

Khasi Humour

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Abstract

Humour is an important essence of the social life of the people. In the context of the Khasi humour, there seems to be little much to say about cartoons and written words that portrays about humour. But, however there are lots of humours which can be found in the spoken language; in its oral form. In the Khasi language the definition of humour has not been ascertain to a single term, but are roughly known as 'biria', 'danda', 'phulia', 'sammut' which can be understands as levels of humour. Today, humour has found its place in local cinemas and radio channels like radio 93.5. The stereotypes of humour which is popular before only in social gatherings and performances such as in stages have been transformed into cinemas. For instance a humour organisation particular known as *Ka Seng Biria U Khasi (SBUK)*, performed satirical drama on stages before and today has evolved to showcase it in the form of media and television.

The paper will also try to understand the role of the 'U damdaar' in the *Ka Shad Lakympong* festival of the Bhoi Khasi.

Keywords: Ka Seng Biria U Khasi (SBUK), biria, danda, sammut, Ka Shad Lakympong,
U damdaar and phulia

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Introduction

It is believed that the Khasis belong to the seven clans or the '*Hynniew Trep*' who came down from the skies and descended on earth to settle and live on it by divine decree. This is derived from the mythological story of '*U Lum sohpet bneng*'². According to the story, there were sixteen clans that lived in heaven and from the sixteen clans God chose and summoned only the seven to descend to earth to rule and govern and be the masters of all creations. From thence on, they would be known as the '*Hynniew Trep*', or the Seven Huts, the Seven Families, the seven clans, who would later become the ancestors of the seven sub-tribes of the Khasi people comprising the *Khyriam*, *Pnar*, *Bhoi*, *War*, *Maram*, *Lyngngam* and now the never-heard-of *Diko*³. Later, God found that it was insufficient in this tractate with the seven clans that he made a covenant with the seven clans and this covenant is planted in the divine tree on a sacred mount called *U Lum Sohpet Bneng*, which served as the Golden Ladder between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Men. It was believed that a covenant was agreed upon where in the covenant Man has to adhere to the three principles of *Ka Tip Briew Tip Blei*, *Ka Tip Kur Tip Kha* and *Ka Kamai ia Ka Hok*⁴. This mythological story has often been likened to that of the Biblical myth of Genesis. In Genesis, it tells about how man was created and that it was from the image of God, he was being created. To the Christians, Adam and Eve were the first offspring that God gave full authority to men to govern all creations on earth. From the story we see the close or direct relationship that God once had with men. Also, we learnt that the *Khasi* believed that man was indeed the image of God created to do the works here on earth. We can say that the story of '*U Lum sohpet bneng*' is the important cornerstone upon which Khasi indigenous religion rests.

² Mount of Heaven's Navel

³ Excerpts from Nonkynrih, Kynpham Sing, "*Around the Hearth: Khasi Legends*", 1(4-5); Penguin publication, New Delhi.

⁴ The knowledge of man and God, the knowledge of one's Maternal and Paternal relations, to earn righteousness

Similarly, '*U Lumsohpet bneng*' the mythical story of '*U Diengiei*'⁵ and '*Ka Krem Lamet Latang*'⁶ are worth mentioned as they are also both essential to the Khasi indigenous religion, but we will not go in detail on these mythological stories. In the '*Diengiei*', it tells, how evil begins to settle in the lives of the Khasis and a pact made with the little *Phreit*⁷ marked the first gesture of Man towards repentance and humility. In the '*Ka Krem Lamet Latang*', it tells the role of the rooster in the Khasi religion, marking the 'rooster' as a sacred symbol of sacrifice to save men from retributions which is similar to the cross in the Christian beliefs.

