse code, traffic lights, national flags; Icon/iconic is a mode in which the signifier is perceived as *resembling* or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) - being similar in possessing some of its qualities: e.g. a portrait, a cartoon, a scale-model, onomatopoeia, metaphors, 'realistic' sounds in 'programme music', sound effects in radio drama, a dubbed film soundtrack, imitative gestures; and Index/indexical is a mode in which the signifier is *not arbitrary* but is *directly connected* in some way (physically or causally) to the signified - this link can be observed or inferred: e.g. 'natural signs' (smoke, thunder, footprints, echoes, non-synthetic odours and flavours), medical symptoms (pain, a rash, pulse-rate), measuring instruments (weathercock, thermometer, clock, spirit-level), 'signals' (a knock on a door, a phone ringing), pointers (a pointing 'index' finger, a directional signpost), recordings (a photograph, a film, video or television shot, an audio-recorded voice), personal 'trademarks' (handwriting, catchphrase) and indexical words ('that', 'this', 'here', 'there')”²⁷.

Conventionality

Symbolic, iconic and indexical signifiers are developed on the basis of the conventionality of the relation between the signifier and signified. The rank of the conventionality is

²⁷Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics for Beginners*, (London: Routledge Publication, 2002), p.11-12

different in different categories. For instance, Hodge and Kress suggest that indexicality is based on an act of judgement or inference whereas iconicity is closer to 'direct perception' making the highest 'modality' that of iconic signs. Saussure's motivation or the convention is capable of describing the extent of the power of domination of the signified over the signifier. And then he cites some examples, A pair of scale which is signifying the justice, then he argued that some signifier and signified have natural connection later it is defined as rational relation.

Peirce's understanding of symbol is a little bit different, For Peirce, a symbol is 'a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object'. That is, a sign becomes a sign merely or mainly by the fact that it is used and understood as such' ²⁸. It would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant' ²⁹.

A symbol then becomes a conventional sign, or one depending upon habit (acquired or inborn)' ³⁰. Peirce thus characterizes linguistic signs in terms of their *conventionality* in a similar way to Saussure. In a rare direct reference to the arbitrariness of symbols (which he then called 'tokens'), he noted that they 'are, for the most part, conventional or arbitrary' ³¹. A symbol is a sign 'whose special significance or fitness to represent just what it does represent lies in nothing but the very fact of there being a habit, disposition, or other

²⁸Peirce, Charles Sanders (1931-58), *Collected Writings (8 Vols.)*, Eds. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss & Arthur W Burks, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 2.307

²⁹ *ibid.*, 2.304

³⁰ *ibid.*, 2.297

³¹ *ibid.*, 3.360

effective general rule that it will be so interpreted. He adds elsewhere that 'a *symbol*... fulfills its function regardless of any similarity or analogy with its object and equally regardless of any *factual* connection therewith' but solely because it will be interpreted as a sign³²

Peirce defines, the Icons on the basis of the similarity between the signifier and the object. The pictures are not a duplicate it is a representation of that object. He is stating that, "iconic sign represents its object 'mainly by its similarity'"³³. And then he added that every picture is an icon. Icons have qualities which 'resemble' those of the objects they represent, and they 'excite analogous sensations in the mind'³⁴. semiotician generally understanding that there is no pure 'icon', in all iconic innovation some kind of cultural convention may involved it. He says that, 'any material image' (such as a painting) may be perceived as looking like what it represents, it is 'largely conventional in its mode of representation'.³⁵ Icon and index have more natural than the symbol when they making the connection between the signifier and signified. Kent Grayson observes: 'Because we can see the object in the sign, we are often left with a sense that the icon has brought us closer to the truth than if we had instead seen an index or a symbol'³⁶. He adds that 'instead of drawing our attention to the gaps that always exist in representation, iconic experiences encourage us subconsciously to fill in these gaps and then to believe that

³² *ibid.*, 5.73

³³ Peirce, Charles Sanders (1931-58), *Collected Writings* (8 Vols.), Eds. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss & Arthur W Burks, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,), p. 2.276)

³⁴ *ibid.*, 2.299; see also 3.362

³⁵ Peirce 1931-58, 2.276

³⁶ Grayson, Kent, The Icons of Consumer Research: Using Signs to Represent Consumers' Reality'. In Stern(1998) *op. cit.*, pp. 27-43., 36

there were no gaps in the first place... This is the paradox of representation: it may deceive most when we think it works best³⁷.

We can see from the foregoing analysis the shortcomings of the traditional view of semiotics. Both Saussure and Peirce identified signs and its signification from a point of view which ignores the role of cognition, which I believe is crucial to the understanding of semiotics. Cognition becomes all the more important in understanding the nature of humour and its relation to language. Any sociological interpretation of the nature of humour would be highly inadequate. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in their book, *The Way We Think* has argued much to the same effect that the study of humour cannot be separated from the study of cognition.

Cartoons, even though, they are signs differ from other sign systems. In understanding any cartoon, there are certain extra-linguistic factors which play a prominent role. The main extra-linguistic factor is the reader's mental framework which acts upon the cartoon and produces humour. The mental framework of a person is what one could call his world view or Weltanschauung which shapes his perceptions in particular instances. Therefore, as classical semiotics doesn't factor in this cognitive aspect of humour, we will have to do away the tools of classical semiotics for this particular study. This has been noted by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), who have developed Cognitive Integration Theory, which blends cognition and semiotics.

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³⁷ *ibid.*, 41

Cognitive Integration Theory

The Cognitive Integration Theory, Mark Turner says, is the semiotic analysis of metaphors. The question then arises, What is a metaphor?

The Oxford dictionary defines it as

“a word or phrase used to describe sb/sth else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful, for example She has a heart of stone; the use of such words and phrases: a game of football used as a metaphor for the competitive struggle of life The writer’s striking use of metaphor.”

This would be the traditional definition which describes the nature of metaphor but doesn’t help us in trying to know phenomenon of humour as a part of our cognitive makeup. This is where the Cognitive Integration Theory helps us. According to the theory, a blending of different spaces produces metaphor. This theory construes our mind to have different conceptual contents which it calls mental spaces and the blending of these different mental spaces produces metaphor.

This would be better explained if we take a look at an example.

My *karma* ran over my *dogma*

There is the first input space which understands the sentence to mean “Car ran over my dog”. This is input space 1

Input space 2 is a deeper space, that is, in this case, one can say, a philosophical space, representing abstract concepts.

Then, we have blended space which gives us the metaphor.

Blended space

In this space, we have the deeper meaning of one’s actions running over, that is, superseding one’s dogmatic beliefs.

Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier are describing the blended space and the metaphors which are involved in that blended space. Their basic argument is, the gist of the operation is that two or more mental spaces can be partially matched and their structure can be partially projected to a new, blended space that develops emergent structure³⁸. They understand that the rule in human thought and action are the compression of Conceptual Integration Network. They are citing this statement with the help of sign language and the theories of neuroscience. The blended space in mind is happening simply because of the partially matching sign (all kind of system i.e. sound image and jester) developing an equidistant point from that two sign. In this point the common set of sign are merging but it will produce a meaning that is very different from the both and it will carry the minimum notion of that two.

³⁸ Turner, Mark and Gilles Fauconnier, *The Origin of Language As A Product of the Evolution of Modern Cognition*

They are redefining the meaning of metaphor as, A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity³⁹. As I discussed above, the two sources, they are calling it as inputs, are merging in a single mental point but this blend can have a life of its own, not fully determined by the inputs. But this projection is happening because of the metonymic link between the two inputs. Metonymy means Substituting the name of an attribute or feature for the name of the thing itself (as in 'they counted heads'). Another important thing is the idea about the basic metaphors. Even the most famous of all basic metaphors, the "conduit metaphor of communication," analyzed in Reddy (1979), requires conventional blending. In this basic metaphor, a sender (speaker) places an object (meaning) into a container (expression) and sends it (expresses it) to a receiver (hearer) who opens the container (processes the expression) to take out the object (understand the meaning). This metaphor underlies expressions like, "I am trying to put my thoughts into words" and "I am not getting much meaning out of this poem"⁴⁰.

