

**“Analyzing the Elements of Humour in Stephen Leacock Selective Short Stories”**

A project work submitted to Madurai Kamaraj University in partial  
Fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

**Master of Arts in English Literature**

by

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Under the supervision of

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project work entitled, **“Analyzing the Elements of Humour in Stephen Leacock Selective Short Stories”** submitted to Madurai Kamaraj University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **Master of Arts in English Literature** is a record of original research work done by **E.BENNY ANTONY RAJ (Reg.No. B8T15957)** during the period (June 2018 - April 2020) of his study in Mary Matha College of Arts and Science, Periyakulam under my supervision and guidance and the project has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associate ship / Fellowship or similar title to any candidate of any University.

Signature of the Guide

**(Mr. S. JOHN WESLY REGAN)**

Head of the Department

**(Dr. G.J.SATHIASEELAN)**

Principal

**(Rev. Fr. ISSAC PJ CMI)**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project work entitled, **“Analyzing the Elements of Humour in Stephen Leacock Selective Short Stories”** submitted to Madurai Kamaraj University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **Master of Arts in English Literature** is a record of original research work done by me during the period (June 2018 – April 2020) under the supervision and guidance of **Mr. S. John Wesley Regan**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mary Matha College of Arts and Science, Periyakulam and that it has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or similar title to any candidate of any University.

Signature of the Candidate

**(E.BENNY ANTONY RAJ)**

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## Chapter I

### **Introduction**

Stephen P. H. Butler Leacock FRSC was a Canadian teacher, political scientist, writer, and humourist. Between the years 1915 and 1925, he was the best-known English-speaking humourist in the world. He is known for his light humour along with criticisms of people's follies.

Stephen Butler Leacock was an English-born Canadian writer, teacher, political scientist and humorist. He was a polyglot having proficiency in English, French and German. Leacock's stories are masqueraded with humor and mainly revolve around himself and his life-events. His works reflect a noticeable satirical element - a fine line between hilarity and absurdity. Leacock was always an educator and this trait was clearly visible in all his literary and creative pursuits. He efficiently combined pathos with satire and topped it with subtlety and irony. He always saw 'humor' as the ultimate expression of human kindness and progress and during 'Great Depression' he attempted to soothe the miserable souls through his writings. Leacock was traditionally conservative, which was clearly evident in his satiric norm and the way he valued the community over the individual. Although people disapproved of his dependency on a 'lesser-known genre', he remained devoted to his first love, humor.

Born to Peter Leacock and Agnes Butler, Stephen was the third of his parent's eleven children. His family immigrated to Canada on account of banishment from manor house, and settled on a farm in Toronto, Ontario. He was just six at that time. In 1878, under the influence of alcohol, his father abandoned the family and traveled west to Manitoba, along with his brother E.P. Leacock. In 1903, he was awarded a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago where he studied economics and political science. In 1894, his first humorous story was published in a Canadian magazine. In the next few years he had published more than 30 stories in various Canadian and American magazines. In 1903, he was appointed as a lecturer in Mc Gill University, Montreal. He became the head of the department of economics and political science in 1908, and served until his retirement. In 1906, he published his first book, 'Elements of Political Science', which became a best-seller as soon as it arrived in the market. Soon his other books followed namely 'Literary Lapses' (1910), 'Nonsense Novels' (1911), 'Sunshine sketches of a little town' (1912), 'Arcadian adventures with the idle rich' (1914), 'The unresolved riddle of social justice' (1919), 'My discovery of England' (1921), 'Economic prosperity in the British Empire' (1930), 'Humor: its theory and technique' (1935), 'My remarkable Uncle and other sketches' (1942). Two of his books were published posthumously - 'Last Leaves' (1945) and 'The boy I left behind me' (1946). He also published a series of articles in leading newspapers and magazines which earned him fame and reputation. 'Economic prosperity in

the British empire' (1930) and 'My discovery of the west' (1937) were among his finest articles.