However, it's very important to note that Humour in the Khasi culture has co-existed with these stories which are imprinted in Khasi folklore. Humour in households, humour in the community festivals, humour in public gatherings and in urban areas are all present and are very active which are passed on from generation to generation through word of mouth. Sometimes, it is hard to believe that the Khasi would determine their cultural identity not through folklore but also through the various forms or sets of humour. Some of the examples, portrayed mythology in a very humorous way and have been cited in the following paragraph, giving importance to the 'rooster' which is a mythological symbol of the Khasi traditional religion. This humour has incited mixed response in different sections of the people and is being circulated widely in the rural as well as urban scenarios. Other forms of humour such as in the form of trickster tales, performance and wits are also mentioned for analysis and understanding the Khasi society and cultural world view through culture and folklore. For example, the role of the '*U Sangot*'⁸ in village community or the role of the '*Damdaar*'⁹ in the community festival called '*Ka Shad Lakympong*' has played a role in the long history of the Khasi humour. The '*U Sangot*' disseminates important information to the people and many are the example of the information containing humour and are made humorous by the listener. Whereas, the '*Damdaar*' is a central humour-figure, cajoling and mesmerize the audience to participate in the

⁵ Oak tree

⁶ A cave

⁷ A small bird

⁸ A public announcer

⁹ Humour figure or personality

festival. Both of these are important historical humour-figure with different roles and functions in the society. However, only the role of the 'Damdaar' will be looked into closely in the following paragraph. It is interesting to know that through time, Khasi humour has evolved and has adjusted in the urban culture of technologies, mobile messaging and the internet. Examples of Khasi humour in urban set-up are cited in the paper, which we will also see and understand the dynamic nature of Khasi humour. These humours (cultural-historical-political) are carried or spread through various modern forms of technology.

Defining Humour

Humour has been part of human civilization since time immemorial. People have been using it in everyday communication through conversations, exchanges in oral and written forms, songs and other literary devices. The New International Webster's Student Dictionary defines humour as the 'capacity to perceive, appreciate, or give expression to what is amusing, comical, ludicrous' or 'the quality of being amusing, comical, ludicrous, etc' (The New International Webster's Student Dictionary 2000:346). Defining such a broad concept as humour has its own drawbacks and dangers. While some authors have used a variety of words and concepts interchangeable with humour (such as wit, comedy, risible, mirth, etc.), others have gone to great lengths to distinguish the nuances evident in such lists. Aristotle said that humour is 'an imitation of men worse than the average; worse...as regards...the Ridiculous ["a mistake or deformity"]', which is a species of Ugly' (Aristotle 1954:229). Theorists of ethnic humour Christie Davies and Elliot Oring have stressed the inherent ambiguity of humour. Davies stated that humour is merely 'playing with aggression' (Davies 1990; 1991) and Oring argues:

'Joke cycles are not really about particular groups who are ostensibly theirs about real Pole targets. These groups serve merely as signifiers that hold together a discourse on certain ideas and values that are of current concern. Polish jokes, Italian jokes, and JAP jokes are less comments about real Poles, Italians or Jewish women than they are about

a particular set of values attributed to these groups. These attributions, while not entirely arbitrary, are, for most part not seriously entertained.’ (Oring 2003:65)

According to Mahadev Apte, humour in general is a ‘public function for men cross- culturally and a private function for women’. In public domains, women seem not to engage in verbal duels, ritual insults, practical jokes and pranks, all of which reflect the competitive spirit. Prior to the twentieth century, the word “humour” had a narrower meaning than it has today, and it was used to refer only to a sympathetic, tolerant, and benevolent amusement at the imperfections of the world and the foibles of human nature generally (Wickberg 1998). Freud spoke of humour as being the ‘highest of the defense mechanisms’ and a ‘rare and precious gift’ (Freud 1928:6).

The academic study of humour by folklorists has been a late arrival in the overall history of the study of narrative folklore. Early folklorists certainly collected humorous materials found in traditional genres such as tales, ballads, proverbs, humorous anecdotes, and riddles, but there did not seem to be serious interest in how humour operated, its possible hidden meaning, or why it lasted. According to Jan Brunvard’s *American Folklore Encyclopedia*:

Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm included numerous tales in their *Kinder und Hausmarchen* (1812-1816)...[and the] interest of the 19th century English folklorist in “folk wit” was an interest in proverbs and riddles as a repository of old “wisdom”, not humor. Francis James Child included humorous texts in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898) [only] because they met his criteria for traditional narrative song. (Oring 1996:374)

Folklorists have often interpreted the themes of humorous jokes and stories as symbolic responses to disturbing events or movements. Again in Brunvard’s *American Folklore*

Encyclopedia, Elliot Oring discussed Alan Dundes' (1934-2005) contributions to the study of narrative humour. Oring stated that Dundes:

