



The Artistic Use Of Humour In Examples Of Abbasid Poetry

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Abstract:

Humorous poetry can be seen as a form of 'caricature' in which the act of laughter is combined with an element of seriousness. This is achieved by exaggerating and drawing attention to shortcomings in order to convey a message, criticise a particular social phenomenon or shed light on certain vices prevalent in Abbasid society, such as avarice, excessive indulgence and hypocritical piety.

Thus, the significance of the apparent meaning of the humorous style in poetry does not negate the power of the underlying meaning, as irony is one of the most important pillars and components of this style. It is based on the simultaneous presence of a thing and its opposite, which allows the reader a wide range of interpretations. This explains why the humorous scene can overshadow the apparent meaning, while the tragic scene remains hidden in the folds and hidden areas of the poem. This is evident in the texts of certain poets of the Abbasid era, particularly the Makhdin, Ahl al-Tharf and al-Shatir.

The poetry of the early Abbasid period in particular embodies a decisive moment in the history of Arabic poetry. It marks the transformation of popular laughter into the realm of poetry and its orientation within an artistic framework that aims to surprise the recipient, shatter his expectations and preconceptions, and serve as a poetic weapon used by renowned poets against their opponents, far from frivolity and triviality.

Keywords: Abbasid poetry, humour, surprise, irony, caricature.

Introduction:

The theme of humour in Arabic literature, which is in itself a form of entertainment and self-amusement, is a multifaceted theme with various ramifications. The Arab people have been endowed with a quick wit and a sense of humour. As they progressed in life, their wit and humour developed and kept pace with the rhythm of their lives. Whenever prosperity flourished, humour and the spirit of jest accompanied it.

On the other hand, humour in Arabic poetry is considered a cultural phenomenon whose star shines brightly, albeit with variations between eras and literary periods. It has

spread widely in various poetic forms such as satire, ridicule, wit, bawdiness, and even lamentation.

Humorous poetry can be seen as a form of "caricature" in which the act of laughter is combined with an element of seriousness. It seeks to exaggerate and draw attention to flaws in order to convey a message, criticise a particular social phenomenon, or highlight certain vices that were prevalent among some individuals in Abbasid society, such as avarice, excessive indulgence, and hypocritical religious behaviour.

Consequently, the apparent meaning conveyed by the humorous style in poetry does not negate the power of the underlying meaning. This is because irony is one of the essential pillars and elements of this style, which is based on the simultaneous presence of a thing and its opposite. This allows the reader a wide range of interpretations and perspectives. This explains why the humorous scene often dominates the apparent meaning, while the tragic scene remains hidden in the folds of the poem and its hidden worlds. This can be observed in the poems of a group of satirists, parasites and ridiculists, among other poets of the Abbasid era.

Abbasid poetry marked a decisive moment in the history of Arabic poetry, a moment when popular laughter was transformed into a poetic field and merged with it in an artistic framework. It worked to surprise the recipient, to break his expectations and anticipations. On the one hand, it was a kind of poetic weapon used by famous poets against their opponents, far from frivolity and entertainment.

1. The necessity of humour in literature:

If we take a brief look at the periods that preceded the Abbasid era, we find traces of wit, humour and comic anecdotes that laid the foundation for the abundance of humour that characterised the rule of the Abbasid dynasty. Kufa was the ideal haven for this poetic style, especially during the Umayyad period, especially in the time of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Some scholars attribute the spread of this phenomenon in Kufa to its proximity to Persia, which facilitated the infiltration of destructive ideologies such as Manichaeism and Mazdakism. Undoubtedly, the desperate and oppressed people of Kufa sought to understand these ideologies and came to a single conclusion, which was rebellion against customs, traditions and all inherited values¹.

The rebellion could intensify and manifest itself in broader and more artistic forms, with the most active participants being likened to devils. Some poets were not concerned with accountability, were unafraid of shame, and disregarded social norms. Their only aim was to make people laugh, including themselves. Afterwards, they moved between their homes and the taverns².

