

Part I: Concept of Humor in Kannada and Sanskrit Literature

Part II: Effect of Humor on the Stress Parameters of IT Professionals-a randomized controlled trial.

By

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Abstract

Part I: Concept of Humor in Kannada and Sanskrit Literature

Background: The concept of Humor in Kannada Literature starts as early as the stone Inscriptions found in 450 BC. The Humour has been introduced subtly in the Literature works of yesteryears and has slowly developed just like a bud blooming into a flower has fully developed as a main means of laughter in the Kannada literature, though some mention of it is there. Therefore this study of literature was undertaken to observe the development of humor and laughter in kannada literature. Sanskrit is India's oldest language and the mother of several languages in India. Sanskrit literature, generally perceived as staid and serious, contain verses of jollity and wit, ribaldry and bawdiness, snide sarcasm and wry comment showcase the fact that can also be flippant and fun. Though there is no direct mention of Humour in the literature a study showed that the humorur has slowly seeped in right from vedic age and has grown into a recognizable concept in the later works of the 11th century. Thus an effort is made here to record the concept of Humour in Sanskrit literature.

Methods: Library searches, thesis work, Internet searches, Cross references from the thesis work, and a person with good knowledge of Kannada was contacted to decipher the Halegannada and the lipi.

Results: Humor and laughter was traced from time – 900-1000 AD like pampa, Rama etc, Different kinds of humor like Ragale, galate, Thamashi was also found in the Middle period. Different kinds of Humor and Laughter were found in the contemporary period where humor took different turn with Beechi and others bringing different dialogue of humor making special characters like Gampara Gumpu, Comidians, Puppet shows etc. Sarvagana's of vachanas has a lot of humor in them "Wearing marks of ash, if one goes to heaven, a donkey (that rolls in ash0 sure goes'. Kannada stage plays have also a lot of humour in them. One such writer is kailasam. His works of humor are unforgettable. There

was no humor in the vedic period. Period between 12th and the 2nd centuries BC saw the Ramayana and Mahabharatha where Humor in a subtle way slowly seeping into the literature. Humor was also found in the form of story telling, like the Jatakas, The panchatantra. These have a quaint humor. Sanskrit plays between the 2nd cent BC and the 7th cent AD, were romantic, funny or both. Vidushaka in many Sanskrit plays brings lot of humor. The sole reason to introduce vidushaka into a play is to add humor into the narration and to make the entire play lighter with humorous situation. Bharath's Natyashastra (Scripture of Dance) laid foundation to the concept of nine Rasa or emotions i.e., Adbhuta (wonder) Hasya (Laughter), Shirngara (Love), Shaanta(Peace), Bibhatsa (Disgust), Vira (Valour), karuna (Pathos), Bhaya (Fear) and Raudra (Anger). It is here that we find direct reference to Hasya. The subhashita verses also contain certain aspects of subtle humor, jollity and wit.

Conclusion

The concept of Vidushaka which is unique to Sanskrit Literature is introduced with the purpose of making people laugh and has acted as the foundation for court Jesters, clowns and other such comedy characters.

Thus humor which was subtly present in the bygone era as subtly has slowly developed as the basis and the main theme for many Literature works as time progressed in the twentieth century. It is ironical however to note that we have to resort to Humor and laughter clubs to distress ourselves when it is an inborn trait. Today's stress has made us forget the art of Laughing and we have to be goaded into laughter.

We find that literature works in Sanskrit from the vedic period though does not deal with Humor directly has in them the philosophy of fever-lasting happiness as the basic theme in them and methods to find and delve in everlasting happiness. Though this does not mean laughter in any way, laughter is also a way for a person to be happy though it is temporary in its action.

Slowly as time progressed Humor has set into the Literary works subtly at first then, more profoundly in Dramas, short stories and subhashitas.

The concept of Vidushaka or jester is unique to Sanskrit literature which is not found in the Greek Literature of the same time period.

We find Hasya as an important Rasa in the later period when natya shastra came into vogue. This was mainly written with the concept of enacting drama in mind. This is the first direct instance where the word Hasya finds a mention

in Sanskrit literature.

Thus Sanskrit Literature which is considered to have serious thought provoking themes also has humour in them.

Part II: Effect of Humor on the Stress Parameters of IT Professionals-a randomized controlled trial.

Background: Humor and Laughter are important part of our lives bringing in a lot of physical, psychological and social benefits. The positive effects of Humor and laughter are gaining importance in modern society. There have been experimental works studying the therapeutically benefits of laughter. The results of these studies are quite encouraging and also strengthen the age old belief “laughter the best medicine”. These studies have some or the other lacunas and thus this present study was undertaken to study the effects of laughter (not mirthful) on the stress parameters of the IT professionals as IT industry is one of the growing industries of today and has managed to bring a lot of stress along with it.

