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Humour in the Shudraka's *Mricchakatika* [*The Little Clay Cart*]

Abstract:

Humour is genuine passion of human being. It releases the pressure and gives free and happy mind-set to the human being. There are numerous things in life that exasperates, frustrates and disappoints the man yet with sprinkle of humour the person become cheerful. The individual who is content with smiling face looks extremely lovely though he/she are loathsome. The sense of humour creates happy atmosphere and helps to illuminate precarious complications. The gratification is the decisive aim of human being. Everyone attempt to live cheerful, for happiness the aspiration fulfillment of the person is indispensable but it cannot be feasible for everyone. It is necessary to be happy with some satisfying wish; here the comical inclination helps the being. Nowadays, humour become very powerless and lost its uniqueness so in the present research an attempt will make to concentrate on the assortments of natural humour in the Shudraka's *Mricchakatika*.

Keywords: Humour, Exasperates, Precarious, Indispensable, Uniqueness.

There are many plays that used sense of humour to comment on the contemporary situation. The sense of humour releases the stress on the mind and body that gives pleasure. The

classical period was full of natural humour. The humour comes from bottom of the heart that entertains the people. There were no needs to manage the humour. The pressure of daily life was so hard that no one is ready to live with stressfulness. They are not interesting in quarrels and arguments regarding the rivalries of the community. It is necessary to live cool that helps to human progress. The cheerful mind supports the creativity and imagination. Through the creativity, there was rise of new ideas that ideas solve the problems of life and contributes to the progress of human civilization. Today the quality of humour become very low, innocence in humour is lost and the artificial humour has been raised in the world.

It was classical period of India that was full of Sanskrit dramas. The Sanskrit plays are written for the court and elite people. It was also the medium of social revolution and promotion of ideas. The Vedic tradition and puranas contributed for the rise and development of Sanskrit plays. After the Buddhism, there was revival of Hinduism that was the core seed of these plays. The promotion of Hindu culture and ideology was the chief phenomena of the drama. They used the form of verse with comic elements. The social, political and economical condition of the period has sharply reflected in this plays. In the present research, I am interesting to find out the nature of the humour in the play of Shudraka's *Mricchakatika* and how the humour contributed for the health of the society.

Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Shudraka are the greatest dramatist of the ancient Indian history. No doubt Kalidasa was the Shakespeare of India and Shudraka the master of humour. Bhavabhuti is less celebrated but magnificent dramatist of the era. The lack of humour made him less appreciated and popular dramatis than Kalidasa. There were no much information has been available about King Shudraka. His only one drama is available in the Sanskrit literature. He doesn't follow any dramatic unity and framework of characterization. They are free flow of

imagination but full of bone and flesh. That's why the humour created by these characters is very light, tender and natural. Shudraka's humor runs the whole array, from severe to ridiculous, from satirical to appealing. Its variety and keenness are unmatched. Here, Dr. Ryder remarks, "Sudraka's humour runs the whole gamut from grim to farcical from satirical to quaint".¹ The nature of the humour in the play *Mricchakatika* or *The Little Clay Cart* is under scrutiny in this research paper.

The prologue of the play is very interesting to note that it starts with the humorous incident. The anchor and his wife are talking about the lunch. Anchor very proudly demands the sweet dish for lunch and his wife says that there are many sweet things, milk, sugar and fruits are available for lunch. The anchor was very excited to enjoy the lunch and immediately demands the dish but wife exclaims all things are available but not in home but in market. The laughter in the audience broke very easily. The humour is related to daily routine of the people. The question of daily bread and butter was very serious matter at the time of this period. It introduces the problem of hunger and poverty. The poor man had no respect and has to live shameful life. Poverty is evil than the death, death release pain but poverty gives soreness in life.

