



Cartoons at the Stroke of Partition: A Critical Study

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Abstract

The Partition of 1947 which drastically ruptured the geographic and social structure of the subcontinent and whose imprint on demographic, social, and cultural landscapes is profound and long term, has ever since compelled academicians, historians, researchers to unearth those times by embracing novel perspectives. Newspapers, journals, and pamphlets seriously call for attention if one seeks to understand how the idea of division is immediately recorded, interpreted, analyzed, and criticized in the years around 1947. The present paper takes into account cartoons, a visual art-form of caricature that ventures to express potentially political themes in seemingly comic ways. The paper analyzes select cartoons implicated in the competing ideologies that ripped apart the Indian subcontinent in and around 1947. The focus is on the cartoons published in major national dailies viz. *Dawn*, *The Tribune*, and *The Civil & Military Gazette*, which collectively formed and shaped the public sphere, pre- and post-Partition.

Keywords: Partition, Newspapers, Cartoons, Public sphere

Introduction

Hilary Chute writes, “Cartoons are single-panel images, involving a visual-verbal punch” (454). She acknowledges Randall Harrison’s argument that with the advent of the printing press ‘cartoon’ took on another meaning, “... a sketch which could be mass-produced... an image which could be transmitted widely” (qtd. in Chute 454). Cartoons, as a form, entered print in the 1840s with the founding of a cartoon-based weekly, *Punch*, in London. Lucknow’s weekly *Oudh Punch* or *Awadh Punch*, Bombay’s weekly Anglo-Gujarati *Hindi Punch*, the *Delhi Punch*, the *Punjabi Punch*, the *Urdu Punch*, the *Gujarati Punch*, etc., became some of the vernacular versions inspired by the British *Punch*. These journals too rigorously started critiquing the British policies in their cartoons. In Mushirul Hasan’s

opinion, *Awadh Punch* was the most prominent journal, that exposed the ‘ruin and destruction caused by the colonial regime’ through its cartoons (2012). Though *Punch* failed to carve a niche for itself in contrast to the tremendous success of the *Punch*-style vernacular newspapers, it made cartoons integral to the newspaper culture in colonial India.

Very little has been done in the way of looking at newspaper cartoons as a significant genre of written history. The present paper intends to analyze how newspaper cartoons, as a visual form, evoke a rich interpretative vocabulary to fathom the past. Ritu G. Khanduri adds: “The inherent exaggeration of caricature allows it to remain permissible as news, unlike prose, which using representational conventions of a witness’s report about horrific violence could be dismissed as exaggeration” (106). In this process, newspaper cartoons are treated not as illustrated news, but as an interpretative space that invites the public and public intellectuals to assert the politics of humour. Unlike narrative, which depends on a sequential structure, the cartoon narrates through ‘metaphor’; in Edwards’ words, “editorial cartoons as ‘visual metaphors’” (qtd. in Kamra 49). The present paper takes into account a close study of selected cartoons published in three leading national dailies during 1946-1948: (i) *Dawn* – that often-propagated position of the Muslim League’s position on Partition; (ii) *The Tribune* – which was more preoccupied with the ideology of the Congress, and lastly (iii) *The Civil & Military Gazette* – the counterpart of the Britishers.

Cartoons in *Dawn*

The cartoons in *Dawn* happen to be the “The Experts”. It is under this regular heading that a series of cartoons appeared on the burning issue of Partition from 1946 to 1948. On 23 February 1946, *Dawn* published a cartoon that depicted a damaged helicopter named ‘Akhand Hindustan’ in the background while Alexander and Sir Cripps half-bent in a box labeled ‘British All Purposes Repair Outfit’ looked for adequate tools to repair the helicopter:



Fig. 1. "The Experts"
Dawn, 23 February 1946

The caption "have no fear we shall not only find the 'solution', but in reasonable time too" metaphorically mocked the British indulged in looking for the appropriate way to repair the plane, i.e., to keep India united. The damaged jet here

actually symbolized 'united India' or 'Akhand Hindustan' in a tattered condition.

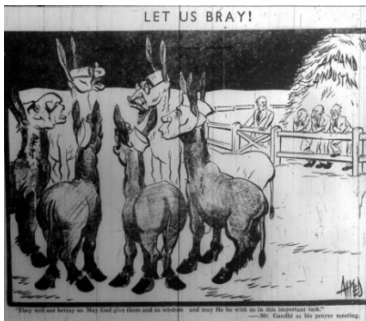


Fig. 2. "Let Us Bray"
Dawn, 5 April 1946

"Let Us Bray!" dated 5 April 1946 caricatures Gandhi as a mule delivering lessons to his fellow mules, i.e., Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and two other mules with Gandhi caps. Lord Wavell,

standing in the court looks intently at Lawrence, Cripps, and Alexander. Three of the mission members lean on the grill, completely engrossed in watching the mules discussing the matters. A huge pile of 'Akhand Hindustan' grass to feed the 'the Indian leaders' lies beside the British men.' The cartoonist parodies the Gandhian way of holding prayer meetings, where the untamed mules (the Congress men) came together to decide the future of India. The animal-human morphing is a very regular feature of political cartooning.

