WALLPOSTER COMICS
a development communication tool
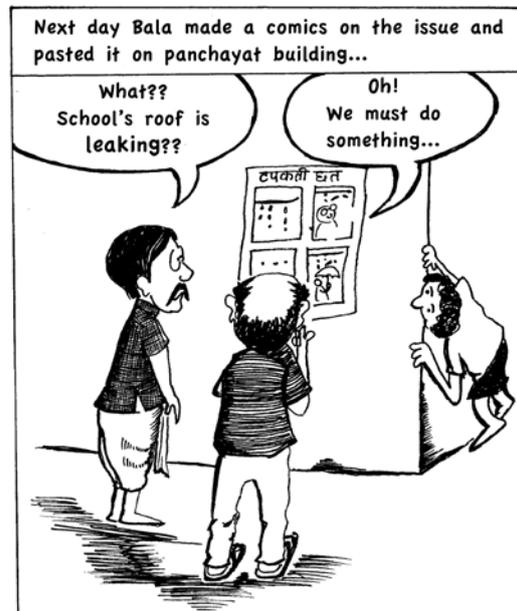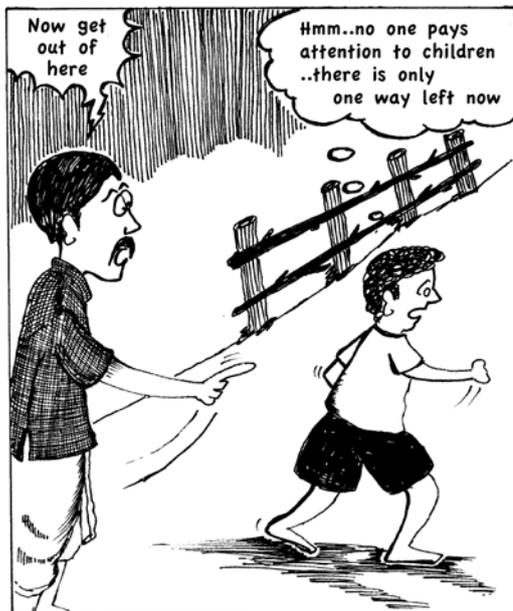
Sharad Sharma

WORLD COMICS INDIA

Grassroots Comics

Grassroots comics are different from the mainstream comics, these comics are made by common people themselves. Most of the time they are linked to some organization activity or the social campaign. These comics are photocopied and distributed to a limited area, which encourage local debate in the society.

Grassroots Comics are inexpensive and method is not complicated, you just required a pen, paper and access to a copying machine to produce one.

What makes these comics different from professional material is the ownership of the content as well as. The comics are pasted up in all possible locations i.e. village's meeting place, bus stops, shops, offices, schools, on notice-boards and electricity poles or even on trees. One more important thing in these comics are the proximity of source of the communication and the readers.

The campaign comics made by artists are not as close to reality as Grassroots Comics are. The local people understand their culture better.

So the people are interested in what produced by their local activists or organizations locally.

Grassroots Comics Movement

The Grassroots comics movement started in the late nineties. A group of like-minded cartoonists, development journalists and activists looking for using their skill beyond their livelihood and betterment of the society came up with an idea of using comics as communication tool.

The community and NGOs quickly received it, as stories used here were their own. This medium also becomes popular in low literacy areas.

The easy to understand and cost effective methodology made Grassroots Comics soon popular in NGOs and development sector.

With its roots in India it soon spread to other part of the world. Now NGOs activists, institutes, Government departments and many individuals now using this medium in Tanzania, Mozambique, Brazil, Lebanon, UK, Finland, Sweden, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Australia and Mongolia.

The manuals in many different languages are available on their websites.

WALLPOSTER COMICS

Wallposter Comics are produced by community, NGOs activists, informal groups, students to raise their voice on some specific issue or simply express themselves. These comics are produced using normal two A-4 sized paper and photocopy machine.

Wallposter copies are made for local distribution to open local debate. The method of producing wallposter is inexpensive and simple.

Here in this guide you will learn how to produce your own wallposter in easy steps.

My Chemical: A farmer thinks that due to unsuitable temperature he won't get fruits on time and hence applies strong chemical to accelerate the process. Few days later due to the chemical rain all the fish and aquatic animals died. Due to access of chemical even the stored water got contaminated and when he went to take shower it affects his skin badly. *Story and art by Ekkasit, Thailand*

What else? A girl was standing on the bus stop when a boy passes a comment on her 'What a beautiful face!. Next day when she comes with her body fully covered the boy passed the comment: 'I can still recognize you.' Third day she even covers her head with the scarf. The boy comments 'You look even more beautiful now.' The girl now comes with her face covered as well. Comment continues: 'Oh! God! Beauty in the veil'. *Story and art by Sudrish Khan, Pakistan* (Note: Read Right to Left)

MiRiN BANDH

This Close: A woman use to earn her living and her children's school fees by selling vegetables.Once she hears the announcement for "Forceful Close/bandh" of market in future days. Because of continuous bandh in the market she is unable to pay fees of her children so they are expelled from the school. And also nothing remains in the house to eat and she thinks that because of these bandhs her life is ruined. *Story and art by Kahorpaam, Manipur*

End of Beatings: Few villagers come to Delhi and start living on footpaths. The police trouble them and beat them taking them as thieves. Then, one day they show their voter identity card to the police which saves them from getting beaten by the police, they feel secure after getting this ID. *Story and art by Samir Pathak, Delhi*

INÉRCIA

Story and art by Fabianny Melo, Brazil

Inertia: Once, in a street of Fortaleza a helpless girl is getting robbed in the stark daylight. Some passengers on a bus passing by witness this. A passenger notices that the thief is unarmed but thinking about the uncontrolled street violence, the driver speeds away and no one insists the driver to stop the bus. *Story and art by Fabianny Melo, Brazil*

WALLPOSTER COMICS can be paste on different locations like on house wall, tree, electric poll, school-college notice boards, telephone booth, bus stop, barbar shop etc. Comics can also be hanged as an exhibition simply using a piece of string or pasted on wall.
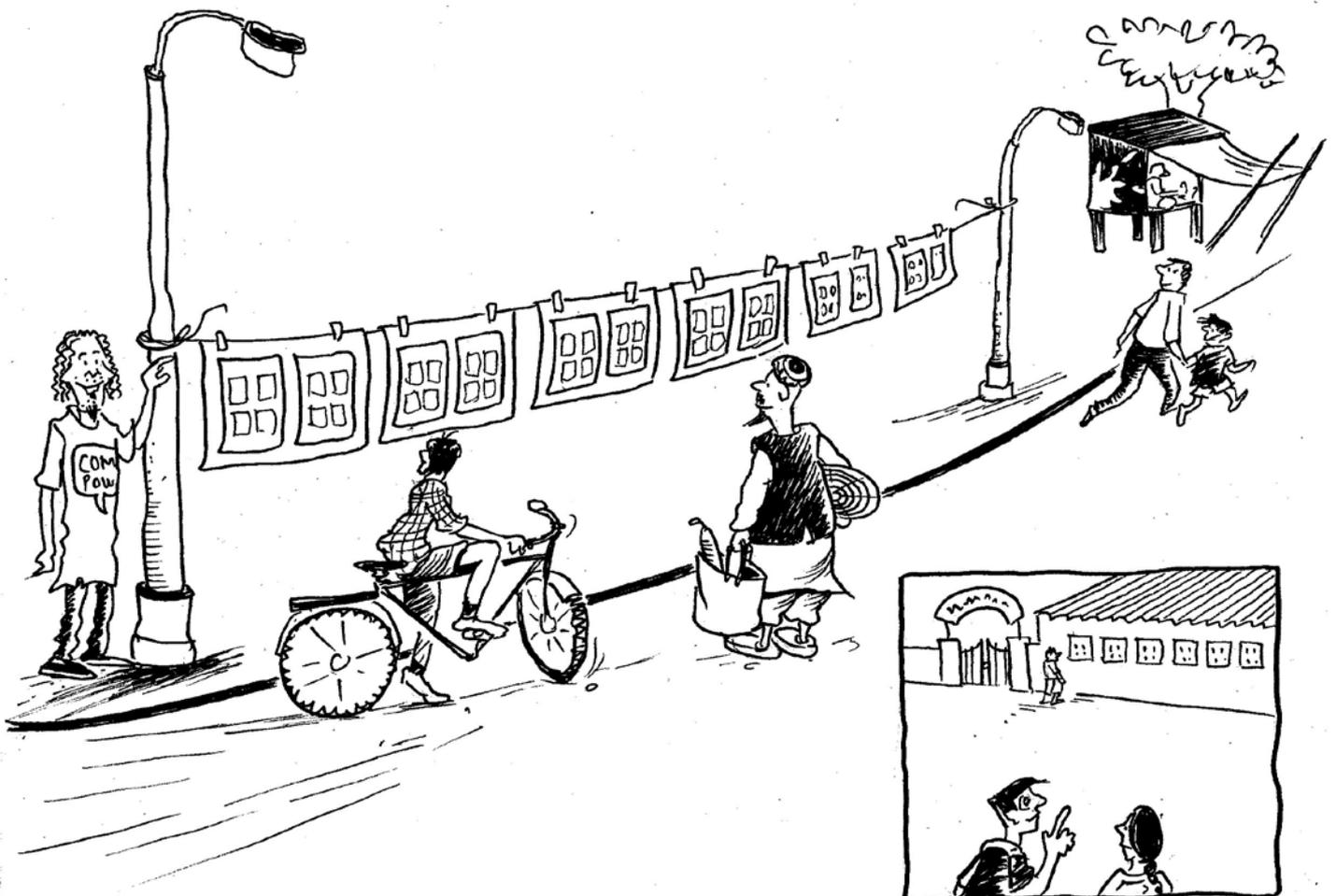
This 4 panel wallposter comics can be converted into comics strip as shown below

To make your own WALLPOSTER COMICS
follow the steps below

Deciding on theme and issues
To start real work on your comics you must decide a theme or issue first. Create a story based on this theme. You have to remember that we cannot handle too many issues in one story, so it is always good to narrow down and focus on one specific area of this broad theme.
The target audience plays an important role in this exercise.

