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COMIC BOOK AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

Special Project Report

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Design

in

Visual Communication

by

DINESH KATRE

90625008

Guide

Prof. S. Nadkarni

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जी. डी. केंद्र पुस्तकालय
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Industrial Design Centre

Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

1992

APPROVAL SHEET

The Visual Communication Special Project - titled
'Comic book as a medium of Communication'
by DINESH KATRE is approved for the partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the postgraduate degree in
Visual Communication

Guide:

Chairman:

Internal Examiner:

External Examiner:

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose behind taking up this subject as a research project was to evaluate this medium in terms of communication, its potentials and versatility.

The advancement of technology has offered us a number of mediums like video, audio-visuals photography, interactive programmes in computers etc. through which one can communicate to the masses.

Comic book is as flexible as above mediums and largely accepted by people.

EDUCATION THROUGH ENTERTAINMENT

It is a new thought coming up these days. Lots of educational films are made and experimentation is being done. Compared with television, comic book is the cheapest medium which an Indian kid can easily afford. Though some publications have tried to make it more informative, nobody has used it for fair educational purposes. This report attempts to focus on its hidden potentials and the generalized principles.



THE TRACES OF COMIC BOOK IN INDIAN HISTORY

In Indian history we can find equivalent examples, which can be remotely related to comic book.

The miniature paintings, murals, illustrated granthas and even the stone carvings have similar characteristics as comic book.

Murals of Ettumanur and Vaikom, Mughal paintings, Gajipha, Ajanta murals etc. are the examples, telling the stories of Indian history and Mythology.

The purpose behind making these murals and paintings was not different than the comic books.

It was meant to preserve and pass on the knowledge and the stories to next generations.

Our ancestors have narrated the stories of Buddha (Jatak Katha), Ramayana, Mahabhart, the stories of Krishna etc.

This tradition could not take finer shape because it was very unwieldy to work on walls.

The basic reason behind this downfall was the lack of reproduction technology.

In the later stage after the arrival of Britishers to India we again picked up this medium in the form of comic book.

THE AUTHENTICITY IN COMIC BOOK

It is a general impression about comic book that its humorous and not meant to be read seriously and also it does not have any informational value.

In the country like India it is considered as a bad reading habit and many of the parents believe that comic reading spoils their children.

Comic book does not have a nature of its own but still some of them fall into the categories as below:

- 1) humour
- 2) adventure
- 3) fantasy
- 4) Science fictions
- 5) mythology
- 6) history - biography

Some of the stories are woven around a permanent character and the others randomly come up with new stories and new heroes.

India comics do not have a character of healthy reading material because they are not made with proper research and studies.

WHAT BRINGS AUTHENTICITY IN COMIC BOOK?

1) Extensive research and studies

One really needs to conduct a deep research for the topics like mythology, history and science.

One should be very sure about the historical dates and periods, the events and the places.

2) Environment and atmosphere

a) The awareness of geographical details where the story is going to occur.

b) The details of architectures, trees, animals, accent language, costumes.

Example:- Tintin Comics: The hero oftenly goes to many countries where you can clearly see all the peculiarities of there. When he comes to India, they have shown him talking in 'Hindi' which makes the reader more involved in it.

3) Science and technology

a) Scientific diagrams and details

b) Proper knowledge of scientific definitions

Example:- In 'Expedition moon' the details and and even the blue print of the spaceship is published.

c) The drawings of the vehicles, aeroplanes and other machines are drawn with proper detailing.

4) Character detailing

For the establishment of the characters there are many things which one should make clear.