This is the basic idea about metaphors, metonymy and blend space. Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier are using these ideas and analyzing the cartoon with Cognitive Integration Theory. The advantage of this theory over classical semiotics is, classical semiotics handling the sign in its form but in cognitive integration theory exploring the mental tunings to the sign. This theory will help us to understand the mental functioning to all sign

³⁹ Turner , Mark and Gilles Fauconnier, *Metaphor Metonymy and Binding*, eds. Antonio Barcelona, , p.5.

⁴⁰ *ibid*

system. So I am taking these two tools (classical semiotics and blending theory) for my study I am hoping that classical semiotics help me to analyze the text and the blending theory help to understand the behavior and the distribution of cartoons.

Chapter 2

Humour Satire and Cartoon

Humour

Philosophers have always believed that what distinguishes Man from the beasts is Reason. Moralists believe it is Conscience. Chomskians believe it is Language. I don't see why Humour can't be raised to this status of preeminence.

An inquiry into what Humour is cannot be started before we find out whether Humour as a quality is 1. subjective or objective and 2. whether it is simple or compound.

1. "H is humorous if and only if P finds it funny"¹. For this statement to be intelligible it is necessary that we understand the word "funny". By understanding the word, I don't mean knowing the dictionary meaning but being able to identify what constitutes "being funny."

Ever before we knew the dictionary definition of "crying", we knew that if somebody cried, then it meant that they have either been hurt or have had an uneasy feeling. Likewise, we identify that something is funny when we see ourselves or someone else as smiling or laughing or giggling or chuckling. That is, we find certain behavioural responses in ourselves or someone else like the

¹ Ted, Cohen, *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, eds. Berys Gaut, (London: Routledge Publication) P. 375

release of certain muscles and other attendant facial contortions. As I see it, this seems to be the only way that we come to know that some thing is funny.

As it is not possible to know that some thing is funny without certain behavioural responses in a person, let us analyse the earlier statement given in the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*.

The statement “H is humourous if and only if P finds it funny” admits of three interpretations, out of which the third is an attempt to prove that the whole statement is a tautology. To impute to the author of this statement a consequence and make the statement tautological, which was most probably not intended by the author, would not make the author accountable. Therefore, even if the interpretation of the statement as tautological, is damaging to the whole analysis, we will ignore that interpretation on two counts. because there are other interpretations (which I give below) which would prove to be more helpful in our analysis.

Since the identification of certain behavioural responses is a sine qua non for identifying humour, the whole issue of humour turns upon our behaviour, such that

- a. Humour could be an objective quality that resides in objects and *causes* the behavioural responses like smiling and laughing,

b. We can also say that Humour is a certain disposition or faculty that resides in Man and the behavioural responses are the outward actions of the inward faculty, which makes us believe some thing to be humourous. That is, if there was no Man, there would be no humour.

(a) Asserts Humour to be an objective quality while (b) asserts it to be a subjective quality. I believe it is neither, as Humour is both subjective and objective, which I intend to show later on.

(a) says that there are objects which if combined in a certain way would make that object to be humorous. If I were to colour my face and put on a funny hat, the object, which is me, by adding certain other objects like colour and a hat, has been turned into a completely different one, which is a clown. This new object, which is a admixture of different other qualities produces humour. Not all combinations produce humour but only certain ones but the fact remains that certain combinations produces the quality of humour.

What (b) says that we all have certain mental frameworks (as explained in the first chapter) or mental dispositions without which there wouldn't be humour. If I see a clown, the reason I laugh is because the mental framework that I have construed normality in finds some anomaly in the dress of a clown. For me, normality attaches to only certain forms of social actions, such as, the person should dress and talk according to the written and unwritten norms and rules of that particular society and when I find a particular

person's outward behaviour to be different, my mental makeup at once triggers my humorous sense and I laugh.

But each of these accounts of our sense of humour gives only half of the picture while both combined would give the whole. I agree with both but it is difficult to agree with only one. From the nature of the facts, it appears that humour is both (a) and (b). If I see a certain clown, I do laugh because of the associations that are built in my mental makeup and history but at the same time these associations that I have in my mind would have no object to work upon if I don't find an object, in this case a clown. Here we can clearly see that there are certain combinations of objects which act as *conditions* for our mental framework to work upon to produce humour. It is like the presence of oxygen being a condition for the working of fire. Oxygen doesn't produce fire but without oxygen there would be no fire.

(c) I want to prove that the whole statement is a tautology.

Let the object which is purported to be humorous be H.

Let us denote the quality of humorous as h

Let funny be f

Let P be a person.

The statement "H is humorous if and only if P finds it funny" then becomes

“H is h if only and only if P finds H to be f” ()

Since we don't “find” something to be funny as we find something to be true by elaborate arguments and “funnyness” and is only a result of direct perception, we can say that “finding something funny” and “being funny” are the same thing. This would mean that we can resolve “P finding H to be f” into “f”. the resultant statement would be

H is h if and only if H is f.

But we can see that

$h=f$, because otherwise it would be just a definition of the word “humourous”, which is obviously not the author's intention and more importantly identifying sth to be humourous is the same as identifying sth to be funny.

then if $h=f$, then the statement becomes,

“H is f if only and only if H is f”. This is a tautology.

2. Now that we know that humour as a quality is both objective and subjective, we need to know whether it is simple or compound.

A simple quality is one which does not consist of parts while a compound quality is one which comprises simple qualities. Take the colour “red”. This cannot be further analysed into other components. A picture where the clouds are flitting through the sky, is an example of a compound quality as that picture has the simple qualities of “white”(that is, the clouds) and “blue” (of the sky) The question, for us, is humour a simple one or not?

Let us take an example which will probably help us better in trying to find the real nature of humour. Suppose I am reading a joke and my friend sees me laughing out loud and is eager to share the mirth and reads the joke himself. But he is not able to “get” the joke. It is possible that some of the references in the joke are foreign to him. It is also possible that even if he knows all the references, he still isn’t able to get the joke. He may or may not get the joke. If I explain the joke to him and suddenly there is a “spark” and he “sees” the joke as I do then he has got it. It is also possible that all the explanation doesn’t produce any effect on him. What is at work here? The fact that I am able to explain the joke and delineate the different parts of the joke to him proves that humour is compound, as I am able to show in a picture the different colours that are in it, and the fact that he is not able to get the joke even after I have explained the joke to him proves there is another component in the joke. That component, I believe, is that of the relation of parts in

the whole. The relation as such is simple and the perception of it has to be direct. The component of relation becomes helpful in our analysis of satire later on. Before we deal with satire, it is only incumbent that on us that we look at certain theories that have been floated to explain humour.

Traditional Theories of Humour

It is generally agreed that there have been three major general ‘theories of humor,’ and it should be agreed that none of them can succeed as a theory of all humor. The three theories might be called the incongruity theory, the superiority theory, and the relief-from-tension theory².

1. The Incongruity theory

The idea that humorous things are *incongruous* is present in the works of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Hazlitt and Kant, among others. Kant puts this by saying that “laughter is an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing” (Kant 1928: 199)³. In order for this theory to have even an initial plausibility, the idea of ‘incongruity’ must be understood broadly, so that things count as incongruous if they are logically impossible (or paradoxical), merely odd or somehow out of place or simply very unusual. And, of course, it may be the thing itself that is incongruous, or it may be that

² *Ibid*, p. 377

³ *Ibid*, p. 378

the incongruity is due to the thing in its context. A bear riding a bicycle, a poor, badly-dressed man at a fancy ball and a popcorn salesman at an opera all count as incongruous, and their humor is written off to their incongruity.

2. Superiority theory

The idea that humor appears when one finds oneself feeling *superior* to someone is present in at least some works of Plato, Aristotle and Bergson (1956), but it is probably best known in the works of Hobbes, who declared that “laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly” (Hobbes 1928: 9.13)⁴.

