

Original Article

Visual Satire in Editorial Cartoons in Nepali Newspapers

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Abstract: Print journalism's evolution began with groundbreaking technological advancements. The invention of movable type by Bi Sheng in China around 1040 AD revolutionized printing. The study examined the role and impact of visual satire in editorial cartoons published in Nepali newspapers, specifically Kantipur and Naya Patrika. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative content analysis, qualitative thematic analysis, and expert interviews to explore how editorial cartoons utilize satire to comment on political and social issues. A total of 23 cartoons were analyzed, with 16 from Kantipur and 7 from Naya Patrika, covering the period from 2080 Poush 27 to 2080 Falgun 2. Additionally, qualitative expert interviews with prominent cartoonists provided deeper insights into their creative processes and perspectives on satire. The study revealed that both publications use satire predominantly to critique political figures and societal norms. Kantipur is characterized by its use of irony and monochromatic shades, while Naya Patrika features vibrant colors and symbolism. The study also examined how beauty consciousness affects the visual composition and audience reception of cartoons, highlighting how aesthetic considerations enhance the impact of satire. Editorial cartoons are not created in isolation but are influenced by the political and economic affiliations of the media outlets they appear in. Many newspapers have political alignments or connections with interest groups, which affects how issues are framed. Cartoonists, whether knowingly or unknowingly, may contribute to propaganda by reflecting the editorial stance of their media outlets. The framing of news stories and the media's political leanings shape the content of the cartoons, often pushing specific agendas. The findings underscore the importance of editorial cartoons in shaping public discourse, challenging authority, and advocating for social change in Nepal.

Keywords: editorial cartoons, agenda-setting theory, newspapers, visual satire

1. INTRODUCTION

Print journalism's evolution began with groundbreaking technological advancements. The invention of movable type by Bi Sheng in China around 1040 AD revolutionized printing [1]. However, it was Johannes Gutenberg's introduction of the Gutenberg press in Germany in 1440 that truly transformed written material production and dissemination, making books and later newspapers more accessible to the public. The first true newspaper, "Relation aller Fürnemmen und gedenckwürdigen Historien," was published by Johann Carolus in Strasbourg in 1605. The weekly publication is recognized as the world's first newspaper, marking the beginning of regularly distributed news. In England, the first newspaper was the "Oxford Gazette," published in 1665. It later became the "London Gazette" and is still published today, albeit in a different format [2]. The first Nepali-language newspaper was Gorkha Bharat Jeevan, published in Varanasi, India, by poet Motiram Bhatta. The publication date is disputed, with some

sources saying 1943 V.S. and others 1952 V.S. [3]. Sudha Sagar is considered the first true Nepali newspaper published in Nepal, came out in 1955 V.S. In 1958 V.S. (1901), Prime Minister Dev Sumsher Rana renamed 'Type Press' to 'Gorakhapatra Press' after expanding its capacity. Nepal's oldest newspaper, 'Gorakhapatra,' started that year. The Gorakhapatra Corporation was established in 2020 V.S. (1964). The press printed newspapers like Gorakhapatra and The Rising Nepal and remained the government press until 2029 V.S. (1972 AD) when it became HMG Printing Press. Gorakhapatra started as a weekly and became a daily in 2017 V.S. (1960) [4]. An editorial cartoon, also a political cartoon is a drawing (often including caricature) made to convey "editorial commentary on politics, politicians, and current events." The word cartoon, was, however, derived from the Italian word "Cartone," during the early 16th century, which means large paper or preparatory drawing. It is also linked to another word from the Dutch language, "Karton," which means cardboard or pasteboard. The word "cartoon" was first recorded in English in 1671 referring to "preparatory drawings for an art" [5]. For centuries, political cartoons have been a potent medium for social commentary and political critique due to their skillful fusion of satire and imagery. These frequently hilarious, occasionally scathing illustrations use the pen as a weapon, cutting through pretense, exposing hypocrisy, and igniting important conversations [6]. The earliest editorial cartoons that appeared in the 18th century were made by woodcut printing. Woodcuts involved carving images into wooden blocks, which were then inked and pressed onto paper. The technique allowed early satirists like James Gillray and George Cruikshank to reach a wide audience with their political commentary [7]. The first political cartoons appeared in England during the 1720s (First Amendment Museum, 2021). William Hogarth was considered a pioneer for his satirical works along with James Gillray and George Cruikshank, who were reckoned as the "Big Three" of 18th-century cartooning. As printing technology advanced in the 19th century, lithography became the preferred method. Lithography, invented by Alois Senefelder, allowed for more intricate and detailed illustrations, and it quickly became popular in newspapers and magazines. The technique enabled artists like Thomas Nast, considered the father of American editorial cartooning, to create enduring political cartoons that significantly influenced public opinion [8]. The evolution of technology in political cartoon-making has significantly transformed the craft, enhancing its reach and impact. Initially, political cartoons were hand-drawn and printed in newspapers using lithography, a labor-intensive process that limited the speed and distribution. The advent of offset printing in the 20th century streamlined production, allowing for more detailed and vibrant illustrations. The digital revolution in the late 20th and early 21st centuries marked a profound shift. Cartoon which once meant drawings on paper were understood as the animated media or short films like Tom and Jerry, Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, etc. After the advent of Television. What past generations read as cartoons in comics, kids after the advent of TV watched on television, and today's generation watches on YouTube. With the introduction of graphic design software like Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, cartoonists could create more precise and complex images, experiment with colors and textures, and easily correct errors. The internet further revolutionized political cartooning by providing a global platform for instant publication and distribution, making cartoons accessible to a wider audience. Editorial cartoons come in various forms, each serving unique purposes and using distinct stylistic elements. Gag cartoons, typically single-panel with humorous captions, rely on clever wordplay or visual puns for quick humor, often commenting on everyday situations or minor political events. Comic strips consist of multiple panels telling a short, continuous story with recurring characters, allowing for in-depth storytelling and character development. Single-panel cartoons convey complete ideas with varying tones, from humorous to serious, making poignant observations or critiques on current events. Editorial illustrations blend fine art and cartooning, providing visual interpretation of editorial content, often focusing on conveying the gravity of topics without relying on humor. Each type brings unique strengths, enriching media and public discourse through diverse approaches to critique, inform, and entertain audiences [9]. With the advent of the internet, the cartoon sections in newspapers have often been neglected in Nepal, and