1) Residential address

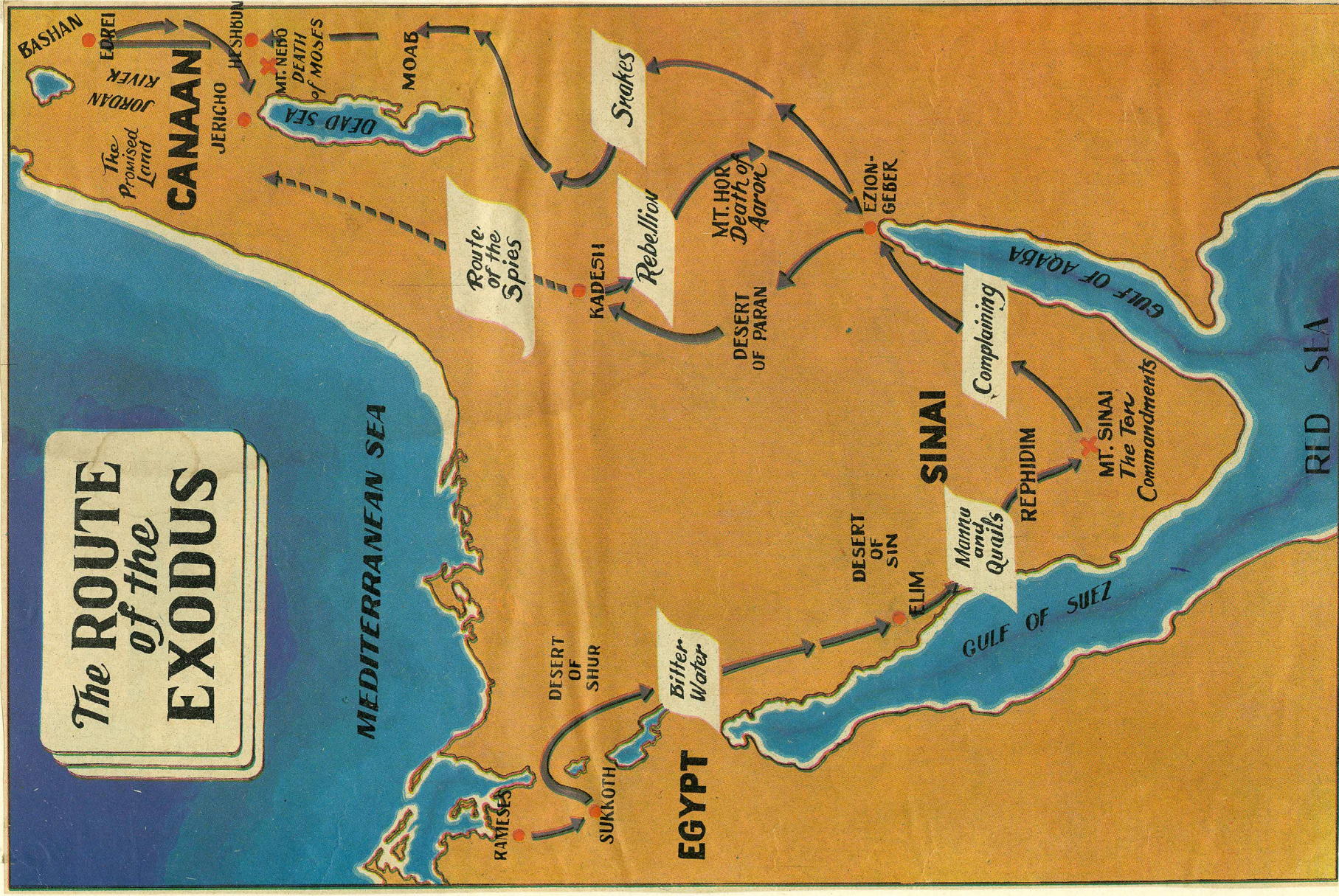
(If the character has a sufficient role in the story)