For example if your theme is HIV/AIDS
You have to decide on which aspect of HIV/AIDS you would focus.

GENDER HUMAN RIGHTS
SHG
TRAFFIC PEACE
GOVERNANCE CORRUPTION
HEALTH HIV/AI
ENVIRONMENT

HIV/AIDS

PREVENTION

PEOPLE LIVING IN SLUMS
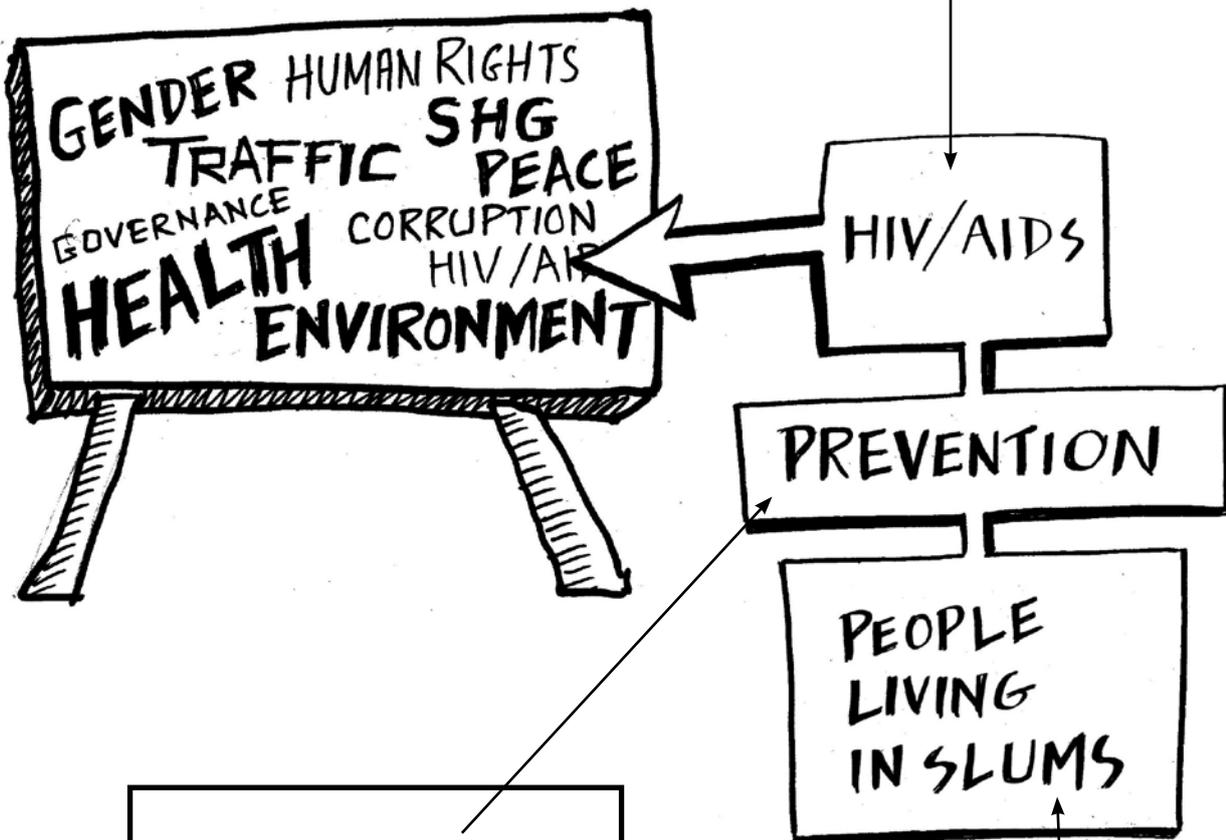
Select one from Prevention, Stigma & Discrimination, Living with HIV, Treatment, Myths and facts etc.

Who is your Target Audience? Lets say: People living in slums.

Writing Story

There are several ways of making story:

A) Base the story on some interesting incident in your life or
    something you heard about which you want to share.
B) An issue, you think very strongly about and want to open a
    debate on it in the society, develop a story around it.
C) To share a success story with others.
D) Some specific information you want to share such as legal
    information or special concessions for disabled people etc.
…………………………………………

Making a storyline

To make a story on selected theme is your next task. To write a story on selected theme is not difficult task but you have to keep few things in consideration before you start:

1.   Story should have a beginning and an end.
2.   Story should have characters.
3.   If there is some drama in the story, reader would read it with an interest.
4.   It is not necessary for each and every story to have a happy ending. Your story can just explain the current situation of a problem and at the end characters of your story may leave a question for your reader.
5.   You must not address more than an issue in one story.
6.   Story should not have any unnecessary detail.
7.   It is better if you could tell your story in 10-15 lines. (6-7 sentences)
8.   Never copy others story.
9.   Check the message of the story doesn't contain inflammatory or religious offending material.
10.   Never target any individual or caste in your story.

Since no one is a professional storyteller it is necessary to focus on message or content of the story rather than storytelling style and ornamental language. Everyone is not a good storyteller. Remember that this is just text story and final output will be in visual form.

....
*In Assam, during one workshop as soon as one participant finished reading her story, others commented "this is half finished story", "there is no message here"*
The story goes like this " In a village there was no school. Villagers called up a meeting, later constructed a school and children started going to school. They said there is no drama no character. But when we discussed more o the story everyone realize how powerful the story is, as it tells about the community effort , villagers didn't waited for government to build school but constructed it themselves. A powerful story which would inspire others villages to follow the suit.

Drawing Faces

Here we will learn how to draw human head in different position. We will start with two alphabets **O & T**

As shown here keep the Letter **O** constant in all the drawings and move the position of letter **T**. With slight positioning you will get new expressions.
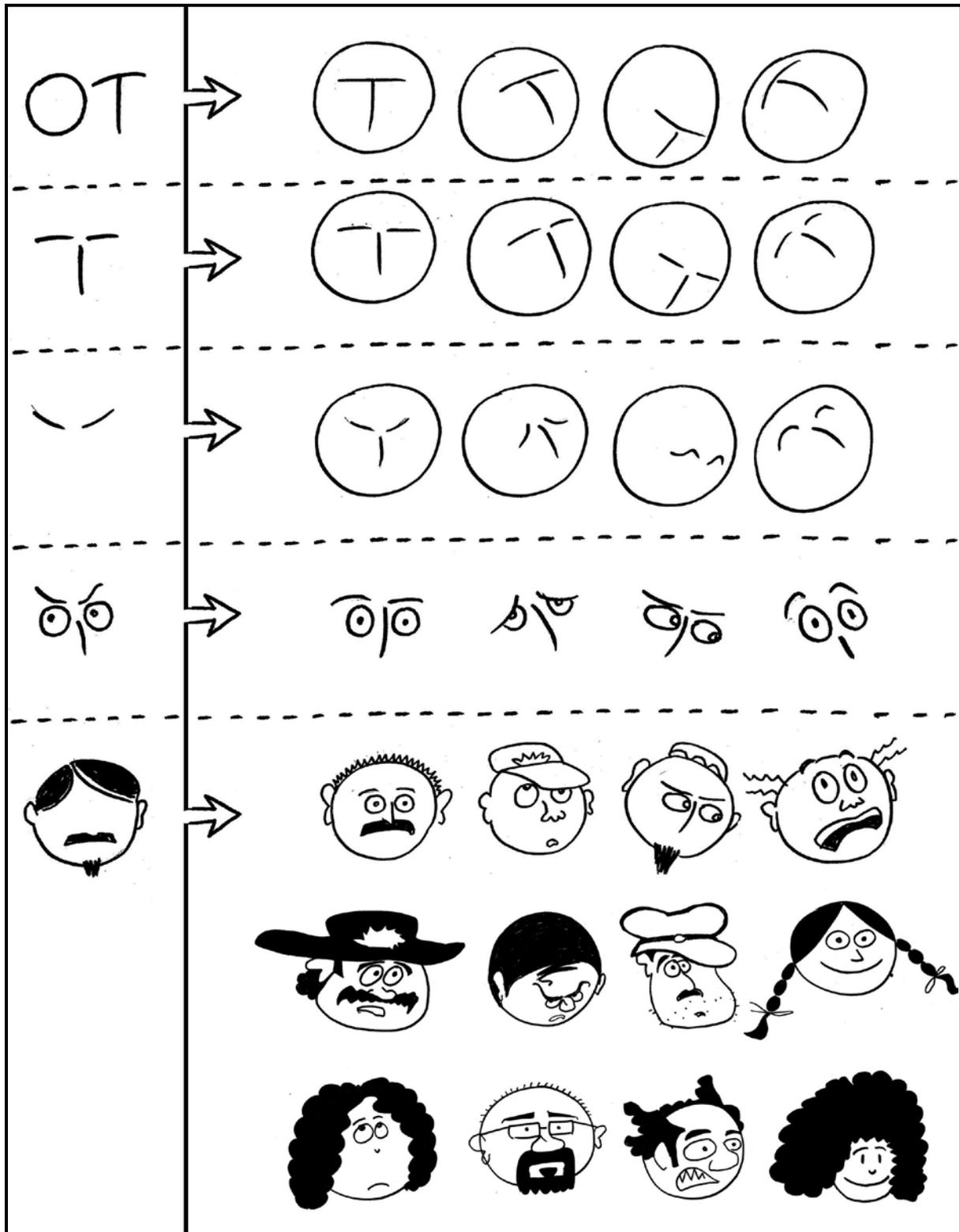
Facial Expression
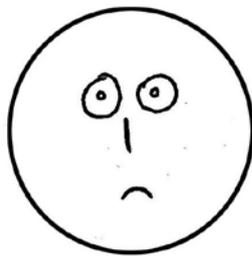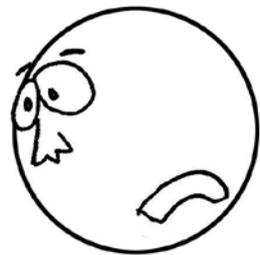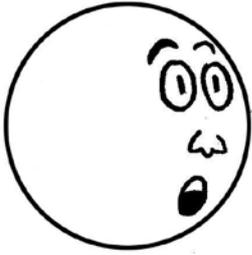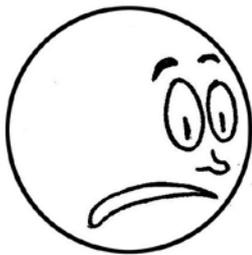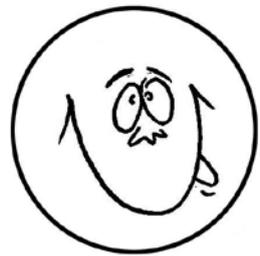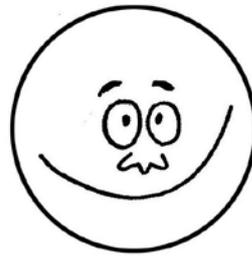
Body Postures