.....single-handedly brought the psychoanalytic to the attention of American folklorist, his interpretations of scores of myths, legends, tales, rituals, artifacts, and jokes made the perspective seem more prominent in the discipline than it, in fact, was.....Generally, Dundes viewed these jokes as providing a socially sanctioned outlet for the expression of forbidden thoughts.....(375)

Defining humour in the Khasi context has been confusing, till date, as there is not a particular word, exactly for humour. The study of humour, research analysis for humour and understanding humour in the Khasi context is very new. However, there is a possibility that a new Khasi term will inevitably come into the literary scope after taking much consideration by literary scholars, researchers and students. Humour has been studied now as objectivity rather than taken it as a study of subjectivity. Today, in the Khasi language, humour has many terms like '*ki biria*', '*danda*', '*phulia*' and '*sammut*', but it should be clear that these can be understood as the levels of humour. Some of these terms have been in juxtaposition, in some way has been understood and used as a common term. The term '*biria*' and '*danda*' are being treated as one, for instance, if one person narrated humorous stories and he is good at it, he is referred as '*u danda*' or '*u biria*' and these stories are called as '*ki khana danda*' or '*ki khana biria*'. These terms are looked at as similar and there is no inherent contradiction in differentiating them. The meanings that they reveal to the listener are the same, though the word might be completely different. If these terms are used in a certain conversation, people would understand that humour or something comical that evoked laughter has taken place. These terms sum up the humorous stories or jokes, the narrator or performer, cartoons in magazines and newspaper and caricatures. We should be clear that both the term '*biria*' and '*danda*' are not a direct meaning of humour, but more likely, just an assessment of humour.

In the Khasi culture, sometimes humour is defined by its roles and functions in the folktales, tricksters tales and other forms of tradition utterances and narratives. There is a need to fully understand this complex idea of humour to the Khasi, so that we can open up to the definition of Khasi humour. We will now look on some examples of Khasi humour through trickster's tales, humour-mythology, performance, jokers or jesters and urban-humour. Definitely, we will also look at some of the examples of humour that are evolving through time. Also, the humour that are spread both verbally and non-verbal.

In the Khasi culture, urban sets of humour can be found abundantly in the modern form but when we try to look in folklore, it becomes very limited. One of the main reasons is that, humour is interpreted or translated into an oral form. However, some humours are found in oral narratives and these humours are portrayed by animal figures. These animal figures perform a kind of wit or trickery to another which creates laughter and plays as humour. Grown up men and women or elders and children would sit around the hearth and narrate these stories. Most of the time, these stories are being narrated by grown up men or women, to young children, and then repeated orally from one generation to another. . Though, being a matrilineal society, we find women do not usually take part in showcasing humour in public. They would always be in the background, which even in the folklore narratives and humorous animal stories, we always find that the masculine gender 'U' is used rather than the feminine 'Ka'. In the modern form we see that the majority of the performers of humour or humour narrators are mostly men. There are so many examples to show the relevance of this articulation but in this paper we will look at one particular animal figure which has mesmerized Khasi folk humour, that is 'U Koh siang'.

'U Koh siang' is the literal Khasi rendering of the 'old man fox' which draws similarity with the native North American variety – "the old man coyote". The 'U Koh siang' is cunning, intelligent, witty and widely known for his overt sexual promiscuity. His stories are narrated with such

vigour that he has stayed in Khasi folklore for centuries and sometimes ‘*U Koh siang*’ is referred to man that have been told or retold many centuries ago. As Desmond Leslie Kharmawphlang has stated that:

“.....Old man fox and the tiger, is a fascinating account of trickery, deceit and debauchery, where you find the fox duping his brother-in-law, the tiger, causing him to injure himself mortally, eventually killing and feeding on him, marrying the tiger’s wife and feeding her and her children the meat of the slain father.....His behaviour is outrageous, and naturally, he evokes not only outrage from the story listener or reader, but also a grudging admiration for his cunning nature. I personally do not think he is evil; in a way, he transcends evil, because he manages to assume an aura of a comic, ironical figure, with an unsurpassed eloquence for words and mannerisms. Indeed, some would regard him as the nemesis of the pompous, high- handed, over bearing stance the tiger assumes. There is a certain Machiavellianism in his ways of knowing what he wants and how to get it- he is the icon of survival, a survivor *par excellence*”

Oral narratives of the Bhoi areas of Khasi and Jaintia hills are being understood to have accounts of ‘*U Myrsiang sadew*’ or the fox of Sadew who led the armies of the traditional State of Shyllong and who is also remembered as the benefactor and liberator of many of the Bhoi traditional states known as *Hima* or province¹⁰.

