

Changing Face of Indian Political Cartoons from 2010–2020

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Abstract

Political cartoons are a reflection of the politics in the country and democracy as a whole. As time changed, media and politics changed, too. Therefore, it is important to understand how political cartoons are changing, especially when they are known to play a critical role in democracy. Comparison and analysis of political cartoons over time could bring about reasonable findings. The present research focused on mending this gap in the existing literature and analyzed the changing face of Indian political cartoons over the past decade. The present study was conducted on Editors of different editorials (English and Hindi) based in the Delhi-NCR region, India. Primary data were used in the study, wherein the interview method was adopted to collect the data in the form of interview transcripts. Herein, qualitative analysis was conducted wherein the interview method was adopted. The study's findings threw light on how the face of political cartoons has changed over the past decade. The research findings could be used by practicing political cartoonists to update themselves. Further, the newspaper could also use this study to analyze how to keep the dying art of political cartooning alive. The research conducted on political cartooning is very limited, and the focus on changes in political cartooning is almost zero. Thus, the present research is one of its kind.

Keywords : political cartoons, cartoonists, democracy, editorials

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Political cartoons in Indian editorials are indispensable. They are a pictorial medium that engages the readers and facilitate them in comprehending and interpreting the political situations in the country (Dugalich, 2018; Lawate, 2012; Oluremi, 2019). Political cartoons are graphics that present a political or social message based on “ongoing proceedings” in the nation’s political scenario. As defined by Greenberg, political 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 in a given moment” (Greenberg, 2002, p. 181). These are sarcastic, ironic, and funny, thereby amusing insights into the mood of the readers (Jose, 2019). Usually, political cartoons reflect the opinion of the public and make a normative judgment.

Political cartoons are more prevalent in free societies. This can be supported by an incident in 2005 wherein Jyllands-Posten, a Danish newspaper, published 12 cartoons of Prophet Muhammad. Owing to this, the Saudi Arabian and Kuwait governments prohibited Danish products, and the creators of these cartoons required police protection (Müller & Özcan, 2007; Rask Jensen, 2008). In this regard, India relishes a free press, the freedom of democracy, and an open society that consents to political cartoons.

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Importance of the Research

A single cartoon cannot bring any change or change the perception of the masses. But yes, a single cartoon can influence other cartoonists and editors to work on the same theme, creating an indirect series over time. In this direction, Tom Engelhardt, who was an editorial cartoonist for the St. Louis Post Dispatch for almost thirty-five years, threw some light on how the build-up of cartoons can influence the opinion of the public and stated:

One cartoon is not going to change a lot of people's positions. I think there is a cumulative effect. If one cartoon can get another editor or cartoonist thinking about a problem, then they might say, 'I ought to say something about that.' A cartoon is like a pebble before the avalanche starts... (Lacity & Rudramuniyaiah, 2009, p. 201)

The same outlook was observed by other authors as well, like Ghilzai (2020), Helmy and Frerichs (2017), and Tyumbu (2018). This points toward the fact that long-term exposure to a certain theme in the political cartoon is required to change the readers' outlook.

Adopting the same perception, UNICEF started "The Sara Initiative" in Africa. It was focused on creating awareness about sexual abuse in girls aged 15 – 45. It was distributed across different African countries by making small changes in the look and feel of the cartoon character, like skin color and language (Beck, 2006). The cartoon series proved successful, as 32% of the African girls could identify with Sara. Further, qualitative valuations also showed the impact of Sara on the changes in the attitude and behavior of African girls toward sexual abuse and assaults (Russon, 2000).

In the same direction, Hallett and Hallett (2012) researched political cartoons about the swine flu virus (from different countries like India and the USA) to explain how fears are addressed through language and media cross-culturally. The study found a direct association of swine flu cartoons with fears relevant to that particular nation's culture.

It can be inferred from the above discussion that if not a single cartoon, a similar theme over some time does change the outlook of the readers and society as a whole. Thus, it would be interesting to understand how political cartoons change over time.

Problem Statement

As in any other sector, with multiple environmental, social, political, and technical changes taking place worldwide, the face of political cartooning is also changing. Therefore, assessing these changes over time is imperative to understand the variables and trigger points. Moreover, when such information is used to strategize, it can lead to the greater good. But the researchers have not covered this topic of changing nature and characteristics, resulting in a huge gap in the existing literature on the political cartoon. Thus, more than ever, it becomes important to assess the changing faces of political cartooning, thereby mending the identified gap.