Here first learn the basic proportion of a human body. As shown in the picture, the height of a human body is equal to the 7 heads of his body.
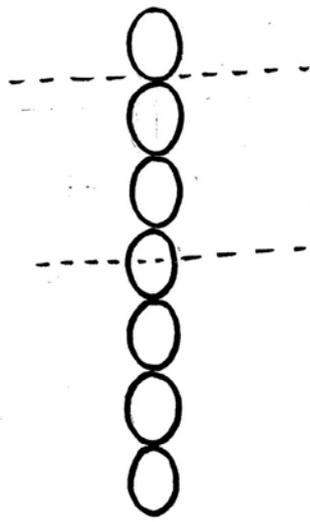
1 = Head

2 ½ = Body

3 ½ = lower part of the body

Following this measurement, this is how a human skeleton would look

Now lets try to draw few more body postures using same technique.
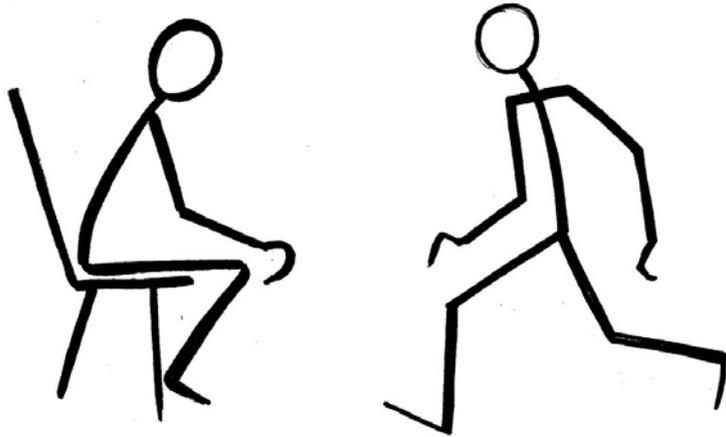
It is easy to make any postures using this technique. Now add some flesh and cloths to this skeleton figure as shown here, see how quickly it converts into a complete human body.
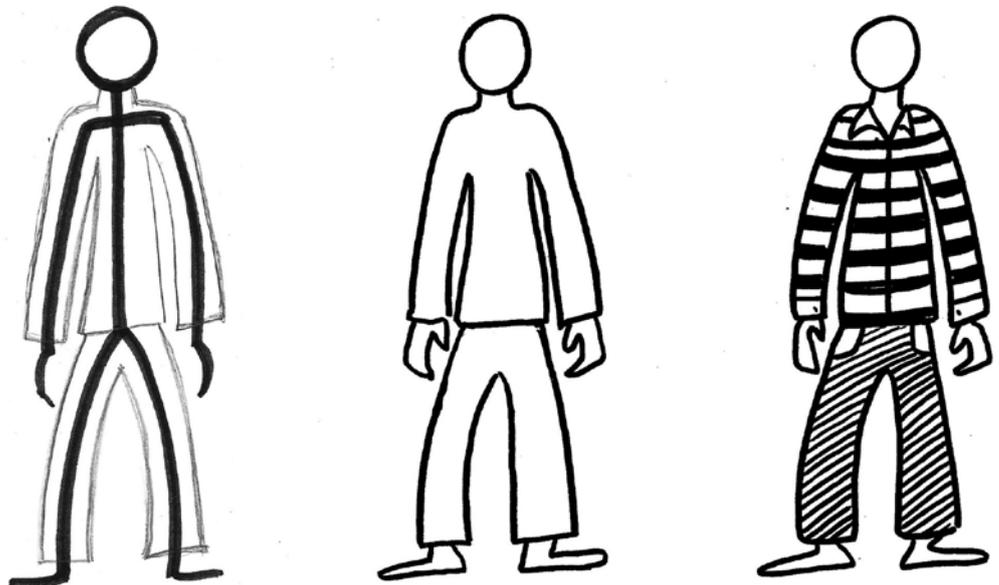
Creating more Postures

With the help of same technique you can create any difficult-posture very easily. Here are few simplified outlines of body postures and hand moments.
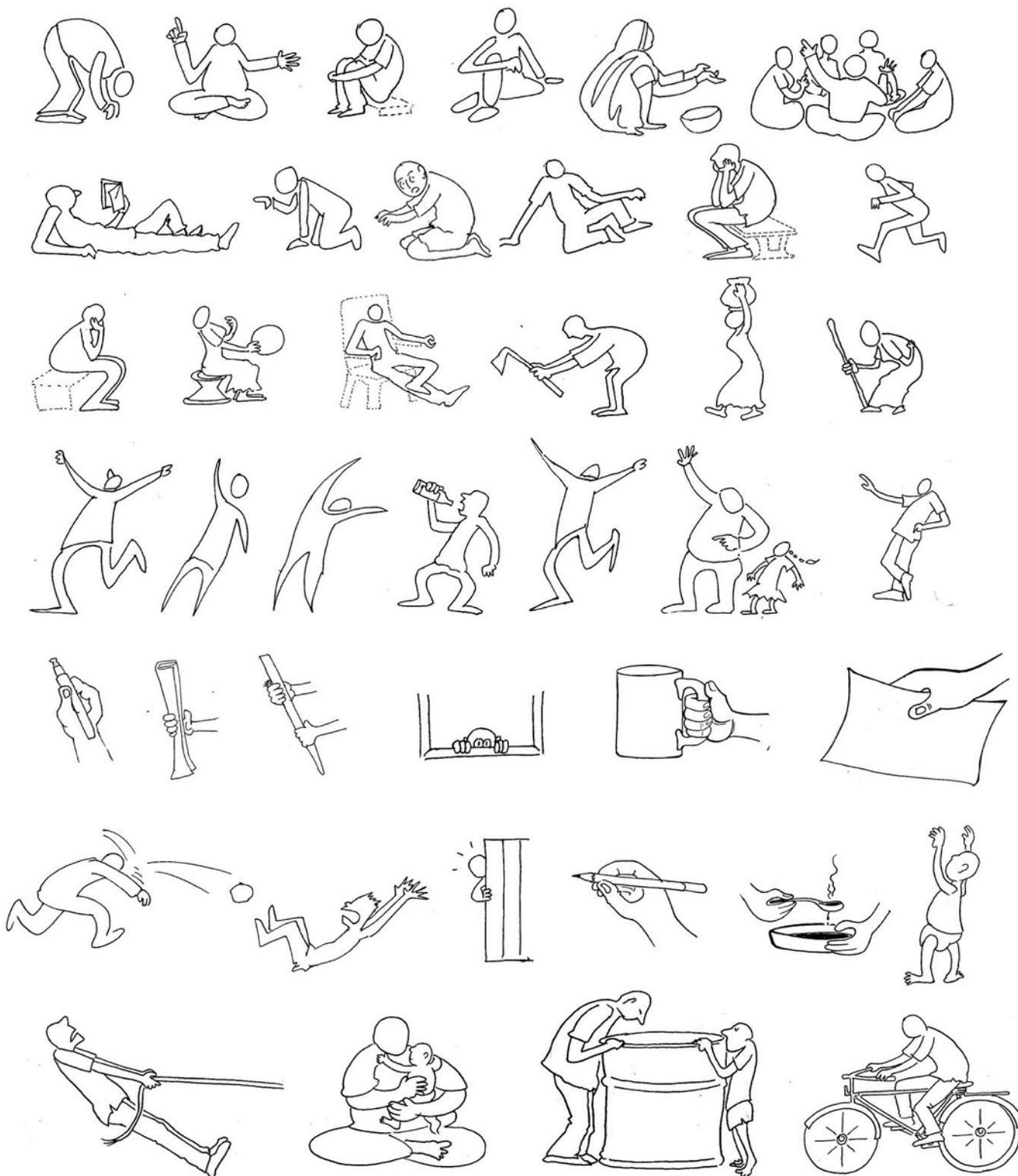
Divide Story into 4-parts

Our final comics would be a 4-panel wallposter comics. To draw the poster in this format we will divide our story into 4 parts. Later each part will be drawn into one panel.

This is how story must be divided into 4 parts:
1. Introduction of the story
2. Development in the story
3. Drama/ twist
4. Message/ concluding part

One example of such story

In the first part of his story this artist wrote "There was a village", but story doesn't move here. So in final drawings he made changes and showed some action in the story.