Jokers or Jesters in the Khasi Context

Khasi culture of jokers and jesters has been in existence for centuries and their role and contribution to the society has been immense. They would be preferred to call themselves as performers rather than likened them to jokers or jesters. They have been linked and incorporated with the festivals or cultural rites in the past. Jokers have been a main attraction

¹⁰ Excerpts from Bareh Solony, paper entitled “*A War-Jaintia Tricksters*”

for the youth, children and even old people to the festivals and cultural gatherings. They have been known by different local names and one of the performers or jokers that we will look here is the *'Damdaar'* which happens to be the main attraction of the local festival called *'Ka Shad Lakympong'* or *'Ka Shad Lakhempong'* literally means the dance *Lakympong* of the *Raid Nongtung* in *Ri Bhoi*. The festival in itself is an arrange marriage, as the name suggests that by *'Lakhempong'* literally means to wrap the hands around the waist. In some case divorce also takes place in the festival. There are one hundred and ninety villages that participated in this festival. In the festival, people from all the villages, gathered and participated a dance performance in a selected open-field in one of the village. This dance is encouraged especially for the young people and the festival has been celebrated for centuries ago by the ancestors, but has stopped for a few years and has nearly faced extinction. In the past virgin maidens are encouraged to take part in the dance festival. However, in 2008, the festival was revived again. There are many reasons for this sudden halt of the festival and one reason is because of people getting converted from the traditional religion to the different religions and denominations. The twelve clans or families encompassing the *Shadap*, *Lyngdoh*, *Lyngdoh Raid*, *Sten*, *Marsharing*, *Sarin*, *Mujai*, *Palei*, *Lamare*, *Mapur*, *Marsynting* and *Pariat* organized the festival from time immemorial where the chief selected from the *Shadap* clan only preside the festival. In the festival, the *'Damdaar'* plays the role of the joker, making comical gestures accompanied with songs. His physical structure is small and his attire is also comical. His attire consist of the white plain cloth wrapped around his waist, and in his hand, he carried a white cloth tied on a stick. The dance festival was carried out from sunrise to sunset and the *'Damdaar'* dance along with the performers in a circular fashion (clock wise and anti-clock wise movement). At the same time, he also invited people to the dance in a distinct way by making it very comical too. His role is also to catch or lure new pair and new couples to the dance, indirectly suggesting these couples to settle and get married. One important aspect is that, the role of the *'Damdaar'* has not changed for hundreds of years and till now he has been practicing his role constantly with the change of time. His vigorousness has remained intact and his importance to be in the

performance is astonishing which the community expect him to be so. There is a song about the



'*Damdaar*', which gives retrospection to his role in the community and especially his role in the festival of '*ka shad Lakympong*'. This song is a living symbol which is likely to keep the role of the '*Damdaar*' active for so many years. The song tells that, in the past, the '*Damdaar*' even exhibits his sexual organ, while he sings, talks and jokes on topics which indirectly signify sex. We can say that the festival still exist because of the attributions of the '*Damdaar*', but the question is how long will it survive? The community is hopeful and strong enough to keep this festival alive by motivating and training youth on music, dance and its meaning of the festival. However, on the role of the '*Damdaar*' the future becomes very bleak as '*Damdaar*' are not made but are created. So, if the present '*Damdaar*' becomes inactive and retires, the community will find it difficult to cope to find a new one.

