

Humour in the *Kāvya* Literature: Sanctity and Sacredness Put in the Pillory (Prof. Gabriella Ferrero Olivero and Prof. Daniela Rossella, 366 words)

In *Kāvya* literature, comic pièces are usually humorous and often very amusing, but their aim is not primarily diversion: above all, they stigmatise specific customs, individuals, or groups in a penetrating way. Consequently, it is obvious that immoral or inappropriate *Brahma*□as, fraudulent ascetics, and dissolute or deceitful women (especially in their relationship with sacredness) are some of the favourite objects of farces, comic tales and mirthful aphorisms. Furthermore, beyond the stock-character of the false ascetic or priest, *Kāvya* demonstrates that also a non-corrupted social system or a non-hypocritical “religious leadership” can be the target of a comic aggression. In this case, they are ridiculed exactly because they represent a system, which tries to bridle the legitimate cravings of mankind. In an uncommitted and farcical way, this type of humour targets religious persons or ascetics because they represent the “public moral order”: their attempt of prevailing over desire, and of following purity, are felt as vain (and stupid) instruments of denying natural yearnings and drives. With regards to this theme – and in keeping with our current researches – our paper will examine Indian humour as it is described in the rhetorical treatises, and as it emerges in the *Kāvya*: in fact, through impropriety (*anaucitya*), in the “art literature” it is possible to convert all sublime emotions into the ridiculous. Given a preliminary examination of Indian humour-satire according to its various settings, targets, and purposes, our goal is to show the multifaceted values of “humour” in poetical and theatrical Indian texts in reference with the sacred sphere: in fact, quietude or other apparently religious or spiritual practices, which would not really conduce to spiritual salvation, produce the *ābhāsa* of *śānta rasa* and the comic thereby. Of course we will also attend to literary conventions, and to the numerous theoretical implications of this theme: thus, particular attention will be paid to the “*verba ambigua*-comicality” – that is, to that form of humour, which is based on linguistic ambiguity. In these cases, humour and laughter emerge from the teamwork of the opposite-coexistent meanings, and comicality emerges when it de-structures two collections of beliefs. Finally, we will examine related topics, like the echoes of Indian humour in the Western culture.