All parts of the story must be interconnected, keep this in mind while you divide your story.

This is how you must draw 4 boxes /panels on one A-4 sized paper to draw your visual script
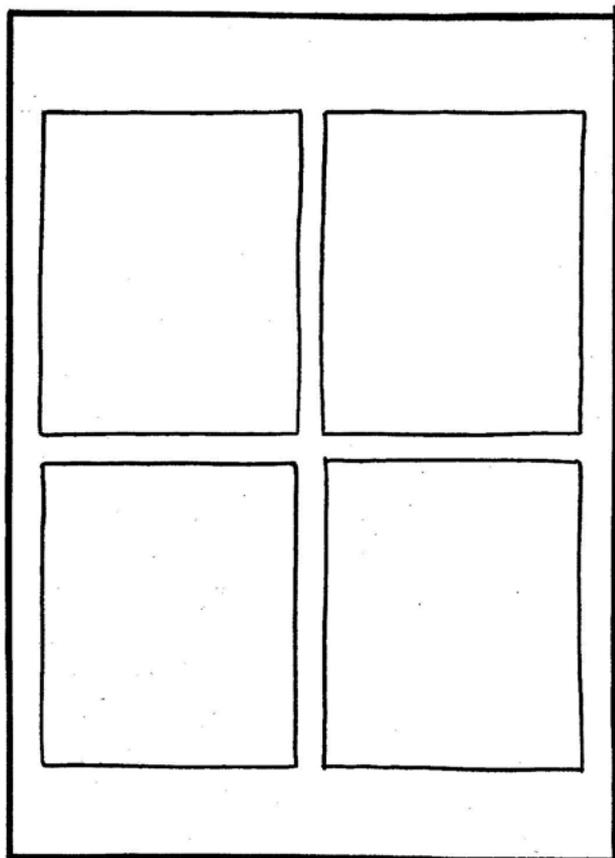
This is how the visual script would look
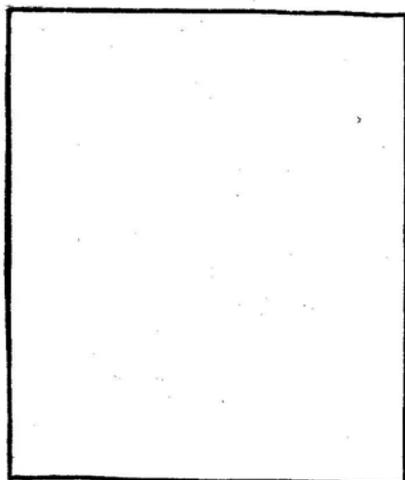
This is a Panel

Here in lower part of the panel you must draw main character of the story.
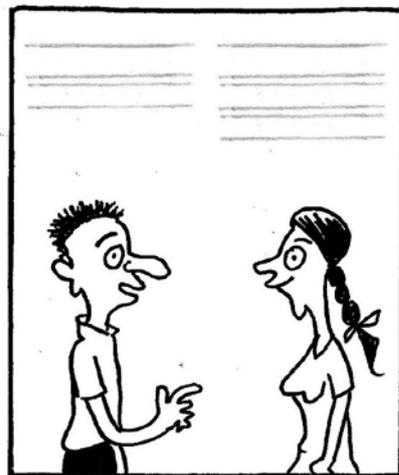
The upper part of the panel is used to write dialogue of the characters

Don't explain anything that can be seen from the image. That is duplicating information.

Different types of Balloon

SPEECH balloon

THOUGHT balloon

SHOUTING balloon

WHISPERING balloon

When more than one person speaking the same thing

If a person at the right hand side speaks first, his balloon would appear on top

Explanation / Narration box
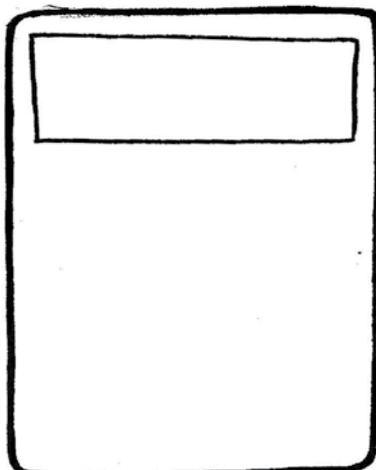
Duration box
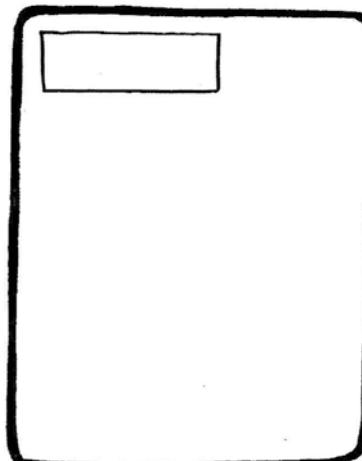
Notice or Signboard
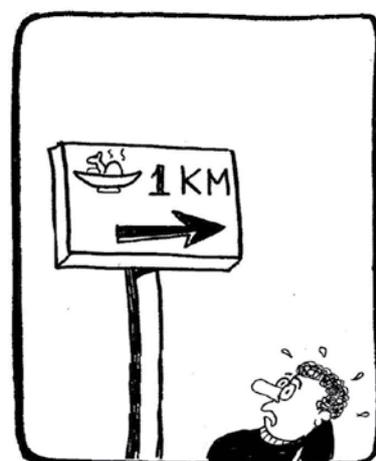
Reading Order: Comics are read from left to right first and from up to down. (This rule is absolute except in Arabic or other right-to-left languages, where direction is opposite). If something is important it should be given more space in the panel.

Writing Text in a Comics
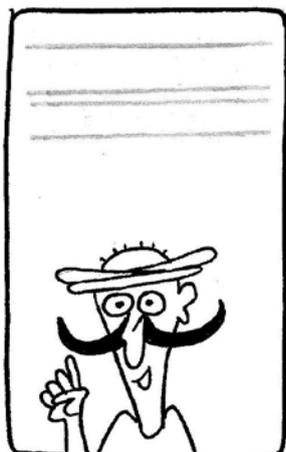
First draw straight lines with pencil

Write your text between these lines

Draw balloon lines and ink them

Erase pencil lines

If you need reader's attention on some specfic text, write them in **BOLD LETTERS**

You can write different style of text for dialogue, notice board or hoardings

Foreground &Background

In comics generaly we work on two layers foreground and background. Foreground is the front portion of a panel which is used to draw main character of the story, while background is the space behind these characters used to show the detail of that area.

Here in above example you can easily understand the importance of background in a comics. Here in all three frames the foreground is constant while background is changing. Reader can easily understand that in 1st frame characters are inside the room, while in 2nd frame they are in a village and in 3rd they are in a city.
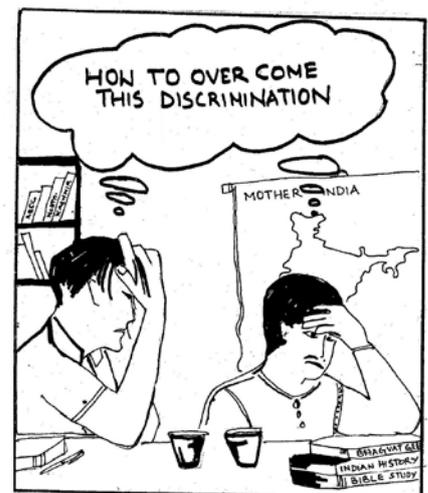
Here are few more examples of **foreground** and **background** information in a panel

Common Error-1

Here we are listing most common error committed by people while drawing their visual script. Hope this would help you not to repeat the same mistake.

Don't write the character's name on top of them

...you can introduce their name in the dialogue

Don't put speech baloons between the characters...

