

THE POLITICAL ASPECT OF CARTOONS: REDISCOVERING THE POWER OF PRINT MEDIA

Devi Prasad Pokhrel
M.phil Fellow, Kirtipur
CDE

ABSTRACT

Cartoons in print media portray social reality through the satire of political scenarios. The regular cartoons in Nepali newspapers quite frequently raise an evoking, critical awareness about contemporary political, social, and cultural issues. This paper will analyze one cartoon from each of four popular Nepali cartoonists. Such cartoons will be sifted for their use of Nepali colloquialisms, texture, colors, signs, symbols, roles of mythical characters, etc., to critique current issues with the sharpness they deserve. The analysis is going to be framed using the last three pillars of Marshall Fishwick's Seven Pillars of Popular Culture: Logos, Ethos, and Mythos. To elaborate further on these cartoons, perspectives of Dominic Strinati about popular culture, structuralism, and semiology will be used. The wider reach of cartoons in the dailies within Nepal enjoys a sure means of communicating an idea or message to the public. This study tries to explain how these two elements instituted potent social and political commentary and built higher levels of critical consciousness among citizens on contemporary issues. This paper will deconstruct the linguistic and visual elements that make Nepali cartoons a strong medium of social critique and reflection.

Keywords: *Politics, Pop-culture, Myths, Cartoon, Print media, Parody*

Introduction

The ethics of most cartoons that are continually published in national dailies in Nepal is to form coherent critiques on the contemporary issues. Such cartoons attack politics and the carelessness of lawmakers. Politics is the mother of all policies. If politics proceeds in the correct direction, numerous issues of the people are diagnosed, but on its contrary, a state of chaos is made within the nation. The politics of our nation has been directionless since long time, so the problems of the people are scattered on the surface. The selfish nature of lawmakers is the cause of the problem. In this manner, the misdeeds of politicians are always criticized by the cartoonists. It too creates tremendous pressure on them to be determined in their work. In this paper, I will take some cartoons of four cartoonists Durga Baral, Rajesh KC, Basu Kshitij and Rabin Sayami who are well-known in the print media Nepal. My argument is somewhat worthwhile because it examines that the message conveyed by cartoons is important and well known. In the published cartoons the

use of folk dialect, the combination of mythical characters, images, colors and the reactionary expressions of the events make a parodical criticism about the misconduct of politicians and their impact upon the public.

The Politics of Cartoons

Not all expressions can be conveyed straightforwardly. Cartoons can be taken as indirect ways to express something meaningful. Joan L. Conner, in his article "Popular Culture in Political Cartoons: Analyzing Cartoonist Approaches," views that almost the degree to which political cartoonists utilize well-known culture settings to form a sense of political culture. Some cartoonists make an association between our popular culture and political culture, putting pressure on politicians. Considering the use of popular culture in political cartoons, it is nurtured by advertisements and stories. This builds the plot of the story and strikes a chord at the end. It moreover presents the substance to readers interested in politics by utilizing reality in humor and including cultural images in popular cartoons. In order to further elucidate his point regarding political cartoons, Conner continues, "Political cartoons that reflect popular culture references work in a similar way; they focus on potentially provocative political issues but tie them to imagery and references from entertainment that may unexpectedly draw readers to politics" (261). Cartoons essentially satirise politics, just like other popular cultural genres that also happen to be popular. Therefore, the audience effectively understands the message that they are trying to deliver.

Another critic, Usman Salisu O., in his article "Satire as a Tool of Political Cartoons in the Nigerian National Dailies: A Critical Discourse Analysis," contends that political cartoons put pressure on the lawmakers as he states, "The goal of a political cartoon is to raise public consciousness using figurative tone and graphical imageries to address crucial issues and criticize political leaders and their contemptible practices" (124). Thus, cartoons published in daily newspapers work to create the lawmakers realize their obligation. He further notes, "Cartoon depictions are the image of political failure just as it is with images of corruption and responsibility depicted, the target of the image of political failure is individuals and political institutions" (131). Specifically, political cartoons are depicted on a daily and decide whether the political cartoons portrayed are a means to empower the public.

