

**THE IMPACT OF MASS COMMUNICATION ON
ELECTION AND SELECTION
- A CASE STUDY OF ARISTOPHANES IN *THE KNIGHTS***

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බටහිර සම්භාව්‍ය නාට්‍ය අතරින් ග්‍රීක පැරණි කොමඩි නාට්‍ය නියෝජනය වන්නේ අප වෙත ලැබී ඇති ඇරිස්ටෝෆෝනීස්ගේ පිටපත් කිහිපයකින් පමණි. ග්‍රීක කොමඩි නාට්‍යයවලට තරමක නව මුහුණුවරක් සපයමින් ඇරිස්ටෝෆෝනීස් තත්කාලීන සමාජ ගැටලු ඇසුරින් නාට්‍ය රචනාවෙහි යෙදුණේ ය. ඔහුගේ නාට්‍ය ප්‍රේක්ෂකයා තමන්ට තමන්වත් අමතක කර හඬ නඟා සිනහසීමට සැලැස්වීය. එහෙත් කතාවස්තුව කේන්ද්‍ර වූයේ සමාජයෙහි පැවති බැරැරැම් ප්‍රශ්නයකට ඉදිරිපත් කරන ගැටලුවකි. මෙම ගැටලුව 'පිළියමක් පිළිබඳ සිහිනයක්' ලෙස හැඳින්වීමට සමහරු පෙලඹවීහ. ඒ ඔහු යථාර්ථය පදනම් කරගෙන මනෝමය විසඳුම් සෙවීමක යෙදුණ නිසා ය. නාට්‍යයෙහි ප්‍රධාන චරිත තත්කාලීන සමාජයෙන් තෝරාගත් ඒවා වූ අතර ඔවුන් ව අතිශයෝක්තියෙන් වේදිකාගත කෙරිණි. *The Knights* නාට්‍යයෙහි විමසුමට ලක් කරන්නේ එවක බැරැරැම් ප්‍රශ්නයක් වශයෙන් පැවති උග්‍ර ප්‍රජාතන්ත්‍රවාදය, දූෂිත මැතිවරණ ක්‍රමය සහ ජනතාවගේ නායකයකු පත්කර ගැනීමයි. පෞද්ගලික අපේක්ෂා අරමුණු කරගත් සටකපට දේශපාලනඥයන් ජනතාව රැවටීමෙහි යෙදෙන ආකාරය, නායකයා තෝරා ගන්නා ඡන්දයේ දී ජනතාව ඊට රැ වටෙන ආකාරය ආදිය මෙහි ද හාසාජනක ආකාරයෙන් රඟ දැක්වේ. ග්‍රසියෙහි නාට්‍ය අනිවාර්යයෙන් ම නාට්‍ය උත්සවවල දී මහජනතාව ඉදිරියේ රඟ දක්වනු ලැබීය. එකවර එක ම තැනක දී ජනතාව ඇමතීමට ලැබීම නිසා නාට්‍ය එවකට ප්‍රබල ජනමාධ්‍යයක් බවට පත් වී තිබිණ. කලාකරුවා ව සලකනු ලැබූයේ 'වැඩිහිටියන්'ගේ ගුරුවරයකු' වශයෙනි. මෙම ලිපියෙහි විමසුමට ලක් කරන්නේ උදාහරණ සහිත ව ඉහත තර්කයයි.

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සංස්. මහාචාර්ය පැට්ටික් රත්නායක, ආචාර්ය කේ. බී. ජයවර්ධන, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ කවීකාචාර්ය දිනලී ප්‍රනාන්දු, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ කවීකාචාර්ය අංජලි වික්‍රමසිංහ
මානව ශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨ ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, 21 කලාපය, 2014/2015 මානව ශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

Aristophanes is the sole representative of the form of drama known as Greek Old Comedy since no plays of other poets have survived the test of time. Aristophanes flourished in the fifth century BCE in Athens. It is believed that he and his plays were evidence of the extreme form of the particular type of democracy that survived in the city state during that period. The freedom of thought as well as the freedom of speech and expression enjoyed at the period is visible in every comedy he had put on stage at the drama festivals. It is also significant that drama festivals had been a national and extremely popular event at the time where almost all the citizens as well some foreigners participated. The event also had a religious flavour as it was held in the honor of the god of Drama, Dionysius himself. Since the open air theater accommodated almost fifteen thousand people, it naturally became a forum for the poets to use their productions as a powerful mode of mass communication. In fact, the freedom allowed the poets to criticize the powerful personalities and even political policies in the process of enlightening the spectators. The poets had to be mindful that their audience consisted of spectators with different levels of intellect. Hence, one of the major challenges they had to meet was to entertain and address these people. They were Mediterranean people whose emotions were high and were not hesitant to voice them. The poet would receive the feed back immediately.