draw them on the top and the straight lines

The one who speaks first should be to the left

First question then answer
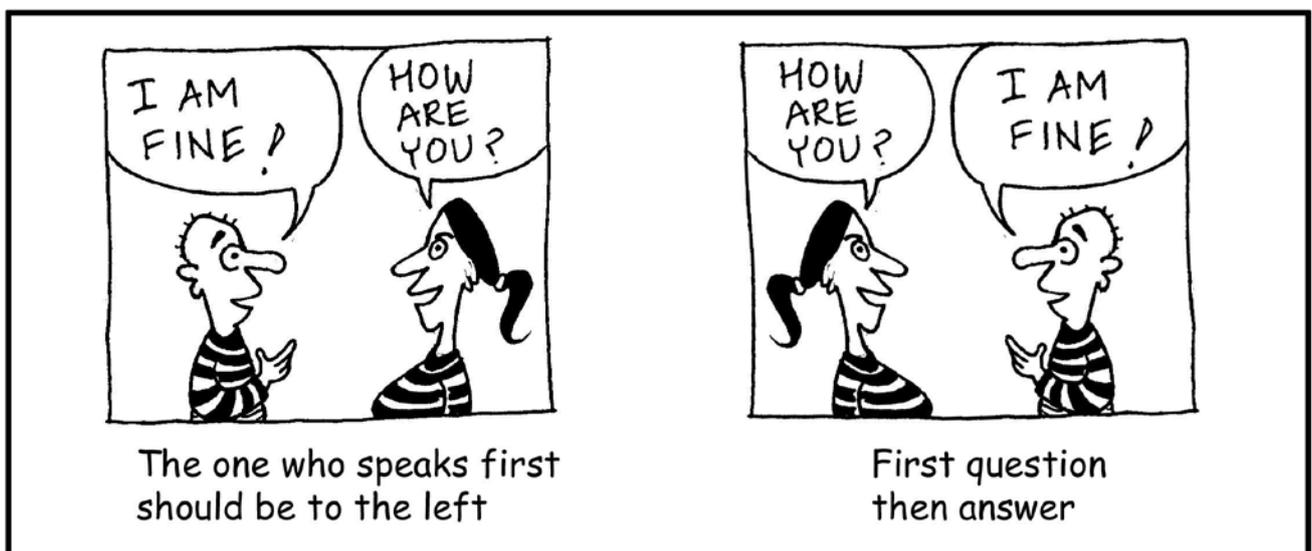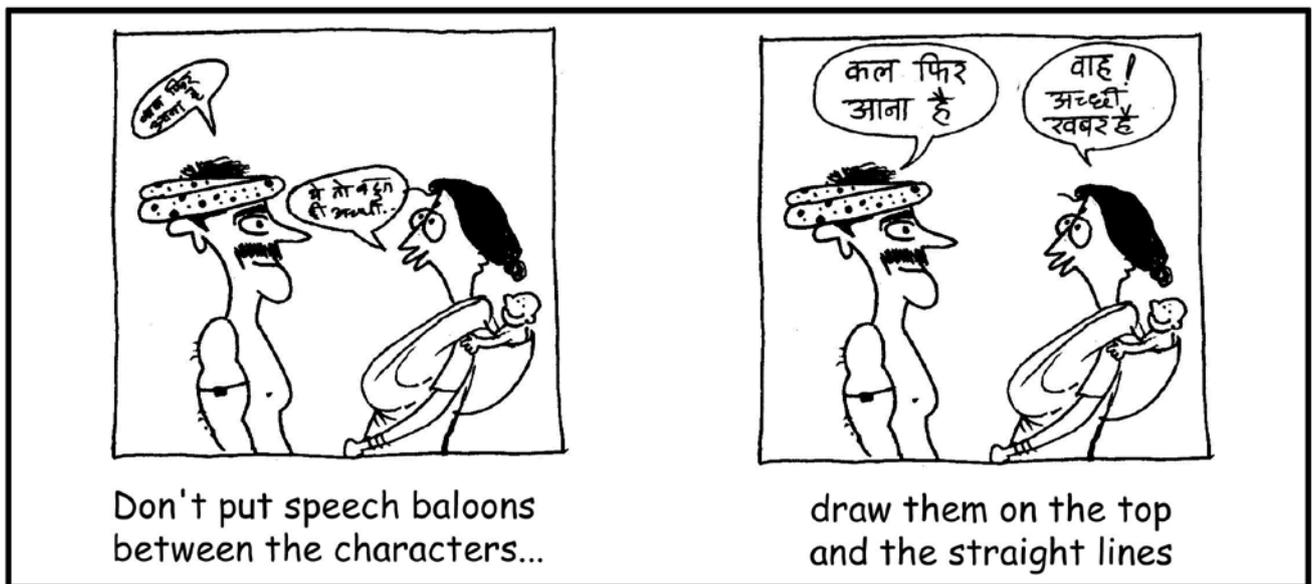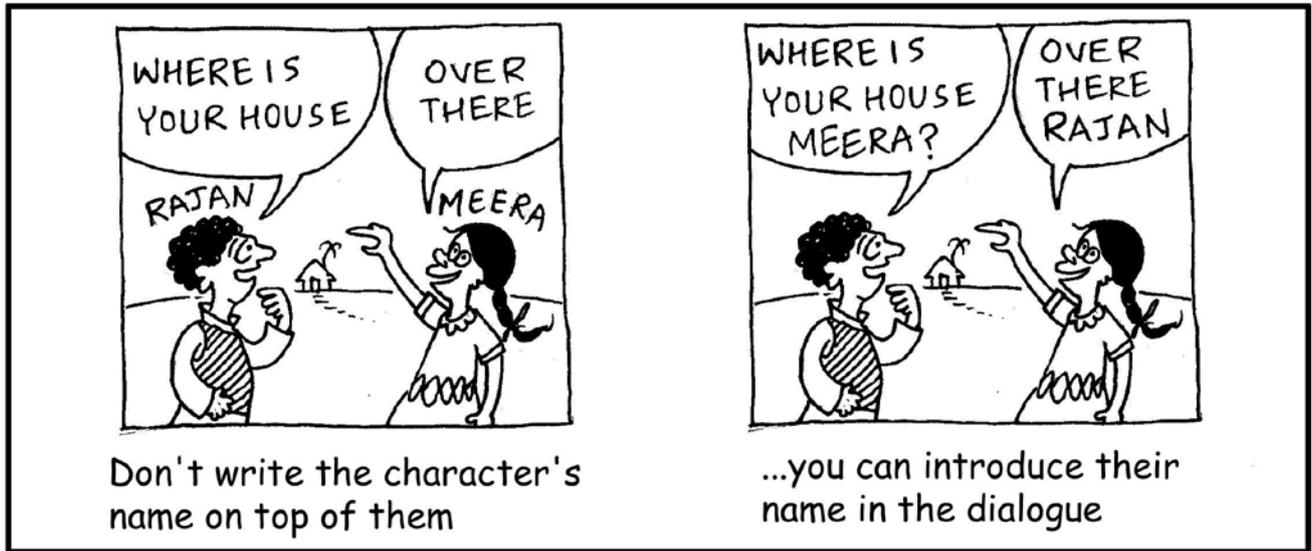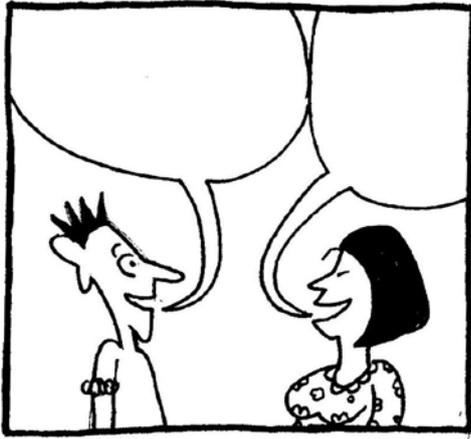
POINTER DOESN'T MEAN TO SHOW THAT WORDS ARE COMMING FROM MOUTH...
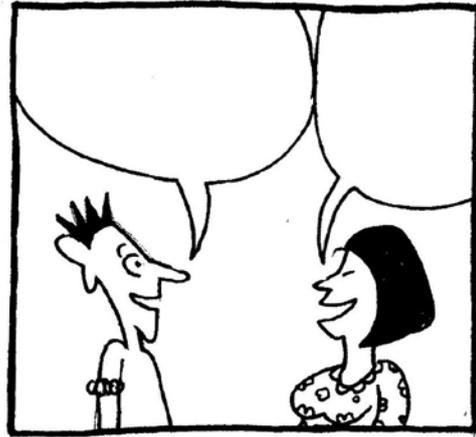
...BUT TO INDICATE THAT WHO IS SPEAKING

FOCUS ON MAIN CHARACTERS
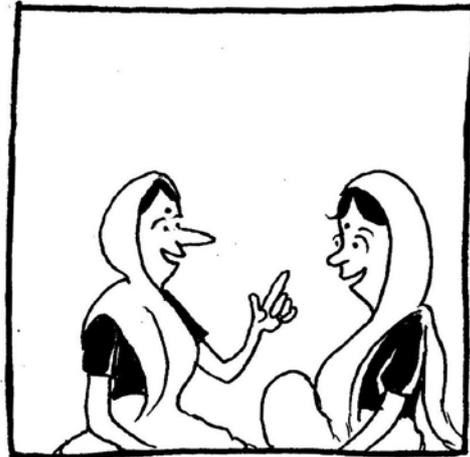
AVOID IRRELEVENT BACKGROUND DETAILS
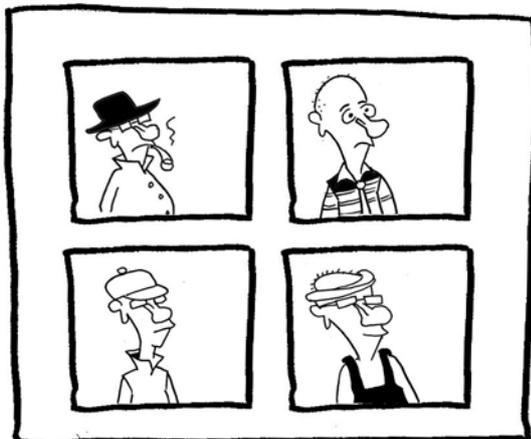
DON'T MAKE TOO MANY CHANGES IN YOUR CHARACTER'S PROFILE OR DRESS
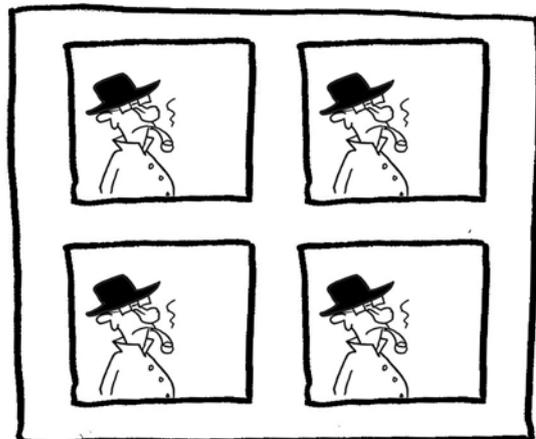
IT IS EASIER FOR READER TO IDENTIFY THE CHARACTER IN COMICS, IF HE/SHE IN SAME DRESS OR PROFILE

Final Wallposter Measurement

Here is measurement for the final art work. You must draw same measurement on two A-4 size papers as shown below.

