

Humour as a Coping Mechanism. *LOL.*

AYRA AREEBA ABID

We often turn to humour to comfort ourselves and to seek solace in despondent times. When luck falls down, we confide in our best buddy – humour. Amusing ourselves is important in such times, and is often so classified as a coping mechanism. When dealing with life problems, a little smile goes a long way. “Laughter is the best medicine,” they say, but techniques of inducing amusement vary from one person to another.

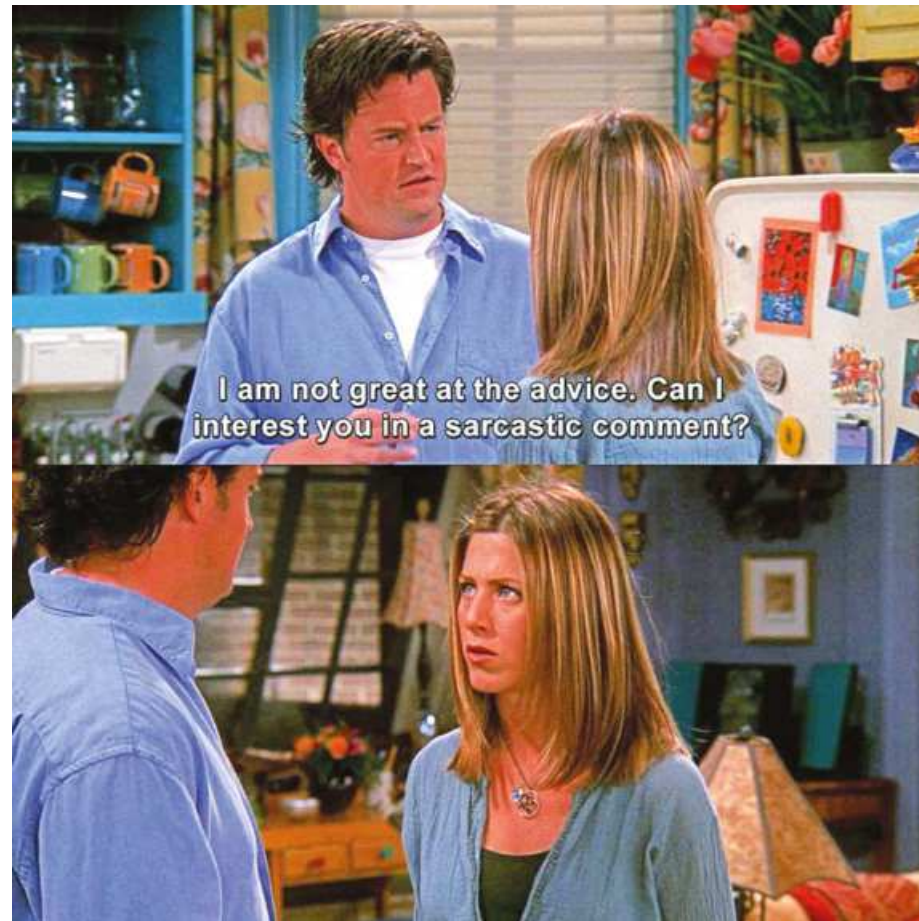
Here are four kinds of humour we see all the time, nowadays often through memes on social media.

AFFILIATIVE HUMOUR

This is the type of humour we need in our lives to promote the love of sheer positivity. There will always be that one class clown we cannot imagine being absent in our classrooms, or that one *deshi* uncle/auntie at *dawats* who will fill the room with their wholesome laughter (even while passing dad jokes). Affiliative humour creates special bonds: at workplaces, classrooms and even at our own homes. Just as buds grow into flowers, relationships too, often thrive through the use of humour. To deviate from the stress of modern times, simply laughing or even smiling with companions can go a long way.

SELF-ENHANCING HUMOUR

Gen-Z has seen the epitome of this type of humour through memes, more so recently centred on the ongoing



pandemic, depreciating mental health and academic pressure, among others. The latter can be understood as discarding the challenges life throws at us, but

self-enhancing humour can actually help people focus on the brighter side of their lives and deviate them from depressing news.

AGGRESSIVE HUMOUR

Disparaging has become too common in our daily lives, sadly, and this can be truly seen in the form of “savage” memes, power abuse in workplaces and bullying at school. This type of humour is highly discouraged, readers. “Sarcasm” can sometimes evade borders. Alienation and ridiculing aren’t cool. Aggressive humour is usually used as a coping mechanism, sometimes in the name of dark humour. I urge to eradicate this form of humour style from and rather engage in acts of valour. There will be more ripple effects than what is anticipated, I promise.

SELF-DEFEATING HUMOUR

Self-defeating humour is entirely opposite of the former. This type of humour is used by people who amuse at their own expense. Butchering and belittling yourself is not a good practice, either. It is important that we value ourselves and others while respecting our individual borders.