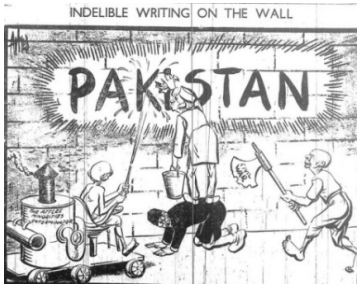


Fig. 3. “Indelible Writing on the Wall” *Dawn*, 23 March 1946

In “Indelible Writing on the Wall” (*Dawn*, 23 March 1946), Ahmed, the cartoonist, shows the inevitability of Partition, and the helplessness of the Congress. Gandhi is

shown sitting on ‘The Attlee Minorities Exterminator’ trying to wash off the writing on the wall. Nehru stands at Azad’s back, rubbing ‘PAKISTAN’ off the wall, while Patel goes at it with a ‘Civil War’ saw from the other side. Azad bending downwards supports Nehru (the Congress) on his back.



Fig. 4 “The Lost Page”, *Dawn*, 3 October 1947

“The Lost Page” (*Dawn*, 3 October 1947), published just after Partition, is a virulent attack on Mahatma Gandhi and his principle of ‘ahimsa’. Gandhi sits

in grave darkness, shuffling the pages of ‘The Book of Non-Violence’. Gandhi ji’s conscience is a ghost who stands beside him with one hand on his shoulders, asking, ‘Where is your ahimsa?’ In a state of utter bewilderment, Gandhi searches for an answer. Cartoonesque laughter is often very irreverent.

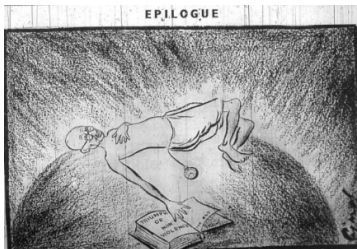


Fig. 5 “Epilogue” *Dawn*, 31 January 1948

“Epilogue” published in *Dawn* after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi caricatures him fretfully lying on a globe, a semi-sphere symbolizing the earth. One of Gandhi’s hands

rests on his chest and the other on the last page of a book. One

side of the book reads ‘Triumph of Non-Violence’ while the other side reads ‘The End’. The image shows Gandhi, the sole man capable of stopping death’s wild horse ‘violence’; rendered powerless by the forces of communalism. The Muslim League was always distrustful of the Congressmen and their policies. Jinnah, from the very beginning, scoffed at Gandhi’s non-violent means of struggle. Gandhi, on the other hand, never accepted Jinnah’s two-nation theory based on the grounds of the idea of separate entities.



Fig. 6. “Exposed” *Dawn*, 31 July 1948.

Dawn in “Exposed” shows a man (wearing a cap which gives the impression of his being a Muslim) holding one side of a huge book which reads ‘A page from the past’. It points at a man sitting on a couch, on the other side. The man portrayed in the drawing is Mountbatten, reading a book titled ‘How to become Glamorous’ and drinking the ‘wine of vanity’. The background is covered with the drawing of a Sikh carrying the body of a defenseless woman. The book is divided into various sections and is marked with the carnages such as East Punjab massacres, genocide in states, and others, which the subcontinent witnessed from time to time. The comment which the cartoon carries “He is to be blamed”, holds Mountbatten, a vain and self-obsessed man, responsible for the violence and bloodshed. The horrors and bloodshed of the times do not trigger Mountbatten’s conscience, but he rather looks smug about his achievement. Ajmal Husain, the Muslim cartoonist in ‘Exposed’, portrayed every community apart from the Muslims, who were guilty of monstrous offences. The image of a Sikh drawn in the background holding a woman frames the Sikhs as abductors who committed heinous crimes at the time of division. It also holds ‘Mountbatten’ or the entire British community responsible

for the carnage that the subcontinent witnessed at different intervals of time.

