

How Effective is Laughter and Comedy in Creating an Atmosphere of Positive Peace?

How do you feel when someone says something that sends you into paroxysms of laughter, you have lost control, you must ride out the wave of uncontrollable spasms as the tears roll down your cheeks. It is a wonderful sensation, such a release, and an underlying sense of unity pervades the atmosphere. So how powerful is humour and laughter in creating positive peace? This paper will explore the nature of peace, what is humour and laughter, who are the comic provocateurs. Furthermore, humour will be explored as a channel for dissent, the freedom to break the rules, unmasking and challenging authority. The ability of laughter to transcend opposition and rise above situations will be discussed. Various techniques to resolve disputes and creative approaches of spreading laughter and humour are explored. Lastly, humour as nonviolent activism and comparisons to Gandhi's Satyagraha are highlighted.

The Nature of Peace

Peace has been narrowly referred to as the absence of war. Metaphorically, we cannot see the woods for the trees. If we are looking specifically at the trees then we are missing the whole experience of the forest. The 'trees' represent our focus, such as seeing the world as a hostile, negative place. Where all we see is the scary shadows of wars, violence, anger, manipulation and conflict. This consciousness is evident today in international politics with increasing militarisation, terrorism and nuclear weapons proliferation threatening mutually assured destruction. However, the whole peace picture is obscured. If one chooses to shift thinking from negative to positive then the various aspects of peace can come into focus. Peace is multifaceted and is based on assumptions and practices. It has been commonly associated with finding peace and quiet at home, peace on the streets, law abiding peace and peace with justice (or freedom) on the global scale. It is also described as an absolute feeling, some experiencing peace through divinity, mystery or god, or picturing it as embodied in the 'prince of peace'. Peace is the way we understand the deeper nature of life and the meaning of Being.¹ Martin Heidegger, considered one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, contemplated the notion of Being as 'a dim, glimmering grasp of the meaning of Being is present and comprehended by each of us in a kind of 'pre-ontological awareness'.²

According to Goethe, humour in comedy frees the human spirit from passion providing a channel to envision the world clearly and serenely and to laugh at life's inconsequentialities rather than weep. This is considered the supreme goal and the authentic happy ending.³ The happy ending is the here-and-now and the feeling of happiness results from over-ruling restrictions on human liberty.⁴

¹ Cox, *The Ways of Peace*, pp2-5

² *Ibid.*, pp2-5

³ Kallen, *Liberty Laughter and Tears*, p347

⁴ *Ibid.*, p353

Humour and laughter, more than other aspects of the human make-up, act as both liberation and liberty at the core of Being.⁵ Tragedy and humour are the levees of the human spirit, the latter overcomes struggles.⁶ Humour enables the rising above of a situation and achieves a psychic distance which transcends bondage.⁷ In addition, the act of laughter creates a feeling of social unity. Real peace is considered a state of harmony or unity.⁸

Laughing For a Long Time

For as long as there has been tragedy there has been laughter. The Ancient Greeks had a strong sense of humour. The comedies by Aristophanes, living around 400 BC, at the time of the war between Athens and Sparta. The comedies stimulated jokes which circulated around both communities. The citizens of Rome were able to express their jokes, even the most autocratic of Roman rulers was hesitant to ban public criticism. A thousand years after the fall of Rome the occidental world appears to not have produced any political humour.⁹ During the outbreak of the Peasants Revolt in 1381, one of the most famous slogans was given in a sermon ‘when Adam delved and Eve span who was then the gentleman?’¹⁰

In the 14th century there are signs of rebellion, exhibited by the antics of the knavish fools. Till Eulenspiegel, born in Brunswick, roamed Central Europe and Flanders. A great many people told stories of his comic pranks and these were published in the 16th century.¹¹

Roman Catholicism in the Middle Ages dictated what people should think and feel. The technological advance of the printing press spurred the circulation of rebellious pamphlets and broadsheets. The majority of the common people were illiterate and aired their resentment by mouth to mouth jokes about the Catholic establishment. A popular quip in the late 15th century was ‘God is everywhere on earth except Rome – only his deputy is there’.¹²

In the early 18th century, two of England’s most famous satirists Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift wrote Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver’s Travels. They saw their main task as attacking reaction, corruption and hypocrisy with bitter humour, exerting great influence on public opinion. Defoe published a pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, as a practical way to get rid of non-conformists, as a hoax on the Church.¹³