Review of Literature

Political Cartoons and Periodic Research Done

Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Laxman, the most famous Indian editorial cartoonist who contributed to the field for about forty years, stated, "Within a decade of independence [from Britain], the tribe of cartoonists proliferated" (Laxman, 2000, p. 8). So, within a decade, Indian political cartoons grew and developed. Similarly, other researchers have also analyzed the changes in political cartoons over time. For example, Thibodeau (1989)

researched to examine the portrayal of blacks or African Americans in political cartoons and changes in their depiction for forty-two years.

Benoit et al. (2001) researched Clinton-Lewinsky-Starr Affair by analyzing 2,000 political cartoons. Caswell (2004) analyzed the wars in America for 200 years by analyzing political cartoons. Seymour-Ure (2001) conducted research that analyzed the representation of party leaders in political cartoons in the 1997 general election and classified the leading images thus used. In addition, the study assessed the future of cartoon tradition in light of variations in the size and design of newspapers. The study finally stated that the unique ability of political cartoons to express the unsayable through detailed images guarantees that political cartoons will carry on flourishing. Similarly, Sani et al. (2012) conducted research to assess the linguistic construction of humor in Nigerian political cartoons during 2007–10. The study concluded that linguistic presentations have specific features employed to describe different aspects, create social identities, and depictions and illustrations of political figures, parties, and other public officials.

Scully (2014b) assessed the challenges and opportunities faced by American and British political cartoons from their inception till 2014. The study stated the political cartoon business is serious enough and not something to laugh upon. However, the researcher found that political cartoons have not received the glory they deserve, as historians and researchers do not take them seriously. In the same year, Scully (2014a) conducted another research based on assessing political cartoons' transformation from the 18th century till 2014. The study stated that today's cartoon differs greatly from a century ago. In the 18th century also, cartoons were in the transformation phase and are still transforming in 2014. The present political cartoons were found to be less dominated by British, European, or American styles and less masculine as well. Finally, the study concluded that with increased Internet involvement, the future of political cartoons is bright and brighter than ever before.

Similarly, Sani et al. (2014) conducted research to assess the political cartoons in the first decade of the millennium, 2000–2010. According to the researcher, the combination of words and political cartoons can inform and entertain the public on social and political matters. Political cartoons can similarly be used to censure iniquity and folly as a method of converting culture and its organization. Political cartoons have been developing and are used more in editorials and media as an energetic social treatise that facilitates newspapers and culture. They facilitate the creation of a political statement, social argument, and explanation. The researcher states that political cartoons play an energetic and impactful character over which the public is well-versed and reoriented on modern communal subjects touching the culture.

Political Cartoons and Their Roles from Prior Research

Research by Walker (2003) stated that the chief aim of editorial political cartoons was to provide public opinion. The researcher further stated that political cartoons were the source of leading and prime-time news, and the political cartoons emphasized the themes and thoughts of the newspaper's title. She remarked that cartoons were like "a complete punch package" despite their simplicity.

Danjoux (2005) conducted research and stated the importance of political cartoons in the battle against Israeli-Palestinian. The researcher also claimed that political cartoons could signify community temper and judgment in a way that was regularly unparalleled to other systems of public treatise. In research conducted by Chatterjee (2007), the author interpreted republic over the cartoon art of well-known Indian political caricaturist R. K. Laxman. The author, in her research, critically analyzed the cartoons of Laxman, particularly featuring "metaphors and manuscripts," "performative characteristics," and "article description." In addition, Susmita's research provided some information about Laxman's caricature art, specifically around the usage of signs and style of illustration.

Political cartoons are close to art, and research has focused on print/editorials. According to Abraham (2009), political cartoons are signs that editorial readers analyze to recognize multifaceted social matters. His study

explained how political cartoons are second-hand in editorials treatise to a conventional countrywide plan. Additionally, political cartoons focus on important (current) topics on a real-time basis over regular ones. They focus on wide exposure of such subjects countrywide. The main role of editorials is to target major issues and inform the public about subjects that are very important to them. Agenda-setting is also an easy way to draw the general public's attention toward hard-hitting subjects in politics and countries' social matters, which cannot be easily explained in text form (Abraham, 2009).