Historical sources mention some names that were known during the reign of Ibn Marwan, similar to Al-Huzayn Al-Kanani, Al-Aqishar Al-Asadi and Al-Hakam ibn Abd al-Asadi. It is said that Al-Aqishar once drank until he had nothing left to wear, and the owner of the tavern threw him out after taking all his clothes on a cold day. He hastily buried himself in a pile of straw to protect himself from the cold until the tavernkeeper took pity

¹- Mohammed Abdul Aziz Al-Kafrawi, History of Arabic Poetry in the Early Islamic Era and the Umayyad Period, Fajalah, Cairo, Nahdat Misr Publishing House, n.d., vol. 1, p. 254.

²- Same reference, p. n.

on him and gave him back his clothes and his dignity. However, this incident may seem trivial compared to other risks he took. There was the day he fled from the army to Sham, sold his weapon and his belongings, and went to the tavern. About this he said:

"I left Egypt, the abode of its free men,
without any regrets or worries.
So I decided to become a refugee,
and surrendered to the invaders.
I said to myself: 'Perhaps I shall see,
A rider on a horse or a laden camel.
My mount was a donkey,
An old one, with protruding teeth and a worn saddle"¹.

It is also said that he married his cousin Al-Rabab, but his people did not approve of their friendship. He then sought the help of a Magian named Ras Al-Baghl, who praised him in a way that was closer to criticism:

"The Magian Ras Al-Baghl has rewarded me,
for my friendship with Al-Rabab.
I saw you wetting your bed,
and that your father, a donkey, was the mount.
And that you are the master of the people of hell,
When you oppress the wronged.
You are close to Qarun,
Pharaoh, and the one who was swallowed up by the whale"^{*2}.

When Ibn Marwan reproached him, he replied sarcastically: "Does it not please you that I have placed you above the kings?"

It is said of Al-Huzayn Al-Kanani that he had a light-hearted nature and his appearance reflected his sense of humour and joy. He would encourage people to enjoy his humorous campaigns against his victims. Regarding a person called Amr ibn Amr, Muhammad bin Marwan once spoke to Al-Huzayn about him. Al-Huzayn replied, "Indeed, Amr is one whom I know to be abundant in evil and scarce in good, and the best of Amr's deeds hang from the Pleiades. Muhammad asked, "Is this poetry?" Al-Huzayn replied, "After a while it will be poetry," and then he recited:

"The evil of Amr is present and obvious to his friend,
And the best of Amr's deeds hang from the Pleiades.
Amr has not ceased to be a thorn in the flesh of misfortune,
They will confront him until he dies and is buried".

These verses reveal the poets' interest in entertaining people by ridiculing their opponents and sometimes even themselves. For example, Al-Asfahani mentions the following incident: "There was a man in Al-Madinah called Safwan, a client of the Makhzumite family. Al-Huzayn borrowed his donkey and went to Al-Aqiq³. He drank and then approached the donkey, which was already drunk and standing at the entrance of the

¹- Abdullah ibn Al-Mu'tazz, *Tabaqat al-Shu'ara* (Classes of Poets), Egypt, Dar Al-Ma'arif, 1968, n.d., trans. Abd Al-Sattar Ahmed Farag, p. 256).

* - "Al-Mukatanna bi'l-Hukm" refers to Abu Jahl because Quraysh used to address him by the title "Abu Al-Hukm".

³- Mohammed Abdul Aziz Al-Kafrawi, *History of Arabic Poetry in the Early Islamic Era and the Umayyad Period*, p. 255.

mosque, as its owner had trained it to do. Safwan took the donkey and locked it up with Al-Huzayn. The next morning Al-Huzayn said:

"O people of Al-Madinah, tell me,
In which stable was the donkey locked up?
For what crime was the donkey imprisoned?
And what is the victory of the donkey if it is oppressed?"

When Safwan saw the eloquence of Al-Huzayn's speech, he released the donkey and invited the poet to drink. He recited to one of Safwan's slaves who was in the mosque:

"I swear to you by the house around which the spirits move,
And by Zamzam and the veiled Kaaba,
Is Safwan's mistress a prostitute or chaste?
I know what to bring and what to avoid"¹.

In addition to these examples, there are other poets who did not receive their share of fame. They were also known for their excessive indulgence and mixture of humour and wit. Among them is 'Amr ibn 'Amr, known as Dhi Kanan (with a fatha on the kaf and kasra on the noon), who likes to delve into sexual topics and push the boundaries to the extreme. It is said that one of the wealthy forbade him from receiving his gifts, saying, "I would not give you anything because you spend your wealth in debauchery. When he couldn't find any defence for himself, he pretended to suffer from sexual weakness and claimed that he could no longer tolerate immorality or debauchery. He said:

"O 'Amr, what have you become!
On a day when they are broken,
Is it pain that afflicts him,
Or is it from worry and distress?"