2) His profession

3) The standard of living

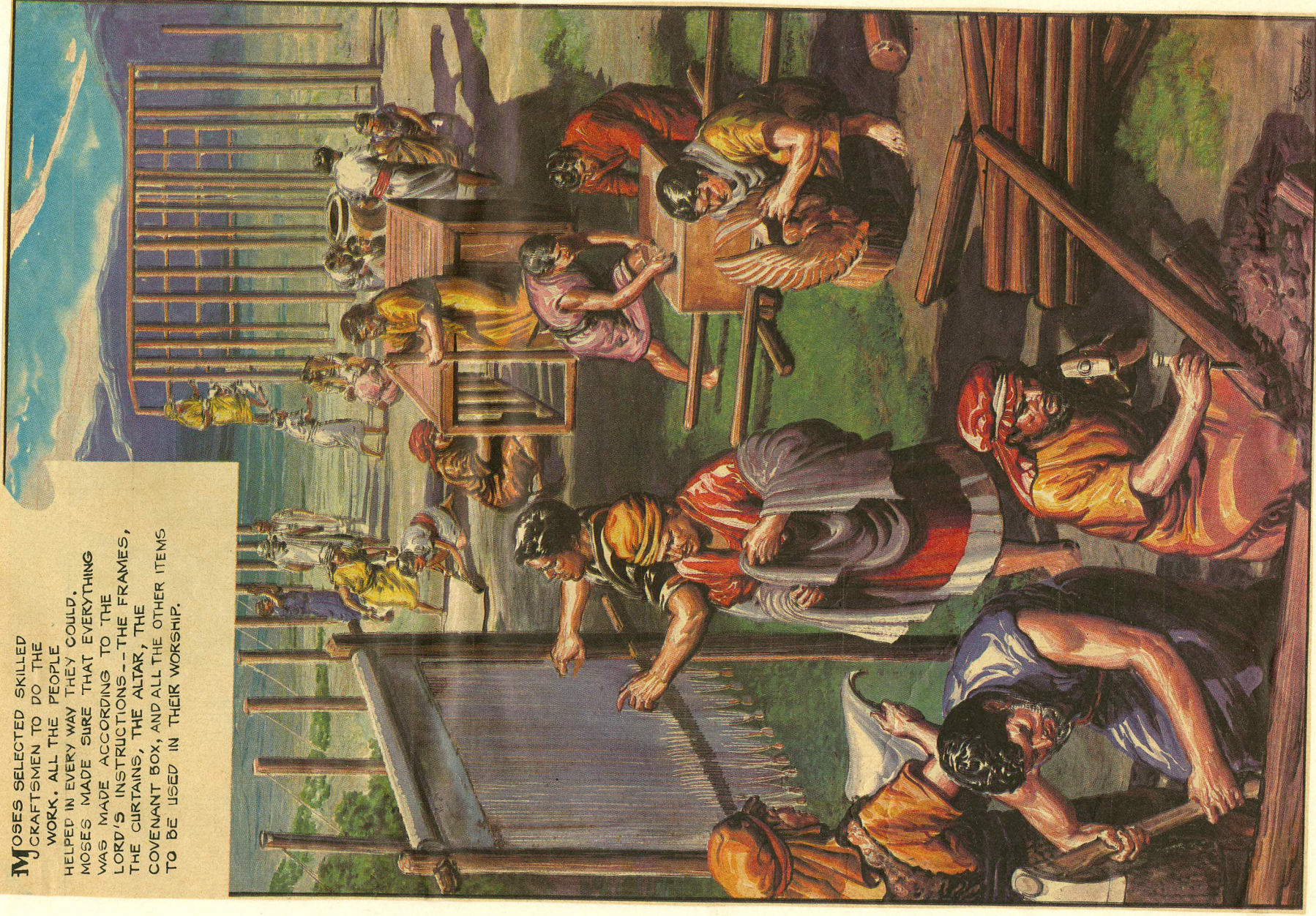
4) Education

5) Habits and interests

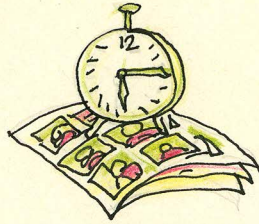


A map showing the true geographical details of the route of the exodus in 'Moses'.

MOSES SELECTED SKILLED CRAFTSMEN TO DO THE WORK. ALL THE PEOPLE MOSES MADE SURE THAT EVERYTHING WAS MADE ACCORDING TO THE LORD'S INSTRUCTIONS--THE FRAMES, THE CURTAINS, THE ALTAR, THE COVENANT BOX, AND ALL THE OTHER ITEMS TO BE USED IN THEIR WORSHIP.



The creation of environment and an ideal study of costumes and characters.

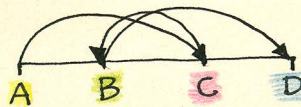


THE MANIPULATION OF TIME

Some stories are very slow and some which contain many attention catching incidences, gear up and unfold very fast. Some of them have very inconsistent pace due to it's journey through various frames of time.

Time is the component which determines the speed and accelerates the story.

Comic book is a series of pictures or pictorial statements, which follow certain rules of visual grammar. Each statement has to be constructed thoughtfully including right pauses and comas, because every picture counts a lot of efforts. The length of the statement is decided according to the time it requires. Like the movie camera consumes more number of frames for slower actions and less number of frames for faster actions.



The advancement of the story need not be linear always. Some comic stories are as straight as A,B,C,D, but some follow a different pattern altogether.



