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SEMATIC ANALYSIS
OF R.K.LAXMAN
CARTOONS

"YOU SAID IT" (2)

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SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF R.K. LAXMAN CARTOONS,
"YOU SAID IT"

Cartoon are undoubtedly a very powerful communication medium since they use pictures to communicate and since they blend with the message to be conveyed. It is very interesting to study and analyse the way cartoons become very effective as a powerful communication medium. The cartoons of R.K. Laxman which appear everyday in the news paper "Times of India", a natural choice owing to it having been one of the most popular, lasting and having a deep relevance to every day life of the ordinary citizen. //

// The cartoons of R.K. Laxman fall largely under the theme of socio-political affairs and therefore deal with the current political affairs, economic order and every day life of the ordinary citizen. //

// As an introduction to the compilation of his cartoons under the title "you said it", R.K. Laxman remarks, "My cartoons are drawn with the object of

producing a laugh or at best a smile but many readers believe that they have a deeper social purpose". But there can be little doubt that his cartoons do more than merely make us laugh. In a very subtle way we identify ourselves with the environment, situation and characters that he creates and we realize that it is all for us and about us.

It is the aim of this seminar to analyse the aspects of visual semantics of his cartoons to understand better how any ordinary citizen identifies the various environment, situations and characters and own relationship to them.

ANALYSIS

TITLE "YOU SAID IT"

This very peculiar title "You Said it" suggest that the reader is internally connected with the subject of the cartoon. It perhaps means that the sentiments expressed by the character(s) in the cartoons and that of the reader himself.

MEDIUM AND MODE OF PUBLICATION

The cartoons appears every day on the front page of the daily news paper "Times of India" which has the very wide circulation all over the country. Collections of the cartoons have also been compiled into several volumes published under the same title.

It is very significant that the cartoons appears on the front page. This aspect not only increases the relative prominence of the cartoon but also helps the reader in understanding it in the day with which it often has a very important relation.

The size of the visual although small is still

sufficient to capture the attention of the reader since there are normally no other visual elements on the same page. The small and standardized size, and the standardized slot makes it much simpler and more economic.

VERBAL MESSAGE

You said it

by Laxman



If you had come a second before you could have seen him! He came in this way from tour and left that way on another tour!

You said it

by Laxman



I must say we are lucky! Even the cheapest set is beyond our reach!

You said it

by Laxman



It's no use just dashing to Delhi to see him, sir. You just dash to Srinagar, Darjeeling, Orissa, Goa, Pune, Hyderabad ...

" The verbal message can be classified on the basis of whether it conveys the intended meaning directly or indirectly. "

DIRECT

The case where they convey a direct message is illustrated:

The characters portrayed and situations created are directly involved in the intended meaning as can be seen.

INDIRECT

The case where the intended meaning is indirectly conveyed is illustrated:

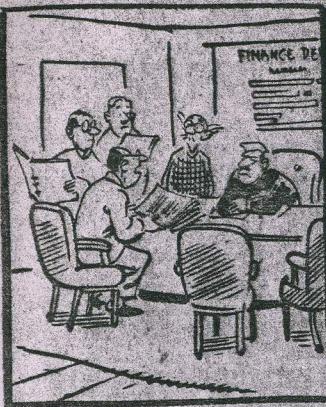
Here the characters involved in the situations created have a subtle indirect relationship with the meaning actually intended.

For example: The message could be about a person or situation not illustrated in the cartoons.

ENVIRONMENT

You said it

by Laxman



This expert committee recommendations are impractical, sir. It says the measures to control prices are by productivity, economy, efficiency, etc. and suggests nothing new!

You said it

by Laxman



Why does the press all the time insist that there is no law and order in the state? Certainly there is law and it is only order that isn't there!

You said it

by Laxman



Sorry to interrupt, sir. Don't tell them not to waste water. They are here to complain about its acute scarcity in this area.

You said it

by Laxman



I think these people are getting to be too greedy. There's no drought, no floods here and yet they want relief grants and measures!