Yet another critic, Lyombo Eko, in his article "The Art of Criticism: How African Cartoons Discursively Constructed African Media Realities in the Post-Cold War Era," contends that the cartoonists indirectly attack the vices of the politicians through their creations. An examination of the prototypical model of cartoons of countries with major clashes between governments and the media found that the use of African mythology to delineate media substances on the African continent

was irreversible. His consider too appears that African politics Cartoonists oppose the prohibition of tyrannical leaders suppressing freedom and the abuse of control through animalization."Cartoons use symbols and visual metaphors to simplify and communicate complex ideas and concepts. One of the powers of the cartoon lies in its ability to crystallize complex issues into a simple metaphor "(5).In this way, the cartoon may be a popular, journalistic story worldview and like every representation, it reduces the complexity of its reference domain to the carrying capacity of its medium and to preparing the capacity of its senders and recipients."Cartoons are a critical, ritualistic paradigm in which cartoonists summon their readers to snap out of their political stupor and enter into some sort of complicity, a sort of 'representational game' against those who abuse power. This is possible because cartoons almost always contain localizing, priming cues that are designed to trigger certain ideas in the minds of readers"(19).So, the organizing of the cartoons in the media in different places is distinctive, but the concept of the message they are communicating is the same.

Additionally, another researcher, Eugene Balk, in his article 'The American Scene Print and the Cartoon' discusses the commitment of cartoons within the American print media. He further clarifies the American visual printmaker, who instead inclines toward uncommon scenes of lifestyle in America; Traditional craftsmanship, which has been the subject of solo print exist for a long time, was rejected. Not so frequently, young printmakers turned to the already ignored medium of lithography. The revival of American print is linked with the progress of American cartoons."Few examples of prints by an artist who was consistently and conspicuously depend on the cartoon and caricature. However, it was also occasionally and rather shockingly the case that these popular art forms also had an influence on other printmakers (390). The influence of other print media on cartoon pictures is the same as that of others by cartoons. Printmaker endeavoring for a native popular and contemporary craftsmanship from as it was had to turn to the cartoons to discover those characteristic borrowing from its style and wit placed the artist within the advanced wings of American printmaker.

In contrast, another researcher, Iro Sani, and his colleagues in a collective study, 'Political Cartoons as a Vehicle of Setting Social Agenda: The Newspaper Example', are fascinated by researching a wide extend of subjects Specifically, communication, media studies, and health sciences. Moreover, cartoons serve as an effective source of information used to think about social phenomena. Again, he clearly explains how political cartoons are used in newspapers as tools for setting the agenda in society."Through political cartoons, the media comment on current socio-political issues in order to transform people and keep them informed and abreast of topical issues that affect their lives. Additionally, the cartoons illustrate how the agenda is set by focusing on specific issues of interest at a particular

moment through a recurrent and wide coverage of such issues"(162).The cartoon genre constitutes an impressive medium of communication through which the media set a social plan by connecting relevance to the importance of issues and events through recurrent scope pointed at forming the people's understanding of the issues to bring positive alter in society.

While synthesizing the above-mentioned critical gathering in general, newspaper cartoons contribute to the understanding of media depiction of various issues, people, and social events, which also speeds up the flow of messages within the minds of the people. The individuals can appear in reality to those in power through critical awareness. But when criticized through words, the condemned class can hurt the personal life of the critic. So cartoons are too a safe way to criticize. Pundits like Eugene Balk and Joan L. Conner say that cartoons are a medium that plays a major role in making the general public aware of the different evils that exist in society. Moreover, indirectly, cartoons have brought our traditional mythical culture to life. So far, there have been numerous considerations on cartoons and socio-political issues, a few centering on contemporary social issues and some on political inconsistencies. In the present ponder; my focus is on how Nepali daily paper cartoons have continually criticized political deception. For that, I have analyzed the four representative cartoons published in Nepali newspapers inside the theme of pop culture which reflects the significance of this research.

Understanding Political Cartoons: A Textual Analysis

Cartoons, alongside other materials, play a driving role in recognizing a newspaper from a blank sheet of paper. It doesn't take long for an accomplished cartoonist to create a cartoon, but the process of making a cartoon thought is exceptionally challenging.