PAGE MANAGEMENT AND TIME

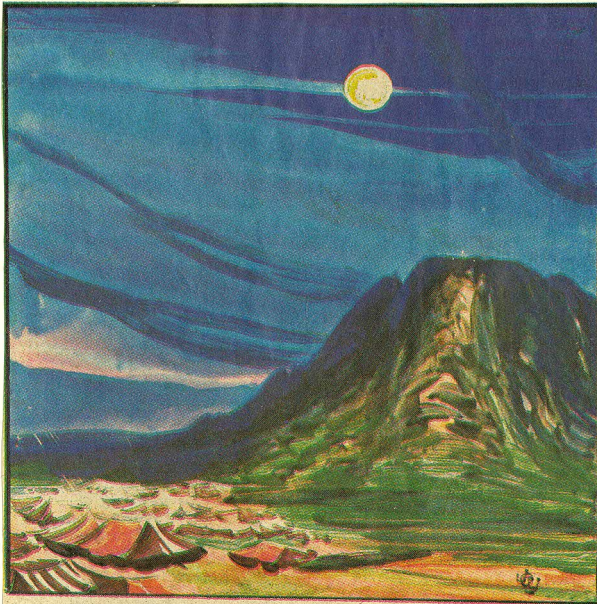
Every page of comic book is like a small unit of 'time'. The value of the unit can be varied according to the requirement. When you turn over the page, it is considered as one slot of time or one of the phases of story has got over.

It is quite similar to a film with many cuts and editing points.

Every page of the comic book is like an editing point or an interval or a small pause which makes the reader feel the momentum of time.

In Indian comics nobody has explored this virtue, but towards the west one can find many examples.

Depending upon the length of the story, it was broken into parts or serials. The interval between two consequent comic books indicated the time taken for the advancement of the story and held the breath of the restless reader.

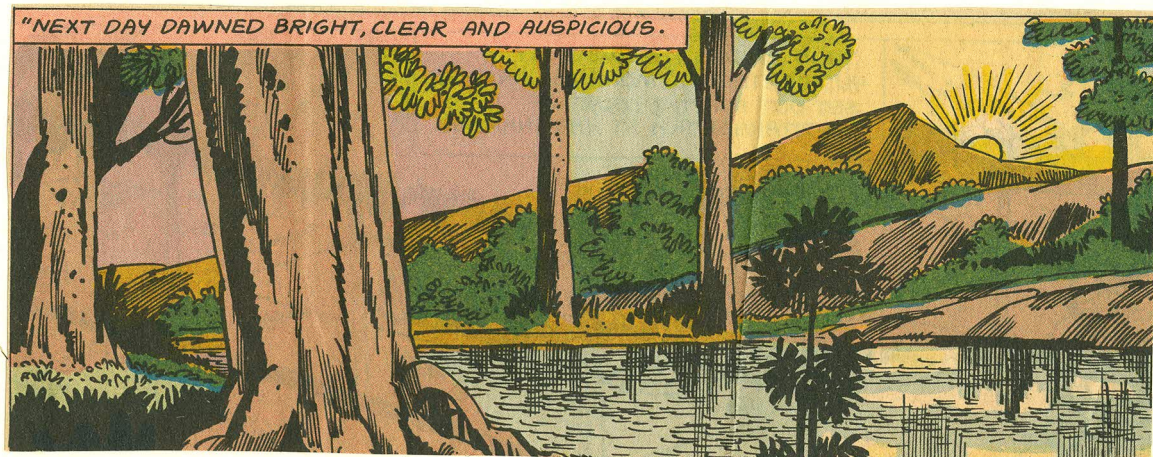


AFTER THE COVENANT CEREMONY, THE LORD CALLED MOSES UP TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN TO RECEIVE THE STONE TABLETS WITH THE LAWS WRITTEN ON THEM.

THE DEVICES USED FOR TIME INDICATION

There are many devices used which one can categorise like colour differentiation, change of drapery, change of location, silhouets and shadows and in some cases it is written in words.

The sunset and the sunrise are the common devices used for indicating the culminating point of the Chapter and the time.



"NEXT DAY DAWNED BRIGHT, CLEAR AND AUSPICIOUS."

THE PROPORTION OF VISUAL AND TEXT

Comic book is a medium where visual and text go hand in hand. It is a collection of visuals aided with a bit of text to make the message more explicit.

Though it's generally understood that comic books are made for children, they are equally read by elders due to its entertaining virtue and picturesqueness.

A comparison between 'text book' and 'comic book'

The normal text book appear very drab and monotonous because it has nothing that strikingly appeals you at first glance.

The perception of the content is left on the readers capability of understanding. The text is prepared in form of description which is unable to demonstrate any concept. In a way text always delivers second hand information. The author recollects his observations and translates them into words and the rest depends upon how illustrative he can write.