The environments that are typically created in these cartoons are that of (1) a ministerial office, (2) a village and (3) a middle class household.

MINISTERIAL OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

This environment is illustrated:

The characteristic features of this environment are the official looking furniture and arrangement of a room, files, charts, telephone, busy looking officials and the presence of the worried important man.

VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT

This environment is illustrated:

The characteristic features of this environment are the huts, the dry parched lands, the kacha roads, the leafless trees, the totally unsophisticated and the innocent curious look of the villagers.

MIDDLE CLASS HOUSEHOLD ENVIRONMENT

You said it
by Laxman



Look, just read today's paper. You don't have to go through all the old issues to know what was happening during your long absence!

You said it
by Laxman



Oh, the police caught him! Then he couldn't be a terrorist but an ordinary criminal!

This environment is illustrated: *✓*

The characteristic features are comfortable home furniture like arm chair, TV set, wall calenders, time piece, curtains, windows and the presence of a typical middle aged middle class couple.

The presence of a news paper or a cup of tea in the hands of any of the characters, perhaps suggest that the time is early morning.

CHARACTERS

You said it

by Laxman



The talks are on. The one on the right represents Maharashtra, on the left is Karnataka and the middle fellow is the interpreter!

You said it

by Laxman



You say you are neither a loyalist nor a dissident but a simple Congressman! What's the game? Are you trying to split the party further?

The characters typically and mostly found in the cartoons are (1) Common Man, (2) Ministers, (3) P.A. to Ministers, (4) House wife, (5) Villagers (6) Others.

THE COMMON MAN AS CHARACTER

The common man is portrayed as a middle aged man in a checkered coat and pair of rather large spectacles, dhoti, bald head with a wisp of white hairs at the back and a bristling moustache supporting a bulbous nose. He is seen to be a deeply observant and sensitive individual, but surprisingly very non-committal and in a way indifferent. He is in fact an abstraction of people from all walks of life.

THE MINISTERS AS CHARACTER

The Minister is typically a man in his late forties who is clothed in a typical congressional dress involving a congress cap and kurtha.

You said it

by Laxman



No, sir. It doesn't make any profits. But the benefit is, being a labour-intensive unit we are able to give employment to 5,000 persons here!

You said it

by Laxman



They all say the same thing. My only hope is that '87 won't make '86 look like a happy new year!

The man's expression is that of a man who would like to flaunt his authority.

THE P.A. TO THE MINISTER AS CHARACTER

The P.A. to the Minister looks a systematic well dressed and competent man who is over-burdened by the responsibilities of the office as shown by his worried looks and his total involvement with files and papers. The spectacles and the keen eyes portray a highly analytical person.

THE HOUSE WIFE AS CHARACTER

The house wife is a typical middle class women with an authoritative look. Dressed as best as she can afford and having a highly synical expression characteristic of a dissatisfied middle class person.

VILLAGERS AS CHARACTERS

The villager is typically a mute spectator of the doings of the civilised people. Although

You said it

by Laxman

VILLAGERS



Remember, don't ask for drinking water, etc. Demand that your language should be included in the eighth schedule and made the official language!

You said it

by Laxman

You said it

by Laxman



You mean you set fire to the bus without any reason like linguistic, religious, boundary? You must be an utterly irresponsible citizen!



Do we know about eradicating rural poverty? Of course, we do. We were about that high when it was done last time!

clothed in tattered clothing the villager has a proud expression and is curiosity portrays him as a highly practical and smart individual.

OTHERS AS CHARACTER

The other categories of characters are social workers, police officials, criminals, road-side vendors etc.

OTHERS

CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, the principal characteristics of the cartoons from the visual communication point of view is their ability to communicate certain typical environments and characters which are closely related to the every day experiences of any citizen.

The way these environments and characters have been portrayed visually using the cartoon symbols has been the subject of our semantic analysis of R.K. Laxman's cartoons.

