

A Silent Mode of Cultural Representation. The Study of Humorists' Characteristics in Southern Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract:

The aim of the present study is to highlight the importance of the humour as a culture representational tool of the society. The present study indicates that how culture is represented by the Humorist. The role of language in the society and its importance through the humour is the main objective of this paper. The humorist provides a cultural plate form to represent the cultural activities through the humour. Multiple themes of the society are represented through this silent medium. The humorist not only present the contemporary cultural elements of the society but it also represents the non physical elements of the society also. The humorist is not only a person who all the time provides fun to the society but he also plays a key role to integrate the society and memories its missing cultural values in unique way. The data presented in this paper is collected through qualitative anthropological and quantitative sociological research methodologies.

Key words: Bazurg, Bulliar, Ppawolee, Saraiki, Humorist, Nashaii

Introduction:

The transmission of the culture is possible through multiple ways. Every society has its own ways to transmit the cultural values through their own ways. Some societies have visible ways to transmit the cultural values and others have no visible ways to transmit the cultural values. Most of the time, the silent medium of the cultural transmission is not considered by the members of the society. The humor is silent way of cultural transmission. The relation of the humor is very close to the members of the society. As Radcliffe-Brown explained:

In the first instance, they are relationships in which 'one is by custom permitted, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn is required to take no offence. (1952:90)

The relationship of the humor with the society is expressed through different ways. In this regards, the role of the humorist nature is very considerable. The role of the language by the humorist is very caring in this regard. The use of the simple language is principal source of the humor. Simple verbal and non verbal language is used for the humors. Humorists are cultural experts but their way of transmission is silent. Humorists understand the cultural situations and abruptly act or perform according to the situation of the social gathering. Humorists chose the way to transmit the culture as that is a source of comfort for the people. It is consider a major characteristic of the humorist that how he or she develop the sense of the tolerance among the members of the society. Humorist colors the reality in the sense that it is criticized but not violates the masses.

The novel ideas and imaginative thinking are also express through this silent mode of the cultural transmission. All the time in the society social and cultural values are expressed in a monotonic way that creates dullness among the

members of the society, but the expression of the socio-cultural values through the humor is a novel medium that protects the members of the society from the traditional mode of the cultural transmission. The ambiguous themes of the societies are expressed in funny ways. Social hierarchy among the members of the society is general phenomenon of the all the societies. The humorists try to neutral the sensations of the different social groups through humor.

The lesson from the humor is always accordance with the situation adoptability. All the time it is human friendly and for the well beings of the human beings. Through the humor the importance of the different relations likes friendship and family. It discovers the social reality in unique way. The humor creates social integration among the society through the belongingness of the individual and marginalized social groups from single society.

Methodology:

Qualitative anthropological and Sociological research methodologies which include methods like Socio-economic survey, participant observation, key informants interviews and in-depth interviews were used to collect the empirical data. Different sampling techniques were used during the research like purposive sampling, random sampling and snow ball sampling. By using these sampling techniques 100 households out of 300 households have selected as sample of study. Beside this structured and unstructured questionnaire and in-depth interviews have been used during the study. Modern methodology like photography and recording have also used during research. The research conducted in four month from February 2012 to June 2012.

Results and Discussion:

Characteristics of Humorists:

The research in the village Sanjar Pur revealed that, there are different categories of humorists in Saraiki region both performer and nonperformer, who create humor and amuse the people through their specific ways of producing humor in the cultural context of Saraiki language and cultural discourse. Nevertheless, the study identified numerous characteristics of those humorists that they consciously or unconsciously take into account for producing humor. These characteristics are as under:

Simplicity in Humour:

First, within specific cultural contexts, the humorist normally chose quite simple and comprehensible language, signs, symbols, and situations to create humour. Similarly, the humorist tend to deal different issues and situations in a straight forward manner because the audience/ viewers simply understand life and its experiences in rather a simple Levi Straus binary conceptions like sky/ earth; night/day; good/bad; beautiful/ugly; and just/unjust. Therefore, in spontaneous and simple way, humorist conveys their message and arouses the heart touching feelings among listeners.

For instance, in my locale a family has a pet dog named “*buzurg*” (head of family). There is a famous joke about this pet which was told by my respondent that once a man went to their house and knocked the door. A young boy came out. He said “where is *buzurg* (head of family) and he pointed toward dog and simply replied “I just have tied it up”.

Humorist as Cultural Expert:

In case of humorist of Saraiki region, who themselves belong to that region and culture; therefore, they clearly understand the cultural peculiarities, the happiness, the plight, the miseries

and other social situations occurring within cultural contexts. They are the cultural experts and try to create the humour that may amuse the listeners and provide some relief to them. Further, they have to follow the norms, values and traditions of the society to which he is targeting for creating humour. In Saraiki culture, although there is found no restriction on creating humour by targeting gender, age, occupation and castes, however there are some limitations on targeting such groups in public.

High Tolerance for Criticism:

The humorist or the comic in Saraiki region are actually are the persons with high tolerance for the criticism from different segment of society. As these humorists tend to criticize every social, political and economic phenomena occurring in the community, therefore they also anticipate the reactions from society members. Moreover, several times the humorist have to make himself ridicule for coloring reality to situation, and the listeners/viewers also try to ridicule him in response.