Gopalakrishnan (2019) explained that political cartoons could melt the heart of readers and sharpen their thoughts; they could make the readers laugh, smile, cringe, and have a lot of other feelings. It would be gross to underestimate the power of political cartoons, which could remind them of various sentiments. Cartoons have transformed from an approach to making the community giggle in a normal and reductionist way to an inspiring art form. Political cartoons are very belligerent; they arise from the road, like jingles and doodles, and virtually always try to speak the actuality of supremacy. The big question is how the cartoonist grabs the eyes of the editorial readers. To this, Gopalakrishnan stated that designing cartoons for the editorials is done differently. Cartoonists sketch a cartoon for a story in such a way that the reader's eyes fall for the text. The readers' experience should be wholesome and not piecemeal. He mentioned that the mixture of everything — the article, the caricature, humor, and background details — whips up that entire experience (Gopalakrishnan, 2019).

Thus, it can be inferred from the above discussion that though prior research has discussed the role played by political cartoons, none of the research discussed the changing role of political cartoons. Further, it can be stated that comparison and analysis of political cartoons over time can bring about reasonable findings. However, in the existing literature, no recent research was found to have focused on the analysis of Indian political cartoons over time. Thus, the present research has been focused on mending this gap in the existing literature and analyzing the changing face of Indian political cartoons.

In this direction, the study has focused on assessing the changing face over the past decade (2010–20). This time frame has been deliberately selected because this decade witnessed the maximum impact of technology and the Internet, owing to which the political cartoons witnessed the maximum transformation. This has been discussed in the next section.

Importance of the Past Decade for Political Cartoons

Technology has assisted in recognizing the aspects of life in a better way, thereby making the concepts clear and scientifically proven. It is essential, hence, to interconnect knowledge using several technical tools (Kanojia et al., 2022). Recognizing the aim and determination of interactive and advanced techniques to make a cartoon message actual is important. Cartoons have been broadly used to interconnect messages to crowds. Single-frame non-animated cartoons are more widely used as editorial cartoons in newspapers. The development of this art can be seen in today's editorials. The art is livelier and more colorful with the help of software like Adobe Photoshop, Coral-draw, Maya, and many others. Some cartoonists sketch the cartoon and then do touch-ups with digital art tools. As editorial styling changes daily, our new generation of artists has also polished their skills to work with today's technology-oriented editorials. As a result, political cartoons have changed a lot over the past decade. In recent Indian elections, major political parties used humoristic cartoon strips in editorials, memes for smartphones, and videos for television against opposite parties to make fun of political leaders and give readers direction. Such strategies are developed to win the confidence of common people.

Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi used cartoons as a tool in the 2014 elections. Political cartoons and Indian elections have a solid bond as political cartoonists deliver the best cartoons during the Indian political elections. However, history changed when Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi won the election from the political party BJP, Bharatiya Janta Party. The scale of the win was 282 seats out of 543 in India's lower house in 2014. As a result, the

total figure of politicians in the BJP-led partnership rose to more than 340. Since 1984, no signal party has won such a historic side-line election (Burke, 2014).

High-speed Internet-protected digital substructure and worldwide digital literateness are the two main apparatuses for the success of Digital India (Indu et al., 2022; Tanwar et al., 2021). It was a big step for the Indian commoner and editorial readers to adopt the digital India concept. The launching of different software and modified applications with high-speed Internet have encouraged cartoonists to do more experiments with art. In recent Indian elections, major political parties used humoristic cartoon strips in editorials, memes for smartphones, and videos for television against opposite parties to make fun of political leaders and direct readers to the party. Such strategies are developed to win the confidence of the electorate (Chatterjee, 2019).

With the technical advancement in the 21st century, political cartoons are attaining new heights. Though video and animated political cartoons are an old concept, animated political videos flourish on different news channels, accurately depicting political issues in the country humorously. Cartoonists are experimenting more with artwork and software to create political cartoons. The list of artists who are currently leading the cartoons in the digital world is Surrender, Munjal Ji, Satish Acharya, Keshav Venkataraghavan, and Kanika Mishra; some of them work with famous editorials, and some work over the Internet.

