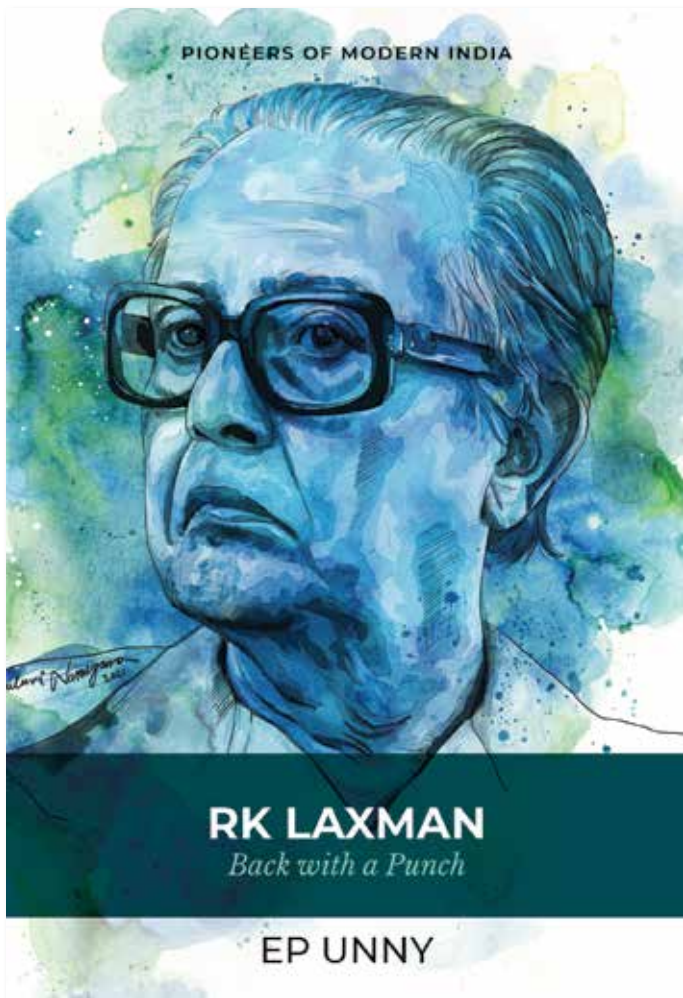

**PIONEERS
OF
MODERN INDIA**

A concise monograph on the life of RK Laxman as he caricatured the personalities and events that made modern India.

Analyses the influences that led Laxman to become a much-loved cartoonist, such as the impact of the city of Mumbai on his life and work.

*Explores the reasons for the enduring popularity of Laxman's work, including his most famous creation—the **Common Man**.*



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RK Laxman

Back with a Punch

EP Unny

A celebration of a Master Cartoonist

RK Laxman was one of India's pre-eminent cartoonists for many decades. His creation, the 'Common Man', became an indispensable part of the morning newspaper for Indian readers. Laxman's insight into Indian life, his gentle humour and caricatures of the political leaders of a newly independent country, had a profound impact in India and abroad.

In this book EP Unny describes RK Laxman's life, the influences that led him to become a much-loved cartoonist, his work ethic and the nuances of his craft. It is a tribute from a leading cartoonist to a master of his art.

Written in Unny's succinct style, this monograph offers a concise chronicle of the master cartoonist's journey, as Laxman's pen captured modern Indian history for readers in India and across the world.

EP Unny grew up in Palakkad, Kerala. His first cartoon appeared in *Shankar's Weekly* in 1972. He has worked with *The Hindu*, *Sunday Mail*, *The Economic Times* and *The Indian Express*, where he is Chief Political Cartoonist. His work has featured at the Asian Cartoonists Conference in Tokyo and at the International Cartoon Festival in Carquefou, France. In 2009, Unny won the Lifetime Achievement Award of The Indian Institute of Cartoonists.



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R.K. Laxman



R.K. Laxman with Mario Miranda and other delegates at a cartoonists' meet in Hyderabad

The making of the 'Common Man'...

Everyman has traditionally been used by dramatists to convey the moral of a story. This is a dicey device for the cartoonist, who should be anything but preachy. Laxman solved this problem brilliantly. His protagonist never spoke a word. The next challenge was to give the character a physical form that suggested a pan-Indian identity. Taking away the voice was easy, but one can't reduce the muted man to a matchstick figure to bypass all evident specificities. Given Laxman's maximalist style, the character had to be fleshed out. Again, it must connect to the whole of India, which was the newsfootprint the cartoonist surveyed every passing day. In his 1950 appearance, the bespectacled figure was labelled in all caps as 'COMMON MAN' to dispel any specific identity.

...By 1960 the little man settled down to what came to be recognized as his signature form. Wisps of hair over the ears, uncovered bald pate, round oversized glasses, checked coat and shoes without socks and to make his ethnicity suitably uncertain, the timeless unstitched Indian cloth called the dhoti—an attire common to many parts of the country. The protagonist had by then found its natural habitat—'You Said it'.

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