Dawn employs the strategy of downward conversion in vilifying the image and character of the revered and respected Congress leaders. The inferences that *Dawn* leaves behind through its cartoons constitute a strong critique of Congress' ideology and its proponents. The Muslim leaders or the Leaguers remained distrustful of the Hindu Congressmen and their activities and policies. Their beliefs stand buttressed by the cartoons published on Gandhi and other leaders in *Dawn*. The visual culture that these cartoons generated only ended up endorsing the belief patterns circulating in the public sphere. The cartoons failed to open the possibility of counter-discourse.

Cartoons in *The Tribune*

The Tribune, one of the leading nationalist papers, ostensibly supported the position of Congress on Partition tacitly. The character whose face stared out routinely in *The Tribune* was that of Jinnah. His overweening presence was often satirized, effecting a 'downward' conversion. Debunking and ridiculing seemed to be more attractive than expressing reverence, or in Janis L. Edward's terms again, "effect[ed] an 'upward' conversion of character" (25). A cartoon dated 5 March 1946 "Splitting the Shadows" showed Jinnah sitting with large-sized scissors labelled 'vivisection demand' to cut the shadows bearing the words 'Future Proposals' of the members of Cabinet Mission. Jinnah stopped the members from moving further, saying, 'I want my half first'.



Fig. 7. "Splitting the Shadows", *The Tribune*, 5 March 1946.

The shadows connote the proposals or the measures that the mission members were to deliver shortly. Jinnah here comes off as too stubborn to hear the members, who came to break the deadlock between the Congressmen and the Leaguers mainly. 'Splitting the

Shadows' highlights the Congress's impression of Jinnah who ruthlessly followed his ambition of Pakistan.



Fig. 8 “Birth and Rebirth of Nations”, *The Tribune*, 10 April 1946

The Tribune's cartoon dating 10 April 1946 “Birth and Rebirth of Nations” refers to the legacy of the struggle which various states underwent to establish

themselves as nations on the world map. On the upper right corner, a man drenched in sweat holds the Union Jack. ‘Britain–Toil & Tears’ written below the man refers to the United Kingdom’s struggle to become a model nation in these times. Next to him, ‘the Statue of Liberty’ with ‘America–Atom Bomb’, pertains to the supremacy which the United States of America established in world politics by dropping the atom bombs on Japan (Hiroshima and Nagasaki) in the Second World War. On the upper left-hand corner, a circus master holds the ring while a Japanese man gets ready to pass through it. The tag line ‘Japan–Hard Lessons’ indicates various lessons which Japan learnt while coping with the consequences of the bombs dropped by America. In the lower left-side corner, Maulana Azad carries the tricolor to signify that the birth of Hindustan lies in ‘sacrifice’. On Azad’s opposite side, Jinnah with two swords, i.e., ‘statements’ and ‘threats’, juggles with Cripps on the left and Lawrence and Alexander on the other side. Mr. Cripps, known as the wisest of the mission members, and Maulana Azad, both look at Jinnah who might attack them any moment. Lawrence and Alexander can be spotted looking at Jinnah from the left margin of the cartoon which indicates the roles they were to play in the entire situation. The words ‘Pakistan–Sabre Rattleing’ accompany Jinnah’s figure to imply the idea of Pakistan being founded on military threats, Jinnah’s

tantrums, and other demeaning factors. While free India, on the contrary, emanates from the age-old struggle and sacrifices of a million people.



Fig. 9. Jinnah's Pakistan, *The Tribune*, 13 April 1946

The two-frame cartoon published in *The Tribune* on 13 April 1947 shows the short life of Jinnah's Pakistan plan. It included the Eastern territory of Bengal, the Western territory (comprising Punjab, Sindh, and other provinces), and the southern Muslim principality of Hyderabad. Hyderabad was under the rule of Nizam, who resisted ceding with India and wanted to accede to Pakistan. The cartoon highlighted the impracticability of the Pakistan plan of initial days; though the arrangement, which finally came into being, was equally disastrous and impractical. To ease difficulties, various territories of Pakistan separated by India were to be linked via a Muslim corridor. In the inner frame, Hitler with his side-man Herman Goering hatches a similar plan to acquire European territory. Jinnah is portrayed as a painter, with his second man Liaqat Ali Khan (who became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan) seen appreciating the map marked by homelands and corridors which almost entirely cover India. Three of the Mission members have been caricatured as watching Jinnah and his companion making plans illustrating the Indian perception of Britishers. The Congress leaders always believed that the British were willing to appease every desire of Jinnah. Jinnah was frequently called, as well as portrayed as a Hitler figure, with diabolical intentions. He was accused of concocting the plan to take over India (as Hitler in Europe's case) and hence, must be stopped. The cartoonist, using Hitler as a foil for Jinnah, warns Indians about the threat Jinnah posed to India with the complicity of the British.