As against, comic book directly hits the readers mind because of its potential of visuals. He does not have

to decode the translation and understand, which is a very long process.

The text used in comic book along with the visuals is meant to drive or channelize the readers thoughts. The author can make him see in the picture what he wants him to see and build up the connections between the pictures. Even a child who cannot read also understands the story by just looking at the pictures.

Written matter appear much rigid than visuals. Every word is stuffed with some amount of information which functions in it's limited area. The written text can inform the reader but it cannot make him experience.

On the contrary a visual can convey many abstract connotations and create an impact on the readers mind.

It can powerfully express the flavours like satire, humour, irony etc. and a bit of exaggeration helps making the expression more explicit.

A comic book has almost 80% of pictures and 20% of text and the proportion is quite justifiable.

EDUCATION THROUGH COMIC BOOKS

If we look back into the 18th century, we see that the previous generations had only text books and news papers to read. The concept of 'education through entertainment' never existed before.

Now a days the development of technology has brought more inputs of information through the mediums like video and animated films.

It has been observed that the children of today love to watch movies, and advertisements than the real television programmes.

It is because the advertisements are very fast in speed, every moment children get to see new things, the constant change of colours and actions, diverse light effects and sounds.

Children have fascination for animation films also. Animated films have a different world altogether which has humour and lots of imaginative things in it.

It's a world in which dead objects move and dance, the cartoons of animals talking and communicating to each other.

Compared with these films the real life looks very slow and simple.

An Indian kid seldom gets to see such animation films. They are very expensive if produced. So comic book is the only medium which suits to all Indian conditions, which is very cheap in price and easy to reproduce.

It has got many of the qualities, similar as video and animation films.

Comic book has got variety of colours and pictures. It can focus on the story from various angles, perspectives and view points.

It has got the dimensions of space and time though not in reality but in a subtle way. The overall effect and the perception of the story is 3 dimensional.

Some of the publications in India have tried to introduce educational columns through this medium. But the attempt was at a very superficial level.

Most of these topics contained the information like, wonders in nature, birds and animals, historical places, sports and a bit of science.

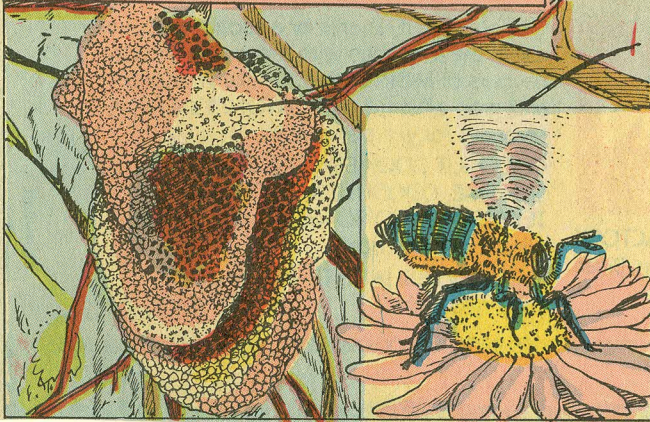
Prof. Jayant Narlikar has written many science fictions through this medium, which received quite good response.

'Amar Chitrakatha' has illustrated many of the mythological stories in India, like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panch Tantra etc. and historical stories also.

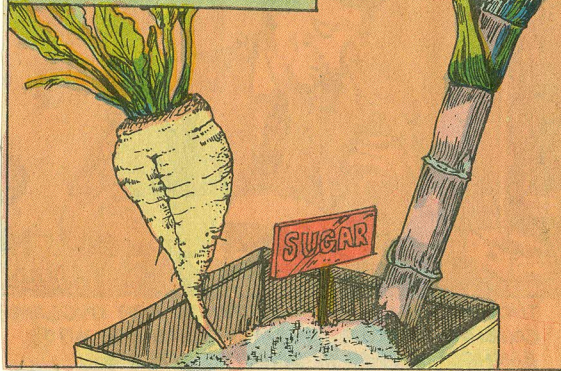
It is observed that many of the comic characters are popular among children. They will definitely love to learn from these comic heros. If education enriches one's life why should it be uninteresting?

One can really weave the fundas of science through stories and make them more dramatic, for which a child need not be forced to learn.