3. Relief-from-tension theory

The best known exponent of the idea that humor comes with *relief* or the *release of tension* surely is Freud (1976), although Spencer (1911) had such a theory at about the same time. The idea, roughly, is that social and psychological constraints make it impossible for us to express certain thoughts and feelings, and so those mental phenomena, as it were, build up in us and finally are given expression in the laughter promoted by jokes about the very things we have been forbidden to express ourselves about ingenuously: for instance, our sexual impulses, and our instincts for aggression.

⁴*Ibid* , p. 378

Criticism of the three theories

These three theories, even though they explain humour, do so only partially. To take the case of incongruity, it is obvious that many incongruities are not found humorous and vice versa. There are certain incongruities which produces pity, some which produces anger and therefore to ascribe humour to incongruity is a generalization which is too sweeping to be true.

It is a typical lack in superiority theories that they do not attend to the fact that the jokes, cartoons or skits in question are, after all, *fictions*, but fictions that are sometimes taken to represent genuine truths and sometimes not. To take an example, there is a film in which there is a particular episode where a family of orang-gutans is making its way through a jungle. All the monkeys, except one, is relatively young and therefore are swift in moving from one vine to another. But there is this one orang-utan which is old and in an eagerness to keep up with the young ones tries to jump from one vine to another with a similar ease, which is sadly beyond it. It comes crashing down but he still tries to keep up with the air-borne relatives by running as fast as he can through the jungle floor. Audience and I, who saw this film found it funny. But I don't think it is because I feel superiour to the orang-utan that I am laughing.

As the relief from tension theory says there are any number of things we find ourselves constrained not to speak of, or give active voice to, because of political, social, moral or other strictures that seemingly declare these things out of bounds. By this very fact, it

shows that any expression to forbidden things doesn't necessarily produce a smile but only pain and frustration. For example, if I am constrained by my society not to speak against my religious leader, any expression that tends to malign or present that person in a humorous light would only produce hurt and anger.

Each theory has indeed identified a feature characteristic of some examples of humor. But it is almost immediately apparent that none of these characteristics is either necessary or sufficient for humor. That is, not every incongruity is funny, nor is everything funny incongruous, and so on for the other two theories. Indeed there are no necessary or sufficient conditions for humor.

To know what humour is goes half way in knowing what satire is. The other half, are the unique distinguishing factors of satire which will take a look at now.

Satire

More often than not, identifying a satire is easier than identifying what goes into a satire. One main feature of satire is that is not self-referential. The content, that is, what makes up satire, refers to sth outside. In other words, one can say the content of satire is borrowed. Satire, is in a way, like imitation. For me to imitate, I need to imitate *something*. It is not possible for me just to imitate without specifying what it is that I am imitating. Likewise, it is not possible for me to be satirical without specifying what it is that I am satirical of. So, there is a certain connection between satire as each has to be

about something. I feel it is possible to draw the features of satire from identifying the characteristics of imitation. If I imitate in a particular fashion, then I am being satirical. If I am true to the original, then I am just imitating. To take an example, if I am imitating the writing style and word choice of a particular writer, I try and be faithful in using words and turns of phrase that would indicate to the reader clearly that I am imitating that author. But if over and above using the turns of phrase of a writer, I exaggerate certain salient features of his style and choice of words, then I am being satirical. There are certain other conditions that imitation has to fulfill for it to be classified as satire.

The object of imitation has to be 1. real and 2. known

What I mean by real is that the object should have previously existed. I am using the words “real” and “exist” in a broad sense which I will explain now.

To be “real” and “to exist”, common sense would dictate, is to be a concrete part of space-time and be capable of being perceived. Thus tables, chairs, the Administrative building of JNU exist and are real, while Sphinx, nymphs, cupids are imaginary and do not exist. This broad classification serves all our practical purposes and that is why I believe all the arguments of the most sagacious philosophers have not shaken our belief in the existence of rocks and stones.

But the word “real” as I use it covers both the real objects of the external world as well as the imaginary objects, such as the sphinx, nymphs, etc. The “Real” therefore for me

becomes those objects that have certain characteristics and those objects should have been *asserted* by someone to have had those characteristics. Thus, the gods of the Greek pantheon are real because the features that distinguish each god have created by the Greeks and therefore are a part of the history of Man's imagination. To give an instance of a thing to be "unreal" in my sense, let us say I now invent a new character hitherto unknown and I name it "Spuderman" who is half Super man and half Spiderman. This character would not be real because I just created it and no one knows about it. This brings us to the second condition, which is, the object should be known.

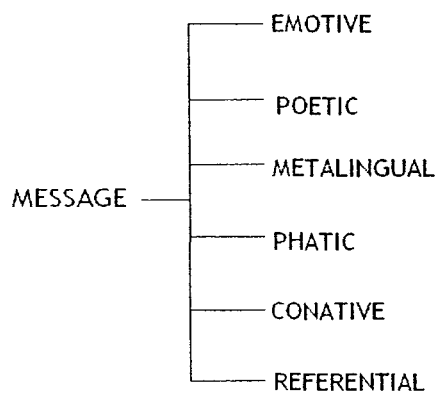
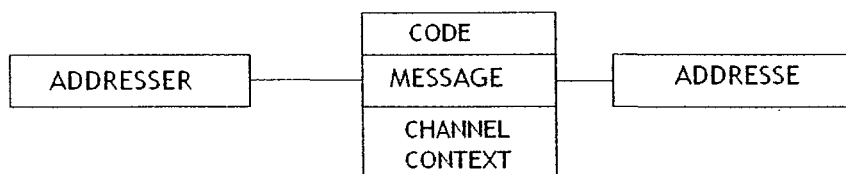
What I mean by an object being known is that if certain characteristics are given, then the object should be easily identified. If I were to say "the animal which is half a horse and half a man", then it should be capable of being identified as a centaur. Thus, my "Spuderman" would not be known because if I were to say "sth that is half superman and half spiderman," noone would be able to say what it is as it is a creature of my imagination only and has not become public enough.

These two conditions are the most minimum that have to be satisfied for an object to be an object of satire.

But these conditions by itself if satisfied, would not be enough to convey a satiric message. Now the task remains to find those unique features of satire that would set it apart from other kinds of imitation. I intend here to bring in the Jakobian model of

communication as I feel that this model can help us in trying to find out what the unique features of satire.

Let me briefly explain the Jakobson model⁵ of communication and then I will try and establish how this model is connected to satire.



Jakobson analyzes the part of a communication by beginning with someone who has something to say. Let us call him the ADDRESSER. In the mind of the addresser lies an idea, something to be said. The first step in communication is to transform that idea into a set of symbols that may be interpreted. The

⁵ Geertz. Clifford, *Roman Jakobson: Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics*, eds. T. Sebeok, (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press., 1960),p.352

ADDRESSER converts his idea into a MESSAGE. The CODE of this MESSAGE is a particular language, let us say, English. Then, we have the CHANNEL, which is the means that we use to convey our message. The channel can be either auditory or visual. The person who receives the MESSAGE is the ADDRESSEE. Everything that is in the background that might have a bearing on the MESSAGE is called the CONTEXT. Therefore we have these six factors. But the interplay of these factors give certain functions.

Each of these six factors, ADDRESSER, ADDRESSEE, CONTEXT, CHANNEL, CODE, and MESSAGE, as Jakobson says, "determines a different function of language"⁶.

What is the purpose of the MESSAGE? the MESSAGE when the message is an expression of the speaker's attitude towards what he is talking about the function is EMOTIVE. If I were to suddenly express myself in iambic pentameter a la Shakespeare, then it calls attention to the form of the MESSAGE. Then the function is POETIC. If I am a school teacher and am explaining to the students, "Spell "their" as t-h-e-i-r and not as t-h-e-r-e." Here, I am bringing attention to the CODE, which makes the function a METALINGUAL one.

When I answer the phone by saying "Hello," I am putting forth a message which primarily signals that the CHANNEL is in working order (See Carpenter Fries,

⁶ *ibid*, p. 353

The Structure of English New York, 1952). This function is called by Jakobson the PHATIC function. Jakobson uses the term CONATIVE to label the MESSAGE expressing an orientation toward the ADDRESSEE with its grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative. If my MESSAGE directs attention to the CONTEXT - for example, if I say, "Oh, what a fine morning," - then its function is REFERENTIAL.