Fig. 10. “Labour Mission in Labour Provinces”, *The Tribune*, 20 May 1946

In the cartoon captioned “Labour Mission in Labour Provinces”, Jinnah rests in a garden under a tree. His confidant Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah (who became the first

Governor of Sindh) stands close to his feet and fans him smilingly. Lawrence while sitting on the tree uses scissors to cut the cord of the apple ‘substance of Pakistan’ hanging from the tree. He is being instructed by Cripps who stands beside Jinnah as to when to cut the cord so that the apple will fall right into Jinnah’s mouth. The garden here stands for ‘The Garden of Eden’ and the apple is ‘the forbidden fruit’ (the fruit of Pakistan), which if eaten would have disastrous results. The Cabinet Mission was assigned with the task of breaking the deadlock among the leading parties of India and making interim arrangements for granting independence to India. The mission’s efforts, if seen wisely, were the last push wherein an amicable solution could be reached. Prolonged discussions took place among the protagonists regarding the manner of transfer of power and the issue of Partition and Pakistan. The mission at the end proposed a three-tier system. The cartoon ‘The Labour Mission in Labour Produces’ too highlights the popular Congress’s conviction that Muslims were favored by the British in every aspect. The cartoonist condemns the Cabinet Mission for ending up conceding to Jinnah’s Pakistan Plan, especially after making far-fetched claims of maintaining the unity of the country.

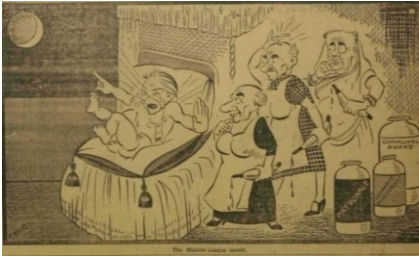


Fig. 11. “The Muslim League Insists”, *The Tribune*, 18 June 1946

“The Muslim League Insists” portrays Jinnah, as a baby in bed crying as he wants ‘the moon’ (Pakistan). He is deaf to

Lawrence, Attlee (dressed as nannies in frocks and aprons), and Alexander (maid in saree) standing beside his bed. Jinnah, who is madly crying, is unwilling to hear any of his concierges. Lawrence and Attlee are thinking of the right way to pacify the kid while Alexander, the Indian maid, is biting her finger. Three cans labelled as ‘patronage’, ‘democratic electorate’ and ‘communal award’ are placed on the floor beside the nannies. About the situation, it is evident that the nannies must have filled their bottles from the jars while trying to soothe the baby. The cans here symbolize the privileges the Britishers were ready to offer Jinnah on the political front. The crying baby (Jinnah) is getting on the nerves of his au pairs. The cartoonist in caricaturing Jinnah as a baby whining for the moon exposes Jinnah’s impetuosity to have ‘Pakistan’, without taking into account other practical factors. The analogy is drawn between the moon which symbolizes femininity, intuition, emotion, and darkness and ‘Pakistan’ similarly to be founded on irrational, impulsive forces in contrast to the sun which is associated with masculinity, rationality, truth, and morality.

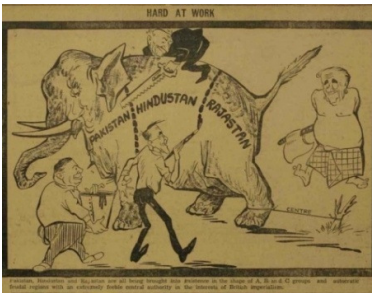
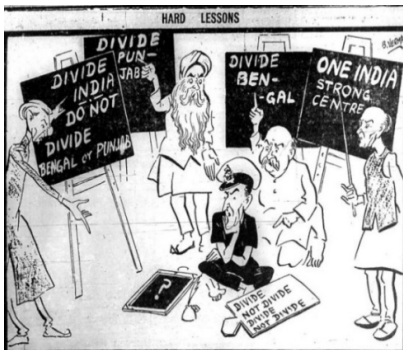


Fig. 12. “Hard at Work”, *The Tribune*, 20 June 1946

The cartoon “Hard at Work” printed in *The Tribune* on 20 June 1946 represents a scene in which an elephant is embodied as India. It tries to move forward but one of its legs is tied to a cactus-like plant with a string of ‘Centre’ thread. Lawrence sits on its

back clenching it with one hand and swinging a handsaw in the other. Alexander, with a bucket full of paint, stands beside Cripps who marks areas on the elephant's body. Wavell the Mahout, stands barefoot and hides a saw waiting to slash it into three parts: 'Pakistan', 'Hindustan' and 'Rajasthan'. The cartoonist has pictorially represented the mission's proposal of the grouping provinces. In the proposed scheme, the Centre is bound to be in a weaker position as represented by the thread trying to hold India (the elephant) divided into various parts. The smirking faces of all the British men bent upon dividing the elephant in the image connotes the lack of seriousness on the part of the Britishers in handling the Indian situation.