There were two drama festivals in Athens at the time. One was the City Dionysia and the other, the Lenaea festival. Good weather allowed foreigners to attend the City Dionysia therefore it also became an event where the Cultural and economical superiority was displayed to the allies. Both festivals were sponsored by the state. It was a duty of the Archon to find sponsors (Choregi) for the individual plays that were to be performed at the festival. It was considered an honor for a citizen to be chosen to do this since it was a duty on behalf of the welfare of the state. Selection of the plays were done by a magistrate though it is not clear regarding

the criteria to judge the suitable (Sommerstein 1973, p20) Aristophanes used the opportunity Old Greek Comedy provided to the extreme, through the manner in which he manipulated the form. He dealt with contemporary problems in society by providing dream-like solutions and used every method he could to make the people laugh, albeit followed by serious reflection on the situation. Sommerstein (1973), rejects the critics who express the view that Aristophanes mainly concentrated on creating laughter and winning a prize at the end of the festival, citing *The Symposium* of Plato (Ibid, p 14). In it when Aristophanes is asked to express his opinion on love he says that he is anxious that his explanation should not be taken as a joke. He says that though what he says might make the listeners laugh; he is serious in his views. (Plato, *The Symposium*, lines 190 and 193). Similarly, Betty Radice observes that the description is given by Aristophanes in the ‘extravagance of fancy and simple, unaffected language.’ Betty Radice, tr.1980, Plato, *The Symposium*, p.17)

Aristophanes seems to be very clear in his intention of using his comic plays as mass communication where he could address a majority of Athenians. He clearly intends to be taken seriously. In *The Frogs* he provides a conversation between Aeschylus and Euripides, two of the famous Classical Tragedians. It runs thus: -

Euripides - ‘A poet should teach a lesson, make people into better citizens’.

Aeschylus - ‘School boys have a master to teach them
grownups have poets’.

(Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, lines 1023)

He is of the opinion that ‘from the earliest times the really great poet has been the one who had a useful lesson to teach’.
(idem):

Aeschylus - ‘What are the qualities you look for in a good poet?’

Euripides - 'Technical skill- and he should teach a lesson.
Make people into better citizens.'

(ibid. lines 1003)

Aeschylus also believed that "from the very earliest times the really great poet has been the one who had a useful lesson to teach." (Ibid ,lines 1030) This is clear in the Chorus:

'Grant that we dance and play
As benefits your holy day,
Part in earnest, part in jest,
We may shine above the rest.'
'The chorus two privileges prize
To amuse you and to advice.'

(ibid. lines, 1517)

Athens, since she was engaged in a no-win battle with the Spartan league, more than anything else needed sound advice regarding the war situation which threatened it's very existence.

'To the city's counsels
may he wisdom lend;
Then of the war and suffering
There shall be an end'. (Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, lines,1524)

To understand Aristophanes, an inquiry into the social and political background is essential. This is in respect of both internal and international politics.

The beginning of Aristophanes' career as a poet and dramatist is when Athens was at the height of its power, as well as fame. It was a radical form of democracy that she enjoyed where all citizens were privileged to enjoy an equal responsibility in policy decisions. The Assembly included the whole body of adult citizens. They shared an equal opportunity to be appointed to executive office and the council. The appointment was by lot which prevented any discrimination. History proves that it was only one man, Pericles,

who had been able to provide confident leadership through his strong personality, sound background and popular policies. He also, as a result of his actions, gained power that comes with success. It was under him that the Greek military alliances against Persia, to which Athens gave leadership, transformed gradually into a maritime empire, with many subject states paying an annual tribute to it.

The subject states, on realizing the position they had fallen to, became resentful (ibid, 1. 121). The alliance which had become an Empire gradually turned in to a tyranny (ibid, 3.37). As a result they turned to Sparta, which was the strongest military power at the time. They persuaded Sparta that Athens was a threat to the independence of the other states. (ibid, 1119, 4.108).