This is a brief overview of Jakobson's model of communication. I don't intend to go into an in-depth analysis of this model as an overview suffices for our purposes. In Jakobson's model, one can see that each of these six factors is related to each other. The central factor being the MESSAGE, how the MESSAGE relates to the other factors gives the different functions of language. When the MESSAGE is related to the CODE, we get the METALINGUAL function. When it is related to the form of the MESSAGE, we get the POETIC function, and so on. What I want to draw from this model follows from what I have said about the nature of satire and humour. I have said that humour is exclusively neither a subjective nor an objective quality but is both. It requires the cognition of humans, which presupposes the existence of an objective quality. It is not like a dream, where there is only cognition and no object nor is it like electrons of physics, where there is only an object but no cognition of it. In satire, we can see that cognition is the cognition of the EMOTIVE function, that is, the relation of the MESSAGE to the ADDRESSER. Only when this EMOTIVE function is cognised by the reader (or viewer) to hold do we get to know whether it is satire

or any other kind of humour. As I described earlier in this chapter, when a writer is imitating the style of another author, the intention is completely different from when he is satirizing the style of the author. In the former case, the writer's intention could be motivated by veneration or love but in the latter case it could be disgust or hatred. More often than not, the intention of the satirist is clear from the nature of the imitation itself. To see a satire as a satire, it is enough if one knows the intention of the satirist, that is, the EMOTIVE function of language.

Cartoon

A cartoon is "a drawing, representational or symbolic, that makes a satirical, witty, or humorous point."⁷ This work focuses attention on a particular kind of cartoon, the political cartoon. In addition to the obvious difference in subject matter for political cartoons compared to other types of cartoons, political cartoons constitute a distinct class visually. Also, while most political cartoons are funny in some sense, it is not the sense in which most other cartoons are funny.

The origins of the modern political cartoon can be traced to the 16th century, with drawings used in the theological debates of the Reformation. The cartoon style as such developed in Britain in the 1800's and is distinguished by the use of caricature.⁸ Throughout much of the United States' history, political cartoons have held a prominent place. During the Civil War era, Thomas Nast's mastery of the medium was applied very

⁷Low, David and Williams, R. E, *Political Cartoon, The American Presidency*. (Grolier. 2000).

⁸ *ibid*

effectively to the defense of Lincoln's policies. Nast is the inventor of Donkey and Elephant signs that remain today the de facto standard signs for the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively. Additionally, his influence is credited with the overthrow of the corrupt "Boss" Tweed government of New York City.⁹

How far cartoons can achieve these kind of results would depend on a lot of factors, not necessarily on the nature or the quality of the cartoon. It might depend on the nature of the political issue, the sensitivity of it, people's nature to raised to be influenced into action etc. Other things being equal, to achieve such ambitious practical results as these, political cartoons must strike a delicate balance between telling things that seem real and true, and using wild imagination, exaggeration and humor. The result is to drive home a powerful and relevant message in a pleasant way. Indeed, this is the essence of caricature, or satire, which is the basis for political cartoons' effect.

⁹ *ibid*

Chapter 3

Semiotic analysis of Toms political cartoon

In this chapter I am using two major tools. The first one is classical semiotics and the second one is blending theory. A peculiarity of Toms cartoon is that it is not an editorial cartoon. The satirical nature of Toms cartoon is made explicit either through the cartoon itself or through the language that is used in the strip. For the purposes of this thesis, I am classifying Tom's political cartoons into three different classes

1. parliamentary politics related
2. economy related
3. gender related

First, a brief list of the characters in Toms cartoon. The major characters in Toms cartoon are Boban, Molly, Chettan(Ittunnan), Appi Hippi, Chettathy, gulumalu, Nethavu, Vakeel and a dog.



Image 1

In image 1, three figures are there. The boy is Boban and the girl is Molly and the dog. Here the dog resembles Boban and Molly pictorially and also behaviourally. That is, the dog not only like Boban and Molly but behaves like them too.



Image 2

Ittunnan, is not an iconic political figure but he acts as the political representative of their village. He plays a role as president of panchayath in this cartoon series. His foolishness and selfishness is the source of much of the humour in this series.



Image 3

Nethavu, (which means “leader”) is the real reflection of every political figure in contemporary Kerala politics. His character is drawn from the different political idiosyncracies of the different politicians of Kerala.

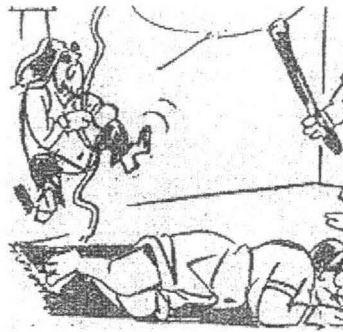


Image 4

Appy Hippy is a character that satirizes the cultural movement of 60s and 70s. From his portrayal of this character, one can see that he doesn't sympathize with the hippy movement. His lack of sympathy results in a proper lack of understanding of the people of that movement and the real problems that those people faced.



Image 5

Chettathy is a typical woman in central Kerala. Through this character, we can get a glimpse into the workings of a typical Malayalee woman in Kerala.

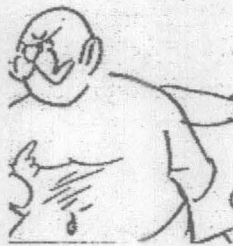


Image 6

Gulumalu is a goon and has no political affiliations. He is shifty when it comes to political opinions and he chooses those opinions which serve him the purpose best at that moment. This shiftiness of his nature is used as a ground for playing off different political opinions. By serving this purpose, Gulumalu becomes an important character.

Parliamentary politics related

Toms political cartoon do not come under rubric of the standard definitions of political cartoon. Most of the political cartoons that scholars deal with are editorial cartoons but Toms cartoon is neither editorial nor does it deal with politics in its pure form. Here Toms tries to depict the interplay of politics in the life of a common man. The common man is not wholly and completely political nor does he live in a society void of political affiliations. Here firstly I try to analyse the text with the tool of classical semiotics.

First Cartoon



Image 7¹

Frame 1

Person 1: now the leader is no more karunakaran, but murali.

Person 2: that means he is ready for anything, even to beat or kill.

Person 3: trouble (gulmal) is coming.

Frame 2

Person 1: were you not here these days?

Person 2: murali called me to beat people, so I went

Person 3: bought a car. Money is piled up.

Frame 3

¹ Thomas, V.T, *bobanum moliyum*, (kottayam: Toms Publication, 2007), p. 323

Person 1: heard that you have a mobile phone

Person 2: he gave me so that I can go as soon as he calls

Frame 4

Person 1: if the vehicle is destroyed, murali is there in the group

Person 2: who is more destructive than him?

Frame 5

Person 1: Sonia is having black cats for security

Person 2: may be fearing murali. He will beat anyone.

Frame 6

Person 1: (gulf) trouble...where are you coming from?

Person 2: karunakaran called me

Frame 7

Person 1: he asked me to join congress (i) congress. Respecting his age i didn't do anything. But i told him that it would be better to jump into a garbage pond than joining his party.

In second chapter, I discussed the nature of satire and humour. We took a look at the theory which explained humour which is produced on the basis of certain incongruities. Even though that theory is not completely adequate, it is adequate in many places. These incongruities in the text or the cartoon produces in us the sense of humour.

Here in the first box,

Person 1: now the leader is no more karunakaran, but murali.

Person 2: that means he is ready for anything, even to beat or kill

The conversation above is funny because of the word "muthirna" which has two meanings. Muthirna means either an experienced leader or it means someone who is ready to do anything.

Here, Toms plays off the two meanings in their speech. In the first person's speech karunakaran is made out to be an experienced leader. In the second person's speech, he is made out also to be a person who is ready to do anything – kill or beat. Here, just when the reader thinks that Karnukaran is presented as a venerable leader, the darker side of the leader is also shown.

