

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
AT A FUNCTION ORGANIZED TO PAY HOMAGE TO CARTOONIST
LATE SHRI P.K.S. KUTTY**

Rashtrapati Bhavan Auditorium, New Delhi: 29-10-2012

**"JOB OF A CARTOONIST IS TO CONVEY IMPORTANT SOCIAL
MESSAGES BY USING HUMOUR AS A TOOL, SAYS PRESIDENT
PRANAB MUKHERJEE"**

"I am happy to participate in this special meeting convened to pay homage to Cartoonist Late Shri P.K.S. Kutty.

Shri Kutty arrived in Delhi in 1941 as an understudy to the legendary Shankar. For around 57 years, he commented day after day on the national scene, chronicling the modern history of India through some of its momentous phases. Kutty spent much of his career in Delhi. As a veteran cartoonist with a Central Hall pass, he was a regular presence in Parliament House.

I am told way back in the 1960s, the late Kamaraj ji asked Kutty in a lighter vein who his choice for Prime Minister was. Kutty replied, "Give me a PM who is easy to draw." Of course Kutty went on to draw every PM with equal ease - from Panditji to Manmohan Singhji.

I have been a recurring target of Kutty's cartoons in my long years in public life, particularly because he drew for Bengali newspapers like Ananda Bazar Patrika and Aaj Kal. It is the job of a cartoonist to convey important social messages by using humour as a tool. Laughter is a stress buster for the public as well as the politician. The cartoon reminds the public that the ruler is as fallible and human as they are.

The cartoon came to us as part of British legacy. It however found a receptive Indian mind awaiting it. Humour magazines blossomed in many parts of the country modeled on the London Punch. By one estimate as many as 70 Punch-like magazines and newspapers had appeared in at least a dozen Indian towns by the end of 19th Century. We had the Urdu Punch, Awadh Punch and Parsee Punch. I am sure it would be of interest to this gathering that we have discovered in our Rashtrapati Bhavan Library a rare collection of Punch magazines published from 1843 to 1927. We are in the process of restoring these magazines and would be happy to open them out for viewing by cartoonists and scholars of modern history as soon as they are ready.

Till about the late 1980s, a leader was recognised more by her caricature than the photograph. So much so that the older leaders collected and displayed their caricatures in their workplace. They could

live with their own funny pictures, and because they found in the popular cartoon a ready connect to the public. I myself had cartoons of me drawn by Laxman on my walls till recently.

A cartoonist like Kutty put across his comment sharply but with refreshing humour and he as well as his guru, Shankar, passed on this culture to succeeding generations of cartoonists.

To be able to lampoon without hurting, caricature without distorting, to say with a few strokes of the brush what lengthy editorials fail to express-this is the art of the cartoonist. Cartoonists hold up the mirror to our public life and help us as a nation to see ourselves. We, as a country, must return to the Nehruvian times; cultivate a temper which welcomes criticism, where comment is free but facts are held sacred.

Indira ji has written in her foreword to a collection of Shankar's cartoons on Nehru "Cartoons have become an integral part of the intellectual life of a modern society. Some draw without intent to draw blood; some remove masks and hold a mirror to the face of the society. There cannot be a cartoon without a certain amount of irreverence".

I conclude by paying tribute to the contribution made by Shri Kutty to the modern cultural and political history of our country. As a person from Kerala, who lived in Delhi and drew cartoons for Bengali newspapers (even though he spoke no Bengali), Shri Kutty was a quintessential Indian. His life and works were not limited by linguistic or State boundaries. I call upon the cartoonist fraternity of India to keep his memory alive by excelling in their chosen craft".