(The ***Damdaar*** playing a pivotal role here, in bringing the people together in the dance arena)

Urban Khasi Humour

Along the years, humour in the Khasi culture, has adapted to the changes of modernization and advancement of technology. Though, a major proportion of these humour are still being carried out orally or verbally in special occasions and gatherings. Some of these humour are being

carried out through the internet, mobile messaging and through the media and radio stations. Humour in mobile messaging is a common scene now, as it is easier and fast that can get one message to countless numbers of people. These messages have helped people to cope with their serious life by bringing smiles and even laughter. Whereby, even a lonely person can also enjoy and laugh at these messages. Freud has also stated that 'humour completes its course within the single person; another person' participation adds nothing new to it' (Freud 1991:294). These messages are being enjoyed by young people, old people and both women and men. Some of these humours are also a reminder of the reality of life collaborating to Freud statement, that 'humour is a means of obtaining pleasure in spite of the distressing effects that interfere with it; it acts as a substitute for the generation of these effects, it puts itself in their place' (Freud 1991: 293). These humour talks about the eroding qualities of culture, religion, man versus woman, sex, ethnicity, mother and father, wife and husband, trickery or wit etc. The humour about father and child and husband and wife are quite common, giving the upper hand to the weak.

Myth-religion- humour

Some other humour has religion that plays a great part and its always one religion versus another religion. Well, off course in the end, one religion will definitely have the upper hand over another with a blend of thematic display of humour. The humour that will be showcased here is about the traditional Khasi-religion believer and a Christian-catholic devotee. At first, the catholic seems to have the upper hand, but at the end, the Khasi religion takes control of the situation in a very humorous way by incorporating the 'rooster' which is the mythological symbol of the Khasi traditional religion. From the mythology, the 'rooster' is the symbol of the Khasi traditional religion, and it is highly revered. The 'rooster' was found in many mythological stories of the Khasi, whereby the 'rooster' was perceived as the messenger, the savior or the redeemer- that emancipate the Khasi (human kind) from falling into darkness or bad omen. In reality, the 'rooster' is just a mythological symbol, but, in the humour it look as if the 'rooster' is

also practice widely that even sign or gesture are used in public place to show reverence to God. However, both these symbols in this humour are important as they revealed the historical and cultural importance of both religions. The Catholic with the symbol of the cross and the traditional Khasi religion follows with the symbol of the 'rooster'.

One day both the devout Catholic and a believer of traditional Khasi religion were travelling together in a taxi.

Catholic: Ah! I have reach my church, well let me do my cross (making the sign of the Cross)

Just a little further from the church, there is a worshipping place for the traditional Khasi religion.

Khasi religion believer: Excuse me sister, could you please move back a little bit? I need to do something...

Catholic: do it quick

Khasi religious believer: Uh! Uh! Uh!¹¹

Father-child humour

The humour that will be discussed here is about the father and the child. The child desire to go to the circus, his father was unwilling to take him, but later took him because of the child's wit.

Child: Father, please take me to the circus

Father: You naughty boy, I don't have time

Child: But Father, I heard that there is a naked woman that sits on top of a tiger

Father: Really! Go and take my jacket immediately because, it has been a long time that I have not seen a tiger a long time that I have not seen a tiger

There is another humour that allows the child's wit or child's ignorance to win over his father. This kind of humour is common, especially when the child unknowingly gives an answer to his father. In these kinds of humours, Fathers were always left dumb-witted by the answers. The child always wins in these situations by their answers.

¹¹ Cook-a-doo-dle doo

Child: Father, the heart has how many feet?

Father: You fool! The heart has no feet

Child: But, I heard last night that you said 'sweet heart', please lift your legs properly

Another Khasi humour tells about the reality of career and jobs, when his father asks about his future. The realization of humour is that, when the son answers his questions very sarcastically having humour everywhere. These kinds of humour close the gap between the reality and play that gives the boy the upper hand over his father. This also makes the father realize of the matter when the boy answers the question in a very witty manner. However, we also come to understand that the mind of the boy has also started growing and mature by favouring to answer it in a sexual manner. Comparing to the above humour, it's like a transition that take place from childhood to boyhood.

Father: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Boy: Dad! Actually I don't want to be anything in this life, but all I want is to own a Xerox machine

Father: What? Why in the hell do you want a Xerox machine for?