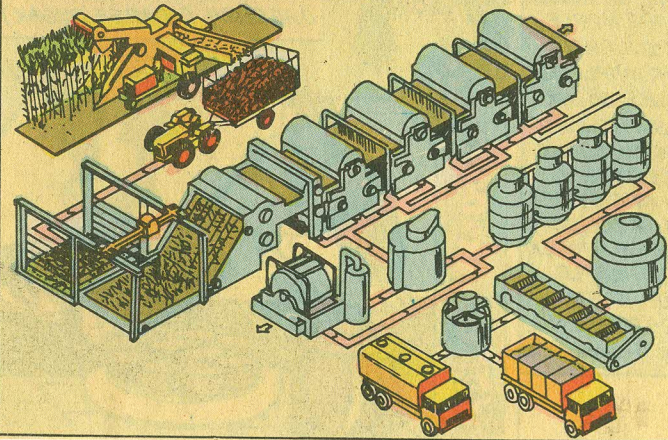
HONEY IS A SWEET, THICK VISCOUS LIQUID MADE BY HONEYBEES FROM NECTAR COLLECTED FROM PLANTS. THE COLOUR AND TASTE OF HONEY DEPENDS ON THE SOURCE OF NECTAR COLLECTED BY THE BEES.



WHICH IS SWEETER? SUGAR FROM BEET OR CANE? BOTH PRODUCE THE SAME SUGAR CALLED SUCROSE. SUCROSE FROM BEET IS AS SWEET AS SUCROSE FROM SUGARCANE, BUT THERE IS MORE SUCROSE IN ONE KG. OF SUGARCANE THAN IN ONE KG. OF BEETROOT.



THE JUICE EXTRACTED FROM CANE AND BEET UNDERGO SIMILAR PROCESSES OF CLARIFICATION, PURIFICATION AND CRYSTALLISATION.



The above pictures show the glimpses of the informative topics discussed in Comics, which have lost the playfulness of the medium. Even the illustrations and the description is unclear.

This is one of the ideal example which came in 'Indrajal Comics'.

It is a story woven around a great scientific discovery. It informs about ODONTOLOGY (The science of teeth) and its arrival to India.

Though not refined as far as the illustrations and the story is concerned, but is a splendid attempt.

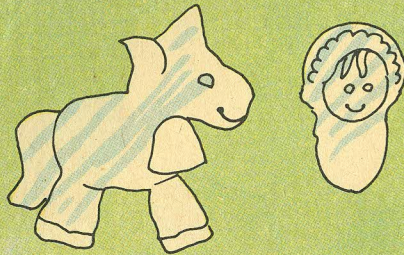


DO IT YOURSELF

BY IQBAL

STEP 1

TRACE OUT THE PATTERNS OF ALL THE ITEMS YOU WISH TO MAKE AND THE SIZE YOU WOULD LIKE THEM IN.



STEP 2

TAKE TWO CUPS FLOUR, $\frac{1}{2}$ CUP SALT, $\frac{3}{4}$ TO 1 CUP WATER, 1 TEASPOON COFFEE.

MIX COFFEE IN WATER TO GET A LIGHT TINT. NOW MIX ALL THE ABOVE INGREDIENTS TOGETHER AND KNEAD TILL DOUGH IS SMOOTH LIKE CLAY.

TAKE SMALL QUANTITIES OF DOUGH AND MAKE INDIVIDUAL BODY PARTS OF EACH OBJECT. WHEN JOINING, WET THE PORTION AT POINTS WHERE THEY WILL TOUCH AND GENTLY PRESS TOGETHER. TO MAKE THE HANGER, BEND WIRE TO FORM A LOOP AND INSERT AT TOP OF EACH FIGURE. NOW BAKE THEM FOR SOME TIME OR KEEP THEM TO DRY IN THE SUN FOR A COMPARATIVELY LONGER TIME.



STEP 3

WHEN THEY HAVE HARDENED, ALLOW IT TO COOL AND PAINT WITH TEMPERA. COAT WITH VARNISH SEVERAL TIMES.



HANG THEM IN YOUR CAR, OR WALLS OR MAKE KEYCHAINS OUT OF THEM.



DX-6

There are many similar columns like, how to make pop ups, masks and cut outs, paper toys and a bit of origamy published through comic books. But they do not appear much exciting. Most of the times the information is stuffed into a box with few illustration

There should be a character who introduces and demonstrates the above skills, which will involve the viewers' attention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Prof. Nadkarni, not only for his guidance and support but for giving me a lot of freedom.

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