29.7 cm

1 cm

1 cm

4 cm —

1 cm

13.3 cm

1/2 cm
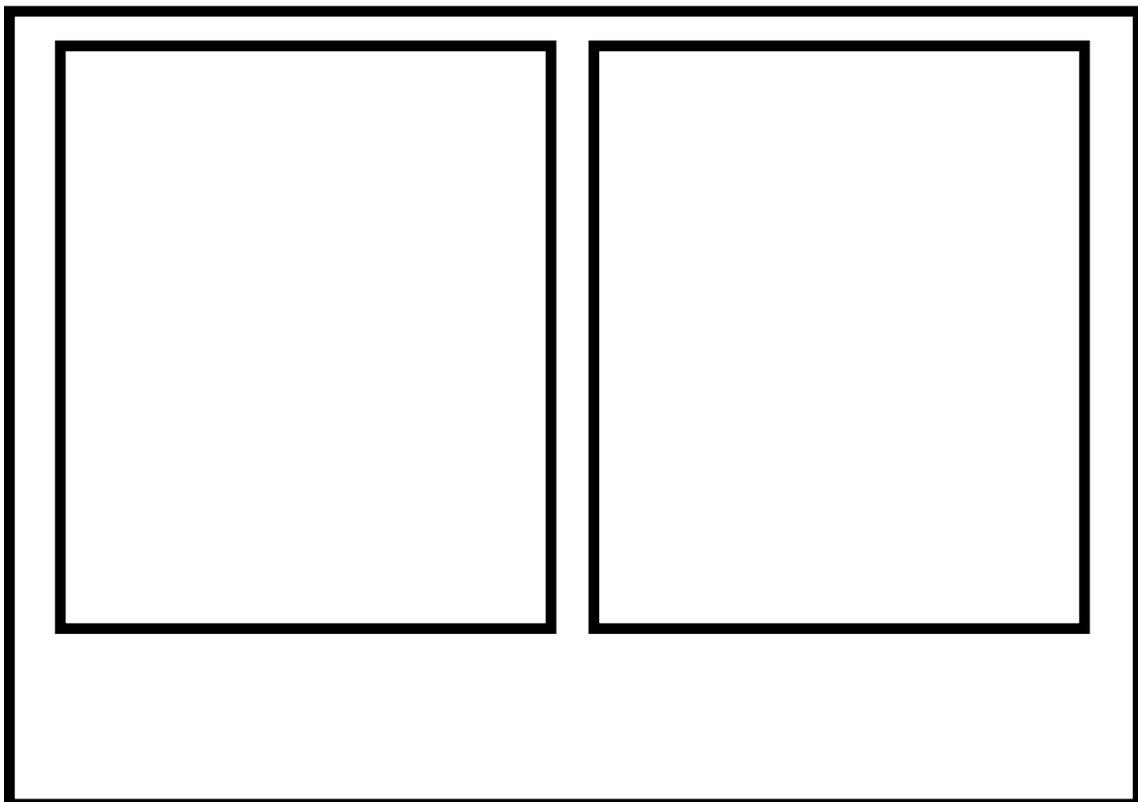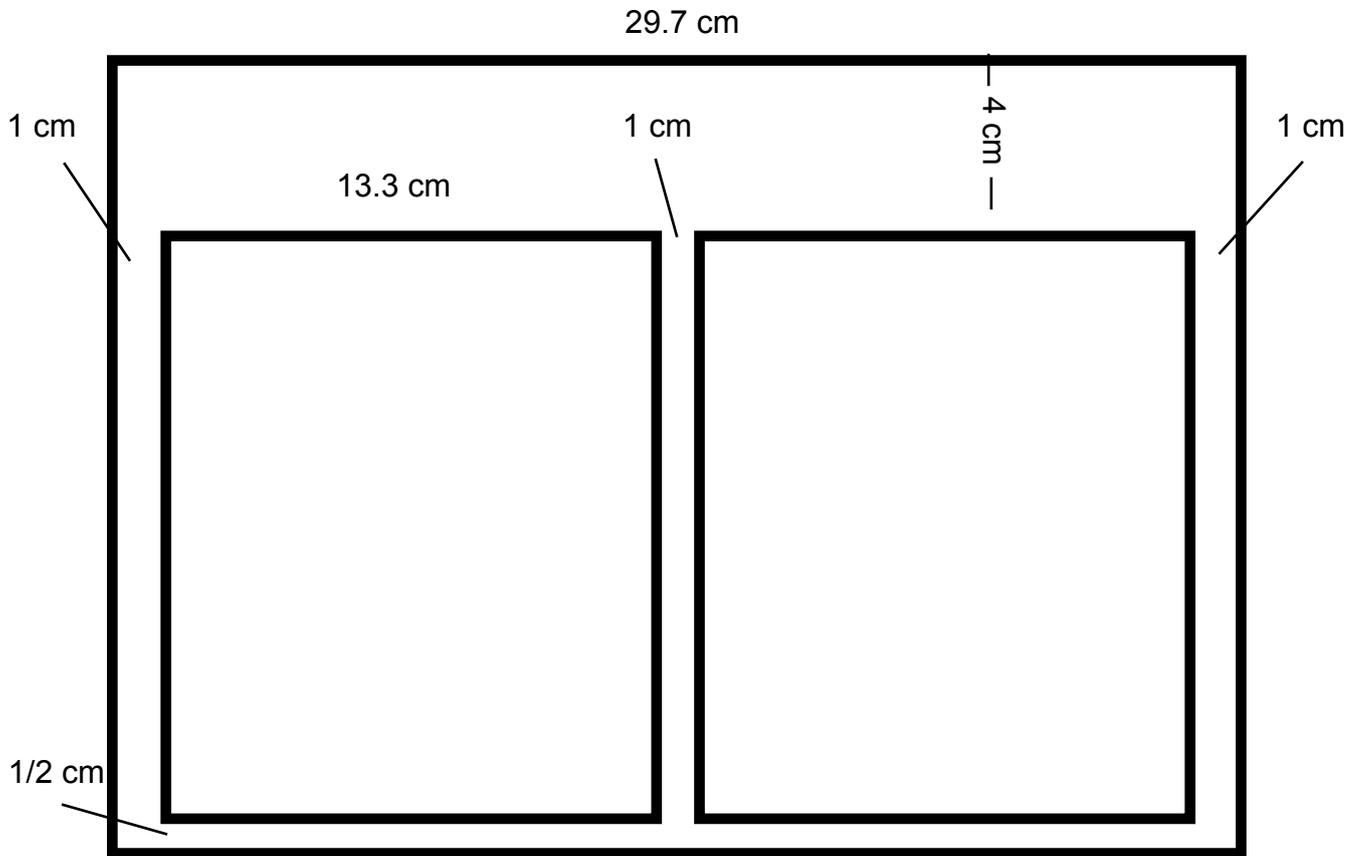
Using Different Camera Angle

CLOSE SHOT
Draw your frame this way when it is important to show facial expression and emotions


MID SHOT
This is commonly used frame, mostly used to show character talking to each other

LONG SHOT
Draw your frame this way when it is important to show detail around the character and background information
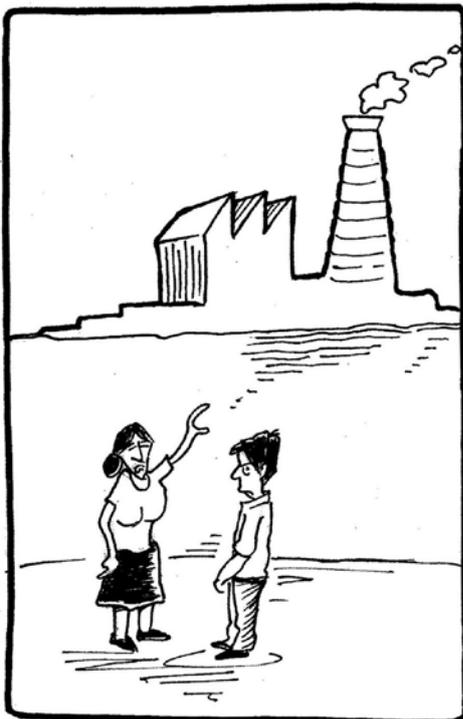

MIX SHOT
**This way CLOSE and LONG SHOT can be used to show depth and bring variety in your frame**

Act & Draw

To capture the real expression of your character in the story it is good if you act the same way and then draw. See the sequence below to understand it more:
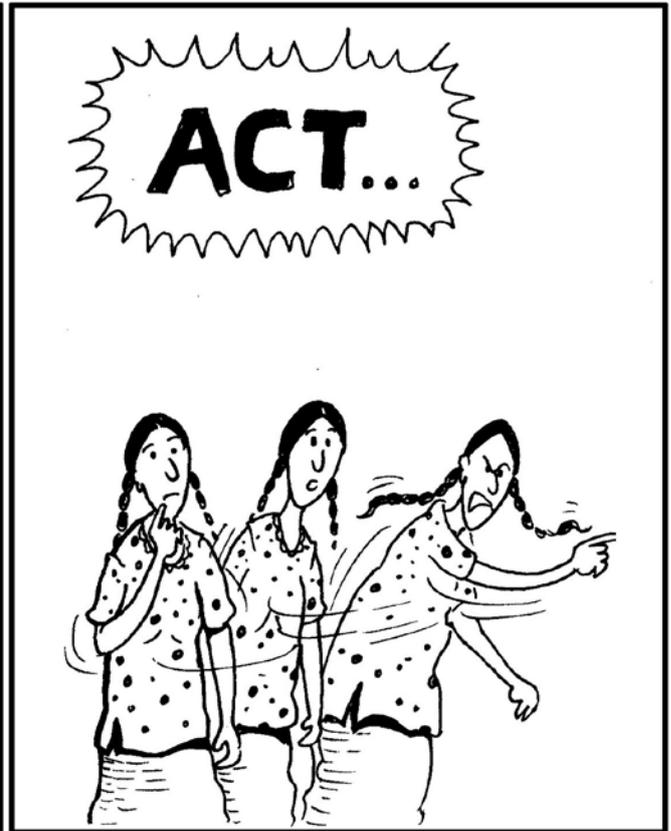
Shadow