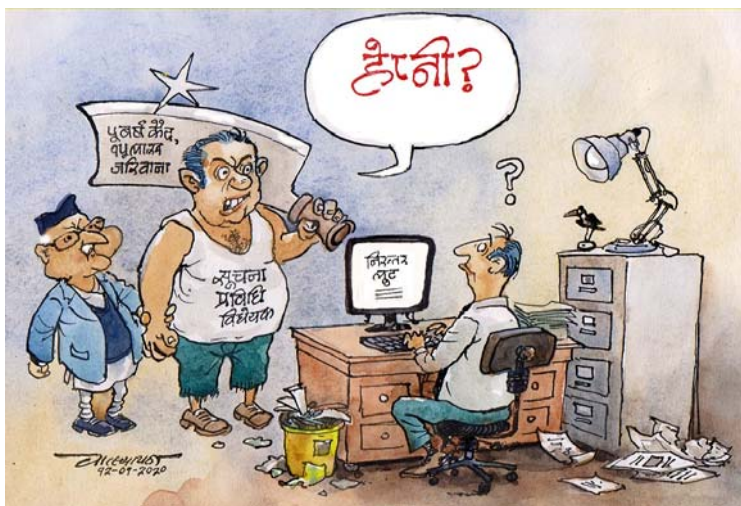


Figure 1: Batsyan's cartoon, published Kantipur (Koseli), 12January2020

The cartoonist's articulated in Figure 1, in above titled '*Hepne*', conveys the message of how a statesman is as merciless as a patriot. The gestures, dialect, and presentation of the characters in the cartoon appear that Nepali politics is oriented towards criminalization. According to Marshall Fishwick's idea of Mythos, the final post of the Seven Pillars of Popular Culture, "Myths are tied to essences; they illuminate God, Man, and Society." Mythic implies an instant vision of enduring truth. They are part of our survival (276). Nearly all myths are associated with our needs. They circulate the relationship between God (power center), man, and society as a whole. Additionally, the message conveyed by Batsayan's cartoon shifts concurring to time and contemporary society. But there's a similitude in all his cartoons. That's the myth, the crow myth that he uses to create the message of his cartoon important. In Hindu mythology, the crow was considered as a communicator, and when the picture of the crow was included within the cartoon, the ubiquity of the cartoon and its message can be effectively caught on by the common public. In this way, the mythological picture clears the virtue of the cartoon.

Along with the expressions of the characters in the cartoons, the local dialects used in the cartoons too hold certain classes responsible, and this heightens the seriousness of the subject matter. Since this, well illiterate people can assume the message conveyed by cartoon.



Figure 2: '*Phalano*' cartoon, from <http://www.rajeshkc.com/cartoons>

Synthesizing the cartoon mentioned in Figure 2, the Nepali dialect words utilized in it have fortified the presentation of the cartoon. Since the title of the cartoon, *Phalano* represents the common man. *Phalano* is the common man as well as everyman. Cartoonist KC presents the social and political absurdities in Nepal through this common man's perspective. Communication alludes to a social process, the flow of information, circulation of knowledge, the outside, and inner

flow of thought not fair to linguistics and media. According to Marshall Fishwick, *Seven Pillars of Popular Culture Logos*:

"Words have no exact meaning; in fact, they never mean the same thing twice. The time, place, context, stress, inflection cannot be duplicated. The meaning of the logos is what the speaker intends to be understood by the listener. Words not only channel but also form and program thought" (105).

The words of any dialect are shaped by the structure of the society where that language is spoken, so the cartoon name *Phalano* is the word which mirrors our circumstances, whose viewpoint only includes us. In addition to the title and presentation of the characters in the cartoon, other words utilized have too made distinctive logos, which have reinforced the soul of the cartoon.



Figure 3: '*Prakriti*' cartoon, from <http://annapurnapost.com/cartoon>

In some cases, cartoonists don't utilize words in their creations, indeed if they do, but even such cartoons, in an effective way, convey the message. The role of an appropriate symbol is effective in such cartoons. The message can be communicated through cartoons, indeed only the use of images. In the cartoon in Figure 3, symbols and iconic figures utilized more than words show its contemporary significance. Symbols objectify profound mythic structures of reality, expressing the interminable in terms of the temporary everyday things that make each day important. Under Marshall Fishwick's *Seven Columns*, Eikons can be depicted, in the simplest terms, as tangible mythology. "Objects in general, icons in particular, are the building blocks of reality" (137). The use of symbols helps to bring the underlying reality to the surface. The combination of the iconic figures seen in Figure 3 outlines the contemporary reality. "Icons are pictorial, and everyone 'understands' pictures" (149). The pictorial concept of the symbol is effortlessly

understood by all. Since the underlying meaning is made simpler by the picture itself. The image of the corona virus used in the cartoon over, the symbolic retention of man and fish, derides our condition.