⁵ *Ibid.*, p365

⁶ *Ibid.*, p343

⁷ *Ibid.*, p78

⁸ Cox, *op.cit.*, p10

⁹ Larsen, *It as a Weapon*, p4

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp4-6

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p4

¹² *Ibid.*, p4

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp 10-12

In the late 19th century, the social phenomenon of kin based joking relationships was evident. This involved playful behaviour such as joking, teasing, banter, ridicule, insult and horseplay. By the early 20th century attention focussed on joking relationships and the broader social fabric worldwide. By the mid 1950s this behaviour was observed in industrial societies in individuals not related by kin and played out in social settings.¹⁴

Humour-Us

From the early 1970s there have been only a few researchers conducting humour studies. Psychologists have considered humour important, humour is evident wherever there is social interaction. The fact that we feel good after we laugh suggests that laughter is important for health and well-being. Humour is an elusive concept, there is no agreement by sociologists on how it should be determined.¹⁵ It is accepted that humour involves communication amongst at least two people and is determined by social forces. Sociologists are in agreement that jokes only become jokes because of the social responses to them. Psychoanalysts assert that humour expresses underlying issues that cannot be expressed directly.¹⁶

Many sociologists have argued that humour services two social functions: social conflict and social control. The outcome of humour depends on the way it is interpreted. If perceived positively it is a tool for social control or unity. However, if negatively perceived as an affront, then it creates conflict.¹⁷ Conflictual humour is conveyed as: irony, satire, sarcasm, burlesque, caricature and parody. This produces a form of indirect aggression aimed at the separation of the group from the object of irritation. Disparaging humour fosters demoralisation and social disintegration inducing hostile attitudes. In totalitarian countries humour can be viewed as subversive in its intent. The social control function of humour and laughter is exemplified by the kidding amongst friends. This type of humour is considered esteeming. Moreover, social regulation occurs through the roles people play, joking relations between them, the rules for public joking and how jokes are constructed and the interaction of groups.¹⁸

Humour is by its nature an indication of a discontinuity in the social system. This gives humour its power and indeed, humour. Humour separates its seamless joints making them visible or contrasting two incomparable views or images giving distorted logic.¹⁹ Freud depicts the joke as a kind of psychic shorthand which links two entities previously thought to be separate e.g. puns.²⁰

Kant and Schopenhauer explain humour in terms of the incongruity model which expresses the laughable as incongruous. Bergson accepts incongruity and adds evolution, he indicates that it is a social and

¹⁴ McGhee, *Handbook of Humour*, p185

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, page iv

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p175

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p175

¹⁸ McGhee, *op.cit.*, pp 174-176

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p160

²⁰ Boston, *An anatomy of Laughter*, p31

evolutionary function used as a tool by which society corrects aberrant behaviour. Laughter restrains eccentricity and corrects rigidity of the mind, body or character.²¹

The most common alternative models for humour involve the notion of superiority.²² Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) theorises that laughter is surprise and superiority and is more cruel than violence. Freud argues that it is aggressive and emphasises superiority over the object. Plato attributes laughter to the malicious gloating over other's misfortunes. Aristotle interprets it as a subdivision of the ugly, a defect not sufficient to cause pain.²³

All of the early theorists have focussed on the negative aspects of humour. The positive idea of playfulness is omitted by Hobbes, Bergson and Freud and other theorists. The connection between humour, games and play is very close. Play arises out of the sheer joy of living and has no function other than pleasure giving. It is considered a self-rewarding activity. Humour and laughter can emerge from high spirits, laughing in sympathy, laughing with old friends and a playfulness which generates a sense of freedom.²⁴

What Makes Us Laugh

Laughter is defined as meaning 'to manifest the spasmodic utterance, facial distortion, shaking of the sides...the instinctive expression of mirth, amusement, sense of the ludicrous...'²⁵ Laughter is an overt expression of humour.²⁶ Laughter is the result of comedy, humour, wit, mirth, jokes, fun, funniness, smiling, playing, fooling, clowning, satire and parody.²⁷ The commonest cause of laughter is that something unaccountable or incongruous is said which excites surprise. The feeling expressed is based on antithesis.²⁸ What makes people laugh is governed by their attitudes which have changed over history and within the life experience.²⁹ People are said to be what they laugh at and through laughing they are engaged in social control and unity.³⁰