Humorists Have Novel Ideas/Situations:

The humorist always remains in search of new ideas and situations to find out opportunity to create humour. They normally create comic plots that may be unexpected and surprising for the community. They tend to avoid rather familiar concepts and situations because they knew that monotony brings dullness even in humour and listeners could recognize such repeated themes as much boring. Further, if they do not rely on novel ideas, then they may do something to create humour, which could result into norm-violation of the society where they are performing humour.

Ambiguity in Themes:

In comedy, most essentially the ambiguity is what makes humour quite amusing. Simultaneously, it is also argued that

in creating humour, there is no need of everything to make sense or having specific meanings. In Saraiki humour, the element of ambiguity is available more than any other characteristics. The humorist like *Bulliar* often talks about different social situations and characters in abstract and ambiguous way. The vulgar jokes and extempore ribaldry is normally presented in ambiguous terms so that it creates humour and at the same time may not be offensive to the feelings of target communities.

Imaginative Thinking:

Although humorist gets ideas from the society in which he is targeting the different types of individuals and groups for creating humour. However, a humorist is more imaginative, who thinks all the way to stress on the liveliness of different social interactions. His thought process is harnesses during his being passing through different situations and he retains the ready-made structured answers to different questions. This faculty of humorist directly relates with ones intellect and life experiences.

Critical Thinking:

As I described earlier that a humorist is the cultural expert and he understands the society; therefore, he is the person, who tends to make visible the indiscernible inappropriateness in political, social, religious, and economic affairs of members of the society. The jokes pertaining to *molvi*, *nashaii*, *pawolee* and on other political personalities and situations reflect the critical thinking, observation and understanding of the humorist.

Neutrality of Sensation:

This characteristic of humorist of Saraiki culture makes them ruthless to emotions and feelings of the members of society. The Saraiki jokes pertaining to clergymen, *pawolee* and *nashaii* although identify different social issues of the society, however

could hurt the feelings of target community, religious people, and groups having low social status due to low castes. Comic and witty persons are often satirical and detached to any emotional situation; therefore, they view, listen and respond to every social phenomenon with sense of humour, imagination, or suspicion. To a very harsh analysis, humorists are persons getting amusement and liveliness from the misfortunes of society members.

Situational Adaptability:

Due to their sharpness and deep insight of the society, the humorist tackle all situations and are always willing to change and accept the open criticism. They knew to get through the situation if there is such need during creating humour. Further, the humorist is aware of the ever-changing social realities, therefore they are ready to accept that changes. In contemporary time, although many humorist of the Saraiki region seemed complaining of the modern trends of mobile jokes, drama movies and programs of the cable TV channels, however some recognized the use of technology in creating humour. They therefore target the technology itself for creating humour.

Instinctual Focus:

The humorist focus as well as gaze is on human's instinctual capabilities and weaknesses in Saraiki region. Simultaneously, the comic image is also linked with the human body in terms of hunger, sexual desires and lust, bodily gestures, movements and disabilities. Majority of the jokes in Saraiki culture comes from humorist focus on human body. However, the humorists are aware of listeners aesthetics connected with desires mainly of love, food, status, and pride.

Social Reality

The humorists focus on social characters that are often anti-hero and belong to real life. These characters are not alien to one's specific culture but come from normal, down-to-earth individuals to which both humorists and the listeners belong. Although the humorists tend to parody social characters, Plates, authorities, however, their satirical criticism is accepted socially because it is related with social reality and creates social awareness along with humour.

The Lessons of Humanity

The humorists are very sensitive people. They create sense of amusement, playfulness and relief for the people suffering from different miseries, oppression and misfortunes. Further, by identifying different social evils like oppression, enmity, and oppression, humorists try to give lessons of humanity, forgiveness, and friendship among members of society. Simultaneously, the humorists tend to establish equality of social class while creating humour. Although, the lower classes are often the target of the jokes, however humorists also tend to get involve the elite classes like politicians, feudal and industrialists in their jokes.

Social Integration

More often than not, to me humorists are the persons, who tend to focus on all features of society and spend more attention to the greater interaction between different groups of the society. They create sense of belongingness among all individuals of the society. The old age persons of the Saraiki region often sitting on some public places and having close gaze and deep insight on youth's activities and creating humour through critical approach actually want integration of their society.

Conclusion:

Cultural representation is a multifaceted phenomenon. Particular society has its own ways of cultural representation. Humor is one of major medium of cultural representation. It is silent mode of culture transmission, but when it is being studied through some special cultural lenses it has very deeply embedded with the cultural roots of the society. Humor is mostly inconsiderable in the society. But in the light of present study it has a vibrant medium for cultural transmission that not only helps to convey the cultural values but it also has a solid rating mechanism for the integration of the society. The nature of the humorists have incorporates the all segments of the society in the main domain of the society. The cultural expertise of the humoror helps him to bring the all segments of the society under a single umbrella.

Through humor the element of the patience has been enhance among the members of the society that help them to bind in single way. The ability to bear the positive criticism not only binds the masses in single force but it also raises the sagacity to detect the social evils in moderate way. Novel cultural ideas are shared through this medium that helps the people to think the social issues in critical sense. The sense of humor among the members of the society helps them to prepare their minds for the sudden cultural changes that may help them to response in any situation of cultural change. It also has vital role in development of society in neutral way by critiquing on the power holding segments of the society in silent way.

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