only a handful of newspapers currently employ cartoonists. While newspapers have shifted to online platforms, cartoons have not found their way to the online medium due to limited knowledge among news portal editors about cartoons. Notable contemporary Nepali cartoonists include Abin Shrestha, Rajesh Manandhar, Rajesh KC, Rabin Sayami, Basu Kshitiz, and Anup Gurung. Editorial cartoons, known for their sharp wit and incisive commentary, often find themselves at the center of controversies due to their provocative nature. These cartoons serve as a potent medium for political and social critique, frequently challenging authority and societal norms. However, their boldness can lead to significant backlash. One notable example is the Danish cartoon controversy in 2005, where caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in *Jyllands-Posten* sparked global protests and debates about freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs [10]. Controversies related to cartoons are common worldwide, and Nepali cartoonists have not been an exception. On Kartik 21, 2049 V.S., Mohan Shyam Maharjan (Khokana) created a cartoon that was published in *Bimarsha* weekly. The cartoon portrayed the then Chief Justice Bishwanath Upadhyaya as a monkey. The Supreme Court found the cartoon to be in contempt of court. As a result, the newspaper's editor, Harihar Birahi, was fined 500 rupees and sentenced to seven days in jail, after which he was released. The incident ignited a debate about the boundaries and ethics of editorial cartooning. The cartoon depicted the tense anticipation surrounding the Tanakpur Treaty case in court [11]. Chief Justice Upadhyaya was shown as a monkey perched atop a coconut tree, with political leaders from different political parties standing on either side of the tree. They were urging the monkey to throw the fruits to their side. The creation of editorial cartoons involves navigating a complex landscape of ethical and legal considerations. Ethically, cartoonists are tasked with the responsibility of being fair and truthful while avoiding gratuitous offense. The ethical codes of journalism, such as those outlined by the Society of Professional Journalists, emphasize the importance of minimizing harm, seeking truth, and maintaining independence. Legally, cartoonists must be aware of the boundaries set by laws on defamation, hate speech, and intellectual property. Defamation laws vary by country, but they generally protect individuals from false statements that could harm their reputation. Hate speech laws, on the other hand, seek to prevent expressions that incite violence or discrimination against particular groups. In Nepal, editorial cartoons have become an essential medium for expressing political and social commentary through visual satire. However, despite their widespread use and popularity, there is limited scholarly exploration of the common themes these cartoons portray and how they influence public discourse.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a mixed-methods study design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a thorough analysis of visual satire in editorial cartoons within Nepali newspapers. The qualitative component enabled an in-depth exploration of artistic techniques, cultural contexts, and nuanced interpretations of visual satire. Concurrently, the quantitative approach facilitated systematic content analysis to quantify and categorize themes, motifs, and trends across a selected corpus of editorial cartoons. For data collection, the study focused on two major Nepali newspapers, *Kantipur Daily* and *Naya Patrika*, during the timeframe from 2080 Poush 27 to 2080 Falgun 2. The period was chosen purposively to capture a snapshot of editorial cartoons published during a politically significant time in Nepal. Primary data includes the collection of original editorial cartoons from these newspapers, specifically examining themes and techniques of visual satire prevalent in their publications. Secondary data consists of a review of existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and previous studies related to satire, semiotics, and editorial cartoons, providing a foundation for comparative analysis and contextual understanding. The study employs a nonprobability, purposive sampling technique for both content analysis and expert interviews. For content analysis, purposive sampling was used to select editorial cartoons from two prominent Nepali newspapers, *Kantipur* and *Naya Patrika*, based on their relevance to the study's focus on visual satire. The sample includes 23 cartoons — 16 from *Kantipur* and 7 from