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this study was to evaluate laughter Yoga on the stress parameters (Blood pressure, Cortical levels, and psychological parameters) of IT professionals in a randomized controlled trail.

Methods: 200 subjects from reputed IT companies were recruited and basal assessments for BP, Salivary Cortisols, and questionnaires were taken on day one. They were then randomized into two groups-LY groups (LY) and wait listed control Group (WLC). Seven laughter sessions was given to the LY group spread over a period of 15 days. Reassessments were done on both the groups after the LY group completed 7 sessions. Those who gave both pre and post assessments were 119 subjects (LY group-65 subjects and WLC group –54 subjects) and there was a drop out rate of about 40%. The blood pressure was measured using the sphygmomanometer by trained person. The salivary cortisol was assessed using the Elisa Immuno Assay kits. The questionnaires were assessed using the standard rating scale assessments based on the scoring pattern.

Results: There was significant difference in the systolic pressure. (Ly group-120.78 mm/hg, WLC group –125.96 mm/hg ($p < 0.04$)). however there was no significant difference in the Diastolic Blood Pressure with in the LY group – pre compared to post- systolic – $p < 0.001$, diastolic $p < 0.000$. There was a difference/reduction of 7.46 mm/hg in systolic pressure, and 3.03 mm/hg in diastolic pressure in LY group. WLC group showed no significant improvement in systolic blood pressure ($p > 0.1$), or diastolic pressure ($p > 0.1$).

Laughter yoga has increased the total positive affect ($p < 0.001$) and reduced the total negative affect ($p < 0.004$) in the LY group compared to the WLC group. Within the LY group also there is significance increase in total positive affect (nearly 18% increase in positive emotions) ($p < 0.000$) and decrease in the negative emotions by nearly 28%. The results have predicated a significant difference between the groups.

Conclusion: The results show that laughter Yoga Module has shown significant positive effect on the Systolic Blood Pressure and diastolic blood pressure. Reduction in the salivary Cortisol levels shows reduction of stress within the LY group. However there is no significant difference between the groups which may be due various factors, may be the number in the WLC was very less compared to the LY group, also the number of sessions may be less to find a significant difference between the groups. LY induced increased positive emotions and reduces negative emotions.

These results imply that laughter yoga is an effective tool to combat stress, and also by increasing positive emotions will help to create a positive working environment and make the world a better place to live in.

Summary and conclusion

There is a paradigm shift in the attitude of people from the stressful materialistic world to achieve a long-standing happy existence. The world is waking up to newer techniques, which might provide them with a stress free relaxed happy life. One such technique is Laughter yoga. Many laughter clubs are being set up all over the world and it is a sight to see groups of people in parks getting together for laughter sessions. Age-old saying "Laughter the best medicine" is being promoted by these clubs. Though there are few evidence based scientific studies on the beneficial effects on the effect of laughter, they all lack proper methodology. But the laughter clubs have definitely promoted a positive approach in these people and many of the participants being in the older age group have certainly found this technique to reduce their stress arising due to illness and social problems common in their age group.

Literature surveys which record the beneficial effects of Laughter thought few, have used laughter induced by watching comic videos. There were varied results of these studies and confounded with many variables. Results have pointed out factors like improved NK cell activity, reduced blood pressure, reduced pain, increased blood oxygen levels, decreased cortisol levels, released muscle tensions etc. The experiments with yoga and relaxation techniques are many and have proved beyond doubt the beneficiary effect of them in

physiological, psychological, immunological parameters and their therapeutic importance.

This study was hypothesized and designed to see the effect of laughter yoga on the physiological, psychological and immunological effects of Laughter coupled with yoga. A randomized trial was planned to take care of the methodological problems that were found in the previous study.

200 subjects enrolled. There was a 40% drop out as IT professionals taken as subjects. (IT being one of the busiest industries, with the employees frequently traveling and conducting meetings etc.) so there were only 119 subjects in for the study finally. These were randomly allocated into LY (65) and WLC (54) groups. Seven sessions of Laughter yoga was given on alternate days, spread over a period of 2-3 weeks.

The results clearly pointed out that Laughter Yoga has physiological psychological and immunological benefits. The LY has shown significant reduction in the Blood pressure within the group and significant reduction in the systolic BP between the Ly and WLC group. There is also significant reduction in the positive emotions and significant reduction in the negative emotions between the LY and WLC group and also within the LY group. This clearly points out that LY can emerge as one of the important techniques to combat stress.

One has also to consider the fact that the seven sessions offered might not have been sufficient to bring about a long standing change and the parameters were recorded a day after the ending of the sessions and not immediately recorded.

Keywords:Humor,laughter,Stress Parameters,IT Professionals.