Thus, it will be interesting to assess the changing face of political cartoons over the past decade (2010–20). Also, no research was found to assess the changing face of political cartoons. In this regard, the present research focuses on answering the following research question:

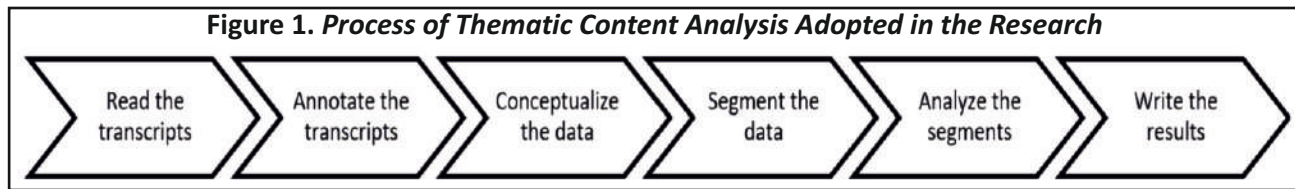
🔗 **Research Question :** How have political cartoons changed over the past decade (2010–20)?

Material and Methods

In the present research, the population of the study is editors of different editorials (English and Hindi) based in the Delhi-NCR region, India. For sampling, non-probability sampling has been used. Under non-probability sampling, all the population members do not have an equal opportunity to be selected in the sample. Therefore, the convenience sampling method has been adopted from the different non-probability sampling techniques. Owing to the restrictions of COVID-19 in the nation (Bhāle & Tongare, 2018; Sen, 2022), the researcher could not reach all the editors in the population; thus, a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was used for sampling. For convenience sampling, the newspapers with the highest average sales were considered from the list published by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2019). The research focused on the changing face of political cartoons from 2010–2020. The research was conducted during January 1, 2021–July 31, 2021.

Primary data was used in the study where in the interview method was adopted to collect the data in the form of interview transcripts. The study adopted a qualitative analysis method to analyze the data gathered using the interview method. The reason for selecting the interview method was that the researchers wanted to have an in-depth discussion with the editors to avoid any biases on the part of the researchers. The interview helped the researchers explain, better understand, and explore the editors' research opinions, behavior, and experiences in the field. A semi-structured open-ended qualitative questionnaire was used to collect the data through interviews. The questions revolved around understanding the changes in political cartooning: "How has the importance of political cartoons changed for the editorials in the past decade?"

The contact details of the editors were retrieved from the head offices of the newspapers. Then, the date and time were selected for the telephone interviews. On the set date and time, the interview was conducted. The average time of each interview was 15–20 minutes. In total, 21 editors were contacted, of which 14 gave the interviews. After that, we adopted the thematic content analysis approach of qualitative analysis. The steps adopted are presented in Figure 1.



The point of view of the respondents (editors) was further supported by secondary research like news articles, research papers, published thesis reports white papers, to name a few.

Analysis and Results

The demographic profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	8	57.1
	Female	6	42.9
Age	25–35 years	2	14.3
	35–45 years	7	50.0
	45–55 years	3	21.4
	55–65 Years	2	14.3
Total Tenure in Industry	> 5 years	1	7.1
	5–10 years	5	35.7
	10–15 years	5	35.7
	15–20 years	2	14.3
	More than 20 years	1	7.1

Changing Importance of Political Cartoons

Political cartoons have played an important role in society. These have been part of Indian editorials even before the independence. Owing to their unique quality of saying a lot in minimal or no words makes them even more significant. These can be harsh and humorous at the same time. The importance of political cartoons has been rightly stated by Rt Hon George Osborne, who is a British newspaper editor, as follows:

The great thing about a political cartoon is that it sums up the state of play at any moment in politics. It's clever, funny, and amusing. It informs and entertains us. It does everything in one drawing that a newspaper does throughout all of its pages.

In the same direction, when the respondents of the present research were asked about the changing importance of political cartoons in the editorials in the past decade, Respondent 4 stated:

As a matter of fact, media has changed a lot over the past decade, and so has the importance and position of political cartoons. As far as importance is concerned, political cartoons have also evolved with the evolution of media. As media has moved to other platforms, so have political

cartoons. Further, the humor is intact, but ironic behavior has enhanced owing to changing times, but it is still as insightful and entertaining as it was 10 years back.