**Fig. 13 “Hard Lessons”,
The Tribune, 29 April
1947**

In the cartoon “Hard Lessons” published on 29 April 1947 the leaders of various communities and states point at their demands written on the boards. From the left, first is Mr. Jinnah who

stands beside the board which reads ‘DIVIDE INDIA DO NOT DIVIDE BENGAL’. Next to him is Master Tara Singh with ‘DIVIDE PUN-JAB’ and beside him is Syama Prasad Mukherjee with the board reading ‘DIVIDE BEN-GAL’. Lastly, there is Mr. Patel who points at ‘ONE INDIA STRONG CENTRE’. Mountbatten in his naval uniform sits like a beggar on the ground. In front of him, two boards are lying on the floor, one is ‘DIVIDE NOT DIVIDE-DIVIDE NOT DIVIDE’; the other one is yet to be turned upside down. Jinnah, Tara Singh, and Mukherjee repeat their demands to Mountbatten, while Mountbatten anxiously thinks whether he should flip the other board or not (contemplating to find out an alternate solution to the current situation or not). The cartoon depicts Jinnah who asks to divide India but not to divide

Punjab or Bengal as he wants to have the whole of Bengal and Punjab in his Pakistan. Tara Singh forces Mountbatten to reconsider his thought of dividing Punjab—the land of five rivers while Mukherjee is in favor of Bengal division to save the Hindu-majority areas from the impending Muslim domination in East Pakistan. Patel, the wisest of the leaders, calmly demonstrates his idea of keeping India united. Patel puts the Congress in a commendable position, and emerges as experienced and far-sighted; his approach in comparison to the rest of the leaders is motivated by limited reason and selfish motives. The cartoonist aptly captures the disagreements among the various leaders regarding the future of India. The Indian leaders' picket in front of Mountbatten (the invincible British power) who is in a miserable condition, highlighting the chaos and uncertainty surrounding Indian politics. The leaders of various organizations and areas are adamant about their demands, closing the doors for negotiations. Ironically, the caption underlines the anxiety the British felt at accepting the finality of division though anticipating that the nation might trump the individual demands of Indian communal groups.



Fig. 14. “Mango Tree Trick”, *The Tribune*, 21 June 1947

The cartoonist in “Mango Tree Trick” parodies Jinnah as a snake-charmer blowing the pungi in front of a plant with a tag ‘Pakistan Economy’. Hidayatullah beats the drum and appeals for ‘Chanda’, ‘funds’ for

Pakistan. The other Muslim League notaries in a crowd watch Jinnah perform the trick (making efforts to turn a small plant into a bigger tree). The tub ‘Appeal for funds’ placed on the ground is meant to collect the funds for Pakistan’s economy,

highlighting the condition of the Pakistan economy which would survive on charity. The comment that accompanies the cartoon, 'Mr. Jinnah has appealed for contribution to the Pakistan Fund. But the planning and building up of the Pakistan Economy is by no means easy and it will take a great deal of time and expert advice to put it on a workable basis', is an attack on Jinnah for his reckless pursuit of the Pakistan ideal without paying or acknowledging the practicalities of the situation. Depicting Jinnah as a magician, performing tricks in a world far from the rational one, the cartoonist makes Jinnah the subject of ridicule. The Britishers, the Congressmen, and other shrewd men believed that a moth-eaten Pakistan economy would never sustain for long. Perhaps, the seeds of discord between the two communities were germinated on economic grounds as well. They eventually turned into full-fledged trees of territorial, military ructions troubling the nations in the present times.

From the visuals published by *The Tribune*, Jinnah emerges as a man driven by wild passions. He is accused for turning his back on reality while recklessly pursuing his Pakistan dream. His psyche is invoked through various symbols, metaphors, and images. For instance, the cartoons which invest power in Jinnah, at the same time disinvest him from the same. As a snake charmer, he is bestowed with magical powers yet he cannot change the fate of Pakistan's economy. In Fig. 12, Jinnah eats the forbidden fruit of 'Pakistan' oblivious of the fact that just like Adam (who was expelled from heaven to earth after tasting the fruit), he too shall be doomed. The Congressmen and the countrymen always distrusted the Britishers. They were rigorously taunted for spurring Jinnah's ambitions. The narrative constructed by the visuals in *The Tribune* reinforces the British image of granting favours to Jinnah and his Pakistan dream. The Britishers are encapsulated as passive actors. Either they are shown silently watching Jinnah's activities or seen helping Jinnah in his struggle. But they never serve Indian interests at large according to popular belief.