In almost all boxes, the text generates the humour, but this humour is not because of the nature of the text or the signified meaning of that signifiers. The cross referencing or the underling meaning of the text in particular Kerala congress politics is the key factor in producing humour. If we use blend analysis, we can perceive the humour.



Person 1: were you not here these days?

Person 2: murali called me to beat people, so I went

Person 3: bought a car. Money is piled up.

The second and third person's dialogue has no such direct relation with each other, but the second person's (Gulumalu) utterance gives some about his connection with Murali. And the third person's utterance creates a blended space, that is not either directly related to the utterance of Murali or Gulumalu. The third person's utterance is the blended space which gives a new interpretation to the

whole strip. The interpretation is that Murali is corrupted and that's why he got money. This blending is possible because of the background of the happenings of contemporary politics. This context and the relation of these two dialogues is not represented in the cartoon, but this meaning is generated in the blended space of the mind.

Second cartoon



Image 8²

Frame 1

Person 1: It is true that it will grow as it splits and it'll split as it grows.

Person 2: initially there was only minister and when there was a split in the party, they got a lot of new ministers.

Frame 2

Person 1: Shyamala's married life too expanded after here split. She had two more children after that.

² Ibid ,p. 316

Person 2: Since 64, they have split 15 times.

Person 3: Again they have split.

Frame 3

Person 1: Wasn't it that final split between George and Joseph?

Person 2: After that there has been split just now.

Frame 4

Person 1: He split again according to the principle that it'll split as it grows.

Person 2: So now all the followers are in the other camp.

Person 3: So, now it's only me who remains in the party

Frame 5

Person 1: today morning he had some physical ailments.

Person 2: hiar in his arms stood straight

Person 3: I want to split, he shouted.

Frame 6

Person 1: that's how he split into two

Person 2: to grow

If we consider the first and second box,

Box 1

Person 1: It is true that it will grow as it splits and it'll split as it grows.

Person 2: initially there was only minister and when there was a split in the party, they got a lot of new ministers.

Box 2

Person 1: Shyamala's married life too expanded after here split. She had two more children after that.

The term (signifier) split is the vehicle to transport the humour, in the first and second box the same meaning is conveyed through the same usage. Textually here there is no paradox of meaning. Here

in the mind of an interpreter deciphering the social context of the person who is referring in the second box, *shyamala*, from that representamen.

Textually this word is plain and unidirectional, but the arrangement of the characters and the immediate environment over the characters creates a blended third space that is independent of the text and the particular context. This blended space has underlying it the moral values of the familial setup in Kerala. Marriage and marital sex and its moral codes are the dominant features in the blended space.

The political view that is conveyed through this strip is critical of Kerala congress and its working.

This message is conveyed through a single signifier *pilaruka*(split).

Third cartoon

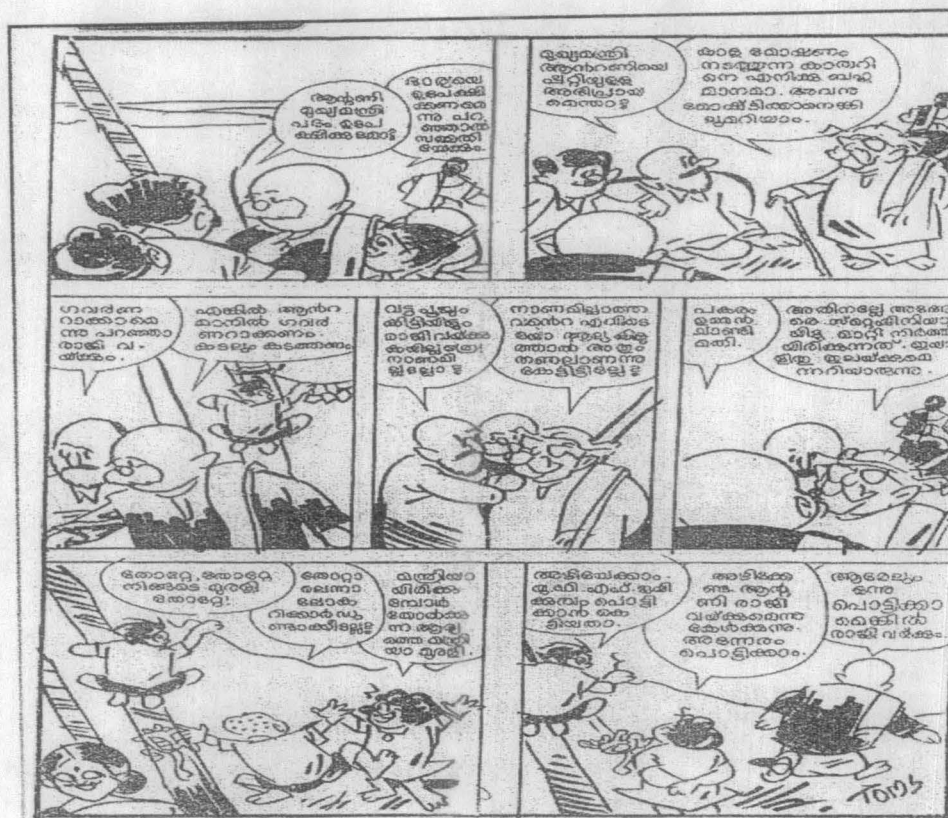


Image 9³

Frame 1

Person 1: will Antony leave the chief minister's position?

³ Ibid, p. 307

Person 2: he may agree if he is asked to leave his wife

Frame 2

Person 1: what is your opinion about chief minister Antony?

Person 2: I respect khader who steals ox. He at least knows how to steal

Frame 3

Person 1: he will agree to resign if he is offered the post of governor

Person 2: .then he must be made the governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and he should be deported

Frame 4

Person1 : he failed. Still he is not resigning. Doesn't he have any shame?

Person 2: haven't you heard this saying "a banyan tree grown on a shameless guy is a shade for him"?

Frame 5

Person 1: instead Ummanchandi will be enough

Person 2: that's why he is kept aside as a Stepney. He was expected that he will spoil it.

Frame 6

Person 1: defeated. Defeated, your murali is defeated!

Person 2: what is there if he is defeated? He had made a world record.

Person 3; he is the first minister who lost the election when he is the minister

Frame 7

Person 1: let us remove it I thought I would light it when the UDF wins

Person 2: don't remove it. It's heard that antony will resign. We will light it then.

Person 3: if someone gives him a good slap (pottikamenkil) he will resign.

In his cartoon the satire is not developed through the text. In the first four boxes, Toms directly attacks the chief minister Antony. In the second box Toms compares Antony with Khadar who steals oxen. Here, Toms can be seen comparing incomparable entities in a linear plane. That incomparability is the driving force of humour. The stream of narration ends up in the same play of the signifier. The word *pottikkuka* has two meanings in two different context. In the first statement it gives means "to light" and in the second statement it means "to slap". This transition of meaning conveys Toms disagreement with the government of Antony. In this cartoon the references are direct. For example, in box 6



Person 1: defeated. Defeated, your murali is defeated!

Person 2: what is there if he is defeated? He had made a world record.

Person 3; he is the first minister who lost the election when he is the minister

Here the political situation is directly explained through the dialogue, so the possibility of blending does not exist, but it represents the political situation of Kerala in a particularly relevant time.

Fourth cartoon

frame 1

person 1: vote for Boban

person 2: no vote, no vote for your party

person 3: votes for the "bald"

frame 2

person 1: all good people who believe in democracy, please vote for Baban (poster)

person 2: this is not enough. We have to go to each home with the candidate

person 3: that's right

frame 3

person 1: it's our candidate of balasadass, Boban. Please vote for him

person 2: ok.

Frame 4

person 1: please vote (poster)

person 2: my friend, please vote for me.

Frame 5

person 1: boan has offered sweets for five paise only, no? I will buy sweets for you for ten paise.

Person 2: let me see whether a third candidate is there or not.

Person 3: shame shame, they have bought "thirumeni's" vote too

frame 6

person 1: dear friends, both the candidates will be speaking from the same platform.