When the man heard his poem, he laughed and resumed his gifts².

In his writing, the poet remained faithful to his traditions and did not hesitate to include his personal life in his poetry, making it a subject of discussion and a source of amusement for the people. An example of this is that he had a wife who resembled him in drunkenness, restlessness and debauchery, but he did not try to restrain or even get rid of her. Instead, he made her the subject of his poetic endeavours. Here is what he said to her on her return from pilgrimage during the reign of Yusuf ibn 'Umar:

"Fear Allah, you have performed the pilgrimage, and my wish shall not be in vain.
shall not be in vain for what you have done.
O Dhum, do not persist in your addiction,
And do not allow men to get hold of you"³.

The quarrel between them intensified after these verses, and it is said that it worsened their relationship and led to his divorcing her. Reflecting on this, he says:

"Indeed, my marriage did not guide her,
May Allah protect it from the gains.
Every day she causes panic,
People flee from it with screams

¹- Ibn Al-Mu'tazz, *Tabaqat al-Shu'ara*, p. 271.

²- Same reference: p. 275.

³- Sayed Nofal, *Humour in Ancient Arabic Literature*, *Al-Hilal Magazine*, Cairo, Dar Al-Hilal, 1974, issue 8, p. 1.

And her groans are heard when she is approached,
And she prepares for intercourse
She is a dog who barks for years,
But after barking, she retreats."

2- The art of laughter in examples from Abbasid poetry:

When the Abbasid dynasty reached a significant level of progress and civilisation, and the doors of livelihood became wide open, the caliphs, princes and nobles, when burdened with their responsibilities and duties, felt the need for someone to make them laugh and alleviate all that would tire their minds, exhaust their souls and dispel boredom and weariness. As a result, their palaces were filled with professionals and individuals dedicated to the role of laughter and the task of providing amusement¹.

During this period, the number of literary figures, including poets and non-poets, who specialised in entertaining the rulers with jokes and anecdotes increased. Among them were the poet Abu Dalamah, Abu al-Husayn al-Dahhak, Bashar ibn Burd, Abu al-Aynaa and Ibn Maryam, the comedian of Caliph Al-Rashid. They became famous for their knowledge of the affairs of the people of the Hijaz and the tricks of the common people. In addition, Ibn al-Shamqamq rose to prominence in this art². They were among the humorous writers and poets who cultivated satirical imitation, which was largely confined to the Arab world and unknown to Westerners until recent times³.

And the forms of humour in Arabic literature usually revolve around two or more individuals, often centred on satirical poetry, which serves as the main vehicle for social criticism, targeting various aspects. These include praising and condemning the ethics of the nation, as well as the ethics of rulers and subjects. In addition, there are many texts in the poetry of this period that have preserved examples of the behaviour and situations of poets, caliphs and princes. They reflect the prevailing atmosphere in which people judge themselves on the basis of ideals or common realistic qualities, either by exalting them or by belittling them. The social criticism represented by satirical poetry shows us that Arabs associate humour with the ridiculous and the absurd. From their point of view, what is comical is something weak in action or speech. Therefore, for them, a comic situation is often accompanied by the exposure of humiliation or absurdity, which are the vices of behaviour and speech⁴.

An example of humorous poetry in which the poet portrays his own tragic situation and ridicules himself in an attempt to achieve a desired end is found in the verses of Abu Dalamah.

It is said that a daughter was born to him at night, so he lit a lamp and began to sew a map out of rectangular pieces of cloth. When morning came, he took the map to the Caliph al-Mahdi. When he entered, he recited:

¹- Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad, *Studies in Literary and Social Schools of Thought*, Cairo, Dar Al-Ilm Al-Arabi, n.d., p. 70.

²- Same reference, pp. 70-71.

³- Same reference, p. 70.

⁴- Al-Isfahani, Abu al-Faraj Ali ibn al-Husayn, (*The Songs*), published by Dar al-Fikr for Everyone and Dar al-Thaqafah, Cairo, Beirut, 1983, 6th edition, volume 9, page 132.

