Why do people laugh in so many ways?



Dr Binoy Barman

ONE of the main distinguishing factors between human beings and other animals is that the former can laugh, quite conspicuously, unlike the latter. Other animals may feel happy like humans but they are unable to express it with laughter or so. Human laughter is unique and varied. People can laugh in myriad of ways, through various facial expressions, and exploiting the vocal organs they possess as part of their morphology. They laugh with or without making sound, with keeping their mouth open or closed, with a continuity or break, in pleasure or predicament, in creation or destruction. They laugh in so many ways because they have so many motives in their mind, and they are set in so many situations.



You may have a facial expression in which the ends of your mouth curve up slightly, often with the lips moving apart so that the teeth can be seen. It is usually silent and pleasant to look at (We do not hear but see this kind of laughter, by the way). It so happens when you are in blithe mood, probably recalling some romantic moments in your life. It is called *smile*. We are amazed at the classical smile of Mona Lisa. The expression is heavenly, full of mystery. Thanks Leonardo da Vinci for creating such an immortal smile!

When the smile is big and wide it turns into *beam*. Sir Isaac Newton might have beamed when he solved the problem of falling apple on his head with the theory of gravitation. *Grin* is also wide but not as big as beam. *Smirk* is a smile that expresses satisfaction or pleasure about having done something or knowing something which is not known by someone else. Unscrupulous businessmen of our country grin when they acquire big profits and smirk at the foolishness of the policemen. Obviously, they laugh on their sleeves. Sometimes it reaches their abdomen so that it becomes *belly laugh*.

Chuckle is similar to smile in terms of no-sound effect. No eardrum can ever get the sound wave as it takes place so quietly. You chuckle when you read the letter of your sweetheart or you come across the nude photos on your computer screen while browsing internet. Other times you *giggle*, that is, laugh repeatedly in a quiet but uncontrolled and childish way, often at something silly or rude or when you are nervous. You do so when you watch the movies of Charlie Chaplin or Mr Bean.

When you cannot but produce sound during laughter you *guffaw*. In that case you laugh loudly, especially at something stupid that someone has said or done. Many people guffawed when the former Home Minister Lutfuzzaman Babar said, "We are looking for shatruz (enemies)" in a Banglish tone. When you laugh aloud unpleasantly, you *cackle*. Our politicians cackle when they sit for a meeting or eating. They laugh like a drain. Don't get afraid when you hear them laugh their head off.

When you laugh, showing pleasure and satisfaction, often at someone else's bad luck, you *chortle*. Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia chortle when they look at the pictures of ch other of the days of their ment. Any political parley n them will be futile as they really laugh in their face. Both of them are in a mood of victory before election but nobody knows who will have the last laugh. They seem happy now but they will be laughing on the other side of your face when the situation goes sour.

Sometimes you laugh nervously, often at something that you feel you should not be laughing at. This is *tittering*. You might titter at the bickering between John McCain and Barack Obama, two presidential aspirants in the USA. You might also titter at the caretaker government in Bangladesh when you witness easy entry and exit of the big fishes in prisons. What is the use of anti-corruption campaign, then? You have to laugh!

What I write here is just for a laugh. Laughter is a valuable property of human being awarded by nature so that you can deceive others. Don't mind. Laugh frequently, repeatedly; laugh whenever there is a chance. It will help your body and mind work well. If necessary, force a laugh. Laughter is the best medicine, for which you need not pay.

The writer is Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, Daffodil International University.