Person 2: i am asking to my dear friends

person 3: i too am asking

frame 7

person 1: here is our election manifesto. We have written our plans for the next five years

person 2: my dear villagers

frame 8

person 1: give me some four or five more

person 2: no i won't give more. It is to distribute in the next election too.

Frame 9

person 1: keep discipline

person 2: polling booth

frame 10

person 1: he is coming. For how many days has he been like this? Neither eating nor sleeping.

Person 2: see the turban. Must be to congratulate on your election victory

frame 11

person 1: it's been days you have taken bath. Spread the oil.

Person 2: take off your turban and all

frame 12

person 1: there was a bet and here is the result.



This cartoon has a greater importance in Toms cartoon series. In this cartoon the Boban and Molly are contesting for an election, in the introductory part I explained that, the Boban and Molly are the questioning figures and they are the driving force in the cartoon. The humour in this cartoon is not

⁴ Ibid, p. 371

because of the text or the narration style, but here Toms is superimposing the Boban and Molly to the parliamentary politics. This replacing of children to politician is making a blended space. But that space is loaded with the so called understanding of politics in a parliamentary system. But that understanding does no longer exist in the children's nature.



The notions of politics in the parliamentary system is the under current in the blended space. Here the mismatching of the images or the mismatching of the sense makes for satire. Textually it is a plain narration. There is no trap or ambiguity. But the total strip represents a larger system which makes is equally incongruous. This representation of this mismatch in political actions gives rise to humour.

Fifth cartoon



Image 11⁵

frame 1

person 1: anthappan has become minister.

Person 2:What am i hearing?

Frame 2

person 1: why do you have to read out the oath. Is it not enough just to read oneself.

Person 2:how many are there who can read their won?

Frame 3

person 1:newspaper says that he has thrice been in prison. Must be as a freedom fighter.

Person 2: let that be for "freedom" itself.

Frame 4

person 1: comrades are organising a ceremony to congratulate him.

⁵ Ibid, p. 338

Person 2: will all be allowed to come out of jail in parol

Person 3: our other has a marriage proposal.

Frame 5

person 1: i should get picture of his youth to give in the newspaper.

Person 2: better you go to the railway station

frame 6

person 1: but it would be difficult to get that from there. Any way, let's go and see

person 2: mother says she used to steal others' pencils when she was in the first standard

frame 7

person 1: wanted (or beware)

person 2: until last night the photo was there. Must have removed last night using the police last night.

The second box of the cartoon is a direct attack on the parliamentary system,



Here, the lack of proper education among parliamentarians is satirically portrayed. The children's questioning looks naïve but the response to that question brings out the issue of the lack of proper education among the politicians. Their state of literacy is so poor that it is doubtful whether they would be able to read the coronation oath by themselves.



In this box Toms creates humour with the text and the images in the box. The political relevance of the cartoon is, it gives a different understanding of the political leaders in the present time. It is really an exaggerated one. This strip gives two viewpoints about the political system. The first is that the politicians are so corrupt that their photographs can be found in the list of wanted criminals. The second is that the common people, here represented through Boban and Molly, are so ignorant of political scenario that they don't realise that these are the criminals who act as legislators

Economy related

In the deeper sense the economy is the deciding factor of the political self. The political self of a human being is governed by economy and the economic distribution of wealth. But in Toms cartoon, the economic imbalances or the economy related politics is satirically depicted.

First cartoon

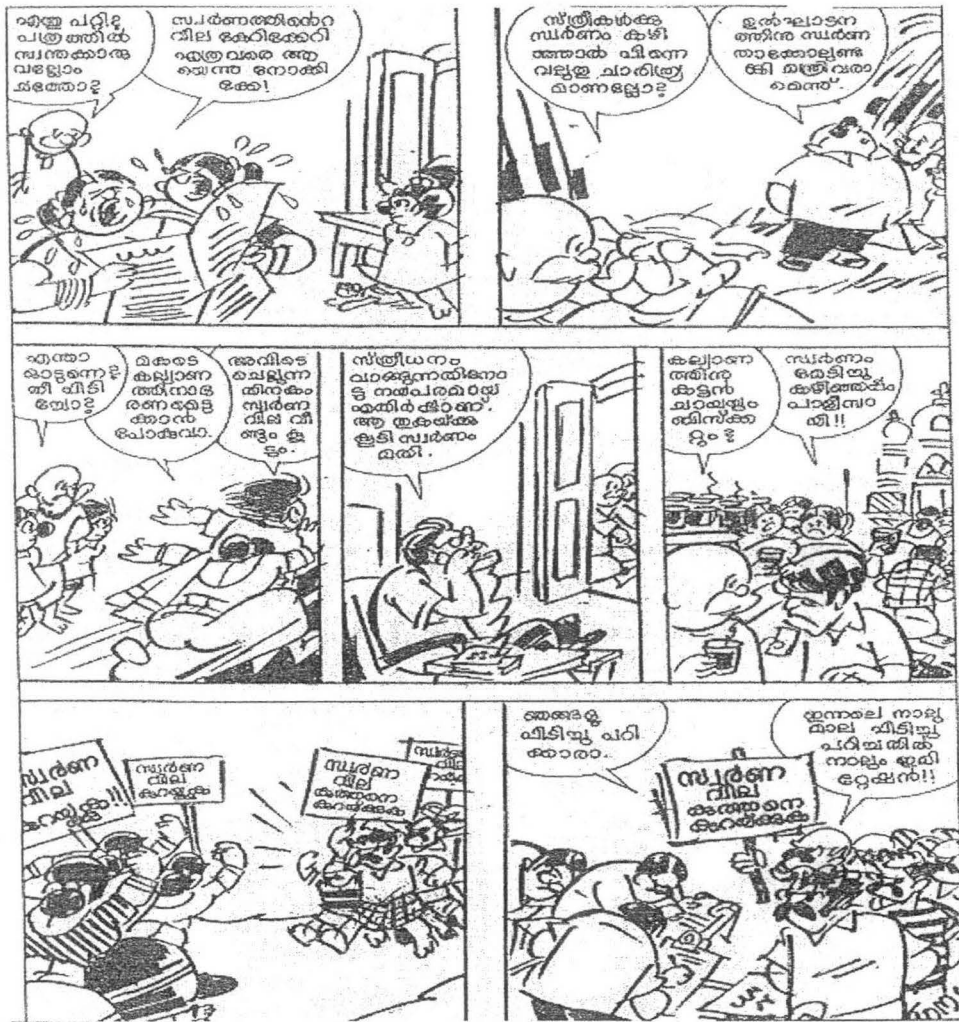


Image 12⁶

Frame 1

Person 1: what happened? Is there a news of any of your's relatives in the newspaper?

Person 2: gold price has gone up. We were just checking how much it has hiked.

Frame 2

Person 1: after gold the most important thing for a woman is her virginity, right?

Person 2: the minister has promised to come for the inauguration if there is a golden key.

Frame 3

Person 1: why are you running? Did your horse catch fire?

Person 2: we are rushing to buy gold for our daughter's marriage.

the gold price will increase by the time we reach the shop.

⁶ Ibid, p. 184

Frame 4

Person 1: we are tactically against taking dowry. Instead buy gold for that too

Frame 5

Person 1: black tea and biscuits for marriage party?

After buying dowry we became bankrupt.

Frame 6

Person 1: decrease the rate of gold

Decrease the rate of gold

Frame 7

Person 1: decrease the rate of gold

We are gold snatchers

All the four chains we had snatched were fake.

In this cartoon, he attacks the corrupted politicians and the existing system. The boxes 2 and 4 are an direct on corrupted politicians, for example,



Frame 2

Person 1: after gold the most important thing for a woman is her virginity, right?

Person 2: the minister has promised to come for the inauguration if there is a golden key.

Frame 4

Person 1: we are tactically against taking dowry. Instead buy gold for that too.

In frame 4, there is no direct attack on any particular political party. But the term used in the

dialogue, *nayaparam*, (tactical) insinuates the political moves of left wing politics. This word *nayaparam* has two connotations. The connotation at the surface level is the meaning that it has. But anyone familiar with the workings of the political system in Kerala would understand words like *nayaparam* are used only by the left. Words like these are not found in common parlance but is part of the left's political argot.