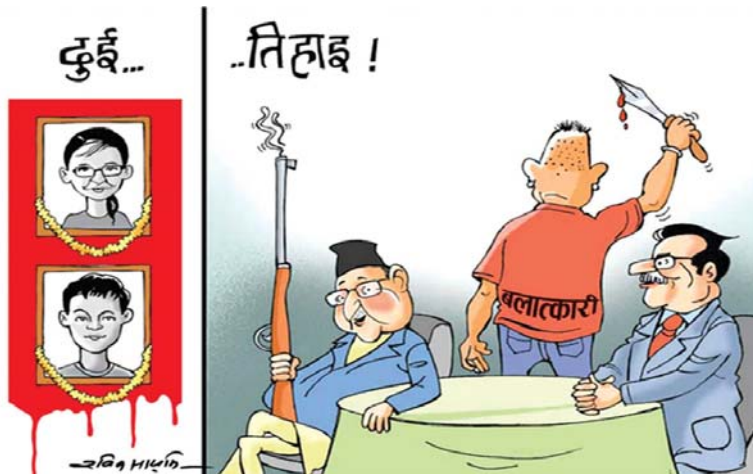


Figure 4: 'Dui...Tihai!' from <https://twitter.com/rabinsayami1>
(Publish in Annapurna Post)

The structure of words in any dialect makes the meaning clear. In case the structure of the word is slightly mutilated, indeed if the shape of the word looks the same as before, it makes an enormous contrast in the meaning it gives. The words used in the cartoon are straightforward and equivocal. The superficial meaning of a word is one and its inward meaning is totally distinctive. By making such words, the cartoon satirizes social and political issues. Such words take into consideration the sociality of the characters used in the cartoon. As specified in Figure 4 above, the word 'Dui...Tihai!' used in the cartoon, when understood within the same pattern, refers to the majority. But in case it is set aside, the meaning it gives becomes another. Cartoonists, in a similar design, make cartoons that convey an effective message, in line with contemporary and real cartoons characters. Concurring to the notion of Dominic Strinati's Structuralism, Semiology, and popular culture. "The way Semiology neglects the social relationship in which signs are produced and consumed. But it similarly concerns how signs are produced and consumed" (117). In the same way, cartoons also rise above the structure of society and have a contemporary social and political parody. It values the entire support of the people for those in power to remain focused on their work.



Figure 5: <https://www.nepalitimes.com/cartoon>

Cartoonists have the capacity to express with a portrait what would take scholars 100 words. Particularly in times of crisis, cartoonists have been at the forefront of talking truth to power through gnawing parody. Most newspaper cartoons express Nepalese's dissatisfaction and aggression at their political leadership for their failure to deliver long-promised dreams. They resort to bitter infighting to hold on to power. Particularly the cartoons published in Nepali daily papers utilize creative expressions, images, icons, myth, the demeanour of characters, and the local lingo. Cartoonists are criticizing high-ranking politicians in the state, running an institutional movement through cartoons to make them mindfully. The cartoons mentioned in Figure 5 shows how diverse cartoonists on the same subject, through their creative consciousness, satirize contemporary social and political events. A few of them have emphasized the local dialect, a few have combined mythical characters, and a few have used only icons to capture the seriousness of the subject in an excellent way.

Conclusion

Cartoons often employ satire to highlight distortions, inconsistencies, and negative aspects of society. They are crafted with precise lines and colors, incorporating a sense of humor to address social, political, cultural, and other human-related issues. Serving as an artistic medium, cartoons play a crucial role in raising societal awareness. As a visual language, cartoons convey information and emotions to the public effectively, transcending linguistic barriers and educational levels. Their power lies in the immediate comprehension of colors and characters that represent various facets of society, politics, power, and authority. Since the advent of democracy, newspaper cartoons have significantly contributed to enhancing

political awareness among the populace. Cartoons possess the unique ability to directly critique social and political norms through symbolic representation. The humor embedded in cartoons resonates with human emotions and intellectual sensibilities, fostering critical consciousness and reflection on societal issues. Consequently, cartoons not only entertain but also provoke thought, encouraging individuals to engage with and question the status quo. Through their visual impact, cartoons continue to be a powerful tool for social commentary and political discourse, bridging the gap between complex ideas and public understanding.

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