'Elements of political science' (1906) was regarded as his best-selling book throughout his career. It ascertained the connection between political science and the state which houses it. 'Literary Lapses' (1910) was his first collection of comic writings - it is considered to be an all-time classic. It is a collection of short stories strung together in the thread of wit, charm and delightfully wicked humor. It was an instant success since its first appearance and received critical acclaim too. 'Nonsense Novels' (1911) is a collection of brilliant satirical fables including the ghost story, the detective story, the rags-to-riches story, the adventure story, the shipwreck story et cetera. It is still regarded as worth many hours of joyous delight. 'The sunshine sketches of a little town' (1912) contains a series of connected vignettes from every walk of life. It is considered to be one of the most lasting classics of Canadian humorous literature. It is popular for its universal appeal and was adapted in a television series in 1952 and 2012. 'Arcadian adventures with the Idle Rich' (1914) is another classic Canadian satire and certainly his funniest book. It was a big hit in North America at the time of its publication and was a great success. It satirizes the social events in a delightful prose and provides a glimpse of Montreal, a powerful city.

In 1937, he was awarded the royal society of Canada's 'Lorne Pierce medal' for his academic work and contribution to the Canadian Literature, particularly

humor writing. In 1937, he won the 'Governor General's award' for his book, 'My discovery of the West: A discussion of East and West in Canada' which was based on his experience gathered as a lecturer on his tour to western Canada.

In 1900, he married Beatrix Hamilton, an aspiring actress and had a son named Stephen Lushington Leacock, from her. His son's growth was stunted from an early age due to lack of growth hormone. Consequently, his height never crossed the four foot mark. Although, Stephen tended his son with great care, there was a love-hate relationship between father and son. In 1928, the success of his books allowed him to move to Old Brewery Bay in Orillia. He built a house there which was later converted into a museum and was declared as one of the 'National historic sites of Canada'. In 1946, 'Stephen Leacock Associates Foundation' was instituted. It was tasked to preserve his literary legacy and manage 'Stephen Leacock memorial Medal for humor'. It is awarded to encourage Canadian humor writers. In the same year his unfinished autobiography, 'The boy I left behind me', was published posthumously. In 1969, Canada post released a six cent stamp on the centennial of his birth, with his image on it. In the following year, the Stephen Leacock centennial committee raised a plaque at his English birthplace. Many buildings in Canada were named after him, including the 'Stephen Leacock building' at McGill University, 'Stephen Leacock public school' in Ottawa, a theater in Keswick, and a school in Toronto. He died of throat cancer and was buried in St George the Martyr Churchyard, Sutton, Ontario.

Leacock immigrated to Canada with his parents at the age of six. He attended Upper Canada College (1882–87) and later received a B.A. degree from the University of Toronto (1891). After teaching for eight years at Upper Canada College, he entered the University of Chicago and was awarded a Ph.D. in 1903. For more than 70 years, the Leacock Associates have awarded the annual Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humor, along with a \$15,000 cash prize, for the best Canadian book of humor. It is the only national award of its kind in Canada.

Stephen Leacock once complained of critics who thought what he did was very simple, quoting a review: "What is there is, after all, in Professor Leacock's Humour but a rather ingenious mixture of hyperbole and meiosis?" Leacock commented:

The man was right. How he stumbled on this trade secret I do not know. But I am willing to admit, since the truth is out, that it has been my custom in preparing an article of a humorous nature to go down to the cellar and mix up half a gallon of meiosis with a pint of hyperbole. If I want to give the article a decidedly literary character, I find it well to put in about half a pint of paresis. "Humor as I See It"

Thus he demonstrated in typical fashion that his humor is at least partly based on hyperbole and meiosis (which I take to mean the opposite of hyperbole)—and at the same time that it is so much more. In his classic satirical writing, overstatement and understatement do play their roles. But it's often hard to put your finger on what exactly makes it work.

## Chapter II

### **Humour Verses Reality**

Humour sense is being part of every human character, whereas one can control the humour sense which prevails in nature.