Naya Patrika—chosen for their representative coverage of the timeframe from 2080 Poush 27 to 2080 Falgun 2. The purposive sampling approach ensures that the selected cartoons are pertinent to the study objectives and provide a comprehensive view of the use of satire in these publications. For the qualitative expert interviews, purposive sampling was utilized to select prominent cartoonists who have significant experience and expertise in the field. The technique allowed the study to gather in-depth insights from key individuals whose perspectives are crucial for understanding the creative processes and thematic considerations in editorial cartoons. The expert interviews aim to complement the content analysis by providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of the role of visual satire in Nepali journalism. Data analysis involved a rigorous process of visual examination and semiotic interpretation. Visual analysis entailed a detailed examination of artistic elements such as caricature, symbolism, and aesthetic choices employed in editorial cartoons from Kantipur Daily and Naya Patrika. Semiotic analysis delved into the underlying meanings conveyed through symbols, metaphors, and visual representations, applying theoretical frameworks to decode the satire's socio-political commentary. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency analysis and thematic coding, with findings presented through tables and graphs to identify patterns and trends in visual satire. The study adheres to several ethical principles to ensure the integrity and respectfulness of the study process. Firstly, informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the qualitative expert interviews. Participants were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential impacts, ensuring they understood their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. All information provided by interviewees was handled with strict confidentiality, and data was securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. Respect for intellectual property was also a key consideration. Proper credit was given to the creators of the editorial cartoons analyzed, and any use of cartoon images was confined to the scope of the study. Relevant permissions were sought to avoid any copyright infringement. Accuracy and integrity were prioritized in the analysis and reporting of findings. The study ensured that all conclusions were drawn from the evidence collected and avoided any misrepresentation of the cartoons or the views of the interview participants. The commitment to accurate reporting helps maintain the credibility of the study. Finally, the study was conducted with cultural sensitivity, recognizing the importance of respecting local norms and values. Care was taken to avoid any content that could be considered disrespectful or offensive to individuals or groups depicted in the cartoons. By adhering to these ethical considerations, the study upholds the rights and a contribution of all involved and maintains high academic standards.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 01: Frequency of Editorial Cartoons in Newspapers

S.N.	Newspaper	Total Issues Studied	Issues with Cartoons	Percentage of Issues with Cartoons
1.	Kantipur	34	16	47.06%
2.	Naya Patrika	34	7	20.59%
Total		68	23	33.82%

The analysis indicates that Kantipur Daily is more consistent in featuring editorial cartoons compared to Naya Patrika. The higher percentage in Kantipur suggests a greater emphasis on using visual satire as a means of commentary. The frequency analysis sets the stage for further examination of the content and thematic elements within the cartoons published by these newspapers.

Table 02: Size of Editorial Cartoons in Newspapers

S.N.	Newspaper	1 Column	3 Column	Total
1.	Kantipur	13 (81.25%)	3 (18.75%)	16 (100%)
2.	Naya Patrika	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	7 (100%)
	Total	23 (86.96%)	3 (13.04%)	23 (100%)

Table 03: Placement of Editorial Cartoon in Newspapers

S.N.	Newspaper	Front Page	Editorial Page	Other Page	Total
1.	Kantipur	15 (93.75%)	0 (0%)	1 (6.25%)	16 (100%)
2.	Naya Patrika	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (100%)
	Total	22 (95.65%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.35%)	23 (100%)

The dominant placement on the front page indicates that both newspapers consider editorial cartoons as a significant tool for engaging readers with visual satire and commentary right from the outset. The positioning likely enhances the cartoons' effectiveness in delivering their messages and influencing public opinion.