Laughing is empowering, it connects with feelings of elation, joy, triumph, liberation and power whereas tears link to feelings of distress and helplessness.³¹ Laughter is generally thought to be natural, cheerful, convivial, exhilarating and healthy.³²

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp29-30

²² McGhee, *op.cit.*, p160

²³ Boston, *op.cit.*, pp28-31

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp38-42

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p19

²⁶ Lorenz, *On Aggression*, p253

²⁷ Boston, *op.cit.*, p15

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p34

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p15

³⁰ McGhee, *op.cit.*, p162

³¹ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p86

³² Boston, *op.cit.*, p226

The levity of laughter is considered a force which raises things, lightens up and metaphoically lets people fly. Seriousness is the opposite, similar to gravity or concern, which pulls things to the centre, suppressing or denying freedom.³³

The intent behind laughter can be either aggressive or playful. Laughter that expresses joy and happiness and is untiring in its devotion to make people laugh, is the image of a love, which is absolutely self giving. Laughter is needed just as people need love.³⁴ Laughter is visualised as the pearl that the oyster forms around the speck of irritation.³⁵ Nietzsche is quoted as saying 'I have canonized laughter, higher men learn to laugh'.³⁶ According to Lorenz, laughter at its most intense is never in danger of causing primal aggressive behaviour.³⁷

Laughter and humour serve social, psychological and physiological functions. The process facilitates an indirect form of communication conveying messages, creating social relations and managing delicate situations. Humour and laughter release tensions, frustrations and anxieties. In times of tragedy humour is a technique for neutralising emotionally charged feelings. Humour and laughter promote health and longevity and is an important function for biological survival.³⁸

Konrad Lorenz in his book *On Aggression* states that laughter produces a strong bond or fellow feeling among the group.³⁹ Groups under stress are likely to develop a sense of humour. Oppressed groups transform misery into laughing at oppressors. This has been observed in concentration camps and the civil rights movement. In a spirit of harmony the group is able to laugh at each others foibles revealing mutual trust and communal relationship. Laughter is a communication of approval.⁴⁰

Laughter Is a Transcendental Experience

Laughter's role is thought to be divine. The pieces of pleasantry are thought to have a secret charm to heal the spirit.⁴¹ It is the soul's weapon in the fight for self preservation. Laughter is a transcendent experience it moves beyond words and is mystical.⁴² It rises above the situation creating a distance between the condition and itself.⁴³ This state of Being is considered high indifference, objectively removed from consensus reality models and able to appreciate the humour of the human condition. Herman Hesse states that the highest endeavour is where humour attains the impossible, an ability to live in the world but not of

³³ McGhee, *Handbook of Humour vol II*, p27

³⁴ Boston, *op.cit.*, pp236-239

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp239

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p84

³⁷ Lorenz, *op.cit.*, p254

³⁸ McGhee, II, *op.cit.*, pp113-117

³⁹ Boston, *op.cit.*, p34

⁴⁰ McGhee, *op.cit.*, p173

⁴¹ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p101

⁴² *Ibid.*, p65

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p78

it, and yet, to stand above it. In its highest forms it gives the power of sifting the true from the false.⁴⁴ The spirit experiences itself freed from passion and exists in the here and now.⁴⁵ Through the power of humour an exalted worldly wisdom can result.⁴⁶ The universal aspiration is liberty, true freedom of thought.⁴⁷

Breaking the Rules

The messengers of humour have been characterised by the fool, clown, trickster, joker, buffoon and jester. They operate outside the norms of society and simultaneously are near the centre of human experience.⁴⁸ These provocateurs are disorderly in their behaviour and their roles are designed to break rules, upset law and order, challenge conventions and taboos. They are agents of comic chaos, shape changers, uninhibited, wild, and are both nothing and everything. Through jokes and humour distinctions are broken down between wisdom and folly, sanity and insanity and rules and disorder.⁴⁹ The fool, clown, jester and trickster exist on the borderline of humanity marking out the limits.⁵⁰ The sound of laughter provides the audible boundary of having stepped over or having 'gone too far'.⁵¹