One live example which we come across was Stephen Leacock a Canadian novelist who has written many short stories. Many of his humorous short stories we have chosen few and they are

- My Financial Career
- Self-Made Men
- How to Live to be 200
- Merry Christmas
- How to Make a Million Dollars

## My Financial Career:-

Stephen Leacock narrates a short story with only few characters. In financial career the story reduces around only, bank managers, accountant, we could like to quote some of the lines to depict his humour nature. Going to bank is a normal scenario but the author himself has got feared to approach the bank persons in one of his quote he mentioned as. .

Can i see the manager "I said and added solemnly alone.

I don't know why I said alone".

The author had got terrible fear of approaching the bank personalities for just opening the account, and that too he told them to meet the manager alone.

In another scenario the conversation between the bank manager and the author goes like,

"he wants to invest fairly large I whispered,  
I propose to deposit fifty six dollars now and fifty dollar a month".

After this incident the manager he himself got up and opened the door and called the accountant to open the account for the author. Just for depositing the cash the author told that his face was pale as death. There is no need to describe an ordinary situation comparing to death. This particular quote narrates the humoristic sense of the author.

In another scenario the author wish to withdraw the entire cash as he wish to close the account.so the accountant ask him to fill the cheque to withdraw cash he never thought that he is going to close the entire account, in thought of giving his cash back he asked in what denomination he wants his cash back. Without understanding the situation the author says humorously all of it, and again the accountant asked hen later understanding the actual meaning he replied in cents. The innocence of author is clearly depicted in this situation.

### **Self-Made Men:-**

Stephen Leacock has given hilarious short stories among which self-made men pose a remarkable story with only few char actors he had clearly presented the char actors that had matched his short stories. Tom is one of the character in this story who lives for a normal life and a job seeker in Broadway. The landlord is a lady who trusted tom and his self-confidence, and the old man who plays a supporting to role for tom.

Earlier the author depicts the old man as so suspicious later the old man plays an inevitable role in tom's life. Tom has a normal day routine where he meets the old man in Broadway waiting for the train. Tom filled with astonishment and approached the old man asking for a match as the conversation eyes tom came to know that the old man was cheated by his own son George. He then took the old man to his place and consoled him and made him to cat.

The conversation begins with George tom and the old man at last George has agreed that

he has cheated his father and agree to repay by giving cheque. The old man at least got relief from all his problems with the help of tom. The life of tom has changed his frame has gone speeded everywhere throughout the town.

Atlas the author humoursly pointing out that "To succeed in life he writes the growth of America have only to see an old man seated up on a railing and smoking a clay pipe then go up and ask him for a match".

The Author lived in 18th to 19th century believe in humour which can be extract from their day to day life. This quote is a live example of how the can be happy even when lost everything. Compare to other author Stephen Leacock made every one laugh and to think positive in all dreadful situation.

### **How to live to be 200:-**

Stephen Leacock always turns serious topics into absurdities, It is a clear evident he shows health mania into a stupid idea.

The development of the thesis is actually quite a hard thing to determine here, if we go further send see that his there is would actually be in support of health mania. The author always believes in health mania but against the way adapted to maintain physic.

Leacock has his readers laughing to themselves. As serves purpose of turning serious topics into absurdities because you may think upon them the first few times and then realize that you were duped into thinking seriously on something that makes little sense in the end.

Leacock essay on health mania is in itself controversies as if one compares today to the day of leacock, where such things were doubtless harder to convey because of popular attitude (Remember Leacock time was late 19th to 20th centuries)

"If you see a bacilli, walk right up to it, and look it in the eye. If one flies into your room, stick at it with your hat or with a towel. Hit it as hard as you can between the neck and the thorax. It will soon get sick of that".

Smacking bacilli with a hat or towel? How utterly crazy! (However, those of you who are fellow Hitchhikers know full well the powers of a towel. Do you know where your towel is right now?)