Even if he were to sit above the sun out of generosity,
People would say, "Sit down, O family of Abbas!"
Then they would rise from the rays of the sun to the sky,
For you are the most honourable of men.

Al-Mahdi said to him: "Well done, Abu Dalamah! What has happened to you?" He replied, "O Commander of the Faithful, I have had a daughter. Al-Mahdi asked, "Did you compose a poem about her?" Abu Dalamah replied, "Yes, I said:

You are not the daughter of Mary, the mother of Jesus,
Nor were you raised by the wise Luqman,
But perhaps you were nursed by an evil woman,
with a filthy heart and a despicable father.

Al-Mahdi laughed and said to him, "Well, what shall I give you to raise her?" Abu Dalamah replied, "O Commander of the Faithful, this card must be filled," pointing to the card he held between his fingers. Al-Mahdi ordered it to be filled with money, and it was filled with four thousand dirhams.

And sometimes it gets to the point where you make yourself ridiculous, trying to deceive people to make them laugh. It is said that he found himself in a dilemma when he entered Al-Mahdi and found a number of nobles and a group of Banu Hashim present. Al-Mahdi said to him, "By Allah, you will not leave this place until you insult someone who is in my presence, or I will cut out your tongue and break your neck. So Abu Dalamah looked at the people, and every time he looked at one of them, he winked at him, hoping that he would spare him by giving him a gift. At that moment, Abu Dalamah said, "I realised that I had fallen into a trap, and that no one deserved to be insulted more than me. I do not claim to be safe from insult, I said:

Shall I not tell Abu Dalamah, my father?
that there are no honourable people, no nobility.
When they put on the turban, they become monkeys,
And when they take the turban off, they become pigs.
They collect shame and they collect filth,
So shame follows them wherever they go.
When you have attained worldly pleasures,
Do not rejoice, for the day of reckoning is near"¹.

The people laughed, and there was no one left but they agreed with him¹.

Such humorous 'caricature' poetry, in which the poet portrays himself in the most unflattering way, is considered a unique experience that is rarely found. Although there are hints of this self-mockery in the poetry of Al-Hutay'ah. When Al-Mahdi Al-Abbasi came to power, Abu Dalamah was among the poets who praised him. He is reported to have said:

"I have sworn that if I see you alive and well
In the villages of Iraq, while you are prosperous,
You will pray to the Prophet Muhammad
And I will fill your pockets with dirhams".

¹- The same reference, page 130.

Al-Mahdi replied, "May Allah bless him and grant him peace," but he refused the dirham. Abu Dalamah said: "How quick you are to accept the first and how slow you are to accept the second. Al-Mahdi ordered his pockets to be filled with dirhams¹.

One of his more amusing anecdotes is that he once went into a tavern to get drunk. When he left, he found the guard staggering, his clothes torn and dishevelled. When he was presented to Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur, the caliph ordered him to be locked up in the henhouse, and so he was imprisoned². When he awoke from his sleep, he began to call for his servant and maid, thinking that he was in his own house. But all he could hear was the clucking of chickens and the crowing of roosters. It was then that one of the guards informed him that he was a prisoner and that his robe had been torn by the guards. Abu Dalamah asked for a pen and paper, and they were brought to him. He wrote to Al-Mansur:

"O Commander of the Faithful, may my soul be sacrificed for you,
Why have you imprisoned me and torn my clothes?
Is it because of a yellow bird of pure temperament?
Whose radiance is like the flame of a lamp?
And it has been boiled with the fire of Allah,
Until it is ripened from its source.
I was brought to prison without any crime,
As if I were one of the labourers of the dungeons.
Had I been with them, it would have been easy,
But I was imprisoned with the chickens.
And they inform me of my sins,
As if I had escaped your punishment".

One of the poets from this group in the early Abbasid period was a poet called Abu Al-Abar, whose nickname was Abu Al-Abbas. It is said that he resorted to foolishness after he found that serious poetry had become unprofitable. This foolishness made people very interested in him. Al-Asfahani narrated that "he earned many times what any serious poet of his time earned through his foolishness". Despite the fact that most of his poems were clumsy in expression and strange in meaning, such as his saying:

"Tell those who seek
A good remedy, how strange!
Abu Al-Abbas gives you
A remedy that will not cure you.
It treats toothache
And for men with cunning,
And for women when they menstruate
And for fever if it lasts,
And for gout in men,
And for dementia".