These four types of humour which have been elucidated above can tell us a lot about specific personalities. So, when you’re meeting someone new, you can detect their style of humour to get an idea of how they truly are as human beings, while a lot of characters are unique to themselves.

Which style of humour is most relatable to you?

Ayra Areeba Abid’s favourite word is ‘serendipity’ and she’s a linguistics geek. Connect with her at areeba.ayra@gmail.com

SATIRE

Man Crowned Feminist Icon After Making a Cup of Tea

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

It was a bright, sunny afternoon in the city of Chaka. As lunch time arrived, all busy workers in the city breathed a sigh of relief and took a well-deserved break. In a particular office, located in the centre of the city, were three co-workers Sadman, Sakib and Rahman. They sat at their lunch table and politely argued over whom among them was the most feminist man.

“I always encourage my wife to be as independent as I,” said Sadman, while wearing the clothes his wife ironed and eating the lunch his wife made. “I also inspire her to work harder, which is why I let her handle her day-time job, parenting the kids and the household chores all on her own. This will allow her to truly live up to her potential, you know?” he continued.

“You’re absolutely right! In this modern day and age, a woman’s place is not just in the kitchen, it’s all over the house. It only makes sense to let her manage all the tasks around the house,” chimed in Sakib. “Being a feminist has made me realise that society does not respect women enough. This is why I’m forcing my wife to dress the way I deem appropriate and giving her the chance to earn my respect,” he added.

“Really? How is she taking it?” asked

Sadman.

“She curses at me at times and says silly things such as ‘Why did I settle for you?’ or ‘You’re such a misogynist’ and other little jokes, but it’s no big deal. I understand that change can be difficult,” said Sakib. Everybody nodded in agreement.

“My wife is extremely important to

me, which is why I sat my family down to have a talk about this before getting married. I made sure they knew that none of that old-timey ‘control and oppress the daughter-in-law’ mentality will fly with me. After the talk, they all agreed to treat my wife like royalty... like the Duchess of Sussex to be specific,” said Rahman.



PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

“We’re all such great allies, I wish more men acknowledged the hardships women face and actively tried to do their part in attaining equality for all,” said Sakib, shaking his head in disappointment.

Just as the gentlemen were about to declare a tie among themselves and conclude that they are all equally feminist, the new employee, Farhan, joined the lunch table.

“Hey, what are you guys talking about?” asked Farhan. Upon being briefed on the dilemma in hand, Farhan spoke up, “Guess what, I once made a cup of tea for my wife.”

Everyone at the table shuddered in disbelief. Bloodshot and wide-eyed, jaws on the floor, they screamed in unison, “WHAT???”

“Yup,” Farhan replied with a smug look on his face. He knew they were no competition to him.

The three men looked at each other, and without saying a word, agreed that Farhan was the clear winner. Proudly, they picked up Farhan for his *Lion King* moment and held him in the sun’s rays, like Rafiki held Simba upon his birth. They chanted “Alpha male! Alpha male! Alpha male!” and crowned him as the feminist icon of the office.

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THE BANGLADESHI PERSPECTIVE OF DYSLEXIA

HIYA ISLAM

Dyslexia is a learning difference (or a disability) of neurological origin that manifests itself when a person begins learning to read. In Bangladesh, dyslexia is a concept alien to most educators and parents, and many dyslexic people themselves.

Dyslexia can be found in people from all walks of life, if diagnosed well. Although the demographical data is likely to vary, dyslexia is said to affect roughly around 10 percent of the population globally. A study in 2015 revealed a 9.02 percent prevalence rate of dyslexia in the primary schools of Dhaka. Apart from this study, there is only a handful of research that has been carried out in Bangladesh which explains the oblivious attitude of common people to the condition. With further studies encompassing a wider age range, a lot more can be told about the current status of dyslexia in Bangladesh.

Dyslexia is also genetically inherited. The genes in play and the neurobiology of the disorder are yet to be understood completely. If not present in the immediate family, it is highly expected to be existing in the extended family. However, no access to education, unnoticed reading difficulties and general disregard can combine to make it perplexing to ascertain.

In conversation with Muhammad Shamsul Huda, founder of Suriyafaz Dyslexiabd and a self-taught dyslexia tutor, it was revealed that dyslexic students were indeed very much present in the community and are struggling deeply in schools and other academic settings. There is a serious lack of awareness and understanding of this language-based disorder in Bangladesh. This, along with the positive diagnosis of Huda’s nephew, had spurred the creation of this organisation that has been up and running for about 10 years now.

Huda’s journey hadn’t been easy initially. During the early days, he had been frequently mocked by people. However, he had received utmost support from his family, especially his elder brother who had been highly sceptical at first but later changed his beliefs after reading a book on dyslexia.