The fool, clown and comedians exhibit powerful characteristics, which enable them to be 'allowed' to step over conventional boundaries. The fool was common in the courts of Medieval Europe. The fool is a fun character playing the role of someone who is foolish or intellectually insufficient. There are a range of up to 10 variations or types of fool. The fool's image is symbolic and revealing national character. The fool has a licensed freedom and exhibits a willingness to be the butt of jokes or the object of laughter. He is admired for what he can get away with and embodies the deeper wishes of others to escape from responsibility. Thus he has a special position and power.⁵² The clown is a reminder of how far civilisation has come from its animal origins. The clown is more deliberate in action, he feigns incompetence and is renowned for a basic sadness. The clown utilising a range of up to 27 personality types. Carl Jung and Radin value the mythic and psychic qualities of clowns. The laughter at modern clowns is of great antiquity and modern comedians unconsciously reproduce the actions of this archetype. The lid is removed from the conscious every day life and as if in a dream, an insight into the infantile, primitive Self is revealed.⁵³ The comedians use jokes and puns aimed to escape from the weight of tradition. The comedian is strategic and uses jokes to define situations and selves.⁵⁴

⁴⁴ Lorenz, *op.cit.*, p253

⁴⁵ Kallen, *op.cit.*, pp347-353

⁴⁶ McGhee, II, *op.cit.*, p29

⁴⁷ Kallen, *op.cit.*, pp347-353

⁴⁸ Boston, *op.cit.*, p93

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p93

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p102

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p31

⁵² McGhee, *op.cit.*, pp 161-162

⁵³ Boston, *op.cit.*, p113

⁵⁴ McGhee, *op.cit.*, pp162-166

The laugh makers serve an important function as a safety valve for society. They liberate hidden and inhibited wishes such as issues of sex, excretion or aggression. It provides a sense of empowerment to the majority and upholds social order.⁵⁵

These laughable characters are in a unique position of power to be able to tell the truth through the eyes of children, poets and the insane. The laugh makers are the catalyst of laughter in society.⁵⁶ There is a hidden power with a secret sense and an ability to call forth a laugh at will and by timing.⁵⁷

Humour Unmasked

In Kahil Gibran's book *The Prophet* he writes 'what is your sorrow but your joy unmasked'.⁵⁸

The power and irony of those that wear masks is that they are able to unmask society in a myriad of ways.⁵⁹ The mask or camouflage conceals true intentions and suggests that things on the surface are not what they appear to be.⁶⁰

Humour is considered the best lie detector, discovering with uncanny flair, contrived ideals and insincerity. Humour unmasks pretence, pompousness and arrogance.⁶¹ Humour is a powerful tool which makes people intolerant of phoney and fraudulent ideals. Lorenz states that knowledge and humour are the two great hopes for civilisation.⁶²

The idea of unmasking is described as a strip-tease momentarily freeing the unmasked from custom, habit and discomfort.⁶³ The comic unmasks through laughing at subtle and acute perceptions of the humorous aspects of the Self.⁶⁴ The hopeless fools reveal hypocritical abuses of power through making themselves the object of ridicule and revealing his own foolishness and cleverly unmasking the force and fraud of powerholders.⁶⁵

Humour exerts an influence on social behaviour analogous to moral responsibility and makes the world a more honest and better place to live.⁶⁶ Furthermore, humour creates the bond of personal love and friendship enabling people to live peacefully together to work for the common good.⁶⁷

⁵⁵ Boston, *op.cit.*, p32

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp93-97

⁵⁷ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p81

⁵⁸ McGhee, II, *op.cit.*, p51

⁵⁹ Lorenz, *op.cit.*, pp254-255

⁶⁰ McGhee, II, *op.cit.*, p51

⁶¹ Lorenz, *op.cit.*, pp254-255

⁶² *Ibid.*, p257

⁶³ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p76

⁶⁴ Lorenz, *op.cit.*, p255

⁶⁵ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p92

⁶⁶ Lorenz, *op.cit.*, pp254-256

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p257

Challenging Authority

Humour is an agent for social change and reform of the system. The content of humour reflects societal anxieties, values and the need to change.⁶⁸