Another poet from this group was a poet known as Abu Al-Ajl, and he acquired this nickname because of his stupidity. Ibn Al-Mu'taz narrated the following about him: "Abu Al-Ajl was the most knowledgeable, wise and eloquent among the people (...) Yet he was

¹- Al-Isfahani, (The Songs), volume 20, page 90.

²- Ibn al-Mu'tazz, (Categories of Poets), page 453.

despised and looked down upon. When he saw this, he resorted to carelessness and buffoonery, and he didn't spend a year without accumulating a considerable amount of wealth. When Al-Mutawakkil went to Damascus, Abu Al-Ajl met him walking on a stick, with one foot in a slipper and the other in a sandal¹. Al-Mutawakkil looked at him, smiled and said: "Have you gone mad after us? Then he began to say:

Shah shah on reason,
It's not my appearance.
Its owner is bankrupt,
Very little skill.
And my folly has made
The world a fool to me.
I hope my foolishness
Will carry me on a mule,
From the presence of the Master,
The favoured, the chosen,
The commander of the faithful,
Al-Mutawakkil, the One."

Abu Al-Shamqamaq found his way in satire, ridicule and questioning as the best way to earn some money that wouldn't even guarantee his daily subsistence. Al-Hasan ibn Sa'id al-Juhani narrated: "Abu Al-Shamqamaq said to me: 'I went to Bashar, who had a connection with some poems he had written, and asked him for help. He said, 'May Allah forgive you! You ask me when I have no other profession or income than poetry. And you, a poet like me, earn your living from poetry? I said, 'You are right, but I passed some boys the other day who said:

Seven women and a fig tree,
They opened the gates of the city.
Indeed, Bashar ibn Bard
is a blind goat on a ship.

Abu Al-Shamqamaq was silent for a while, then he said, "Oh, maid, bring a hundred dirhams for Al-Shamqamaq. Then he said, "Take it, Abu Muhammad, and don't let the boys see it. He said, 'I took it and went out and threw it at the boys². And he said in a pleading manner when he approached one of the Hashemites and asked for some money to save himself and his children from starvation and destruction:

O majestic king!
Gather glory and dignity,
I saw you in a dream,
And you bade me farewell.
So I came to you in search,
And on you is the truth of my words.
Indeed I left my family
In Egypt, where their bread is the juice of crushed grains,
And their drink is the urine of camels,

¹- The same reference, page 452.

²- Ibn Abd Rabbih, (The Unique Necklace), volume 3, pages 35-36.

May it quench their thirst"¹.

The group known as the "Tafilis" emerged during the Abbasid era, named after a person from Kufa called "Tafil ibn Zalal" from the Banu Abdallah ibn Ghatfan tribe². He often attended feasts without being invited. This gave them their reputation and they became associated with this behaviour. Among the epithets used by people of the time to describe this group, who lived in poverty and destitution, was a statement by a man describing one of them: "His stomach is insatiable and his dominion oppressive. He eats from the fire and drinks from the sand. Even if an elephant were to eat, it wouldn't be enough for him, and if he drank from the Nile, it wouldn't quench his thirst. He wanders the land until he falls on a horse's hoof... His fingers are fit for a spear, like the net for a fish"³.

They were known for their excessive eating and drinking, and for pounding the ground in search of feasts and weddings to crash. They were also known for their disregard for the etiquette of eating.

Uthman ibn al-Darraj, who lived during the time of al-Ma'mun, is considered one of the most prominent 'gate-crashers' of weddings and feasts. He excelled in the arts and tricks of the trade, surpassing Tafil ibn Zalal. His skill is evident in this testament in which he advises his companions, urging them to break into weddings and feasts and to endure all kinds of humiliation and harm in order to obtain some food⁴. In it he says: "Do not be intimidated by closed doors, heavy veils or the use of insults, for all this will lead you to a great reward. It will save you from the humiliation of asking. Endure the debilitating blows and the lingering slaps, all in the pursuit of loot and security. Engage in humorous banter with the wealthy and be pleasant to servants and those entrusted to you. When you have reached your goal, be possessive and save for your future, for you are more deserving of the food than those who were invited, and more worthy of it than those who were prepared for it"⁵.

