
Research Papers



THE PERVASIVE NATURE OF PARODY: A STUDY

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Abstract

The form of parody writing has been around for centuries and ceaselessly continues to have a profound effect on entertainment today. Parodies appear in many shapes and forms. 'Literature, film, the visual arts, and music all can use parody today to comment on the "world" in some way.' (Hutcheon: 111) Parodies are extensively used in films as well as in the variety of programmes on radio and television. Parody basically seeks to enlighten and entertain. The function of entertainment, however, does not cease to be there. It possesses the instructive values too.

The parodic work must draw attention to the earlier work. Its writing ought to be tightly crafted and thought-provoking. The subject-matter is so ridiculously different from the original that parody naturally stirs a smile. So, more contrast, the better. There are three factors that make the parodist select a poem for parody. One, it should have impressed the parodist; two, the specialties of the poem should be well understood by him; three, those specialties are appropriate for parodying. Normally, there are two objectives behind poetic parody. One is to show the defects of the original poet, an example being Atre's Shyamales. Another objective of parody is to use the good material of the original and to apply it to an ordinary object in a pseudo-serious way and thereby mock that ordinary object. This second objective is more comprehensive as compared to the first one. In fact, for parodying, the poet must be filled with pure and innocent love for poetry. He needs to delve deep into the stylistic attributes that

he wants to parody in detail.

Parody is a type of high quality humour enjoyed by rational, choosy readers. All the features of a first class humorist must be present in a parodist, too. Excellent parody is not just a parody of external expression but also of the content. Great parody imitates everything right from the prosody, style and mannerisms to the tiniest features of the content of the original. The parodist has to portray the inconsistency within the very serious content of the original. He creates laughter by striking a contrast between the façade of the diction, rhythm and tune of original and the hollow content of the imitation. For achieving all this precisely, he needs to be aware of the existent tendencies in the current literature. He needs to be a good listener and his taste of literature must be good. Imitating a style of expression directly cannot be achieved without command on language. It is not possible to aim at the content and target it precisely without knowing well the

entire personality of the original writer. In other words, parody is no longer worthy of name, if it loses sight of its target. 'Good parody is always based on affection. You have to be fond of a writer before you can enter to his spirit, as opposed to merely aping his mannerisms' (John Gross: xii). Though many excellent parodies are motivated by exasperation or contempt, and they are designed to annihilate, most parodies are relatively benign. Although parody is the nearest literary equivalent of caricature, its connotations are playful.

It has been argued that parody in the Middle Ages was especially directed at the sacred texts, on account of the emphasis on religion and the pervasiveness of religion texts during this time. Similarly, the prevalence of parody directed especially at classical texts during the Renaissance has been accounted for through the heightened interest in art and culture of antiquity. Moreover, the fairly widespread use of genre parody during the period has been linked both to the Renaissance spirit of creating new literature out of the old. Like Renaissance, the neoclassical interest in literature of ancient Greek and Rome has been considered as a reason for the proliferation of parodies directed at texts during this period.

The proliferation of text parody directed at the work especially of those poets well-known for their idiosyncratic styles is attributed to mounted Romantic indulgence in the individuality of the author. The extensive use of text parody in 19th century has also been linked to the Romantic tendency towards social and political satire—probably a consequence of both French Revolution and the political unease in the Regency period. The need to satirise has again been regarded the primary factor in the pervasive use of discourse parody in Victorian comic literature. During the first half of the twentieth century, the prevalence of text parody too, has been accounted for mainly through the literary avant-grade introduced by modern writers. All these different cases have evinced once again that it is impossible for the parody to contain in a single comprehensive definition. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that even the same parodic kinds employed throughout history manifest widely differing aims, intentions, functions and attitudes. The same diversity applies to parody in Post-modern age. Here, too, parody, which is much more pervasively and conspicuously employed compared to earlier periods, exhibit a wide variety of aims, functions, and the attitudes. Post-modern parody is primarily discourse parody—a phenomenon that can be

accounted for through the characteristics of Post-modern in general and post-structuralism in particular. Discourse is, almost always the object of parody in Post-modern fiction.

Different parodic kinds are widely employed at different literary-historical periods—a phenomenon usually determined by the literary, cultural, social, and ideological characteristics of each period. This applies to parody in the Post-modern age, too, where the general characteristics of postmodernism as a movement have determined the kind of parody most pervasively produced at the time.