Similar responses were observed in other respondents' comments, some of which are stated in Table 2. In the same direction, in the research conducted by Chen (2018) on humor, the author discussed the online trend of political cartoons. The author stated that political cartoons are now being presented as online memes to meet the changing needs of readers. Further, these are also available in the form of online political cartoons. According to the author, online memes and political cartoons are not a displacement of political cartoons in newspapers but are merely a shift to meet the changing demands, though the originality and authenticity of political cartoons remain in newspapers and daily editorials. From the above discussion, it can be inferred that political cartoons still hold the same importance as they did in 2010, but they are now also available on online platforms. This can be attributed to the changing needs of the time.

In contemporary India, political cartoons have had their influence on television also. Glove puppet displays like *Gustakhi Maaf* on NDTV are a sample of Indian political satire on television. Larger-than-life-sized marionettes are used to create humor in the show. SAB TV telecast a show called *Laxman Ki Duniya*, motivated by

Table 2. Changing Importance of Political Cartoons

Respondent	Quote
3	"Yes, the change can be observed. If talking specifically about political cartoons, they are as important as they were in the previous decade. The change is in terms of media; earlier, they were an important part of daily editorials but are now an inseparable part of online media like Twitter."
5	"Political cartoons are here to stay. There might be some change in the style of presentation and content, but the importance of political cartoons for newspapers has neither increased nor decreased."
12	"The importance is the same as it was 10 years back. The humor is the same, the coverage of the issue is same, it's just that they have now moved on to screens and are not just part of editorials and newspapers."

Figure 2. (a) Twitter Political Cartoon by Cartoonist Surendra (b) The Hindu Political Cartoon by Cartoonist Surendra



Source : (a) Sen (2019) ; (b) The Hindu (2019).

famous cartoonist R. K. Laxman and his representation of the common man. This displays the impression of political sarcasm in the Indian television business (Chakraborty, 2014).

A cartoonist in *The Times of India*, Sandeep Adhwaryu, said that the cartoon section in editorials has to turn out to be the most superfluous. The growth of technology and the Internet is making the conversation of political cartoons further independent, a spectacle welcomed by different cartoonists. Sandeep mentions as cartoons are spreading more on digital platforms and getting more into the public, editorials are showing more interest in cartoons. The 21st century is composed of a massive artistic hop. According to E. P. Unny, the famous political cartoonist, Indian political art/cartoons are attractive and more open. The world is becoming more visual, and people are engaging in dialogue more through images (Sirur, 2019).

Figure 2 depicts two political cartoons involving Prime Minister Narendra Modi by the same cartoonist Surendra, depicting similar aspects but on two different mediums—online medium Twitter and the newspaper *The Hindu*.

Change in the Subject Matter of the Political Cartoons

Political cartoons are analyses of politics involving humor and irony. Thus, as the face of politics changes, the face of political cartoons also changes accordingly. As stated by Respondent 4 :