In feudal Europe those who felt powerless to directly condemn or fight joined together as merry men directing their revolution at hypocrisy and tyranny through humour. These groups made up the joyous societies of England. They pretended to be hopeless fools holding up the mighty and holy to derision in speech and song and showing up their falsehood.⁶⁹ The image of the fool has been equated to the warrior. The symbol of power is a bladder not a spear or a sword, the armour is to look the fool, the weapon is laughter and fighting for freedom.⁷⁰ Like the clown, the fool satirises existing authority.⁷¹ In addition, the image of the fool has been compared to Jesus by American theologian Harvey Cox. The fool defies custom and scorns crowned heads, takes blame on himself, performs miracles (conjures tricks), the parables have a joke structure, and has a belief in defence against evil.⁷² The depiction of the sad faced clown and the saviour are blurred⁷³

To laugh at power is to deflate and empty it of rule, which gives a sense of empowerment to the powerless majority. The spread of liberty advances with the spread of laughter. There is nothing that the powerful fear more than laughter. There is no despot or authoritarian who does not work at suppressing laughter and punishing it. The princes of state and church maintained a police force of the spirit to censor, ban books and install programs of thought-control to protect those in authority.⁷⁴

Political jokes circulating throughout history provide the masses with the means to cope with stress and hardship, particularly in authoritarian regimes, which suppress freedom of speech. A typical joke widely circulating in Russia is reproduced below.

Ivan is sitting on the Kremlin wall. His friend asks him what he is doing. He replies 'it is my new job. I'm waiting for the world revolution. When it comes I have to announce the good news by blowing my trumpet.' 'And how much do they pay you?' 'One rouble for each day I have to sit here.' 'that's very little Ivan', 'I know Sergei, but it's a job for life.'⁷⁵

Similar variations to the above joke circulated during the French Revolution, the Hitler regime and throughout eastern Europe.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ McGhee, II, *op.cit.*, p115

⁶⁹ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p90

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p82

⁷¹ Boston, *op.cit.*, p126

⁷² *Ibid.*, p177

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p126

⁷⁴ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p354

⁷⁵ Larsen, *op.cit.*, p1

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The jokes are passed mouth to mouth by the silent majority who are deprived of expression. Henri Bergson states that society avenges itself for the liberties taken. Political humour has an underlying motive of aggression, it is not resignation it is rebellious. It works against the unkindness of the situation. It aims to minimise the enemy and achieve a sense of enjoyment at overcoming him. The jokes are a vehicle which make criticism possible against authority, hence a liberation from pressure. In effect acting as a safety valve and a means to preserve sanity. The jokes are unlikely to topple the dictator but they are effective in as far as the oppressor has no defence against them.⁷⁷

During the rising tide of Nazism, cabaret was a mouthpiece of resistance. Lyrics, jokes and humorous stories were picked up by cabaretists and conveyed through their programmes. In an attempt to suppress humour, the Nazi's conducted joke courts set up to punish people naming horses and dogs Adolf.⁷⁸

Humour Transcending Opposition

The liberating energy of laughter transcends the instinct of fight or flight. Laughter transcends opposition, attains victory over it, therefore producing an empowering effect.⁷⁹

Laughter can be used as a means of dispute resolution and correction of aberrant behaviour. The pygmies of the Congo lived in an anarchist society with no leaders with power or authority. They were characterised as very good-natured and quite fearless. Their sense of humour was irresistible. They would hold onto each other, slap their sides, go through physical contortions and if something was particularly funny they would roll on the ground laughing with tears running down their cheeks. The only individual with a special position was the camp clown whose function was to be a buffer between disputant parties and settle disputes nonviolently. This was done by distracting attention from the original disagreement, taking the blame on himself or ridiculing both parties. However, the clown never passed judgement or exerted authority. As a result of his antics and ability to laugh at himself he was popular and able to rescue himself from opprobrium.⁸⁰

The eastern martial art aikido is a metaphor for the technique of using humour to diffuse confrontations. Aikido is an eastern martial art used to prohibit aggression and invite a positive response to 'attacks'. The essence is to go with the flow of the attack. The approach emphasises harmony and blending rather than discord to defeat the opponent. The use of aikido honors the direction in which the attacker is going. The key is position, timing and focus of energies. An example of this is highlighted by a teacher and a group of students conspiring to knock a book off her desk at 10.18 in the morning. They did this and the teacher had several options on how to respond. She could counterattack, ignore it or use humour as aikido by

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp2-3

⁷⁸ Kallen, *op.cit.*, p354

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p78

⁸⁰ Boston, *op.cit.*, p125

blending with the students. She chose to knock a book off her desk and say ‘sorry, I’m a bit late’. The class laughed and the incident humanised the teacher and provided a way to share their humanity.⁸¹