The first act '*The Gems are Left Behind*' is very comic. It was constructed with lack of mythological knowledge of Sansthanaka. The pursuing of Vasantasena by Sansthanaka, Courtier and Servant are interesting pieces of humour. Sansthanaka uses different kind of symbols, images to express his love to Vasantasena but that was totally foolish and irrelevant images. It creates huge laughter that Sansthanaka cannot express his love in romantic way. He jumbles a lot and uses wrong mythological references to express metaphorical love. Besides, Vasantasena makes excuses and demands help from others but Sansthanaka receives this helpful expression as response to his love demand. Here, he looks like a fool, who receives wrongly and misinterprets

the message. In this segment, humour becomes very enjoyable rather than the predicament of the Vasantasena. The clue to rescue was given by himself that don't go to the darkness and further there was the house of poor Charudatta. It was really a madness of the character that delivers the feast of enjoyment to the audience. In this regarded, G. H. Godbole makes remark that "the humour of Sakara [Sansthanka] is rarely seen elsewhere in Sanskrit Literature. References to eatables or perversions of mythological references are found in his speeches. He expresses his weak points too but he is a coward in spite of his tall talks." ²

In second act, *The Shampooer Who Gambled* is also interesting and full of humour. When the king become lazy the table turns down that leads to anarchy in the empire. The people runs gambling centre and poor plays gambling to earn money. They have no other authentic opportunity to develop themselves. The act presents humour between the shampooer and Mathura and gambler. Shampooer loses ten gold coins in the gambling. He hasn't money to pay the owner and gambler so he ran away. They follow him with all might to catch and beat him. They ran behind him for ten gold coins. Shampooer walks backwardly and stands like statue of god. Both the master of gambler and gambler follows through footsteps but they have no guarantee so they played the dice before the stature. The shampooer cannot control his gambling fever and speaks forgetting as a statue. The scene is really outstanding and focuses on the mind set of gambler. The height of the humour is that when the debt was paid by Vasantasena through her maidservant Madanika, Mathura and gambler again invites him to play the gambling.

Madanika: You are certainly no gambler, if you talk that way. Is there anyone who owes money?

Mathura : There is. He owes ten gold pieces. What of him?

Madanika : In his behalf my mistress sends you this bracelet. No no! He sends him itself.

Mathura: (seizing it joyfully.) Well, well, you may tell the noble youth that his account is squared. Let him come and seek delight again in gambling.

In fourth act *Madanika and Sharvilaka* has very witty and light humour. The theft is actually serious matter but it was treated as a humorous act of Sharvilaka. The theft was not actually theft but the circulation of the same casket of gems to the same person. Here, even the thief is also not the thief but the intellectual noble person doing the act for his sake of love. The height of virtue also supports to the light comedy. Everyone shows nobility and virtue to each other in the play. It keeps light and happy mood to support the light comedy. The love is at the bottom of each activity in the drama. Here, the theft of gems is not real but actually they are stealing each other's noble heart. Each one tries to convince other, it bursts the comic scene among the audience.

The next and fifth act *Strom* has used the different element to produce humour that is exchange of adjectives and nouns. Maitreya and Kumbhilaka is the chief exponent of humour. They used adjective with irrelevant nouns and changes the parts of the words that makes lot of humour. When Kumbhilaka came to announce the arrival of Vasantasena, he not directly announces the name but gives the hints to Maitreya that's the master piece of the humour.

Charudatta: You fool, in spring, in vasanta.

Maitreya: [Returns to Kumbhilaka] you fool, in spring, in vasanta.

Kumbhilaka: Now I 'll give you another. Who guards thriving villages?

Maitreya: Why, the guard.

Kumbhilaka: [laughing] wrong!

Maitreya: Well, I 'm stuck. [Reflecting] Good! I'll ask Charudatta again. [He returns and puts the question to Charudatta]

Charudatta: The army, my friend, the sena.

Maitreya: [Comesback to Kumbhilaka]

The army, you jackass, thesena

Kumbhilaka: Now put the two together and say themfast.

Maitreya: Sena-vasanta.

Kumbhilaka: Say it turned around.

Maitreya: [Turns around] Sena-vasanta.

Kumbhilaka: You fool! Youjackanapes! Turn the parts ofthe thing
around!

Maitreya: [Turns hisfeet around] Sena-vasanta.

Kumbhilaka: You fool! Turnthe parts ofthe word around!

Maitreya: [After reflection] Vasanta-sena.

Kumbhilaka: She's here.

In act six *swapping the bullock-carts* gives support to the development of the sub-plot that was the revolution of the Aryaka. The scene of the swapping bullock-carts makes delight and curiosity to the audience. Here, the exchange of objects and at the same time persons creates humour. The dialogues are also exchanged shifting male as female and female as male that's very interesting. The expectations of each other and preconception make mistakes. The game of hide and seek can be aspect of this chapter. Though the development of sub plot is here but it was not hard and stiff treatment. The quarrel between Chandanaka and Virka is not injurious to the humour but continues light shade to the earlier humour. Both used the free play of the language and various dialects.