This resulted in the Peloponnesian War that dragged on for fifty years devastating the city states of Greece. Greece became divided and the effect of this war was felt on both sides. Athens was a democracy, and at the same time, an empire.

The death of Pericles after the second year of war had an immense impact on the success and the well-being of Athens, as the whole system depended on the quality and personality of the person who came into power. Pericles's successor was Cleon, who was a self-made man who tended to follow the masses that lead the public opinion.

Since the death of Pericles, Athens lacked an effective political leader, a loss that was deeply felt. Pericles had obtained the love and honor of all classes. He had inspired the Athenians with an intense faith and pride in their own political institutions. Without Pericles there seemed to be no one to guide the counsels of the Assembly. However, the citizens or the politicians did not blame the system. If one was brave enough to express such opinions he would be quickly branded a traitor to the democracy, a conspirator and a monarchist, as a person who was acting against the city itself. The fact was that

such movements did exist, particularly among the upper classes who despised the rule of the masses. However, they had little popularity. Their supreme power lay with the people, whether they sat at the Assembly or acted as the members of a jury.

In the democracy the citizens were made to realize that a man had to find ways of influencing the people concerned in order to exert personal power. Hence the art of oratory became essential as well as popular. Oratory was studied and cultivated intensively. Professional speech writers hired themselves to the highest bidder. It was believed that since the situation was such, the people were not the real rulers if they allowed themselves to be led by the nose by some effective speech.

Cleon was, according to his observation, like many other self-made men. They normally had the tendency to follow rather than lead the public opinions. The war went on indecisively until the year 405 BCE, despite several attempts at forming peace treaties and putting them into practice. However, all attempts at putting the war to an end failed. The final catastrophe was the naval defeat in 405 BCE. Athens had to surrender unconditionally, whereby she lost all, and the oligarchs seized power.

It is interesting to note that Aristophanes' dramas corresponded with the dramatics of political history at the period. This is mainly due to the topical value of the subject matter of his plays. Since he seems to be a patriot with strong views of mob rule we find his plays amidst the action itself. The democracy itself allowed him to be so, with its extreme kind of freedom.

Unlike the tragedies, Aristophanes did not select the subject matter for his comedies from myths. Old attic comedy emphasized on real personalities and local issues. His plays were focused on problems faced by the contemporary society. In addition, the solutions he sought were fantastic dream like solutions which brought the attention of the

audience to the gravity of the situations and the problem discussed. Hence the core of the plot of the comedy most often consisted of an ‘agon’, which was a contest type scene and a parabasis where the chorus or the poet himself addressed the audience directly.

When Cleon came to his position it was not the background as much as the attributes that shaped his upbringing and built his character that came into question. The reason for this being that it seems to have had a mark on his thought and actions which in turn had a bearing on the city itself.

‘I’ll tell you what i think about the way
This city treats her soundest men today
By a coincidence more sad than funny.’
When men are needed by the nation.
The best have been withdrawn from circulation.’
‘My foolish friends, change now, It’s not too late’

(Aristophanes , *The Frogs*, lines, 712.)

Cleon the demagogue is an object of ridicule in many plays of Aristophanes. According to the personality portrayed in the plays he was more a slave of the people than a leader. As could be expected from such a person, he was not tolerant of criticism. In *The Babylonians* of Aristophanes Cleon was offended enough to prosecute Aristophanes for ‘slandering the city’ before outsiders, which Aristophanes as well as many critics believed was an excuse to punish the poet for criticizing him and his policies. *The Babylonians* criticized the manner in which Cleon treated the allies of Athens, who were depicted in the play as slaves grinding at the mill. At the same time, Cleon’s actions could also be viewed less negatively, as it was a duty of a ruler to censor this sort of criticism as it was a time of war, especially when there were foreigners present.

However, it proves that in Cleon’s overrated estimate of himself, the criticisms that Aristophanes made against him had been taken

as criticisms ‘against the city’. In his mind he was ‘the city’. Aristophanes himself refers to the prosecution in his play *The Acharnians*: “At least this time I can speak freely, with no risk of being charged by Cleon with slandering the city in the presence of foreigners. This time we are all by ourselves: It’s only the Lenaea.” (Aristophanes, *The Acharnians*, lines 500)

Aristophanes, in retaliation to the prosecution, produced **The Knights** in 424 BCE. In this play he presents Cleon as the character called Paphlagonian, a slave of the people. The play revolves around the appointment of a new slave for ‘Thepeople’, the personification of the people of Athens. His opponent is the ‘sausage seller’, with whom he was to contest in order to be elected to become the slave of ‘Thepeople’. The contest becomes almost a love triangle with the two lovers struggling to win over the heart and goodwill of Thepeople. The devices used evoke laughter while they are extremely thought-provoking. As true to the characteristics of old comedy it involves sexual suggestions as well.