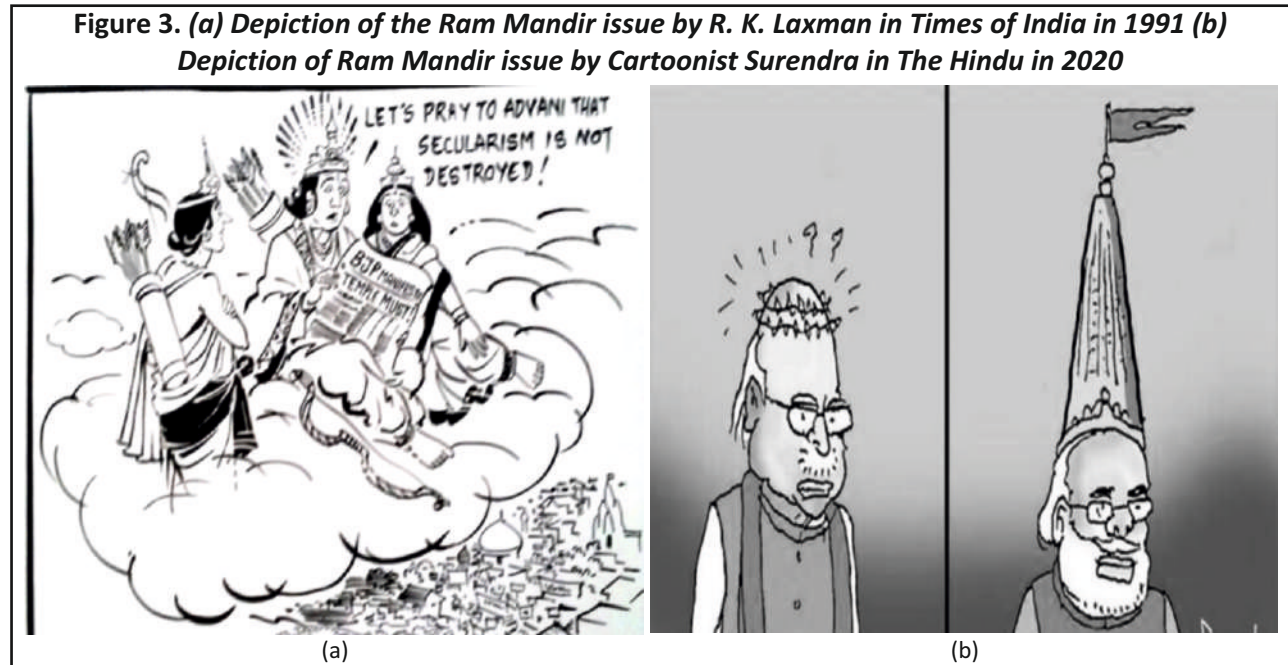
Previously, the political cartoons indirectly depicted the issue with no direct attacks, but now direct attacks can be observed. In earlier times, the symbols of the political parties were used to point toward them in political cartoons, but now the direct figures of the politicians are more readily used.

It means that now political cartoons have become more open and direct. The responses of other respondents also point in the same direction, some of which are presented in Table 3. The cartoons of famous cartoonist

Table 3. *Change in Subject Matter of Cartoons*

Respondent	Quote
8	"The emotions in a cartoon are real now and were real previously as well. Thus, the type of content covered has not changed. Previously the cartoons depicted the most current happening in the country's political world, and today, the scenario is the same. Though, the style of depiction might have changed. Today, cartoons are more refined with lesser filters, whereas, in the previous decade, cartoonists used many filters like the use of election symbols or the theme line of a party."
10	"I don't think content as such has changed. I mean, before 2010, cartoons were known to have a long-term impact on the readers, stronger than the impact of a written article, thereby keeping the issue alive for a longer period in the heart of the readers. The same is the approach and outcome of present political cartoons. The impact is stronger owing to a clear depiction. For example, now, in every political cartoon, the cartoon figures of PM Modi and Amit Shah are frequently used. This was not the case with Ex-PM Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi before 2010."
11	"I don't think content as such has changed or will change in the future. But yes, change is inevitable, so it cannot be avoided. For example, previously, cartoons were known to have a long-term impact on the readers, stronger than the impact of a written article, thereby keeping the issue alive for a longer period in the heart of the readers. But now, due to technology, the impact is not long-lasting due to breaking news on news channels and other mediums 27*7."
13	"Political cartoons are changing, yes. In the last decade and beyond, we saw only

black-and-white political cartoons; now, they have become colored. Further, the size of the cartoons has changed; in some newspapers, it has become smaller. But yes, the thing that has not changed is the position of political cartoons in newspapers; previously, they were placed on the front page, but now they can be seen only on the front page. This means that political cartoons have maintained their steadiness.”



R. K. Laxman support these responses. Some of the cartoons of R. K. Laxman used to focus on the cartoon figure of the “Common Man,” who used to point toward the political issues in the country using irony as the primary tool. However, these cartoons did not focus on any cartoon or political figure (Laxman, 2000; Suryawanshi, 2020). The comparison of the same issue before and after 2010 has been presented in Figure 3. Herein an absolute difference can be seen. Both cartoons talk about the Ram Mandir issue. However, while Figure 3(a) mentioned the name of a political party, Figure 3(b) created the cartoon of the political figure.