"And after all their food they presently incur some simple old-fashioned illness and die like anybody else".

Leacock hammers home the stupidity of health mania by delivering a sucker punch to the reader's face, telling them that die in contradiction to their cause-health. I.e. no matter how much you work out you are not immune to illness.

## **Merry Christmas:-**

In Merry Christmas the author clearly mentioned the richness of Christmas celebration and how it got disappeared from his thoughts. He has given a name for the time that is passed as "father time" and the moments of Christmas as "father Christmas".

In an hilarious way the author compared the mood of Christmas to dying fire when the night has grown late and October wind sounds how outside and there came a voice murmuring as "you are quite mistaken" my dear young friend. In this quote the author himself presenting the mood of Christmas that everyone should have at time of enjoyment. He clearly depicts the conversation between the author and the father time and Father Christmas.

In another quote from his short stories a simple conversation will clearly prove how the author seen to a hilarious person the conversation goes like this.

The author said that "the life is very short and all of a sudden he asked father time how come you know that i am wrong. I asked and how can you tell that what i was thinking? The father time replied that "you said it out loud" answers father time".

See this, how the conversation carried out in a funny way the author forgot that the father time is not a character just time in present which makes to think in another way.

In this short story the author tells how the Christmas celebration happiness has been

scattered due to war across the world. The author wants us to make our future children to enjoy the same with no worries. It is our duty to make the children believe in Christmas time. The author wishes that there shall be peace upon the earth.

### **How to Make a Million Dollar:-**

In this beautiful short story the author talks about an observation how the rich live and how they conduct business in order to become rich like them one must only emulate them.

Each and every one of us know how to become a rich, the person lifestyle can be modified only when he is wearing lot and lot of money. It needs a lot of hard work with smart skills.

The author conveys in a “hilarious way that if one should become rich they must emulate rich but in real world this statement makes everyone laugh that it impossible to act and behave accordingly”.

**CHAPTER - III**  
**HUMOUR IN PRESENT CONTEXT**  
**“Laughter is the best medicine “**

Humour in present context means the humour that is prevailing in the current scenario. Humour can be seen everywhere and it is inside each and every one of us. Without humour no one can survive in this world. Fact is Laughter is the best medicine for us to recover from all health problems which we normally come across throughout in our life; Humour makes us to go through all hard moments which make us down. Humour is the only key for us to sustain from it. Now let us discuss the ways in which humour is existing in the present world.

There are many ways to carry humour to the people, whereas I have chosen certain communications in which the humour is carried among the public. Those communications are MEDIA a mass reach to the public in many ways. In media I would discuss only few they are

1. Online telecast serials for Humour.
2. TV Shows for humour.
3. APPs for Humour.
4. Comedy Films

These 3 Ways are making a mass historic performance on Humour and it makes everyone of us to lead a happy moment than ever we lived through.

## **Online telecast serials for humour:**

The Technical term "Online "means everything goes live. The performers make the moment live. They create the curiosity inside the viewers and enable them to listen to their speech again and again.

How it is carrying through Online? The answer is very simple when the viewer is engaged with some gadgets like computer, phones, i pads and so on

Online Humour TV shows are more popular in foreign countries and recently in India; many of those people are engaged to gadgets always and seem to be techy. So they can view from the place they are which is very convenient for them.

I would like to quote few points about the online humour telecasting and telecasted serials that make the entire world to laugh and made them an icon.

They are Sanjay Mankatala, abhishek upmanyu, rohit swain, abhishek walia, gaurav kapoor, kishore dayani and so on. All these celebrities are earning millions and millions of human hearts by presenting their speech in form of standup comedy. The Viewers have crossed billions already. Everyone that I have mentioned above was earning lakhs and lakhs rupees of their standup comedy which is telecasted live. So we are happy to know that humour sense enables them to earn and to live and to meet out their requirements in this world.

Online telecasting is a broad field where the online humour shows from all around the world can be telecasted in any place across the globe. It clearly prove us that the humour which prevails around the entire world can be brought in to our doorstep.