[He gets downuneasily]I saw the gentleman— [correcting him

self-I mean, the lady Vasantasena, and she says is it proper, is it gentlemanly, when I am going to visit Charudatta, to insult me on the highway ?”

Viraka: Chandanaka, I have my suspicions.

Chandanaka: Suspicious? How so

Viraka: You gurgled in your craven throat; it seems a trifle shady.

You said “I saw the gentleman,” and then “I saw the lady.

That’s why I ’m not satisfied.

Chandanaka: What’s the matter with you, man? We southerners don’t speak plain. We know a thousand dialects of the barbarians

the Khashas, the Khattis, the Kadas, the Kadatthobilas, the

Karnatas, the Karnas, the Pravaranas, the Dravidas, the Cholas,

the Chinas, the Barbaras, the Kheras, the Khanas, the Mukhas, the

Madhughatas, and all the rest of ’em, and it all depends on the way

we feel whether we say “ he ” or “ she,” “ gentleman” or “ lady.” P. 102

Act seven of the play is very short but the line and length of the drama is continued with modest way. Though this part focuses on the sub theme of the play but never disturbs the setup of the play. There is the treatment of shock and surprise, Charudatta waits for Vasantasena but he finds Aryaka the revolutionary, hiding himself from king Palaka. Here is an example for puns in the play.

Charudatta: turn the cart around, Verdhanaka. Maitreya, my friend, help Vasantasena to get out.

Maitreya: Has she got fetters on her feet, so that she can’t get

out by herself? [He rises and lifts the curtain of the cart] Why,
 this isn't mistress Vasantasena— this is Mister Vasantasena. P. 137

Even in act eight, *Strangling of Vasantasena* is continuation of the same humour of act first. Now here once again the entry of Sansthanaka makes bursting humour. Sansthanaka knowledge of mythology and mismatched symbols are really amazing hint of humour. Besides, his use of language and pronunciation of words makes more laughter among the audiences. He was totally confusing and distrusting on his servants. He cannot express his love to Vasantasena, further he has no courage to murder. He was brother in law of king Palaka is a topmost identity and people must think him aristocrat is his ambition. He has lot of ignorance and indecision making power that makes him fool, out of this stupidity the humour increases in the drama. When the power goes in the hands of the fool, he will certainly use in foolish way. Here is a best example of the puns and absurdities...

Sansthanaka: The old hog is afraid of a shin. Never mind. I 'll persuade Sthavaraka, my slave. Sthavaraka, my little son, my slave, I 'll give you golden bracelets.

Sthavaraka: And I 'll wear them.

Sansthanaka: I 'll have a golden sheath made for you.

Sthavaraka: And I 'll sit on it.

Sansthanaka: I 'll give you all my leavings.

Sthavaraka: And I 'll eat them.

Sansthanaka: I 'll make you the chief of all my servants.

Sthavaraka: Master, I 'll be the chief.

Sansthanaka: You only have to attend to what I say.

Sthavaraka: Master, I will do anything, unless it be a sin

Sansthanaka: There's not a smell of a sin.

Sthavaraka: Then speak, master.

Sansthanaka: Murder Vasantasena.

Sthavaraka: Oh, master, be merciful! Unworthy as I am, I brought this worthy lady hither, because she mistook this bullock-cart for

Sansthanaka: You slave, ain't I your master?

Sthavaraka: Master of my body, not of my character. Be merciful, master, be merciful ! I am afraid.

Sansthanaka: You're my slave. Who are you afraid of?

Sthavaraka: Of the other world, master.

Sansthanaka: Who is this otherworld?

Sthavaraka: Master, it is a rewarder of righteousness and sin.

Sansthanaka: What is the reward of righteousness?

Sthavaraka: To be like my master, with plenty of golden ornaments.

Sansthanaka: What is the reward of sin?

Sthavaraka: To be like me, eating another man's bread. That is why I will do no sin.

Sansthanaka: So you won't murder her? [He beats him with all his might]

Sthavaraka: You may beat me, master.

You may kill me, master.

I will do no sin.