It is also believed that *The Knights* became the first occasion at which the poet Aristophanes himself appeared on stage, the reason for this being that no mask maker had wanted to make a mask representing all powerful Cleon. The masks in old comedy were distorted and exaggerated replicas of the features of the character they represented. Furthermore, no actor had wanted to play the character of Cleon. Hence it was decided that Aristophanes himself will play the role. This proves the fearless nature of the poet. As Sommerstein states, “it just may be the mask maker would have been too frightened to make a caricature of Cleon in fear of repercussions” (Sommerstein 1973, p31).

But one may also ponder on the questions: Was it a private vendetta he was carrying out in his drama? Or was this a representation of an early example of a conflict between an artist who was also a media person and a politician?

The Knights on the other hand consist of a representative of the cavalrymen who fought for the country, a powerful representation of the traditional community that cannot be slightly treated. Aristophanes gives prominence to them using them as members of the chorus. They are critical of the things that are carried on in the name of democracy.

The reason for this competition to become the slave of Thepeople is because when one is appointed he gains many a profit. Hence it is directly shown that no candidate was interested in the welfare of Thepeople. It is the private upheaval that is aimed at: “Blessings and riches are showered upon you! Today you are nothing and tomorrow you will be everything!” (The Knights lines 160)

The basic qualifications to be ‘great’ are given as below. The qualifications by no means involve characteristics such as virtue or patriotism.

‘What’s all this about not deserving to be great? You’ve not got ant secret virtues on your conscience, have you?’

‘You’re not of good birth, by any chance?’

‘The worst birth you could think of’

‘Thanks heaven! That’s what’s wanted for a politician.’

And then comes the problem of education morals and ethics. The answer is “come off it. You don’t think politics is for the educated, do you? Or the honest? It’s for illiterate scum like you.” (*The Knights*, 180)

It is not only the personalities of the existing politicians that Aristophanes is critical of but the whole system which makes the so called representatives of the ‘people’ who are elected to serve them, turn corrupted cheats. Once elected, they become exploiters of the rights of the people whom they are expected to safe guard. It should also be noted that it is not only the two candidates that Aristophanes is critical of. He is brave enough to criticize the all

important people in this extreme form of democracy, a thing that could turn out to be extremely dangerous. But how can one set about ‘serving’ the people under such a system? A person with no experience would face this problem. For this there is advice as well. Aristophanes sarcastically refers to what is normally done: “‘Mix all the city’s policies into a complete hash, butter the people up a bit, throw in a pinch of rhetoric as a sweetener and there you are. All the other essentials of a politician you have already. You’ve a voice to scare a Gorgan...” (*The Knights*.215)

This means that though there is a desire to overthrow the existing leader, one does not believe that the next one be a good man either. According to what Aristophanes indicates, a good man could not compete with a scoundrel and win over the people. This was a ‘democracy’ and the opinion of the people mattered most.

‘But now –oh joy, oh bliss!
Appears a champion new,
Whose manifestly much
More villainous than you.

For he’ll surpass you far’
It’s obvious to see
In trickery and crime
And sheer audacity.’ (Ibid, lines 335)

The competition becomes so intense that each rivals one with illegal actions that an election should ideally avoid.

Aristophanes, through a character assures that all will be on the opponent’s side. The reason seems to be that in a new leader, there could be still hope: “The Knights will be here, a thousand of them, all hating him.....So will all the honest and decent people, and our audience here.” (*The Knights*, lines.227)

Aristophanes at this point cannot but refer to Cleon and his prosecution:

‘Oh, and by the way you needn’t be afraid to look at his face. It won’t look like the real one. You see, our sponsor was a bit worried in case you- know- who might -you know what. Ah, he’ll be recognized all right; as i say, we’ve a brainy audience.’ (*The Knights*, 231)

According to Aristophanes he could not resort to his usual method of attacking the character directly. As described earlier, here too, the significance of the tradition of his plays, when a mask is used to indicate a famous personality portrayed on stage, is highlighted.