Table 04: Breakdown of Editorial Cartoons by Theme

S.N.	Subject	Kantipur	Naya Patrika	Total
1.	Co-operatives Scam	2 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (8.70%)
2.	Appointment of TU VC	1 (6.25%)	1 (14.28%)	2 (8.70%)
3.	Developmental Issues	4 (25%)	0 (0%)	4 (17.39%)
4.	Political Issues	7 (43.75%)	3 (42.86%)	10 (43.48%)
5.	Other Social Issues	2 (12.5%)	3 (42.86%)	5 (21.74%)
	Total	16 (100%)	7 (100%)	23 (100%)

Table 05: Techniques Used in Editorial Cartoons

S.N.	Techniques	Kantipur	Naya Patrika	Total
1.	Irony	13	6	19
2.	Symbolism	6	3	9
3.	Caricature	2	0	2
4.	Juxtaposition	2	1	3
	Total	23	10	33

Table 06: Visual Elements Used in Newspapers

S.N.	Visual Elements	Kantipur	Naya Patrika	Total
1.	Text	16	7	23
2.	Background element	9	1	10
3.	Color/Style/Shades	6	7	13
4.	Facial Expression	15	5	20
	Total	46	20	66

Table 07: Main Actor in the Editor Cartoons of Newspapers

S.N.	Subject	Kantipur	Naya Patrika	Total
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1.	Prime Minister	4 (25%)	0 (0%)	4 (17.39%)
2.	Government Officials	1 (6.25%)	2 (28.27%)	3 (13.04%)
3.	Other Political Figure	6 (37.5%)	4 (57.14)	10 (43.48%)
4.	Elite figure	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.35%)
5.	Common Citizens	3 (18.75%)	1 (14.28%)	4 (17.39%)
6.	Criminals	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.35%)
Total		16 (100%)	7 (100%)	23 (100%)

Table 08: Use of Characters in Editorial Cartoon in Newspapers

S.N.	Characters	Kantipur	Naya Patrika	Total
1.	Single Character	1 (6.25%)	2 (28.57%)	3 (13.04%)
2.	Multi Characters	15 (93.75%)	5 (71.43%)	20 (86.96%)
Total		16 (100%)	7 (100%)	23 (100%)

The preference for multi-character cartoons in both newspapers suggests that cartoonists find it effective to use multiple characters to create dynamic interactions, add depth to their commentary, and provide a broader perspective on the issues being addressed. Single-character cartoons, while less frequent, can focus more intensely on the individual's viewpoint, often providing a sharp and focused critique.

Table 09: Representation of Gender in Editorial Cartoon in Newspapers

S.N.	Gender Representation	Kantipur	Naya Patrika	Total
1.	Male Dominated	12 (75%)	6 (85.72%)	18 (78.26%)
2.	Female Dominated	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3.	Mixed	4 (25%)	1 (14.28%)	5 (21.74%)
Total		16 (100%)	7 (100%)	23 (100%)

Female-dominated cartoons, where female characters are the main focus, were absent in both newspapers, accounting for 0% of the total. This highlights a significant underrepresentation of female perspectives in the editorial cartoons analyzed. Mixed-gender cartoons, where both male and female characters appear, were present in 21.74% of the total cartoons. Kantipur featured mixed-gender cartoons in 25% of its issues, while Naya Patrika featured them in 14.28%. The overwhelming presence of male-dominated cartoons suggests a gender disparity in representation within the editorial cartoons of Kantipur and Naya Patrika. The disparity may reflect broader societal gender dynamics and the underrepresentation of female perspectives in political and social commentary. Further exploration into the reasons behind that gender disparity and its implications for the portrayal of diverse viewpoints in editorial cartoons could provide valuable insights into the role of cartoons in shaping public discourse and perceptions. The analysis underscores the importance of diversity and inclusivity in media representation, including within the realm of editorial cartoons, to ensure a more balanced and reflective portrayal of societal issues and perspectives. On Poush 28, 2080, Kantipur Daily published a cartoon set in a jail, featuring two suspects: one good-looking and the other resembling a stereotypical goon with tattoos. The well-groomed suspect questions the goon, highlighting his lack of status as a speaker, celebrity, athlete, or literary figure, and wonders why he is incarcerated. The cartoon satirizes the societal misconception that good-looking or high-status individuals are less likely to commit crimes. It also critiques celebrities who exploit their fame to engage in unethical behavior, emphasizing that appearances can be deceiving. The analysis suggests that societal perceptions based on appearances

