



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 9 | JUNE - 2019



BLACK HUMOUR IN *GOAT DAYS*

Jishnu Mohan M. N.

Part time Research Scholar, Dept. Of English, RDGA Govt. Arts College Shivaganga,
Affiliated to Alagappa University.

ABSTRACT:

Goat Days; Aadujeevitham, is a Malayalam novel written by Benyamin and skilfully translated by Joseph Koypally. This Kerala Sahithya Academy award winning novel is based on real life events and was a best seller in Kerala. The story revolves around Najib, his friend Hameed and their desperate efforts to cling on to their life. The story progresses through various humorous but grave incidents which evokes a strange pathetic laughter within the readers.



KEYWORDS: *Aadujeevitham, Benyamin and skilfully translated.*

INTRODUCTION

Black humour, the humour that muses on cruelty, turning ethical values disordered, including the smile from harsh realities. It reduces seriousness or serious subject of thought. Humorous, horrible and meaningless incidents and characters in a fiction can be defined as black humour. In black humour novels, it is used as a tool to create connections regarding an individual's past and private experiences to satisfy his/her own logical need for stability. It is through dark cleverness that Najib relates his at various times private involvement with request to

proceed with his life there. Dark humor in *Goat Days* make the perusers consider the corrupted good standards and qualities. The term Black Comedy was coined by the surrealist Andre Breton. According to Max Schid, the dark humourists scan for an entertaining recognition on both terrible substances and moral feelings. Dark cleverness was utilized in the 60's American fiction to find the issues and botches in a comic path in the America at that point. Its purpose still remains the same in the contemporary works. Black comedy, according to Stephen Conrad, produces uncomfortable mirth or delight. The blend of Independent and opposing activities brings about

amalgamation of clashing feelings. This normally leaves the peruser with the awkward reflection that the world is pitifully ludicrous and any push to discover some sense in life is impracticable; the same can be said about *Goat Days* too. Black humour, mocks establishments, value systems and customs, as well as treats bizarre, gloomy or horrifying things as funny. Black Humour never tries to recover, or transform the hurting realities on which it focuses. Alan Frutt says that Black Humour occurs when the individual is not concerned or is even pleased by the harsh realities and pain that he bears. According to Rupert Bruce, Black humour is not funny, but Black humour is sick. It's a particular

kind of art that employs violent inconsistencies to break through and crush our fixed, established and practiced way the things have to be.

Through dark satire individuals chuckle at things that compromise them, and by utilizing giggling mount over those undermining occasions. Dark amusingness brings chuckling into circumstances where individuals for the most part go to tears. This reminds us about Walter Kerr's comment on black humour as: "Evil is fun". The same thing happens when Najib uses humour in terrifying situations. Those situations are more than enough to make readers cry.

Though Andre Breton published Anthology of Black Humour in 1940 the term can be found in did not come into use until 1960s. Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* is a notable work which is an apt example for Black humour. In black humour topics and events that are regarded as taboos are treated in an unusually humorous and satirical manner; while retaining their seriousness. The indent of black comedy is therefore, is often for the audience to experience both laughter and discomfort, sometimes simultaneously.

Black comedy has the social effect of strengthening the morale of the oppressed and undermines the morale of the oppressor. Its natural human instinct and its traces can be found in stories from antiquity.

Its use was widespread in Middle Europe from where it was imported to United States. It is rendered with German expression Galgen humour. The concept of gallows humour is comparable to the French expression rarejaune (yellow laughing), which also has a Germanic equivalent in the BelgerianDuch expression groen lichen (green laughing).

In Benyamin's *Goat Days*, we can see him playing with black humour throughout the novel. In *Goat Days* the humour was never engaged with enjoyment of characters, but with the tragic plight of Najib, and it causes conflicting emotions. The reader will definitely think about the absurdity of human life. The characters inappropriate, casual challenge or denial of the seriousness of the situation is employed by the black humour to show its effect, anticipation and presentation both all at the extreme end to each other. Those who expect serious occasions are extremely shocked by the outcome of the event in Black Comedy. In *Goat Days*, Najeeb plays down the centrality of hazardous circumstance through dark silliness. He carries on abnormally to difficult, dangerous circumstances.

Najib and Hameed in *Goat Days*, does many things to get into the prison. Their deliberate actions to get captured by the police seem funny. All their activities such as, tripping policeman's legs, then shenanigans to capture policeman's attention, crossing guards etc....., are described in a funny manner. But there is something to think beyond their activities. Najib comes to prison after tedious planned efforts, as prison was best choice to exist in his present condition. His longing to live his life, forced him to do such a thing. This forces readers to think of the torments he must have faced to willingly prefer captivity.