Change in the Role of Political Cartoonists

The role of the political cartoon has been evident right from its inception in India, which is to bring to the readers’ notice the current burning political issues and keep them burning through the cartoons long enough. They question the government, its policies, and the flaws of the social system as an outcome of politics. All in all, the role involves providing the reader with important information about the current scenario and presenting the angles of news for which they might not be prepared (Jose, 2020; Mackay, 2017). Discussing the role of political cartoonists, Respondent 9 mentioned :

The role of political cartoonists is that of a political critic. They have to be non-discriminatory and should be able to present their views on a common understanding of justice. This role has not changed much in the present scenario, though now cartoonists are more open in their presentation. For this reason, cartoonists are often forced to change their presentation by editors and proofreaders.

Table 4. Change in the Role of Political Cartoonists

Respondent	Quote
8	"There is no change in the role as such. The most important and unchanged role includes a clear presentation, clear of any biases and pressure. The political cartoons should be clear without focusing on one explicit class like individualism, and rather include a surplus of values."
10	"The role of a political cartoonist has been very important in Indian society. Political cartoonists are known to change the opinion and perspectives of the readers. The change that has been witnessed is innovativeness. Due to the presence of political cartoons online, the situation's insights keep changing in 24 hours. Moreover, readers are constantly exposed to memes. Thus, the cartoonists of the editorials must ensure their interpretation is unique and original without carrying any biases from the Internet."
12	"The acute voice of the political cartoonist can become a vital safety controller for society. They provide expression to thwart complaints and dissent. This has become even more straightforward, increasing the importance of political cartoons even more in newspapers."

The responses of other respondents also point in the same direction, some of which are presented in Table 4.

From the above discussion, it can be stated that the role of the cartoonist has remained unchanged. They still keep a check on the government, provide an analysis of the situation without any biases and review the government's policies and outcomes. Mackay (2017) also discussed the role of political cartoonists and highlighted similar findings, thereby supporting the present research findings. On the other hand, the newly required qualities of a political cartoonist include innovativeness, uniqueness, and self-regulation.

A Key Indicator of the Democratic Health

Cartoons are truly key indicators of the democratic health of a country. The type and acceptance of cartoons show how strong or weak the democracy of the country is. If democracy is being hampered, political cartoons have repeatedly displayed it openly to draw the attention of the common public. This was very well depicted by the cartoons of R. K. Laxman, wherein the main lead, the common man, used to witness the failing Indian politics and degrading democracy silently (Chatterjee, 2007; Khurana, 2019). This era of R. K. Laxman openly showed the state of Indian politics and democracy. The change in this health indicator of democracy has been discussed by respondents wherein Respondent 1 stated :

This is a true statement. Political cartoons do present the actual health of democracy in our country indeed. This has been rightfully observed in the time of independence or emergency, the Gujarat riots, the 2G scam, the abolition of Article 370, and the Delhi riots. Political cartoons have been openly depicting the pros and cons of democracy at each instance and will continue to do the same.

This statement can be supported by the cartoons in Figure 4, depicting different major incidences of Indian politics and democracy. Other respondents' replies also point in the same direction, some of which are presented in Table 5.

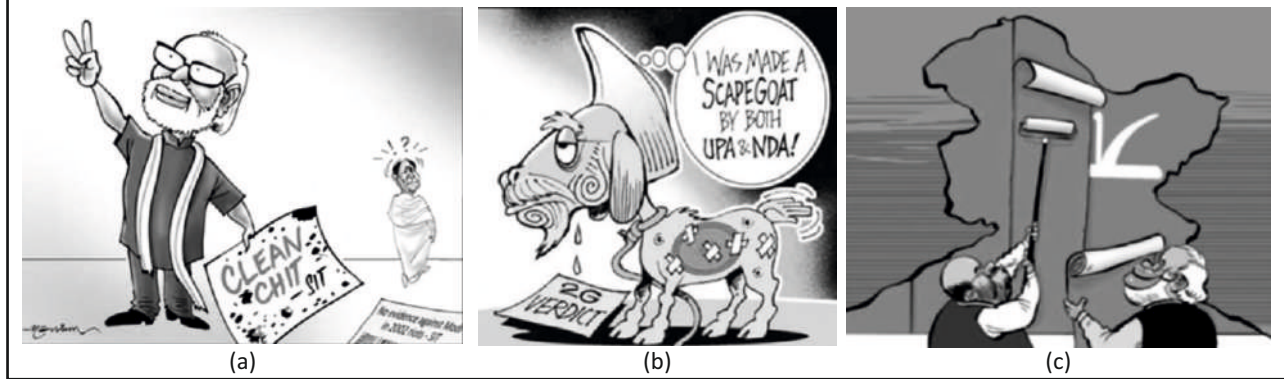
In the same direction, the famous political cartoonist E. P. Unny stated that a political cartoon is not a personal piece of perception of the political cartoonist. Rather, a cartoonist yields to news, current ongoing political scenarios, and the context around him, then develops the political cartoon based on his/her analysis. Thus, political cartoons are a true picture of political situations and events in the nation (Padmanabhan, 2015).