Boy: Well, it just satisfies me when girls come to the shop and said please do both sides. That is, from the 'front and also from the back'

If humour has evolved with the advancement of technologies, then it has also been relatively active in urban-humour performances and in mass media formats. One group locally known as '*Seng Biria U Khasi*' (SBUK) has initiated and is the fore runners in making Khasi humour a performance. The group intent to bring out the various issues relating to socio-political and cultural set up, in the humour platform, which they can be also called as satirical group or satirists. At present, the group is temporarily inactive, as most of the members have either

expired or have come of age and could not perform again as it was before. Recently, this group has release a recording in a compact disc format which contains the enactment of humours called '*hima ki bneng*'¹². Today, Khasi humours have shifted from verbal inter-change to technical inter-change, by becoming active through media and technologies even though the contents remain unchanged. However, distortion takes place in this shift, which cannot be deny. It is interesting to know that this change and transition is happening fast in a Khasi society. Slowly the people are taking it, unaware of the fact that it is being created and shared orally in the first place. All Khasi movies and short films have been released, showcasing the sight of humour. These movies are like a substitute of the humour performance that was initiated by *SBUK*. The characters of humour that are eminent on these movies are always comical and have funny physical outlook. On the other hand, Khasi humour has been flourishing on radio stations that are broadcasted everyday. The humours that are shared on radios are enormous and it talks about various issues. The listener will however feel compelled to smile or laugh, as soon as the humour has been broadcast, finding the information quite helpful also. Sometimes, these humours on radios are placed on western songs; the contents containing information humour and off course in a Khasi dialect. One of the humours that are being broadcasted daily is on political corruption and it has widely heard across Meghalaya. This humour is place in one of the Dutch band, the Venga Boys song 'Sha La La' and an American band, the Archies song 'sugar sugar'. It is quite humorous to hear these tunes in a Khasi dialect and with a very shrill voice, though; the content of political corruption on government schemes is all about. Definitely, it will make a person smile or laugh if he knows the tunes as well. The songs go like this:

Khasi dialect: Shini, shini (sugar), Ah! Shu jah klep

Shini, shini, Ah! Shu jah klep

Sha la la, Sha la la sha ka plaaa.....oh! oh!

¹² Province of Heaven

Sha la la, sha la la, sha ka pla lajong.....

English Literal translation:

Sugar, sugar, Ah! All but disappear

Sugar, sugar, Ah! All but disappear

Sha la la, sha la la all gone to their own pockets.....oh! oh!

Sha la la, sha la la, all gone to their own pockets.....

There are many humours that are very much contrasting and yet similar to the one above. There are also humours that talk about social issues on radios. One of the humours that are regular on radios is on the environment and civic sense talks. On the radio, a drunken person walks in the middle of the night and takes law on his own hand. He shouts, throw stones at street lights and kicks at dustbins etc. Suddenly, an elderly woman on the radio will come over and tells about all that he damaged is his not of the government. At the end of this, an elderly man echoed his voice with '*shuh sharud*'¹³. These kinds of humours actually take place when there is a break or intermission on songs, programmes and talk shows. Moreover, humour has also transit not only in media, radios and mobile messaging but it has also taken shape on the internet as well. Page and video links have been created on Facebook and YouTube respectively, showcasing the different humorous stories of the Khasi. Some of these pages on Facebook have lots of content which are completely about Khasi humour. Some of the pages on Facebook are '*Ki khana u Bah He*' or 'the stories of Bah He' and Khasi jokes. One of these humours that are shared on this page is about the catholic father who happens to pass by on some beautiful girls. The Humour of it, is that when the father starts praying to God and waiting for God's approval on it.

Father went to preach in one church and really want to have a girlfriend, so he prays like this:

1ST Prayer: Please God! Don't lead me into temptation (when unattractive girls passed by)

¹³ Move aside

2nd Prayer: Oh! God it's your will and your will be done (when beautiful girls passed by)

Verbal Khasi Humour in Social Space – I

Oral or verbal humour stills find its uniqueness in the cultural milieu of the Khasi society and it is used sometimes in some of the strangest place that is in funerals and other serious activities. Verbal humour has actively coped with the potent competitor that is through media and mobile messaging; somehow it has taken shape in a way that brings out the originality of the context. Some of the humours that are being shared orally or verbally are as follows:

The humour about this is that jokes are told even at the last rites of the burial, the creator have made an effort to make use of the platform to give the people who are in grief a reasons to smile and laugh regardless of the seriousness of the funeral. To an extent, when we look at the humour, the creator should have taken some serious character to enact the role-play that he wished to be. However, the character that he has created has a funny shabby look, dressed comically and in a drunken state. If the creator makes a serious character, the creator knows that he will face criticism from his audience, so as to fit the situation and save himself from being ridiculed; he takes funny characters to conclude his humour perfectly. The making of such humor seems to be fitting when we look at it, but it takes effort to create humour, as it also depends greatly on the teller who can creatively place phrases and characters properly.