Cartoons in *The Civil & Military Gazette*

The Civil & Military Gazette, in terms of its political affiliation, was partial to the British government. Though in contrast to the conflicting perspectives offered by *The Tribune* or *Dawn*, *The Civil & Military Gazette* provided relatively an objective ‘official’ view of the compelling events of the time.



Fig. 15 “No Agreement No Return”, *The CMG*, 18 Apr. 1946

“No Agreement No Return” depicts the condition of the mission members while trying to reach an agreement with Indian leaders. In a rural setting, Cripps, Alexander, and

Lawrence sit outside the shacks. They are portrayed as rustics wearing dhotis. Lawrence enjoys Hookah, while Cripps sits idle on a stone. Alexander leans against the trunk of a tree and a goat pulls the cart with the words ‘England Sweet Home’ with its teeth. The caption ‘The British Government have issued instructions to their three Ministers at present in India that they must reach an agreement with Indian leaders before they return to Britain whatever the cost’, emphasizes the burden of responsibility on the mission members. They were constantly coerced by the British Government to break the deadlock between the Indian leaders which was the toughest task. In locating mission members as village men, the cartoonist highlights the miserable condition of the members. They feel helpless in not bringing the leaders of various communities on an equal footing. The cartoon not only highlights the dedication of the members regarding the Indian affairs but also attempts to incite sympathy for them in the hearts of readers.

The Civil & Military Gazette in its editorials too vigorously highlighted the efforts of the Britishers concerning the Indian situation. The newspaper in certain instances even condemned the native leaders who in its view lacked seriousness and were busy fighting among themselves.



Fig. 16. “Simla Correspondence”, *The CMG*, 21 May 1946

“Simla Correspondence” printed in *The Civil & Military Gazette* on 21 May 1946 shows Maulana Azad and Jawahar Lal Nehru on the one side and Jinnah with Liaquat Ali Khan

(holding the tray full of stones), on the other. Standing amid mountains they are shown throwing stones at each other. The stone wall where Jinnah stands is tagged as ‘Arrows’. The tag refers to Jinnah’s nature of attacking the Congressmen with various charges. The Congress’ side is marked as ‘Retreat’, on their temperament of accepting whatever comes their way. Drawn against the backdrop of the failure of the series of meetings held at Simla, the cartoon foregrounds the ceaseless efforts of the British to bring about the political settlement between both the parties. The visual is again bent on building the British in the image of a benefactor, whereas the Indian leaders aloof from the serious issues pressing the nation are stuck in a power struggle.



Fig. 17. Untitled, *The CMG*, 23 May 1946

An untitled cartoon published on 23 May 1946 illustrates the panic created among the leaders of various organizations with the Mission’s proposals. Vikram Verma, the cartoonist conveys

how hard it has been for the Britishers to bring out the proposals

and make them comprehensible to the Indian leaders. As ‘Congress wants more light on the proposals’, Lawrence holds a lantern that throws light on the ‘Proposals’ which Maulana Azad and Pt. Nehru try to read. Gandhi smiles and sits on a hand cart of ‘Proposals’, pinned down with nails, ‘feeling comfortable’. Master Tara Singh sharpens a spear on Gandhi’s spinning wheel saying ‘Let us see’. Mr. Jinnah and his counsellor Liaqat Ali Khan ponder over the poster on which a grinning face ‘Pakistan’ is drawn, that instructs to ‘see upside down’ which on flipping turns into a sobbing face saying ‘No Pakistan’. ‘I want clarification’ a mark flagging above Jinnah’s head highlights his dilemmas on the mission’s proposals. Verma attempts to demonstrate the dissatisfaction among the leaders with the award. Nehru, Azad, and Gandhi were reluctant to accept the scheme, saying the plan was approving Jinnah’s Pakistan only under a different name. The Congress asserted that though Jinnah’s demand for a separate homeland was ruled out, he still got control of Muslim provinces through the British proposals.