are often flawed and highlights the need to critically evaluate individuals based on their actions rather than looks. On Magh 1, Kantipur published a cartoon with a similar theme. It depicted a thug pointing a gun at a cooperative office teller, who laughs and dismisses the thug based on his appearance. The cartoon comments on the recent cooperative scams involving politicians and respected individuals, mocking the idea that criminals always look the part. It also highlights the hypocrisy and dual nature of politicians involved in such scams. The interpretation here points to the underlying issue of trust and deception, illustrating that those in positions of power can be just as deceitful as stereotypical criminals. On Magh 2, Kantipur's cartoon targeted former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Nepali political culture. Dahal is shown rushing to inaugurate the Melamchi Water Project for the fifth time in three years, mocking the frequent, superficial inaugurations without addressing underlying issues. The cartoon criticizes politicians' obsession with public appearances and inaugurations for personal publicity rather than ensuring project completion and sustainability. The analysis reflects on the inefficiency and performative nature of political leadership, questioning the genuine intentions behind such public displays. On Magh 3, a cartoon in Kantipur highlighted the negligence of government officials. It showed officials inspecting an unfinished road, where a bus driver humorously remarks about the non-existent road. The cartoon critiques the incompetence and lack of accountability in government development projects. The interpretation emphasizes the gap between governmental promises and actual outcomes, shedding light on the widespread issue of corruption and mismanagement in infrastructure development. On Magh 5, Kantipur's cartoon depicted an office assistant asserting power over former PM Dahal, who is reduced to requesting rather than ordering tea. That illustrates Dahal's political vulnerability and dependence on coalition partners, reflecting his precarious position since taking office. The analysis here underscores the shifting dynamics of power within political spheres, where even high-ranking officials can find themselves at the mercy of their subordinates. On Magh 8, another Kantipur cartoon showed a minister inaugurating a new road, only to be interrupted by a worker ready to dig for a sewer system inauguration. The satirizes the lack of coordination between government departments and the ministers' focus on ceremonial activities over substantial work. The interpretation reveals the inefficiency and shortsightedness prevalent in government operations, where the focus is often on short-term gains rather than long-term planning. On Magh 10, a large cartoon portrayed PM Dahal overwhelmed by his instructions, symbolizing bureaucratic inefficiency and his propensity for issuing directives without achieving results. The cartoon critiques the administrative inefficiencies and the tendency of leaders to rely on excessive directives rather than tangible actions. The interpretation highlights the bureaucratic red tape and the often-futile nature of top-down management without effective implementation. On Magh 11, a cartoon addressed parking issues in Kathmandu, with Mayor Balen Shah advising a motorcyclist to wait for a shop to close for parking. It highlights the city's parking crisis and the inadequacies in urban planning and management. The analysis points to the growing urban challenges faced by Kathmandu and the need for better infrastructure and planning to address such issues effectively. On Magh 12, a cartoon mocked National Assembly members, showing one fainting from victory rather than loss. It satirizes politicians who secure positions in the assembly despite electoral defeats, critiquing the patronage system. The interpretation underscores the flaws in the political appointment system, where merit and public support are often overlooked in favor of patronage and connections. On Magh 15, a cartoon targeted corrupt politicians, showing a political leader's wife questioning his absence from scandals, implying that scandals are a norm for success in politics. The cartoon lashes at the pervasive corruption in politics, where involvement in scandals is seen as a badge of success. The interpretation reflects on the normalization of corrupt practices within the political landscape and the ethical decay it represents. On Magh 17, the day after Martyrs' Day, a cartoon depicted politicians with large bellies, emphasizing their neglect of martyrs' sacrifices. It criticizes the leaders' focus on self-interest and corruption over honoring those who fought for the country. The analysis highlights the disconnect between political