1st Man (Drunken friend, going to his friend funeral: why did you leave me alone? Why don't you take me along?

2nd Man: Crazy fellow! (Shoving from behind)

1st Man: Who is that? (He nearly fell, somehow caught hold of the grass but the bottle of the alcohol slipped down in the crypt)

2nd Man: Haha! You will also go soon

1st Man: Why don't you say so? That you want the bottle (turning to the 2nd man and the deceased)

Verbal Khasi Humour in Social Space – II

This humour, talks about the role play between the creator and his audience, and it shows its relevance about how the creator having the upper hands over his audience; targeting on a particular person. These humours usually take place in a cooking space among the Khasi men-folks in a gathering of a particular locality. The person to be targeted or the victim is a bracketed person in this humour. Psychologist Susan Forward explained that humour can frequently be used as a mask for verbal abuse. The creators will dominate and if the abused, the audience, complains, the abuser invariable accuses him or her of lacking a sense of humor. "She knows he is only kidding, he'll say, as if the victim of his abuse were a co-conspirator" (1989: 97). Somehow this maybe rude to some, but when we look at the conceptuality of the humour; we see that both the creator and that particular audience have an understanding in enacting a comical statement which others may not understand.

He [the creator] starts picking him saying, "That day was hilarious" staring at his victim. The audience who were present there would ask him why or what happen, knowing that the main humorous incident occurs because of the victim.

The creator: Do you remember that day? When we went for a picnic or fishing

Audience: Yes, we do remember (instantly)

The creator: You know on that day some tourists were passing by from the bridge and you know what they saw?

Audience: What? What? (Enthusiastically)

The creator: They exclaimed, look, look, look down there in the river there is a huge crab, which we have never seen in our entire life (looking and jeering at the bow legged person)

Audience: Ha-ha! Looking at the victim, you know, 'it is only a joke or just kidding'

Freud and Khasi Humour

These Khasi humours have an important notion in revitalizing the present scenario or situation, without which the situation would rather be dull or awkward. The theory of Freud talks about release, or relief, or relaxation, also known as psychoanalytic is akin to these two examples of Khasi folk humor. It seems that Freud theory has somehow understood its intriguing nature and complexities on the Khasi folk humor without jostling for meanings and its real functions. Moreover, there is still a bulk of these Khasi folk humors that are shared verbally, caricatures, performance, cartoons, printed-media and other technologies. These have all made all the more interesting and create a wider field to research, while some of these Khasi humour have been created on topics that are hardly talk in the open, for instance on AIDS, sexual infatuation, society issues, political figure, religion, etc. One important aspect is that scatological humor and erotic humor has really dominated in the Khasi society, as it has also dominated in other society. In India, such humours have not been studied substantially and used for academic research which is actually, important components of the society's storehouse which we think irrelevant to research. In Shillong, there are plenty of scatological and erotic humor which Freud theory could have interpreted about substantially, as these are very much similar to Freud explanation about the unconscious mind that takes place in dreams and the influences of sexual interpretation through symbols. He held that dreams reveal associations that are not being openly talked about, and in his famous book *The Interpretation of dreams*, he outlined two levels of meaning on dreams. On the obvious level was the actual dream which he call the 'manifest content' and what was achieved to it was the dreams through disguised meaning which Freud called the 'latent content'. Khasi humour and anecdotes can also be looked in relation with the functions of dreams as in the theory of Freud on humor has significant explanation of humour to that of dreams. In his book, *Jokes and the Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud takes keen interest on the research of humour, especially Jewish folk humour that he had collected for years. We can understand his quest for answers that are