And among the poetic evidence of the unauthorised intrusion of tafilis into feasts and weddings is what Ibn Abd Rabbih narrated about a tafil from Basra. One day he passed by a group of people gathered for a feast. When he entered their gathering by force and sat down with them, the host of the feast said to him, "If you had come or waited until you were invited or sent for, it would have been better"⁶. The Tafil replied: "I only took houses to enter them and set tables to eat from them. Then he recited the following verses

"Every day I wander in the desert of hunger,
The smell of a roasted quail is like the smell of flies.
And whenever I see the traces of a wedding,
Or smoke, or the invitation of friends,
I do not hesitate to enter without permission,

¹- Hussein Attwan, (The Witty Poets in the First Abbasid Era), Beirut, Dar al-Talia'a, 1972, unspecified edition, page 171.

²- Al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr Ahmed ibn Ali, (The History of Baghdad or the City of Peace), Beirut, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, unspecified edition, volume 13, page 127.

³- Ibn al-Mu'tazz, (Categories of Poets), page 127.

⁴- Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Mukarram, (The Comprehensive Dictionary of the Arabic Language), Cairo, Dar Lisan al-Arab, 1970, unspecified edition, volume 2, page 600.

⁵- Al-Husri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Ali al-Qairawani, (The Flower of Literature and the Date of Hearts), Cairo, Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, 1963, unspecified edition, edited by Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi, volume 2, page 210.

⁶- Al-Husri, "The Flower of Literature and the Date of Hearts", pages 908-909.

To be stabbed or beaten by the gatekeeper.
Disregarding those I have entered,
Without permission or consent,
They look at me as if I were an enemy,
Everything they offer is covered with punishment".

The phenomenon of resorting to trickery was widespread during the Abbasid era because the distribution of wealth was not fair. This led the marginalised classes to resort to various means and tricks to ensure their daily sustenance. Society looked down on such behaviour and considered it shameful. For example, there was a Tafil from Basra who came across people having a feast. When he found the door shut in his face, he climbed over the wall and said to them: 'You prevented me from the land, so I came to you from the sky'¹. Among the advice and tricks that Tufayl ibn Zalal, ascribed to Tufayliyyin, used to recommend, he said:

"Do not be afraid of the unknown,
Nor by the distant man.
Enter as if you were a skilled cook,
With your hands holding the ladle of excellence.
Swaying gracefully over the table,
Like a hawk perched on its prey".

Ahmad Muhammad al-Hawfi, in his book "Humour in Literature: Its Origins and Types"². They are: carelessness and ignorance, contradiction, play on words, play on meanings, wit, banter, clever wordplay, retaliation in kind, reversal and irony, mockery of physical defects, mockery of character and psychological defects, self-mockery, political satire and social satire.

Many Arab writers have presented laughter and humour in their books, discussing their necessity, explaining their effects and devoting chapters to jokes, wit and curiosities. Others have included humorous anecdotes in their works³. Al-Jahiz, for example, states in the introduction to his book 'The Misers': In this book you will find three things: a clear argument presented in an amusing way, a subtle trick revealed, and a rare and remarkable benefit. You may find in it amusement or entertainment if you wish, and you may find diversion if you are weary of seriousness. If laughter were unbecoming to the one who laughs and unattractive to the one who provokes it, it would not be said of flowers, ink, ornaments, and palaces: "It laughs as if it were laughing. And Allah, may He be glorified, has said: "And that He is the One who makes [people] laugh and weep" (Quran 53:43), placing laughter in the realm of life and tears in the realm of death. Allah does not attribute to Himself the unseemly, nor does He bestow imperfections upon His creation. How could it not be a great source of joy, a companion of temperaments, and something rooted in nature and fundamental to its composition, for laughter is the first good that appears in a

¹- Al-Husri, "The Flower of Literature and the Date of Hearts", page 206.

²- Ahmed Muhammad al-Hawfi, "Humour in Literature: Its Principles and Types", Cairo, Dar Nahdat Misr for Printing and Distribution, 2001, unspecified edition.

³- The same reference, page 14.

child, bringing joy to itself, making its flesh grow, and increasing the blood that is the source of its pleasure and sustenance..."¹.