Shadow plays an important role in a comics especially to show the time in a story and it also enhance the particular scene.
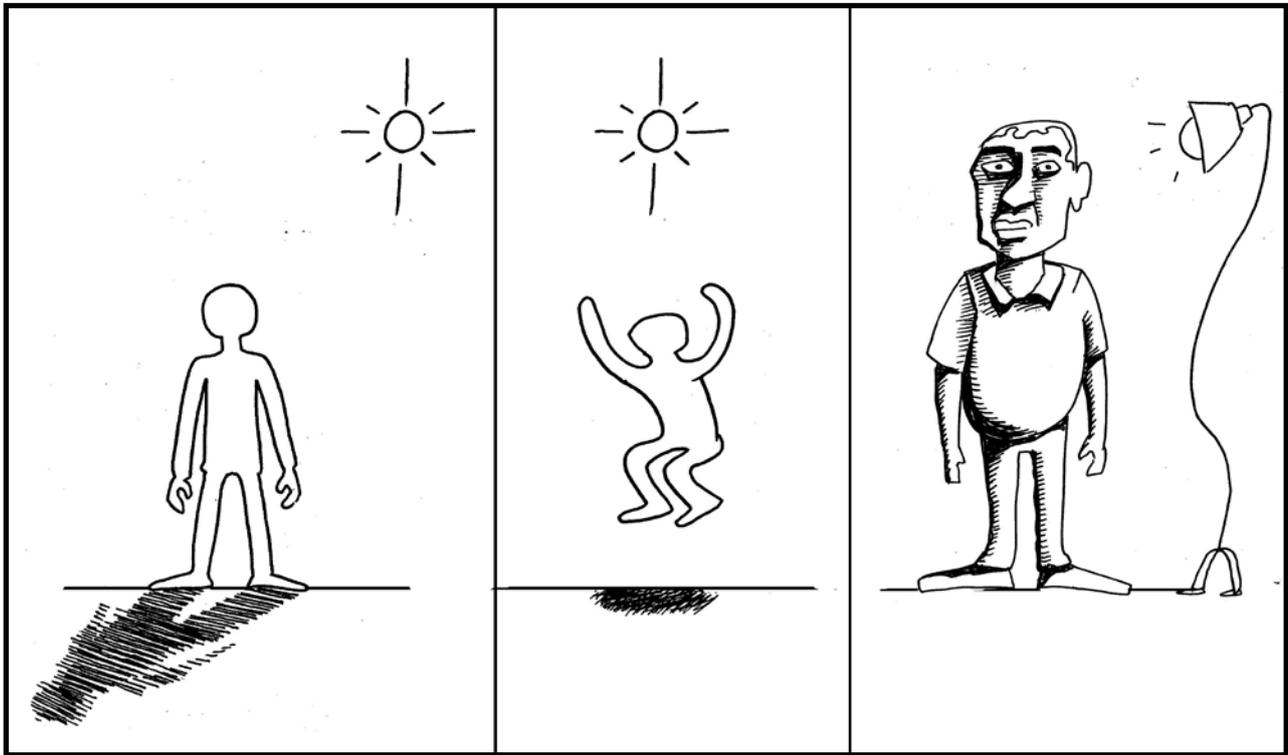
Depth in a frame

Here two example would help you to understand how you can show depth in a frame and create perspective. Thee are common sights you must have experience in your daily life.
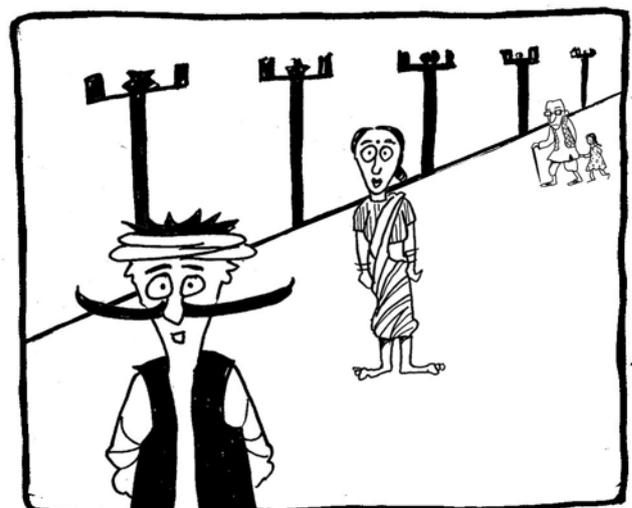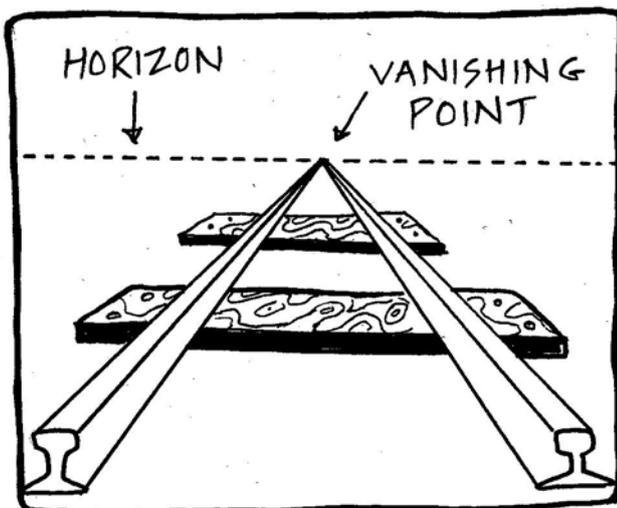
Sometimes people thinks comics are drawing and they start with drawing but never think of a story. In one of the workshop in Brazil one participant who was an artist did the same mistake. First two days he focused on only drawing and third day of the workshop when he realize everyone else almost finished their comics he asked us to help and then three other participants had to struggle to fit his drawings into a story.

Special Effects

In comics we can't hear sound or smell fragrance but both can be shown in few lines. These few lines quickly catches reader's attention on one specific area of the frame.

Inking

Once your visual script is ready you need to start ink them. First Ink your drawing and then your text.

This is your pencil drawing

You can cover your drawing with another paper to protect them
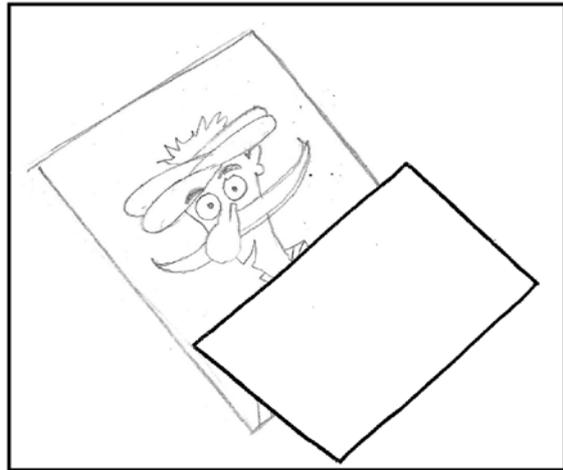
Take a pen and first start inking the outlines

Now add texture and other details

Erase pencil lines

your final artwork is ready
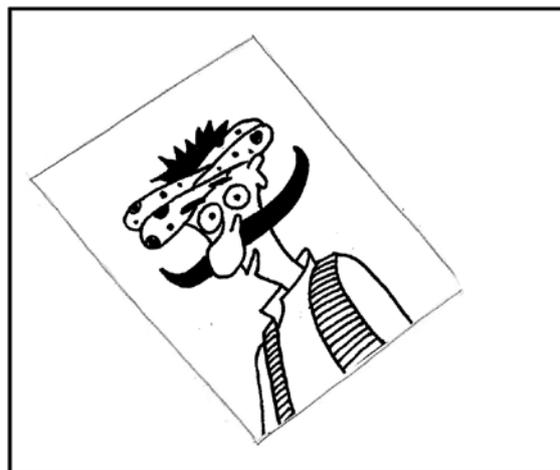
Title

1. It is important to make title short and catchy. It should not reveal the entire story.
2. Title must generate curousity about your story in readers mind .
3. It should be bold enough to read it from a distance
4. You can also add few visual in titles like shown below.
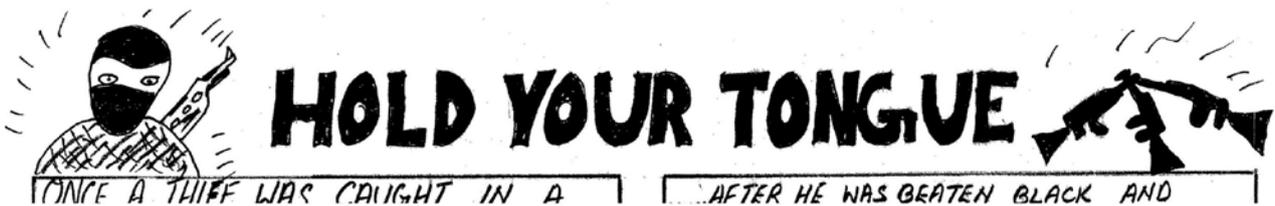
Pasting together and Photocopy

Once your comics is ready paste both the papers together with the help of cellotape at the back.
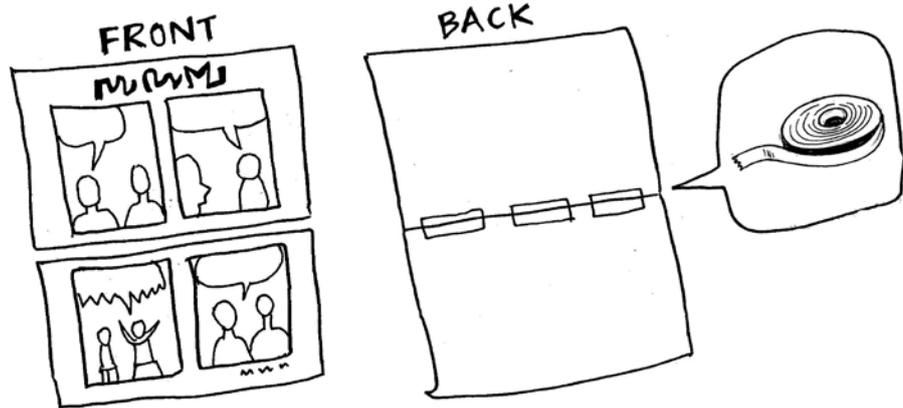
Now take it to nearby photocopy shop and make as many copies as you want

Distribution

Now you have photocopies ready in your hand and it would be good to show it to people. You can plan a visit to nearby community or village or market area. One or two person from the group must go as an advance party and inform or take permission from the village council, market association or locals about this activity.