From the above discussion, it is clear that political cartoons have played the health indicator role and will supposedly continue, irrespective of the era. This can be supported by the fact that the four pillars of our

Table 5. Political Cartoons as Key Indicators of Democratic Health

Respondent	Quote
11	"Absolutely. Political cartoons are the absolute indicator of democratic health. Cartoonists have time and again presented the bad health of Indian democracy in their cartoons by using irony as the major tool. This is not only true for previous decades but can also be observed in the present times."
7	"The sole role of political cartoons in India is to keep on informing the readers about the latest political happenings in the country, which usually revolve around democracy. So irrespective of the era, the mere existence of political cartoons suggests the depiction of democracy in our country."
13	"Political cartoons in newspapers play a role in the political dialogue of a society that makes available freedom of speech and allows the press to depict the existence of a free society. Owing to this feature, political cartoons make a critical feature of newspapers, which will continue to indicate the democratic health of the nation."

Figure 4. Cartoon on (a) Verdict of Gujarat Riots by Narsimha P., India Today (b) 2G Scam Verdicts, Times of India (c) Abolition of Article 370, Economic Times



democracy are Legislature, Executive, Judiciary, and Media (journalism). Therefore, media is one of the basic building blocks of our democracy, which means that political cartoons (part of media) cannot be separated from democracy until democracy prevails.

Conclusion and Implications

Political cartoons are not just mere drawings. They are a reflection of the politics in the country and democracy as a whole. They depict the "Right to freedom" of Indian citizens, thereby practicing freedom of speech and expression. Political cartoonists expose and question the government and the constitutionality of new policies and amendments to maintain societal justice. They help their readers and followers to identify violations of their freedoms and liberties. When it comes to communities, political cartoons facilitate the citizens to identify their role in the community and familiarize them with their responsibilities toward society. These are some of the most common and important roles played by political cartoons for decades now. But as times are changing, media and politics are changing. Therefore, it is essential to understand how political cartoons are changing, especially when they have played an important role in democracy.

The present research attempts to study whether the face of Indian political cartoons has changed in the past decade. The study finds a definite change in political cartoons but not in their role in society. It also discovers that

political cartoons still hold the same importance as in 2010, but their availability is now on online platforms as well to meet the needs of readers. As far as content is concerned, the addressed content has not changed over the past decade, but the presentation method has changed. The study further finds that the role played by political cartoonists has not changed over the past decade. It is still the same, that is, to keep a check on the government and provide unbiased insights and different angles to a political situation. However, newer qualities have been introduced in the role: innovativeness, uniqueness, and self-regulation. Finally, it establishes that political cartoons were and are a key indicator of India's democratic health. Therefore, it is unlikely that the role of political cartoons will change in the future.

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

Thus, the present research presents and discusses the changing face of Indian political cartoons. The research findings can be used by practicing political cartoonists to update themselves. Further, it can also be analyzed by the newspapers to keep the dying art of political cartooning alive in the newspapers. The research faced the limitation of limited respondents. There are 14 respondents in the research based on whose perception the results have been drawn. Therefore, this approach can introduce biases in the research. For future research, quantitative research should be conducted to understand the perception of the readers as well as how the face of political cartoons is changing.

Authors' Contribution

Ananya Singh conceived the idea and developed a qualitative design for the empirical study. She extracted research papers with high repute, filtered these based on keywords, and generated concepts and codes relevant to the study design. Dr. Anantkumar Dada Ozarkar verified the analytical methods and supervised the study. The interviews and discussions were conducted in the local language and English. The interviews in English were transcribed, and the ones taken in the local language were translated into English and transcribed. Ananya Singh and Dr. Anantkumar Dada Ozarkar did the qualitative research. They wrote the manuscript in consultation with each other.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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