## **TV Shows for Humour offline Mode**

Humour that are carried through offline mode like TV shows reaches more and more people than online mode. People are spending their valuable timing in front of TV as it is the only chance for them to live happier after their hard time through the day. While watching TV shows for Humour people are forgetting their sadness and it makes them to laugh and laugh for the entire day.

Some of the Humour shows at present in trending Tamil TV humour shows are

1. Siricha Pochu
2. Comedy galatta
3. KPY champions

These are some of the humour shows that make the entire people to laugh by forgetting their problems. People are addicting towards these shows it's because people are enjoying the timely comedy sense that makes a sudden laughter to the entire audience. This addiction is nice as people are using it in their day to day life also. Is it nice yes of course as they need some urge to carry out their life.

Let us discuss the content chosen in Humour shows , First **Siricha Pochu** Show is famous among the entire club because the host will ask the participant to listen to group of comedians performing the comedy dialogues is it easy to control humour. No, The participant beyond their control they will burst their laugh and what a concept that the presenter has chosen, Every one of us know very well that no one can control happiness. Next we will discuss the famous comedy show” **Comedy Galatta**” It is the Pioneer show for comedy for so long years this comedy show contribute a lot to TRB rating for television shows. Dramatic TV serials domination exist everywhere in the TV shows but this humour show broke all the hindrance faced and turnout into a huge success. This humour show gives chance to many fresher to prove their talent in Humour and the very next show is **KPY champions** which is a trend setter now. The KPY champions Team performing various life situations with comedy as it make the audience to pick those comedies and fill it in their day to day life. How easy it is to fill humour in our life, all this had been made possible only because of the humour shows telecasted through TV.

## **APPs for Humour**

Very honor to hear there are certain apps which is being developed by techy mainly to make people to laugh. In Today's World people are not having time to spare with someone else; hence a new mode of carrying comedy has been developed.

I would like to point some of the Apps Mainly for comedy and they are

1. Share chat
2. Helo
3. Best of jokes
4. Joke Book
5. Tamil Movies comedy app

How fair it is to see all these apps are mainly meant for people to laugh by going through this anyone can laugh unconditionally. People might think does it all needed to create an APP for Humour yes indeed we forget one thing. These days stress is making people to go through lot of problems and what solutions can be given for it. Only Humour app is the best medicine where a daily joke hits their gadgets which make them to laugh without anyone's help.

## COMEDY FILMS:

Recently the Films for Humour are pitching the screens frequently comparing to other zone. The comedy role played a huge part in all films, Comedy Zone is Inevitable in recent trend without comedy part viewers are felt bored of the stories even if the stories are strong the presenter needs humour for pushing the story to the climax. Even though there are lots of fans for a certain actor and actress. The entire fan clubs are for comedians there are no separations. People are enjoying the comedy without any restrictions. How true it is, the producer is investing a huge amount on creating a masterpiece all it goes well only when humour part mixed well inside the story without which nothing goes well. There are many legendary comedians who carried the entire story with their comedy and gave many block buster movies. And there are other comedians who help the main role to lead the film with their comedy support one small example I would like to share is all the Tamil films in recent time are dramatically proves that lead role are supported by comedians, Without comedians films are not hitting the screens.

These are some of the ways in which humour are present in today's context this particular topic has a wide scope to analyze that humour is exist in all over the place it is in the hands of mankind to choose wisely and act accordingly to the present scenario.

## **ABSTRACT FOR WORKS CITED**

### **PRIMARY SOURCE:**

E Book reference 7 **Best Short Stories by Stephen Leacock** “Published on **28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019**

### **SECONDARY SOURCE:**

App Developed in name of **STEPHEN LEACOCK** from Google Play Books-  
EBooks Audio Books and comics

You Tube Videos on Topics for Stephen Leacock Short stories published  
on various stages

These are some of the E BOOKS available based on Brailey techniques.