In the box 3 and 7 is generating a satire in a different manner,



Frame 3

Person 1: why are you running? Did your horse catch fire?

Person 2: we are rushing to buy gold for our daughter's marriage.

The gold price will increase by the time we reach the stop.

Frame 7

Person 1: decrease the rate of gold

We are gold snatchers

All the four chains we had snatched were imitation

In the frame 3, Toms is using the typical techniques of the cartoonist, he is exaggerating the thing. The price hike of the gold is represented through the signifier which is used for "speed". If it had been a real situation, the wording used by Toms would have been inappropriate. Here, he is using the term for high velocity for the hike in price. These incongruous entities creates humour.

But in frame 7, here the text is not the humour generator but the concept of thieves and the political orientation of the human being is the point where humour is generated from. The reader knows about robbery and he also knows about the political situation. But when these two things are joined together we get humour.

“We are gold snatchers.

All the four chains we had snatched were fake”

This dialogue creates a blended space in our understanding about robbery and the political organisation. This blended space generates the politically adorned satire.

Second cartoon



Image 13⁷

Frame 1

⁷ Ibid, p. 368

Person 1: for five rupees- onions and green chilly

Frame 2

Person 1: here take onions and green chilly

Person 2: go and get tapioca and vegetables for five rupees. Take it

Frame 3

Person 1: why can't he get both in one trip?

Person 2: muthappa will go and buy lottery ticket if I give ten rupees

Frame 4

Person 1: pattama!!!they have banned lottery

Person 2: god's grace

Frame 5

Person 1: it's a trick to tackle the online lottery business

Frame 6

Person 1: lottery workers will be given a new job

Frame 7

Person 1: will the government agree to it?

Person 2: the government is ready, but that is not the problem.

Frame 8

Person 1: what job will they do?

Person 2: had they been fit for some other job, would they be doing this job of selling lotteries?

In this cartoon Toms is criticising the policy of the government. Here, Toms portrays the yearnings of the middle and lower middle class who are not well off but are eager to make a fast buck. This makes them buy lottery tickets. This shows in an indirect way the economic situation of kerala. But in the second phase of the cartoon, Toms makes a political statement. His criticism can be seen in the box of 6 and 7



Frame 6

Person 1: lottery workers will be given a new job

Frame 8

Person 1: what job will they do?

Person 2: had they been fit for some other job, would they be doing this job of selling lotteries?

Here Toms gives some hint to the persons who are engaged in the lottery business. The genesis of the political move to ban lottery is not from a sympathetic understanding of the people who sell these tickets but it is a political move without any understanding of the people. The satire intends to bring this out. This difference is blended in a single plane

Gender related

Gender is not a sociological distinction. It is a political distinction. If we go through the governance or a governing body the power and its functionalities is directly related to the gender equation of a society. As a cartoonist, Toms always take a position against the female self. Simple put, he is an antifeminist cartoonist. In his cartoons, he is always patriarchal and he is placing the female characters with all kind of so called prejudices. His female characters are house wives or servants with all qualities of the so called female nature. I take one example to show his chauvinistic leanings,

First cartoon

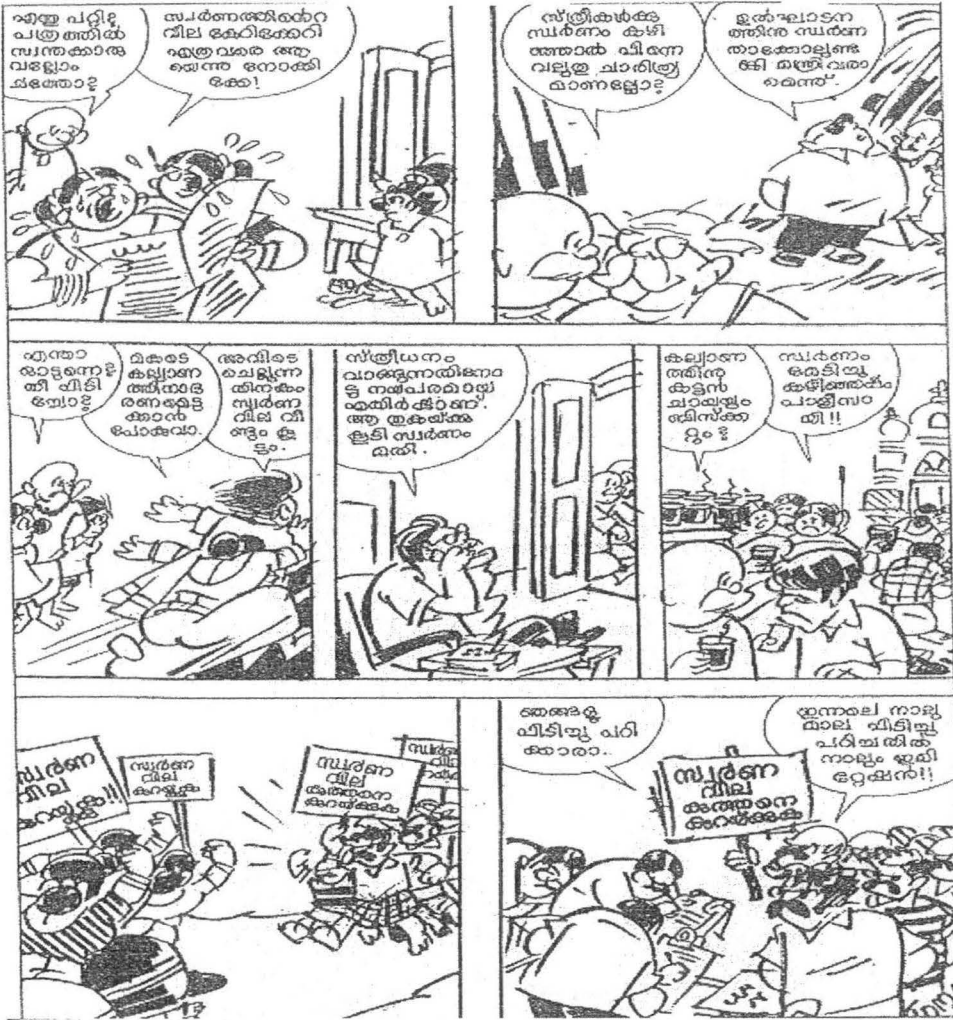


Image 14⁸

Frame 1

Person 1: what happened? Is there a news of any of your's relatives in the newspaper?

Person 2: gold price has gone up. We were just checking how much it has hiked.

Frame 2

Person 1: after gold the most important thing for a woman is her virginity, right?

Person 2: the minister has promised to come for the inauguration if there is a golden key.

Frame 3

Person 1: why are you running? Did your horse catch fire?

Person 2: we are rushing to buy gold for our daughter's marriage.

the gold price will increase by the time we reach the stop.

⁸ Ibid, p. 184

Frame 4

Person 1: we are tactically against taking dowry. Instead buy gold for that too

Frame 5

Person 1: black tea and biscuits for marriage party?

After buying dowry we became bankrupt.

Frame 6

Person 1: decrease the rate of gold

Decrease the rate of gold

Frame 7

Person 1: decrease the rate of gold

person 2:We are gold snatchers

person 3:All the four chains we had snatched were fake

Toms's prejudices against the female gender is very explicit in this cartoon. He portrays women as always being vain and always being conscious of their physical beauty.



Frame 1

Person 1: what happened? Is there a news of any of your's relatives in the newspaper?

Person 2: gold price has gone up. We were just checking how much it has hiked.

Frame 2

Person 1: after gold the most important thing for a woman is her virginity, right?

Frame 3

Person 1: why are you running? Did your horse catch fire?

Person 2: we are rushing to buy gold for our daughter's marriage.

the gold price will increase by the time we reach the stop.

In the first box,

Person 1: what happened? Is there a news of any of your's relatives in the newspaper?

Person 2: gold price has gone up. We were just checking how much it has hiked.]