**Fig. 18. “The Offspring”,
The CMG, 13 April 1947**

“The Offspring” set in a poultry farm, caricatures Mr. Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan as a cock and hen, respectively. Both leaders stand among the chickens and freshly hatched chicks. The growls of ‘Pakistan in Hindustan’, and ‘Hindustan in Pakistan’ come from all

around. Jinnah ‘cock’ and his comrade ‘hen’ are bewildered by the slogans. A cage is placed on the upper left-hand corner and the chicken that stands at the entrance of the cage too shouts ‘Hindustan in Pakistan’. The cartoon accompanies Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya’s statement, ‘Thus the Pakistan movement like the coils of a shell would lead to a Pakistan in Hindustan, Hindustan in Pakistan and Pakistan again in Hindustan’. The comment

sums up the implications of carving out of Pakistan of Hindustan, in one sentence. Jinnah and Khan, drawn as grown-up birds (the experienced leaders), are troubled with the voices of baby chicks (perhaps symbolizing the minor leaders or the commoners). These slogans dissuade them from carrying out their Pakistan dream. Ideally, the Muslims scattered over the subcontinent could never be brought together in Pakistan. Similarly, the Hindus and the Sikhs could never be transported from the territories entitled to Pakistan. Pakistan was going to pave the way for several communal pockets in the Indian subcontinent. Verma, the cartoonist, flags up the consequences of the deeper separatist currents simmering beneath the demands of two sovereign states of India and Pakistan. With help of symbols from the animal world, he captures the trail of problems that were to follow India and Pakistan after Partition.



Fig. 19. “The Indian Rope Trick” *The CMG* 1 May 1947

“The Indian Rope Trick” (1 May 1947) shows Lord Mountbatten performing the famous Indian trick. Jinnah climbs the rope while his supporters (Liaqat Ali Khan and Hidayatullah) watch him astonishingly. The byline, ‘I can do it’, accompanies the cartoon to highlight Lord

Mountbatten’s (or the entire British government’s) confidence that he will find out a reasonable method to transfer power to Indian hands. The rope which Mountbatten climbs is that of problems, and his moving upwards connotes the complications which increased for the Britishers day by day.



Fig. 20. “The Dutiful Boy and Burning Ship”, *The CMG* 19 May 1947

In Fig. 22 “The Dutiful Boy and the Burning Ship” (*The Civil & Military Gazette*, 19 May 1947), Mahatma Gandhi stands amid ‘Partition’ flames in a ship. The cartoon bears the statement, ‘I still believe in one India–Gandhi’, to emphasize Gandhi ji’s faith in ‘United’

India. His faith in one India remained intact even when men of different communities stand against each other and there is blood in the streets. The ship is in the grip of ‘flames of Partition’ to symbolize the idea of ‘Akhand Hindustan’ which burns in communal orgies. Gandhi ji’s reluctance in leaving the ship confers him the status of the sole paragon of ‘Unity’. The visual highlights how impossible it is to keep India united in the circumstances when a most revered man is pushed to the margins for preaching the same.

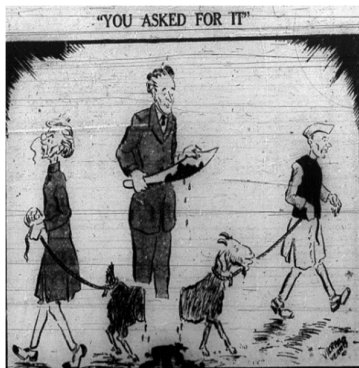


Fig. 21. “You Asked for It”, *The CMG*, 12 June 1947

The cartoon “You Asked for It” shows Mountbatten with a blade smeared with blood after slaughtering a goat into two halves. Nehru with the front half of the goat and Jinnah with the other half arrogantly walk away in the opposite directions. The goat

here connotes the ‘Indian state’ which Mountbatten cuts into two halves on the demand of both the leaders. The leaders are adamant enough not to look back after their demands are met. The goat succumbs to death because of the two men. The death

of the goat metaphorically touches the death of one 'India', where people of diverse cultures and regions have lived together since times unknown. The goat's blood dripping from the blade, smeared over the ground, refers to the blood of the million people who were killed in the whole process of dividing the nation. The cartoonist has drawn the vital parts of the goat (head, mouth, mind, and heart) given to Nehru, whereas Jinnah gets the lower parts of the body—legs, abdomen, etc. It is evident that the British policy of 'divide and rule' is at play. The fact that the lower body is being given to Jinnah highlights the identity crisis which Pakistan was subjected to. The image hints that no matter what Jinnah has attained in the name of Pakistan; it would always remain in the shadow of Hindustan. Mountbatten cannot be blamed for the killing of the goat as whatever he did was at the command of Nehru and Jinnah. The visual casually jeers at the recklessness of the Indian leaders. They barely gave a thought to the consequences of the solution they proposed. Undoubtedly, the Partition of India was fatal for the wellbeing of the nations and could never solve the communal problem. Mountbatten is seen as a man of reason, who knew that vivisection can never make problems disappear. Knowing the truth of the circumstances, he feels completely powerless. Such visuals in *The Civil & Military Gazette* not only built a counter-discourse to the widely accepted British position in partitioning India, but they helped the British escape the situation, by blaming Indian leaders.