The truth is that Al-Jahiz is a pioneer among those who wrote about humour, and those who came after him were influenced by him and imitated him. He preceded them by presenting it in a unique way in his book "Al-Bukhala" (The Scroungers), and he mentioned various humorous anecdotes in his books and letters. Then, many of the writers who came after him began to embellish their works with the colours of humour, and some even devoted whole chapters to it in their books. Some of them, including Al-Jahiz, went so far as to mention explicit and blatant jokes, and they saw no problem with this because their purpose was to entertain, amuse and engage the reader².

Al-Jahiz believed that laughter is instinctive and has an effect on the body and the soul. He said: "If we have bored you with seriousness, we will enliven you with some lightheartedness and amusing anecdotes. There are poems that convey the extreme stupidity of their authors in a way that the rarest pearls and the most profound meanings cannot match. I challenge myself with two extreme challenges: listening to Bedouin conversations and arguing with disputants in language, although I am not good at either. And yet they make the most serious people laugh, no matter how rigid they are, and the angriest people laugh, even when their anger burns with intense fury"³.

This approach influenced all of Al-Jahiz's works and he became known for his mixture of seriousness and humour.

Ibn Qutaybah mentioned in the introduction to his book "Uyun al-Akhbar" (The Sources of Information) that this book would lead the reader to the door of jokes and humour and what has been narrated about the nobles and imams regarding them. He advised the reader by saying: "If you, O rigid one, come across a narrative that you find trivial, appreciate it, marvel at it, or laugh at it, understand its purpose and what we intended by it. Know that if you can dispense with it by ignoring it, there are others who, though you consider it severe, need it. The book has not been made for you alone, but it offers an opportunity to those who outwardly show their affection for it. If it had taken into account the reservations of the rigid, it would have lost half its splendour, and those whom we wanted to embrace with you would have turned away from it".

If it had taken into account the reservations of the rigid, it would have lost half its splendour, and those whom we wanted to embrace with you would have turned away from it⁴.

As for Abu Hayyan Al-Tawhidi, in his book "Al-Imta' wa al-Mu'anasah" (Amusement and Companionship), he would end some of his sessions with humour. He dedicated his session on the eighteenth night to jokes and amusement. He quoted the Minister as saying: "Come, let us make this night full of amusement and take a generous portion of humour.

¹- Al-Jahiz, Abu 'Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr, "The Misers", Cairo, Dar al-Ma'arif, unspecified edition, edited by Ahmed al-Awamri and Ali al-Jarim, volume 1, page 27.

²- Ahmed Muhammad al-Hawfi, "Humour in Literature: Its Principles and Types", page 15.

³- Al-Jahiz, Abu 'Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr, "The Animals", Cairo, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1965, edited by Abdul Salam Harun, volume 3, page 7.

⁴- Ibn Qutaybah, Abdullah ibn Muslim al-Dinawari, "The Sources of News", Cairo, Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1925, unspecified edition, page.

Seriousness has exhausted us, weakened our strength and weighed us down with worry and sorrow. Bring what you have..."¹.

Al-Tawhidi defends his position by saying: "Perhaps the only fault of this style is that it is itself faulted, and that is unfair. The soul must be cheered up. It has reached my ears that Ibn Abbas used to say in his assembly, after discussing the Qur'an, the Sunnah, jurisprudence and legal matters, 'Let's have some fun'. And what I see through it is nothing but the adjustment of the soul, so that it does not suffer from the burden of seriousness and regains strength to engage with what is presented to it and be ready to accept and listen"².

He uses humour as a means of soothing the soul, relieving boredom and preparing to receive and understand, as the poet says:

"Be amused where amusement is fitting for a young man,
And when men are serious, I become serious".

Conclusion:

humour, as a form of entertainment and self-expression, has deep roots in Arab culture. It has its origins in its glorious past and can be seen as a cultural phenomenon that flourished during the golden era of the Abbasid period. This is particularly evident in the people's inclination towards luxury, extravagance and self-indulgence after they acquired wealth and regions came under their control, and the Arabs interacted with non-Arabs.

Poets were at the forefront of promoting and spreading the art of laughter. Therefore, humour and jokes would not have developed, renewed and emerged in this way had it not been for the widespread state of misery among various segments of Abbasid society. These segments expressed their concerns through poets, who conveyed their struggles through the techniques and tricks they used to secure their daily sustenance. These struggles were expressed through verses and passages filled with a spirit of playfulness and wit.

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