leaders and the values of sacrifice and service, underscoring the betrayal of the martyrs' legacy. On Magh 22, a cartoon featured a criminal preferring lawyer over doctors, highlighting the pervasive legal manipulation and corruption in the justice system. The cartoon satirizes the ease with which criminals manipulate the legal system to their advantage. The interpretation reveals the deep-rooted issues within the justice system, where legal loopholes and corruption undermine justice. On Magh 24, another cartoon on cooperative scams showed a poor man worrying about his savings, ridiculing cooperative owners who embezzle funds from vulnerable individuals. The cartoon critiques the exploitation of the poor by those in power, reflecting on the broader issue of economic injustice. The interpretation emphasizes the need for stricter regulations and accountability to protect vulnerable populations from such exploitation. On Magh 25, a cartoon depicted a thug brought to Mayor Balen Shah for city policing, satirizing the municipal authorities' heavy-handed and arbitrary actions. The cartoon criticizes the aggressive and often unjust actions of city police under the guise of maintaining order. The interpretation highlights the misuse of authority and the need for more balanced and just law enforcement practices. On Magh 29, a caricature of PM Dahal interacting with a chair labeled "TU Vice Chancellor" criticized the political interference in academic appointments, reflecting the biased selection process based on political affiliations. The cartoon satirizes the politicization of academic institutions, where appointments are influenced by political connections rather than merit. The interpretation points to the detrimental impact of such practices on the quality and integrity of academic leadership. On Falgun 1, a cartoon compared Maoist leaders and commoners, showing a leader in a car and a commoner on a bicycle. The leader's dismissive comment about celebrating Jana Yuddha Diwas highlights the disparity between leaders who gained power and the commoners who suffered during the conflict. It satirizes the top-level Maoist leaders who used the rebellion as a ladder to political success and forgot their contribution once they grabbed power. The interpretation critiques the betrayal of the original ideals of the rebellion and the social and economic inequalities that persist despite the political change. On Poush 17, Naya Patrika published a cartoon satirizing Nepali Congress leader Chandra Bhandari. The cartoon juxtaposes Bhandari's face with a half-moon under the title "Chandra Grahana" (Lunar Eclipse). The caption reads, "What is the definition of balatkar? I see only chamatkar." The satire was sparked by Bhandari's social media post questioning the legal definition of rape. "Balatkar" translates to "rape" or "exploitation," while "chamatkar" means "miracle" or "wonder." The cartoon cleverly critiques the tendency to gloss over serious issues like sexual violence with euphemistic or superficial terms. It questions the sincerity and awareness of those who dismiss or downplay grave matters, highlighting societal attitudes towards sensitive topics. On Magh 10, Naya Patrika published a cartoon criticizing the collaboration between the government and bureaucracy. The cartoon shows a government employee reading a newspaper with a headline featuring Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's frustration over accusations of government inefficiency. A bureaucrat sarcastically remarks to colleagues, "kaamai nagari ta ke gali khanu hau?" ("How can we be criticized without doing any work?"). The ironic statement exposes bureaucratic inertia and the disconnect between political rhetoric and administrative realities. By humorously highlighting the contradiction, the cartoon critiques the perceived laziness and accountability issues within government institutions, reflecting broader public frustration with bureaucratic inefficiencies. On Magh 17, Naya Patrika published a cartoon satirizing political leaders' superficial observance of Martyrs' Day. The cartoon depicts a conversation between two politicians, with one cynically asking the other, "Shahid ko yaad aayo re? Lau! Kina ni? Shahid Diwas ta hijai sakiyo ta" ("You remembered the martyrs? Oh! Why? Martyrs' Day was just yesterday"). The satire underscores the performative nature of political remembrance, where commemorations like Martyrs' Day are reduced to mere formalities devoid of genuine reflection or action. The cartoon critiques the insincerity and opportunism of leaders who exploit such occasions for political gain without meaningful engagement with the sacrifices of martyrs. On Magh 19, a cartoon from Naya Patrika depicted two political leaders reacting despondently to a

headline about Nepal's improved corruption perception. One leader remark, "Mandi ko asar le hamrai paisa ni baki chhodena" ("The impact of the recession has left our money untouched as well"). The cartoon satirizes the disconnect between political rhetoric on combating corruption and personal priorities amid economic challenges. By humorously contrasting national progress on corruption perception with leaders' self-centered concerns, the cartoon critiques the gap between public promises and private behaviors, highlighting the ethical and accountability issues among Nepal's political elite.

On Magh 24, Naya Patrika's cartoon reacted to news about Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) planning to purchase new aircraft. Two political leaders are shown reading the news, with one exclaiming, "Wow, that is mouth-watering." The cartoon satirizes the potential for corruption or misuse of public funds in large-scale government procurements, such as aircraft purchases by NAC. The phrase "mouth-watering" suggests the allure of financial gain or kickbacks associated with such deals. Moreover, the cartoon critiques the transparency and decision-making process in such high-stakes government transactions, highlighting concerns about accountability and the efficient use of taxpayer money. Through humor and irony, the cartoon draws attention to the ethical implications of major government spending decisions and the need for greater transparency and oversight.

In the Magh 26 cartoon from Naya Patrika, a postman receives a letter stating, "Your post has been abandoned." The cartoon humorously critiques inefficiencies or neglect within Nepal's postal service. The irony lies in a postman, responsible for delivering letters, receiving a notice about a failed delivery. The situation humorously highlights bureaucratic challenges or service delivery issues within the postal system, inviting reflection on the effectiveness and reliability of public services in Nepal.

On Falgun 1, Naya Patrika published a cartoon addressing political interference in academic appointments. The cartoon responds to news that non-professors are applying for the position of Vice-Chancellor. Readers react with surprise, with one noting, "They found non-academic, not non-political." The satire critiques the prevalence of political patronage over meritocracy in educational institutions, highlighting concerns about the qualifications and competency of leaders appointed based on political connections rather than academic credentials. The cartoon emphasizes the impact of political influence on educational governance, raising questions about institutional integrity and the quality of leadership in Nepal's academic sector.