The tradition of Marathi parody may not be longer than the tradition of English parody. It is, however, richer and much glorious one. Marathi parody has both the entertaining as well as instructive elements. English parody possesses entertaining elements. However, the instructive elements are rarely found in the same. In Marathi parody, the contribution of P.K. Atre is unique. He is regarded as the chief exponent of Marathi parody. Most of his parodies have left an inerasable mark in Marathi literature. He is aptly acknowledged as an icon in Marathi parody. Yet, the pioneering work in Marathi parody was done before Atre. According to a research by Patankar, Mangesh Ramchandra Telang is regarded as the first recognised parodist in Marathi literature. The parody written by him in 1889 is considered as the first one that heralded parody in Marathi. The name of the parody was 'Sangeet Hajamat', which is quite amusing. It is quite interesting to note that some significant parody elements are found in Saint Eknath's "Arjadast", a religious and thought provoking song—namely bharud. Many writers have served meritoriously as the parodists. J.K.Upadhye, Dattu Bandekar, Suresh Khedkar, Raja Badhe, P.L. Deshpande, Yashwant Dev, Mangesh Padgoankar, Dr.Dilip Kulkarni are some of the noteworthy parodists, who have done remarkable work in Marathi parody.

Robert Mack has a significant remark regarding the pervasiveness nature of parody: "Parody ought clearly to be included within the legitimate taxonomies of culturally valued literary endeavour. The practical analysis entailed by such a study further insists that we are today in a position not only to confront the long-standing demand on the part of parody to be recognised as a respectable literary activity, but that we ourselves—in various capacities as scholars, critics, educators, and informed readers—finally begin to redress that same demand; parody has played a

significant and very often determining role in a wide range of works by both canonical and non-canonical English authors.” (Mack 20-21)

According to Margaret Rose, “Parody should also be able both to maintain a place in the centres of literary awareness from which it was excluded in the past by those who did not, or could not, appreciate either its heritage or potential because of previous distortions or misunderstandings of its history and functions and to assist those centre towards new and interesting developments” (Rose 284). Linda Hutcheon has the most appropriate remark pertaining to the ubiquitous nature of parody: “Parody is, indeed, in the eyes of beholder. But beholder needs something to behold” (Hutcheon xvi). Macdonald goes even further about its ubiquity, when he says that nothing, and no one, is sacred and that the ridiculous may also be found in the sublime. Macdonald relishes parody because he states: “I like parody because I feel comfortable with it. I like its bookish flavour because I like books and parody is a kind of literary shop talk. I like its classical moderation, its common sensibility. And I feel at home with it because an elderly culture like ours is suffused with parody” (Macdonald xv).

Parody and the parodic forms more generally are inevitable manoeuvres in the to-and-fro of language, in the competition between genres, and in the unceasing struggle over meanings and values that make up any social order. Undoubtedly, at some historical moments and some societies, parody has been more centrally present than at others” (Dentith 188). Sometimes, excessive growth of meaningless symbols hampers the prosperity of the poetic genre. This surfeit of symbols provides a subject to the parodist. He makes the conventional as well as progressive temperaments aware of the reality. We can even say criticism in the guise of a parody is more effective and intense than ordinary criticism. The emphasis of parody is on inconsistency rather than consistency, on rationalism rather than emotions and on incompleteness rather than perfection.

“Parody is the custodian of the artistic legacy, defining not only where the art is, but where it has come from” (Hutcheon: 75).

Nowadays, there is a plethora of various kinds of parody. Parody plays the pivotal role in almost every sphere of life. The media like radio and television are teeming with the novelty of parodical programmes. Undoubtedly, parody of today is at the peak of popularity. Numerous news

papers, magazines are known for their significant contribution of parodical articles. However, according to Dr. Bapurao Desai, no attempt has ever been made to undertake research on Parody (Desai 23).

Parody, like Almighty, is an omnipotent and omnipresent. Parody is not the privilege of any country or any period. In its broader connotation, it is an aspect of thought, or an aesthetic energy. Though it is pleasing thing to perceive the spate of parody and its pervasiveness, it is the onus of the true devotee of parody to nourish and indulge in only the genuine parody and keep the cheap parodic entity at bay. Let us brace ourselves to do away with the chronic attitude that parody has a parasitical value. We should start on our pilgrimage, buoyed up only with the anticipation to understand, perhaps, a little better, the ubiquitous nature of parody, and regard the parody as 'omnipresent and omnipotent' part of literature, and parody as sovereign emperor in the province of art and literature.

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