A luckless, lifelong slave am I,

A slave I live, a slave I die;
 But further woe I will not buy,
 I will not, will not sin [P.121]

Here, Sansthanaka's intentions to kill Vasantasena is narrated in the following way is really hilarious dialogue.

As Sita in the Bharata
 Was killed by good old Chanakya,
 Sho I intend to throttle thee,
 As did Jatayu Draupadi.

In last act *The Trial or The End*, is very comic-serious and long ending act of the play. There are amalgamation of various issues and solution of the problems at the end. There is very less space for the humour but it was continued with the character of Sansthanaka, who makes comment in very comical way. His use of symbols and actions helps to release the tensions of the plot. Sansthanaka: I am beautiful as a pot of jewels. I kill no woman!

By standers Oho! You murdered her, not the noble Charudatta.

Sansthanaka: Who shays that?

Bystanders [Pointing to Sthavaraka] This honest man.

Sansthanaka: [Fearfully Aside] Merciful heavens! Why didn't

I chain that shlave Sthavaraka fasht? Why, be was a witnessh of

my crime. [He reflects] 'I do it thish way. [Aloud] Lies, lies,

good gentlemen. Why, I caught the shlave shtealing gold, and I

pounded him , and murdered him, and put him in chains. He hates

me. What he shays can't be true. [He secretly hands Sthavarakaa

bracelet, and whisper's] Sthavaraka, my little shon, my shlave ,
takethish and shay shomething different.

Sthavaraka: [Takes it] Look, gentlemen, look! Why, be is trying
to bribe me with gold.

Sansthanaka: [Snatches the bracelet from him. That's the gold that
I put him in chains for. [Angrily] Look here, headsmen! I put
him in charge of my gold-chest and when he turned thief, I mur-
dered him and pounded him. If you don't believe it, jusht look
at his back.

Manas Saha says that "There different dialects, often comic and ridiculous are fore
grounded. The political coup and personal intrigue play a major role in the play. The desire of
Sansthanaka for Vasantasena, his failed attempts at acquiring her, all form an important part of
the play. He comes across as a buffoon and a villain. However, his villainy is characterized by
pettiness. The scene of Sarvilaka the thief also adds to the comic rubric of the play".³ The scene
of the court trial is certainly good example of absurdities. Sansthanaka's arguments with court
room are illogical and insincere that produced laughter's. His excitement and self-amusement
focuses on his foolish nature that gives immense delight to the reader and audience. He behaves
arrogantly with justice of the court. Justice gives him the chair but he objected to the justice, who
are you showing my place, I am king's brother in law, I have power. I will sit anywhere, on the
floor or on your head. Such comments are very contradictory that celebrates as feast to the
audience. He cannot manage to give the bribe to others. He always shows the golden bracelet as
a bribe but never give to others. His temptation to others on baser instinct is useless. His
soliloquies are funny and laughable.

Sansthanaka: Hello, magishtrates! How can you inveshtigate the cashe with such partiality ?Why, even now you let thisshhecun-drel Charudatta sabtay on his sheat.

Judge: My good beadle, so be it [The beadle follows Sansthanaka's suggestions]

Charudatta: Consider, magistrates, consider what you are doing!

[He leaves his seat, and sits on the floor]

Sansthanaka: [Dancing about gleefully. Aside]Fine! The shin that I did falls onanother man's head. ShoI'll sit where Charudatta was. [He does so.] Look at me, Charudatta, and that you murdered her.

Humour was the pearl of the incomparable Sanskrit classical plays. The entire classical dramatist used it with accomplished talents. They never lost the major sentiments of the play but developed alternative sub-plot for elevating the central theme and advancing the sensational impact. It releases the dramatic tension and creates overwhelming environment in the play. They utilized distinctive sorts of humour using unadulterated Sanskrit and Prakarit language. Sudraka's humour was exceptionally fine, inconspicuous that portions on the mischievous side of the human being. However, he additionally used weaker section of the human being, poverty and loose character for his humour. His humour is not only barren but it is alive and fruitful. Sutrdhar, Sansthanaka [Shakara] and Maitraya [vidushaka] are the significant character with their weakness yet they are with blood and flesh character. Indeed, even today, it is a fresh and free flowing humour in the aesthetics of the Indian classical drama. Shudraka, through his humour pointed the weaknesses of human being and give them opportunity to reconstruct their noble life.

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