But Paphlagonian is of other opinion. He believes that the people are still fooled by him. Suggestion of a new candidate according to him is a ‘conspiracy’. For the people according to him, he is the leader, himself and no other.

‘By the twelve Gods, I’ll not let you get away with this, conspiring against the people again!’ Villains you shall perish! The just rage of the people will annihilate you!’.’ (The Knights, 240)

Again ‘the people’ meant himself, which reveals the self estimation he had made. The knights who had been fighting and had been at the receiving end of his decisions on war comes to the rescue, because they have had enough of him. They had, through experience, seen through his pretentions.

Strike, strike and never cease
The wrecker of peace-
He’s the whirlpool who sucks all the revenue away.
The cheat, the cheat the cheat!!! (The Knights, 248)

Paphlagonian tries to win over by mentioning the bribes he had given to the judiciary- jurymen.

Help! Members of the jury! Comrades of the order of three obols! I remember how I’ve fed you all these years with my prosecutions- right or wrong, I never gave a

damn, I shouted hard as I could! Come quickly and help!
I'm being assaulted by a gang of conspirators!

It had been for nothing that he had facilitated his followers to accumulate wealth, he expected them to stand up for him when it was needed. And of course anyone opposed to him would be named by him a 'conspirator' and a 'traitor'. (Ibid, lines 255):

As in such cases we see how the 'Foreign Conspiracies' and 'Deals' are accused of. This is to instill fear and arouse patriotism in the citizens. He promises the Knights to build a monument to honor them, which shows that he had not abandoned his usual corrupt practices. He uses the power of rhetoric to fool the citizens: "So you think you'll cow the citizens again with your shouts?"

(*The Knights*, 272)

The threats again are interesting: "When you are a general I'll accuse and try you!" (*The Knights*, 291) This is only one threat among many, prompting the chorus of the Knights to reply-

'Oh villain and monster and screamer so base,
The whole of the city is full of your face.....'
'You stir up the mud and muddy the stream,
You've made all of Athens stone deaf with your screams
And drained her of money (The Knights, 307).

There is reason for him to be so self-confident. He believes that he is the most superior.

'Where did you get the audacity to speak in opposition to me?' (Ibid, lines 340)
'Who is there that can be compared to me?' (Ibid, lines 354)

Mainly this because he knows that he could influence others through his rhetoric.

'I'll pounce on the Council and shake them out of their wits.'
(Ibid, lines 366)

‘I’m not afraid of you, not while the Council Chamber stands
and the People sits in assembly!’ (Ibid, lines 394)

The reference to bribery is interesting. He even tries to bribe his opponent the Sausage seller when he finds out facts about his income.

‘You got sixty thousand drachmas from the Potedians, and
don’t deny it’

‘Would be prepared to take six thousand to keep quiet about
it?’

But when he does not agree, he is threatened with thumped up charges against him.

‘I’ll have you fined for bribery

A million drachs for sure!

No wait a minute, that’s too light

One million? Make it four!’ (Ibid, lines 436)

This accompanies accusations against treason. That the opponent is a traitor and have joined with the foe.

Don’t think i’m unaware of how this conspiracy was built up.
I know exactly how it was fixed.’

..i’m going to the council and tell them all about your anti

Athenian conspiracies. (Ibid, lines 563)

The sausage seller also tries to entice the people by offering free gifts - of leeks and coriander to garnish their sardines! With this starts the contest to prove to Thepeople how much they loved him. In addition, they also bring in religion, sacrifice and positive oracles as well. Anything so far as each could be secured to power:

“My oracle says as, master, that you are destined to rule the
whole earth and be crowned with roses!” (ibid, lines 968)

The final resort seems to be the free meals and goods.

‘Just wait a bit and i will give you your daily barley bread.’
 - ‘I’ve had enough of your barley. ...have done me too often
 over those so called free distributions.’ (Ibid, lines 1109)

The voice of the chorus expresses doubt as to the wisdom of
 Thepeople.