Usually in films there are scenes in which lazy thieves strives to get into prison as they don't want to work, to earn without labour, but as Najib's story is revealed, readers understands his desire to live, to see his family, to see his child, his native land and more importantly, desire to live as a human being.

I didn't know of Allah heard me or not. But.....
.....prayers are my bolt hold (153).

Najib went to Gulf with the ambition of making a living and some fortune for his family. He got trapped by an Arab and instead of a construction job; he gets the job of a shepherd. He was mercilessly treated by the Arabs without enough food and rest. His suffering lasted for three years, four months and seven days. He escaped from Masara and landed up in the prison.

He who was a sand miner and whose hobby was bathing got punished for using water in Masara, he lived for four continuous years without bathing and he wasn't allowed to clean his body. His whole body and hair was full of sand, mud and dust, and in the prison when they got their head shaved,

Najib and Hameed laughed at each other a lot. This was an exceptional moment of fun in the midst of great sorrowfulness.

When Hameed grumbles of the lack of bathroom for cleaning up, Najib laughs, he laughs upon hearing about slinking body and damp prison air. The way Hameed complains raises laughter in the reader's minds. This instance encourages the readers to think of his past life, in Masara for four straight years where he wasn't allowed to bath. In all these instances the author skilfully employed the tool of black humour effectively.

When rainwater fell on him, he was unable to bear the pain and shrugged under shelter like anything, though he greatly desired to get wet in the rain. Worst was the condition of Arabs, Goats and the Camels. Once when Arab punishes him for using water for cleaning purposes, he consoles himself by saying that water in Masara is not appropriate for cleaning his bottom. Arabs beat him for using water, scolded him loudly, and when he tried to defend, they beaten him more fiercely. After suffering all these, he responded in a funny way and his wordings arouses laughter in the readers. Though his ideology was cleanliness- he was forced to move away from it. He uses humour to overcome his pain but behind those, there is pain and grief.

He also relates himself to goats, and names them to overcome his loneliness. The stories behind each name are funny- Pochakari, Ramani, Jagathi, Mohanlal, etc... People actually shoot jokes when they are happy and relieved, but here the situation is exact opposite.... The way he thinks of goats at first and milking them is really funny though all these are of serious subject matters. He is helpless and desperate. Though he gives humorous stories, he is suffering from loneliness, isolation and gloominess.

Najib underrates seriousness of tragic moments by evoking laughter in the readers. For instance, the milking scene, his description of the milking scene, neighbour's goats and ladies etc, were funny. He says that, he was.... leaping behind running goats to milk them. Though it evokes laughter, it shows us the serious tragic sides too. When we expect him to cry over his fate, he applies humour upon it. Thus there occurs gap between expected behaviour and actual response, which is yet another feature of black comedy.

In all the contexts when black comedy comes, it evokes troubled and painful laughter in the readers, as they already know his situation is bad and he has to suffer. The small comic instances which supply reliefs to the readers also makes them think of human values and worth of human life. Upon exploring Najib's story, people will start hating God. He wasn't able to earn a single penny for his family amidst of all his hard works and sufferings. *Goat Days* always searches for enjoyment in cruelty. It always tries to indulge smile from harsh realities. Throughout the novel we can see the author playing with black humour.

We are never able to see Najib distressed or disgusted with a troublesome life in Masara. We come face to face with absurdity of human life, and it forces us to think of how Najib is able to react humorously amidst all these terrible situations.

The scene in the beginning where both Hameed and Najib are waiting to get into prison is an example of the implementation of black humour. In *Goat days* at whatever point funniness happens, it happens because of disastrous circumstances of the central hero and there emerges clashing feelings. Najib ending up as a shepherd too is a successful implementation of black humour. Instances like the sand mining river man, shrugging from rain as he did not bath for four years and Hameed complaining etc are the best examples for black humour.

This study attempted to prove this point in examining and applying certain features and theories related to black humour and achieve the goal in doing so.

WORKS CITED

- Abrams, M H and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Handbook of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Cengage Learning India, 2009. Print.
- Alder, Alfred. *The Practice And Theory Of Individual Psychology*. Totowa; Little Field Adams, 1959. Print.
- Benyamin, *Aadujeevitham*. Trissur: D C Books, 2008. print. Trans. Koyipally, Joseph. *Goat Days*.
- Erikson, Erik. *Childhood and Society*. New York; Norton, 1963. Print.
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goat-Days>.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/books/articles>.
- <https://www.amazon.in/Goat-Days/koyipally>.