Do's and don't
1. Each person must collect 5-7 feedback on their comics
2. It is good if you carry a notebook to take notes
3. After showing your comics to people you can paste them on wall or some prominant places
4. Always take permission before pasting posters
5. Never paste posters on religious places or government buildings
6. Never get into argument with people on the content of your comics

Each participant have 4-5 copies of his/her comics. You need some tape or glue to paste your comics.

CAN I PASTE THIS POSTER OUTSIDE YOUR SHOP

In Jorhat (Assam) a group of participant went to a village to distribute and paste comics. They tried to paste comics but cellotape was not sticking on wall. One women noticed this and quickly went inside her house and made lai (wheat flour glue) and gave it to participants as she realize that this was something important.

WHY ONLY A-4 SIZE PAPER?

WHY ONLY A-4 SIZE PAPER?

AS IT IS EASILY AVAILABLE, EVEN IN A REMOTE VILLAGE

ALSO A-4 SIZE XEROX MACHINE IS AVAILABLE ALMOST EVERY WHERE.

WHY ONLY BLACK & WHITE?

WHY NOT IN COLOUR?
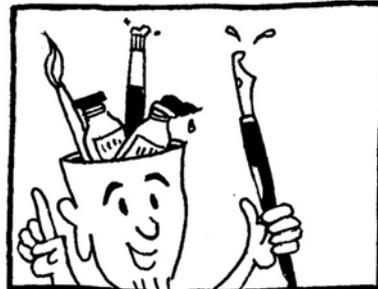
TO DRAW B&W YOU DON'T NEED MUCH RESOURCES
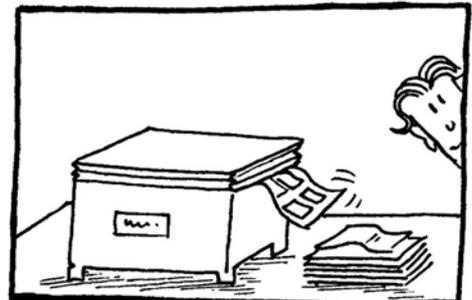
AND IT IS EASIER TO PHOTOCOPY.

WHY ONLY FOUR PANELS?
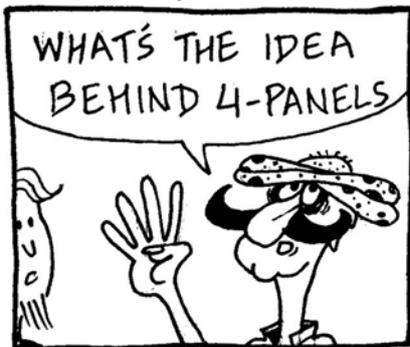
WHAT'S THE IDEA BEHIND 4-PANELS

THERE ARE SEVERAL USES OF THIS FORMAT
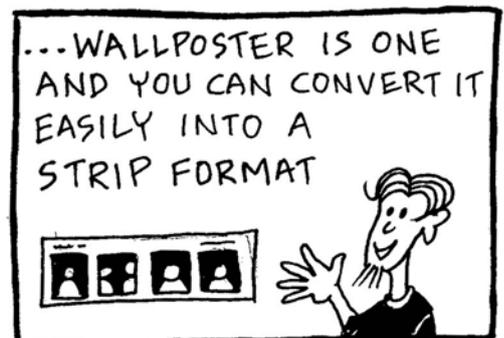
...WALLPOSTER IS ONE AND YOU CAN CONVERT IT EASILY INTO A STRIP FORMAT

WHY NOT ARTIST?

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE COMICS DRAWN BY ARTIST?

LOCALS KNOWS BETTER THEIR CULTURE, DRESS LANDSCAPE...

LOCAL DIALECTS & HUMOUR ARE POWER OF THESE COMICS.

Review Session

Take all comics made in the group and put them up on a wall for review session.

The comics made would be analyzed based on the following criterias:
Story
Message
Overall look
Readability
Usage of black and white
Title
Field Testing Response

Note:

1. Comics must be pasted on one wall and visible to everyone.
2. Each creator of comics will read his/her comics one by one and trainer will give feedback on each comics.
3. Trainer must make sure that he/she finds something good in each comics.
4. Participants can also share the feedback they received on their comics during field testing exercise.
5. This exercise will help participants to improve their next comics.

Adnan sattar was one of the participants in a workshop held in Lahore Pakistan in 2006. He was so frustrated with his drawing that almost gives up finishing his comics. I showed him samples of the comics that how people who draws like him had made powerful comics. Even their comics are published in the book. He quickly finished his comics and left early to catch the evening bus. Later during the critic session all participants were of the opinion that his comic was most attractive.

SEWING THE FUTURE
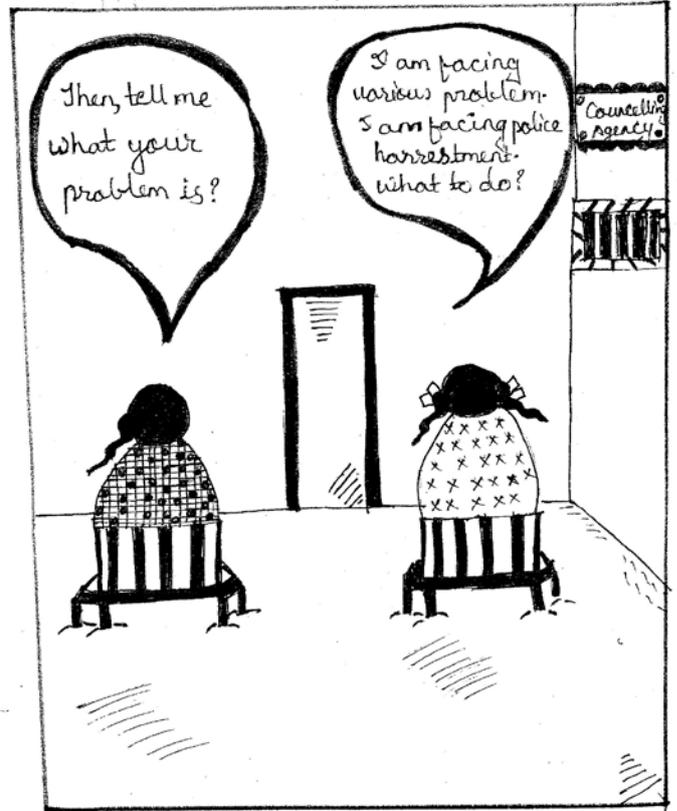
IRINA ARYAL
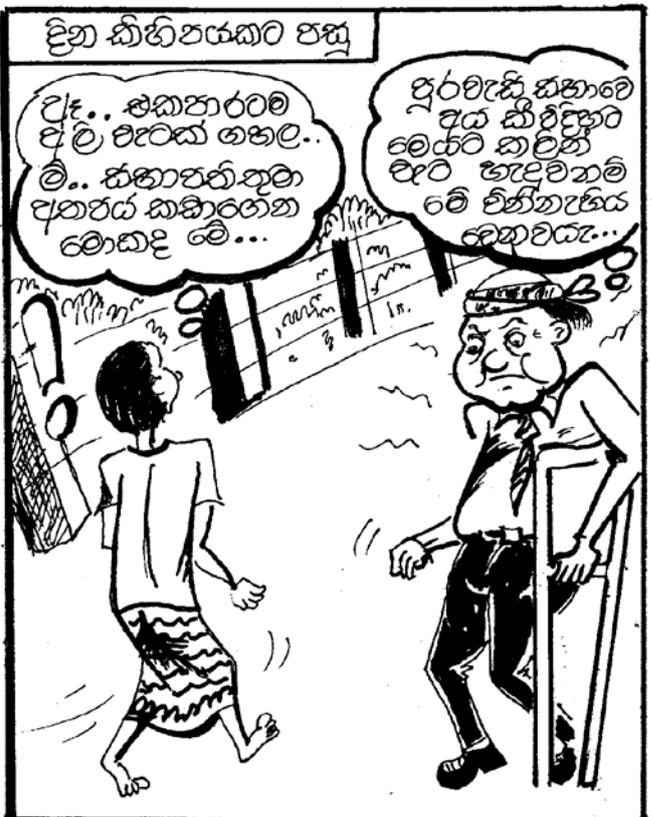
A village is located near the forest. Its villagers are unhappy with the havoc created by the elephants. They reach the concerned forest officer with complaint, but are returned without any assurance. One day, the elephants attack the officer. He repents of not taking appropriate action, in time. *Story and art by Sujeewa Jayawickrama*

Is the food ready: Keshav and Sunita started their new business together and were happy that their venture was flourishing and eventually become successful. Keshav told a cutomer that he and his wife Sunita shared the work load equally. In the evening, when they are back from work Keshav asks Sunita to prepare the dinner soon as he was feeling sleepy. Sunita retorts by saying that since they worked equally hard she was tired too and that he should help her in the household chores. *Story and art by Devendra Ojha*.