The implied meaning in the visual image of that first box emphasizes the dialogue in the box. The minimum message which is conveyed in that box is that all women are only conscious about their beauty. The visual image is of two women crying because of the price hike of gold. The humour in this box is a product of the blended meaning in our understanding about newspapers and the news which they read. The meaning trajectory of news paper is serious and political but the meaning trajectory of the price hike of gold is political but not serious in some sense. This mismatching and sharing falls in the blended space of our mind and that reaction making the humour.

In frame 6, the humour is developed because of double blending, the first blending is - the thieves are protesting against price hike and the second blend is the women are protesting against the price hike.



Frame 6

Person 1: decrease the rate of gold

Decrease the rate of gold

These two protests have two different meaning. In the first protest, the understanding about thieves

is, they are not social and they are excluded from all kind of social securities. But here they are protesting against price hike for their benefit. Our common understanding and the image is blended in one space. Simultaneously the women protesting is blended with some other meaning. Here some cross referencing adds meaning to the box, which uses our notions. In the first box they are crying because of the price hike. That is, they are represented as naïve middle class women who don't know much about the democratic machinery of the government. But in this box they are protesting in a democratic manner. these two images do not resonate well in a single plane. The preconceived understanding of women given by the first box is driving us to a new plane of blend. Here the humour is intensified because of this double blending.

Second cartoon



Image 15⁹

Frame 1

⁹ Ibid, p. 333

person 1: why do you have to show stomach on the street?

Person 2: to show so that to make others know of the state.

Person 3: just remembered. I too am an orator there.

Frame 2

person 1: why are you late?

Person 2: what's the use of having such a husband. By ten only the breakfast was ready. It was ok even if he knew something else too

frame 3

person 1: the minister is here. I forgot his name. But there is a Kutty (kutty in malayalam also means child) as his last name, i guess.

person 2: don't know whether he has a kutty or not, but if yes then kutty (child) must be in an orphanage.

Frame 4

person 1: if it was one or two, i could remember. How many are there? 20?

person 2: it's heard that one child was born dead too.

Frame 5

person 1: but why is here today?

Person 2: elections are coming, no? So must be to re-establish his contact with people.

Peron 3: here he is.

In this cartoon all the female characters are exhibiting parts of their body. This phenomenon of showing off parts of their bodies is common in Kerala society. In the first box, the dialogue of the first and second person emphasises the mannerism of the women. In a so called social construction this behaviour is not normal. Here Toms represents the middle class women.



It is a technique used in comics. Here the existing so called word order is reversed in this cartoon. This generates fun but in the same time they are participating in a political/social activity.

Conclusion of the analysis

I tried to classify the Toms cartoon in three different groups, parliamentary politics related, economy related and gender related. In these three groups, the nature of narration is almost similar. Ambiguous expression, placing of incongruous entities in a single plane and the reverse stating of the cultural or moral codes are the humour generating key points in Toms cartoon. Classical semiotic tools are not adequate for our study, because, sometimes the satire can only be seen from the blended space created in the cartoons. Simple expression or words generates satire because of the preconceived cultural notions and existing moral codes and values.

Conclusion

Cartoons as signs

The semiotics of cartoons has some original features: First, unlike other parts of semiotics, it covers a domain that has not been covered before. Unlike the semiotics of verbal texts, the semiotics of cartoons have to start from scratch. One can learn more about cartoons as signs through cognitive psychology and perception than from semiotics as taught by Peirce and Saussure. There have been many attempts explain pictures as being very similar to verbal signs. But hopefully, our discussion in the preceding chapters will have showed that pictures are very different from verbal signs.

The common place notion of picture or image involves sign directed to the senses which is iconic in nature. Although this notion is not adequate to describe the full workings of different kinds of pictures, we can see that it accounts for the central notion of picture which immediately suggests itself to most people. Not all signs that are visual and iconic would ordinary be described as pictures. Something more would seem to be needed in order to characterise picturehood. Most semioticians fail to see this. The peculiarities of the picture as a sign have been addressed in oblique ways only: by Peirce in terms of qualities and exhibit import, and by Saussure with reference to spatial dimensions. These views of pictures as signs are inadequate as we have shown in the earlier chapters they are not cognizant of the role of cognitive psychology.

Humour and signs

Once can see from the above discussion we have had that humour is not something as simple as earlier philosophers had found out to be. What makes humour to be this complex is its relationship with such diverse fields as psychology and semiotics. Cartoons are not signs that are only susceptible of linguistic meaning. We, while understanding, cartoons have to invoke a whole array of other extra-linguistic apparatus. We cannot understand cartoons or humour without finding out the different modalities of

both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors.

We can see here that semiotics is linked to communication. Communication is defined as the process of transferring data from a source to a receiver as efficiently and effectively as possible. This data then must be decoded into messages that are comprehensible. A study of semiotics cannot be delinked from a study of communication. A sign starts to have meaning only when a group of people decide to use it in a particular way. That is, they confer meaning on a sign, when they start using it in a particular way. But that sign will have a specific meaning only in that particular group. This group can be as small as two people or it can be as big as countries. But the group-specific nature of the meaning of signs remains there.

Cartoons, as signs, have therefore meaning only within a group. The distinguishing characteristics of cartoons have been that they are, unlike photographs, not indexical signs. That is, they don't represent something that has happened or something that is natural. They are stylized images of things that are normally seen. This is where humour comes in. By manipulating things in specific ways and making them deviant from their "natural" form, one gets humour. It would be a fruitful line of inquiry if one were to analyse if humour is also group specific. But that question is not within the preview of this inquiry. When these extra linguistic features are produced by the satirist and perceived by the viewers or readers to be incongruous, then we get what humour.

Recent trends in the study of cartoons and humour have pointed to the importance of understanding the communication process in terms of the social, economic, and political conditions in which inform both the encoding the and decoding ends of the communication chain. Cartoons are a specific media form which tends to use humour and satire to convey messages about the social world. Political cartoons are a form of visual news discourse. Sociologists normally dismiss their ideological import on the grounds

that cartoons simply offer newsreaders absurd accounts of putative "problem" conditions and are not likely to be taken very seriously. Nevertheless, it is through comedic conventions that cartoons seize upon and reinforce common sense and thus enable the public to actively classify, organize and interpret in meaningful ways what they see or experience about the world at a given moment.

Political cartoons offer readers condensed claims or mini-narratives about putative "problem" conditions and draw upon, and reinforce, taken-for-granted meanings of the world. By doing so, political cartoons provide metalanguage for discourse about the social order by constructing idealizations of the world, positioning readers within a discursive context of "meaning making" and offering readers a tool for deliberating on present conditions. Cartoons "frame" phenomena by situating the "problem" in question within the context of everyday life and, in this way, exploit "universal values" as a means of persuading readers to identify with an image and its intended message. Political cartoons operate as frames for the organization of social knowledge insofar as they make use of various rhetorical devices-- metaphors, catch phrases, depictions, etc.--that purport to capture the essence of an issue or event graphically.

Blended space of Toms

We can clearly see from the nature of Toms cartoons that even though there may be cases which involve not any blended space, there are cartoons which can be only explained through the nature of blended space. In some cartoons, there are cases in which there are certain undercurrents of meaning which are apparent only to people who know the socio-cultural background of Kerala. This undercurrent of meaning once apprehended can be explained only in the a blended space. When the superficial meaning is joined with the hidden meaning in the blended space we get humour and satire.

Even though children are the central characters of this cartoon, it doesn't mean that this cartoon is only for children or is childish. This cartoon plays with certain key events in the political life of Kerala.

There are political events which are reflected through these cartoons. One can see that there is a relevance that is cartoon has to political situations in Kerala. It raises issues which are current in the life of Kerala so that people can relate to it easily. Generally, cartoons are usually used for mythological or fantastical characters but this is not the case. The general success of Toms cartoons shows that the readers are aware of the problems that encircle them in society. In a way, Toms cartoons both reflects and reforms. By making political issues the core issues of his concepts, he brings to the fore what is in the background. But also by letting people, who are ignorant, know that they are being duped by political hypocrisy, it plays the role of a reformatary guide.

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