

An exhibition of some of R. K. Laxman's best cartoons and caricatures offers a jolly walk down history



Anyone could argue he is a journalist except that he uses his pen to create pictures. R.K. Laxman's work reflects his carefree spirit but is also a commentary on life as it happened. They are nonchalant scribbles that manage to communicate while not really thinking about doing so.

The exhibition features just under a hundred sketches created by him. His themes are taken directly from his environment. His subjects are usually ordinary, as he himself admits in his autobiography *The Tunnel of Time*. He manages to always unleash some of his trademark humour into his sketches no matter how ordinary the subjects. In this body of work, R. K. Laxman explores the "similarity of all religions of India" as well as his favourite subject matter "Poverty" and "People". His illustrations were vital in lifting works like his brother R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* to cult status. Best known, of course, for "The Common Man", R.K. Laxman holds some of the highest national and media accolades for his work.

R.K. Laxman's caricatures, showcasing vignettes of the life of the common man in India and occasionally reflecting on the life and times are irresistible. There are caricatures of characters from politicians worldwide, comedians, statesmen's and leaders, eminent personalities from various fields including films, musicians, playwrights.

The caricatures of Mahatma Gandhi showcase him as a jovial man, content with his life and in different moods serving people. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru appears in a pensive mood, without his trademark cap, in a garden, with a copy of his book, *The Discovery of India*. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah seems to be a man in a hurry, while Charlie Chaplin seems a little terrified. The caricatures of Mao Tse Tung and Khan Abdul Gafar Khan (Frontier Gandhi) also make for interesting viewing as does the caricature of Adolf Hitler raising his hand. The thoughtful grin of Albert Einstein, seriousness of Karl Marx and the famous cigar of Winston Churchill catches the attention. The famous chair of Sir Bernard Shaw, M.S. Subbulaksmi with her instrument and the smile of Rajnikant and Anil Kapoor catch the eye. H.H. Dalai Lama, J.R.D.Tata with his Maharaja and paper plane, the hat of Sigmund Freud, Prince Charles flashing smile and the relaxed Sheikh Abdullah under the apple tree is a real treat to eyes. Sir Donald Bradman with his bat, C. Prasada Rao and Tenzing Norgay with his mountaineering leaves you stunned.