Dyslexia being a lifelong condition does not equate to illiteracy. With the help of dyslexia tutoring, special needs accommodation and in some cases, individualised plans, dyslexic people can be empowered to read, write and spell on their own. Huda says, “By the age of 25 at most, individuals are capable of learning independently given they are taught using the methods fit for dyslexics.”

Dyslexia has its symptoms occurring over a spectrum ranging from mild to moderate to severe. It is very possible for two dyslexic people to have a different set of symptoms. The signs of dyslexia can appear as early as pre-school and hereafter vary somewhat according to age. During the preschool years, children seem to have a persistent “baby talk” or mispronunciation of familiar words as well as difficulty in learning nursery rhymes and recognition of rhyming patterns. They struggle to remember how words are spelled and confuse letters that look or sound similar. As they struggle to read and spell, a common tendency is to use vague terms such as “stuff” or “thing” to refer to

something and often substitute difficult or new words when reading aloud. They may also skip words. When it comes to speaking, they often have trouble expressing their thoughts. Apart from these tell-tale signs, learners spell the same word correctly and then incorrectly in the same exercise.

Requesting anonymity, Rayed*, 22, says, “I got to know I have a few symptoms of dyslexia in ninth grade.” Since then, he has been receiving support from dyslexia tutors. He is currently a third-year student studying Economics in a college under the University of Dhaka.

As they grow up, these issues cumulatively become the cause of poor school grades and low self-esteem. As Rayed recounts, “I did not feel good about myself even though I had been trying my best.” Besides linguistic complications, dyslexia leads to poor time management, low power of memorisation and

diagnosis.

In class, they are often labelled as lazy or unintelligent when in fact they are trying harder than their peers to complete the same task. The term “difference” is used in contrast to “disability” because it is a more strengths-based definition and makes it clear that dyslexic people simply learn differently than others do. And this is where Bangladesh struggles.

“There are hardly any schools that take dyslexia seriously,” says Huda. To create an inclusive environment for dyslexic students, the problem needs to be targeted at the core of the teaching profession – teachers’ training programs. If trainers are made aware of this underlying issue, future educators will be better-equipped when dealing with dyslexia. Simultaneously, students won’t have to tolerate a discouraging environment and have a chance at exploring their abilities. “Most of the teachers laugh

significant trouble overcoming it. This does not equate to the fact that they cannot succeed in life. For example, Abdullah*, a 26-year-old who got diagnosed with dyslexia when he was preparing for his IELTS, took the help of Huda’s teaching methods. He is soon to fly to Ulster University in the UK to begin his MBA.

While dyslexic people struggle with organisation, planning and time keeping, they are highly creative. They can be brilliant at three-dimensional thinking, problem solving and at seeing the big picture. In fact, there are many famous people who we don’t know as dyslexic. Some of the greatest minds in history like Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking were dyslexic. Leonardo da Vinci’s surviving notes and art works suggest he may have had dyslexia as well.

When certain teaching methods are employed, students with dyslexia demonstrate



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

slow physical movement.

Some of these actions frustrate parents and teachers alike and as a result many of them resort to hitting the child as a corrective measure. Huda along with his team has campaigned in many schools till now. After completion, Huda claims that one of the teachers admitted that they no longer hit children when they struggle and instead, they employ the teaching methods they have been shown.

Mother of 22-year-old Sheikh Md Riyadul Islam states, “I wouldn’t realise [it] in any other way.” Like her, there could be many more unaware parents. Some parents also associate stigma with the condition and refuse to talk. Like dyslexia, it is possible that other learning differences such as dyscalculia and dysgraphia, can go undiagnosed leading to greater number of drop-outs. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, also known as ADHD can also co-exist with dyslexia. It is considered to be a mental disorder and requires a different

it off or pass it as autism, which is entirely different,” he later adds.

After Huda had started Suriyafaz Dyslexiabd, he received support and training via international collaborations such as Nancy Young (Canada), Dyslexia Daily (Australia), and Breaking Through Dyslexia (India). With the help he had received, he formulated a number of screening tests for his students to gauge their extent of dyslexia, as well as other resources for school teachers. This is an informal evaluation which is sufficient to conclude if a child has dyslexia or not and is usually done by dyslexia tutors. As opposed to informal, there is a formal kind of evaluation conducted by a team of doctors and licensed educational psychologists. With a formal attestation, dyslexic people would have the chance to apply and ask for special accommodation when it comes to examinations.

Dyslexia is different for everyone. People with a mild form may eventually learn how to manage while others may have

an improvement in scores. It is necessary to continue campaigning about dyslexia as well as other learning differences so that more people feel encouraged to seek help. At the same time, there is a need for professional services and qualified experts who would lead these campaigns and help in diagnosis.

*Names have been changed upon request

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