hidden on jokes and therefore humor. In the beginning of the twentieth century; through his work, humour and laughter began to be seen as a form of release or relief. Freud also spoke of 'the release of comic pleasure' and believed that it was the release and the relief as well as the pleasure derived from them that were characteristic of and characterized all humor. Freud even went so far to classify, or categorize, humour based on the particular kind of relief it elicited: "the pleasure in jokes has seemed to arise from an economy in expenditure upon inhibition, the pleasure in the comic from an economy in expenditure upon ideation and the pleasure of humor from an economy of expenditure upon feeling". At that time Sigmund Freud being the most outstanding representative focused mainly on the recipient of humour, or more specifically, on the psychological effects, humour allegedly brings about in the recipient. Further, humor research now has become more relevant in the society and so far, it has drawn large followers of scholars; Sigmund Freud being an inspiration to the discipline. As mentioned earlier that Khasi humour is enacted merely to give relief as well as releases the people from emotional self aggravation, but not to offend someone and Freud would also agree to this as he has given an important statement to this that said "humor is one of the so-called substitution mechanisms which enable to convert one's socially tabooed aggressive impulses to acceptable ones and thus avoid wasting additional mental energy to suppress them. Humor such as these are common in modern times especially when they are being shared by modern technologies like mobile messaging, the internet, radios and television; giving more emancipation and broader audiences. Humours that talk about the dominant role of creator and the creator-audience relationship are also common; but are shared verbally and frequently occupying the regular gatherings of the people.

Conclusion

Verbal humour and non verbal humour has spread widely in the Khasi society. It has taken shape to emerge as an important source of entertainment and documenting these humours has made it more interesting and challenging. Looking at the role of humour that has played in Khasi society in the form of folk stories is one thing and looking at its evolving nature is another, where it has become an important asset in media and modern technologies such as mobile messaging and internet. Another important aspect is multi-culturation, where Khasi humour has find place to mix with other culture in the Khasi society such as the Bengalis, Nepalis, Bangladeshi and so on. Especially on jokes, different cultures in the form of words have mixed together creating or completing one joke. It is interesting to note how these other languages of different cultures have accommodated in the Khasi language which they seem to be very much compatible. Such as these are common in the Khasi context which is also known as creolization. It's important to document these humours especially if there is the diversity and the dynamic role that these humours played in the society. Moreover, it is obvious that one culture influenced the other or one culture dominates the other culture. A Bhojpuri joke collected in 1984 by an American anthropologist in Mauritius requires a comprehension of two languages to be funny. The narrator and character are Bhojpuri speakers.

Once, an old lady was in the bus station waiting for a bus. The bus was gone already, the old lady didn't know. She asked a Creole man, "What time is it, son?" "Seven o'clock." So she says, "Has the bus gone?" The Creole says, "Maybe [peut atre]." But the old lady didn't understand. She went over to two or three men playing cards and said, "Has the bus gone?" They said, "Didn't that Creole you were with tell you?" She said, "He says 'petet, petet,' I don't know what it means." They say, "Oh, grandmother, petet, petet, you know what it is [fart]. He cursed at you." The old lady went and hit the Creole man. (Gallob 1987:264-66)

Another joke collected at the same time, when the Mauritian government was encouraging emigration. A father bilingual in Creol and Hindi has sent his son to study medicine in the

United Kingdom. He returns wearing spectacles, and at the airport he greets his father in English, "Hello, Daddy!" The father answers in Creole, "I sent you to become a doctor, now you come back, you wear spectacles, you don't recognize your father, and you are calling me your grandmother [*dadi* in Hindi]" (Gallob 1987:264). In the future, the study of Khasi humour will definitely unearth the various resources which have knitted the Khasi society and its ongoing involvement in the evolving and dynamic nature in the Khasi society. Indeed the study of Khasi humour will have to look broadly by analyzing the various collected data through an approach of linguistic, psychological, anthropological, and sociological and folklore. Using these various study in documenting humour, certainly another discourse will emerge that will help understand the Khasi worldview towards their surroundings and beliefs. Knowing that these humours has added vigour to the Khasi society from time immemorial and being passed on through word of mouth which in the first place humours are regarded as futile or vile sets that fit in the society except only that it acts only as an entertainment; ignored of the fact that these humors are created, certainly to play a significant role in the society. But there is hope, as the study of humour has gain momentum gradually for the past few years and indeed will be look up as an important study in the future. As humours are like a storage system that safeguards the rich cultural heritage of the Khasi people and at the same time acting and functioning as a safety valve in the society.

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