These cartoons use satire to critique various facets of Nepali society, from political hypocrisy and bureaucratic inefficiency to ethical concerns in governance and public services. Through humor and irony, they highlight societal issues and encourage reflection on the integrity and accountability of those in power.

Abin Shrestha (personal communication, September 2, 2024), a cartoonist for Kantipur Daily, emphasized the significance of cartoons as a form of expression, viewing them as a medium rooted in news and societal issues. Shrestha addressed the frequent criticism he faces for focusing on negative topics in his work. In response, he argues that cartoons are meant to confront negativity and irregularities, asserting that if society were perfect, the need for cartoons would disappear. He also shared his concern about society's tendency to prioritize negative news, often overlooking the positive, a dynamic that deeply troubles him. Shrestha sees cartoons as a bridge between journalism and art, positioning cartoonists as both journalists and artists. He reflected on a time when neither artists nor journalists accepted cartoonists in their circles, but it has changed as the role of cartoonists has evolved. For Shrestha, freedom is fundamental to creating impactful cartoons; without it, the effectiveness of a cartoon is significantly diminished [12]. Addressing the diversity of readership, Shrestha discussed his experiences working for both Kantipur daily and Samaya magazine, highlighting how he tailored his work for different audiences. While his cartoons for Samaya catered to a more intellectual readership, his work for Kantipur was crafted to appeal to a broader demographic, including children and the elderly [13]. He also noted the dominance of political cartoons in Nepal, explaining that readers gravitate toward cartoons featuring politicians over those on other subjects. The persistence of traditional caricatures, like politicians in *daura suruwal*, illustrates how few new characters have emerged in the genre. Despite the wide reach of political cartoons, Shrestha expressed frustration that political leaders

remain unchanged despite decades of satirical criticism. An author [14] also acknowledged the growing role of social media for cartoonists, where they can post their work and gain popularity, yet he emphasized the continued importance of newspapers for a professional career. He mentioned the financial hardships faced by cartoonists in Nepal, particularly in an expensive city like Kathmandu, where journalism still does not offer substantial income. Reflecting on the social impact of his work, Shrestha recounted an instance where one of his cartoons, depicting Dr. Govinda KC's hunger strike, might have played a role in prompting government action. However, he remains cautious about overstating the direct influence of cartoons on political change, suggesting that while they can raise awareness, they do not necessarily lead to significant reform. An author [15] also believes that, like people, beauty exists in cartoons. He explained that a drawing should flow like the rhythm of music, with harmony being essential to its aesthetic appeal. While an artist's eye captures more nuances, readers often recognize when a cartoon is good without fully understanding why. He added that perceptions of beauty vary from person to person. Lastly, Shrestha expressed concern about the future of editorial cartoons, noting that online news portals do not prioritize cartoonists and that there is limited encouragement for new artists to enter the field. An author [16], a cartoonist for *Naya Patrika*, emphasized that cartoons are a contemporary form of expression, differing from others in that they convey ideas through images. According to him, cartoons are not only about drawing; the selection of words and the message they convey are also part of the artistic process. He stressed that the way a cartoon is presented in a publication is an art form in itself, underscoring the skill required to create a meaningful cartoon. Mishra also highlighted the notion of aesthetic sense in cartoons, a trait he believes few possess. He mentioned that while some may engage in superficial criticism, particularly supporters of political parties and leaders, they often fail to grasp the deeper message behind the cartoon, focusing only on the facial recognition of characters. In [17], newspapers frequently place cartoons on the front page, not merely as a sign of encouragement toward cartoonists, but because cartoons deserve that prominent spot. He acknowledged that in today's world, where people tend to skim through news articles and favor shorter social media posts over lengthy articles, cartoons serve as a concise way to convey profound ideas. He believes that creating cartoons requires skill, making a cartoonist both an artist and a professional communicator. Mishra further elaborated on the role of newspapers and social media in modern journalism. He observed that by the time people read the morning newspaper, they have already obtained most of the news and information through online news portals and social media. As a result, the exclusive content of the newspaper often boils down to the cartoon. Despite the growing influence of social media, Mishra stressed that political cartoons still dominate in Nepal, but he noted the need for a broader inclusion of social issues, such as road accidents, which are rarely addressed in Nepali cartoons. When asked about the future of cartoons, an author [18] emphasized the need for the art form to transition from print to digital platforms. He also noted that the traditional notion that only those working in mainstream media are journalists is being challenged. In his view, if a cartoonist creates cartoons with journalistic quality and insight rather than solely for entertainment, their work should be considered journalism. Mishra also commented on the influence of media owners, suggesting that their interests may affect the content of cartoons, but he maintained that the influence should not necessarily be reflected in the work of cartoonists. Discussing the evolution of editorial cartoons in Nepal, Mishra recalled that when the first editorial cartoon was published in Nepal in 1957, the technology used was unsatisfactory, with wooden blocks often resulting in smudged images. However, with the arrival of offset printing and, more recently, digital media, the quality of cartoon printing has significantly improved. Mishra expressed his appreciation for digital media, where the colors and details of a cartoon remain intact when posted online [19]. Mishra also reflected on the constraints imposed during the Panchayat era when cartoonists had to work under fear and often used pseudonyms to avoid arrest. Political cartoons were rare, except during festivals like Gai Jatra, where people were temporarily allowed to criticize the government [20]. Even then, there was constant fear