Fig. 22. "Freedom?" *The CMG*, 29 July 1947

"Freedom?" printed in *The Civil & Military Gazette* on 29 July 1947 delineates the final plan of the transfer of power (as given by the British and accepted by the leading parties). The visual represents the dilemma of the rulers of princely states who were given a choice to accede to either India or Pakistan.

The strip shows the rulers of princely states in a cage sandwiched between two cages, i.e., of India on the one and Pakistan (smaller in size as compared to the Indian cage), on the other. Sardar Patel stands with his elbows placed on the cage 'India'. Lord Mountbatten stands beside the middle cage watching over the movements of the kings (rulers of princely states) while Jinnah is perplexed that none of the rulers seem to be willing to get into the Pakistan cage. The cages of India and Pakistan are empty yet the rulers discuss the privileges related to the options they have. Verma sarcastically pictures the situation where the princely states choose between 'India', or 'Pakistan'. The peace and sovereignty of both nations and that of the princely states depends on this crucial choice.

The British, in the visual discourse engendered by *The Civil & Military Gazette*, are seen as fighting hard with the troubles the country was facing. It fashions Indian leaders as men devoid of reason, living far from the real world. The cartoons depicting the pivotal decisions of the British which were going to affect India and Pakistan in the long run forge a discourse opposite to the widely accepted British ambition of 'divide and rule'. The British had been always held responsible for being callous towards the Indians, but the visuals emphasizing the flaws of the native leaders, vilify all charges. *The Civil & Military Gazette* portrays Indian leaders as pathetic creatures in contrast to 'Mountbatten' who possesses exceptional qualities. It repeatedly captures Britishers as overriding the concerns of quitting India in the best possible way. The percepts in the newspaper also reinforce the British government's image as an irreproachable power. The imagery employed from the animal world to capture the prodigious events highlights the British indifference towards Indian people. Though they argue about hazardous situations, the discussions never yield any concrete effort. Perhaps, only the British, the third party on the political horizon, could view the situation clearly and refrain from taking any serious action for reasons unknown. The cartoons printed in *The Civil & Military Gazette* warn about the impending catastrophe 'Partition' in symbolic ways. The political and cultural narratives that leading

nationalist dailies reinforced in 1947 were inherited by posterity and carried further. *The Tribune* invested in proving the Congress as a rational, ethical, modern, and ‘secular organization’ struggling against Jinnah. While the Muslim League identical with Jinnah is projected as ‘irrational,’ unethical, egomaniacal, and a loose cannon. The cartoonists of various newspapers extensively employ the techniques of ‘downward’ as well as ‘upward’ conversion. Commenting on the device employed by the various newspapers, Kamra² writes:

If in the nationalist press (here in the case of *The Tribune*) a privileged Congress is always there even in cartoons where it is not the subject ‘the absent ideal’. In the papers affiliated to other parties, say in case of *Dawn*, demonic Congress is always already there too, and sometimes Jinnah and the League are indeed the absent ideal with the only difference being that the need to valorize the ‘self’ is far more prominent (as the threat of the ‘other’ is more extreme). (100-1)

Conclusion

The cartoons either deal with the representation of events, or caricature key political players, British, and Congressmen and the Leaguers, but they rarely capture the common man. The visuals which are drawn to shape the opinion of a common man remain elitist from the angle of historiography. The scarce images of the ‘people’ or the ‘populace’ in the cartoons, hint at the public’s alienation from the whole process of decision-making. In reality, the fate of millions was decided by a handful of men. As Mushirul Hasan proclaims, “Never before in history (history of South Asia to be precise), did so few divide so many” (43). The narrative enforced through the cartoons grappling with increasingly alarming events nevertheless fascinates as it foregrounds helplessness in the face of history that at some point took on momentum on its own. The cartoons create a sense of doom and collectively spin a narrative of petty machinations of a few individuals at the cost of the people.

End-notes:

1. The theory on which Janis L. Edwards based her work *Political Cartoons in the 1988 Presidential Campaign: Image, Metaphor, and Narrative* (1997) considers editorial cartoons “rhetorically as narratives,” as they express “narrative features” such as plot, character, events (xii) but in a slightly different way from novels, and comics which are usually sequential and continuous. She says that editorial cartoons express the same narrative features through “visual metaphors” (xiii).
2. Sukeshi Kamra in *Bearing Witness: Partition, Independence; End of the Raj* (2003) hints at the significance of cartoons during the Partition violence which led editors to publish cartoons instead of photographs (88).

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