Art Buchwald, winner of the Pulitzer Prize used The Mirroring Reality technique. This involves holding up a mirror to reality and giving it a twist. For example a professional printer sent out a story to customers:

Four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody accused Anybody.⁸²

Reversing Reality techniques are used to view the world from a 180 degrees perspective. For example, in the case of a class starting a new topic. The teacher is aware that students are feeling fearful of looking stupid, so the teacher starts the lesson with a non-sense session before engaging in the sense of the topic.⁸³

Another technique to spread laughter is to create ‘inverse paranoids’. Inverse paranoids are people who think the world is out to do them good. By creating positive self-fulfilling prophecies people can build self-esteem and spread smiles.⁸⁴

Humour as Nonviolent Activism

Patch Adams the founder of the Gesundheit Institute is one of the few humourists using clowning to fight creeping fear in the culture with active love of smiles and laughter. He gathers and trains aspiring multicultural activists to deliver what he terms ‘friendshipism’ to people with a particularly focus on those in orphanages and hospitals. He is an advocate of peace, justice and care. He asserts that he will not embrace fear nor does he believe that violence can end violence. His philosophy is that fun and love is the answer.⁸⁵

The author travelled as a clown with Patch Adams in Russia. In discussions he identifies himself as the archetype of the Trickster and plays a clown character that is mentally slow but loveable. He talks of his central philosophy of creating a love revolution. Excerpts of his speech in Russia (2002) is reproduced overleaf.

⁸¹ McGhee, II, *op.cit.*, p6

⁸² *Ibid.*, p15

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p17

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ <http://www.patchadams.org/achoo.htm>

If you really want peace and justice, really want presidents and world leaders and a world that survives, you got to hear that people think your great, know your great and get to work...Without operating from a base of feeling you are great you not going to be able to do your dreams for peace and justice...In a love revolution the money and power revolution operates with a very few people and wanting to lessen that number all the time. They lead through the money and power over model from the beginning of recorded history. The love revolution will never lead from the few to the many. A revolution where everyone is the leader... Since 911 I've been asking my audiences what is your love strategy, we know the revenge, fear, violence strategy... We don't have a lot of time. You can't be wimpy about being loving...Walt Whitman was a revolution, Einstein was a revolution, most revolutions have been non-violent. The love revolution is not going to have a violent anything...Quickly feel the friendship with a stranger, can't say you spent much time with, but you felt connected to them. That is how you don't want to bomb Iraq – is to feel connected. That corny thing that we are all brothers and sisters, you can actually know it is possible because you did it here.⁸⁶

Positive humour has elements that compare with Gandhi's Satyagraha and could be developed more fully in the future. Positive humour is a safety valve or outlet for dissent or a diversion of aggression. In effect, it transforms negative misery into positive laughter. Gandhi used positive nonviolence as a substitute for violence. Satyagraha is focussed on holding on to truth and self suffering as the mirror to injustice. The spontaneity of positive humour makes visible (or unmasks) suppressed truths and deception. In its highest form gives a power to sift the true from the false. Ahimsa refers to nonviolence or love whereas positive humour in its selfless and devotional form, is the image of love. Moreover, love transcends opposition and achieves a state of indifferent Being in both cases. Satyagraha is also referred to as soul force, truth producing liberty. Positive humour is considered divine and the soul's weapon for self preservation and a force which raises positive energy. Moreover, positive humour produces states of liberty. Gandhi's constructive program of building community was considered more important than resistance which can be viewed in light of Patch Adams work with active clowning to overcome inner states of fear with love in order to change culture, build esteem and re-humanise humanity.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Positive humour and laughter is effective in creating an atmosphere of positive peace. Humour and laughter are extremely important in diverting aggression and violence and providing a channel for dissent. Engaging in jokes, satire and parody empowers the people in the face of tragedy, oppression or evil. Humour is innate and when the intent is playful, loving and devoted to producing real happiness, it has the power to transcend opposition, reveal truth and experience unity and liberty. If peace is the way we understand the deeper nature of life, the meaning of Being and harmony then positive humour provide a insightful channel to laugh at life, experience liberation and unity.

⁸⁶ Patch Adams Healing with Humour Tour of Russia - Video recording by Susan Carew, November, 2002

⁸⁷ Sharp, *Gandhi as Political Strategist*, p221

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