of retribution. He noted that social cartoons prevailed during that period, with few cartoons addressing political issues. However, after the fall of the monarchy in 2006, cartoonists began creating works openly criticizing the monarchy, something that had previously been unthinkable. Mishra pointed out how cartoons have evolved in terms of sensitivity toward marginalized groups. For example, older cartoons might have depicted a character with a disability using a crutch to symbolize incompetence, but today, there is greater awareness, and cartoonists now use blindfolded characters instead of visually impaired ones to avoid being offensive [21]. Mishra also discussed the recurring use of stereotypical characters in Nepali cartoons, such as corrupt politicians depicted with large bellies or farmers shown wearing tattered clothes. He argued that such representations reinforce stereotypes, contributing to a narrative that associates certain roles with specific social classes or communities. He believes there is a need for significant change in Nepali cartoons to address these outdated depictions [22]. Lastly, Mishra highlighted the difference in orientation between print and online cartoons. Online platforms favor square images, while elongated or vertical images are less popular. He emphasized the importance of color coordination in online cartoons and noted the need for further study on the use of cartoons in digital media [23].

4. CONCLUSION

Analyzing Nepali editorial cartoons reveals several critical insights into visual satire as a tool for political and social commentary. The first study question explored the common themes in the cartoons published in Kantipur Daily and Naya Patrika. Political instability and malpractices are rampant in Nepal, which is why politics is the primary subject of cartooning in major Nepali newspapers. Frequent depictions of political figures, scandals, and governance issues reflect the frustrations of the public with the country's leadership. The dominance of political content underscores how cartoonists use satire to critique the failures and inefficiencies in the system, making politics a consistent target for visual satire. Visual satire is a particularly effective medium in Nepal because it offers a concise, impactful way to convey complex messages. Cartoons have the power to engage a broad audience, from children to intellectuals, making them a versatile tool for communication. Their placement on the front page of major newspapers further enhances their importance, signaling that satire plays a vital role in fostering public debate. The use of editorial cartoons to highlight societal flaws also serves as a form of resistance against corruption and political inefficiency, which are recurrent themes in both publications analyzed. Beauty consciousness plays a significant role in how editorial cartoons are composed and received. Both cartoonists and audiences value the aesthetic quality of the cartoons, which can influence how effectively the message is delivered. The harmony and rhythm in the drawing enhance the cartoons' appeal and make the critique more digestible, even when addressing serious issues. Audiences may not always understand the deeper nuances of the art but are still drawn to its beauty, further strengthening the connection between the viewer and the cartoon's message. Despite its sharp critique of political issues, Nepali editorial cartoons tend to cater to high-class audiences, often failing to connect with the lower-class population. It limits their accessibility and prevents them from becoming a true mass cultural form. Their sophisticated humor and focus on elites create a gap between the content and the experiences of marginalized groups. Women are depicted negatively in Nepali newspapers, often portrayed as the primary reason for their husbands, particularly government officials, succumbing to corruption. The representation within these cartoons is predominantly male and features a "single nation," overlooking many of Nepal's diverse nationalities and ethnicities. The lack of inclusivity reflects broader societal biases and diminishes the diversity of voices featured in Nepali media. In terms of humor, Nepali society distinguishes between satire and humor based on social status. Satire is used to criticize elites and powerful figures, while humor is reserved for addressing lower-status individuals. The hierarchical use of satire and humor illustrates the stratification within Nepali society and shows how different tones are employed based on the audience's social standing. Editorial cartoons are not

created in isolation but are influenced by the political and economic affiliations of the media outlets they appear in. Many newspapers have political alignments or connections with interest groups, which affects how issues are framed. Cartoonists, whether knowingly or unknowingly, may contribute to propaganda by reflecting the editorial stance of their media outlets. The framing of news stories and the media's political leanings shape the content of the cartoons, often pushing specific agendas.

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