The people’s power is a glorious thing;
 All nations fear him like a king.
 Yet he is an easy one to cheat,
 A prey to flattery and deceit.
 He sides agape with every speaker ...
 If he had a brain, I’d say
 It is always on holiday. (Ibid, lines 1114)

But Thepeople gives due warning:

Those crafty chaps think they are clever,
 Be sure they outwit me never.
 I watch them closer than they know
 While on their thieving way they go

 I stick a funnel down their throats-
 The funnel where we cast our votes. (Ibid, lines 1114)

The new candidate has the blessings of the chorus who had
 suffered much due to continuous battles.

‘Go your way , and may fortune go with you!
 May you fare as i dearly desire!
 May the orators’ patron protect you,
 may Zeus all your speeches inspire!....
 May your linguistic persuasion
 A garland of victory earn!’

It is stressed by the poet that it was through the manipulation
 of speech that one could ‘persuade’ the people. (Ibid, lines 502)

‘I’ll’ aul you before Thepeople, and then we’ll see’oo can
throw the most mud!’ (Ibid, lines 702)

Aristophanes is well aware of the difference of intellect in his audience. Hence he makes the chorus spell out Cleon’s name repeatedly, in case one may not have recognized the person who was being criticized.

‘Everyone that’s here,
One thing they’ll agree on:
They’ll greet with cheer on cheer
The overthrow of Cleon!
They’ll greet with cheer on cheer
The overthrow of Cleon! (Ibid, lines 1000)
They needed to ‘burst the Cleon bubble’ to live in peace.
(Ibid, lines 1012)

Finally the people are convinced: ‘You unutterable villain! So you’ve been hoodwinking me all the time! (Ibid, lines 2224), for which the answer is “Whatever I stole was for the good of the city.’

The meaning of success is defined by the following qualities:

Success, success in every point!
The villains’ nose is out of joint!
We’ve found a villain even deeper,
Full of every crafty wile’
A man of truly perfect guile!’ (ibid lines,682)

Though he refuses to remove his crown, he is forced to do so despite his reluctance. Upon which Cleon says “Farewell my crown, I don’t want to part from you, but I must” (Ibid, lines 2243)

The winner addressing the citizens is made to utter “I’ll cherish you and nourish you, of Gawpers!!” (Ibid, lines 1292). It should be noted that this was no positive comment either. But that final comment would have been more in tune with democracy.

The inevitable question arises whether Aristophanes had done justice to Cleon. Was it a personal grudge exaggerated to larger dimensions? Was it political prejudice? Has he been fair? Are the questions that arise in a person's mind. These questions could be clarified to an extent by referring to the historians of the period. Thucydides in *The Peloponnesian War* throws considerable light regarding these questions. And then again raises the question was Thucydides himself fair in his estimate? But it also stands as a fact that these are literary evidence on the period as well as the person.

Thucydides has stated in reference to Cleon's character, that he "exercised greatest influence over the people" (Thucydides, Bk 3, section 36). This proves that Cleon had been popular as Aristophanes had stated. About the reason for this popularity, he also agrees with the comic poet. The character of Diodotus commenting on the cruelty against the enemy in war and the senseless killings says "you may well find his speech attractive because it fits in better with your angry feelings" (Ibid section 44).

The reason is as Thucydides says more than thousand of Mytilians had been killed in one expedition. (Ibid section 50).

The historian agrees that Cleon was a popular figure at the period that had a great influence on the masses, that Cleon had propagated this attitude among the masses, encouraging them to act as they wish. According to Thucydides, If one suggested moderate measures, "it was enough to bring Cleon down upon them in full force" (Ibid, book 4, section 21). He accuses them of failing to be honest in their intentions.

Cleon always believed that if some person voiced a different opinion to what he held that he was 'bribed' by the enemy, that it was a "case of calculated aggression, of deliberately taking side with the bitterest of enemies in order to destroy us" (Ibid book3, section 38). He was not ready to tolerate the opinion of others. What he believed was that "your leadership depends on superior strength and not on ant good will of others" (Ibid, Book 3, section 37).

He also did not have any respected for the learned or the intelligent. What he believed was that on a general rule states are better governed by the man in the street than by intellectuals: “The men in the street had been exactly the type he could relate to and manipulate.” (Idem)

Thucydides does not elaborate on the death of Cleon. It is briefly stated but no more. This makes a serious student ponder on his attitude regarding the politician. Thucydides had been a participant in the Peloponnesian war. he lived during the period in question. It was contemporary history that he recorded. Hence the information he gathered would have been tempered with what he felt and the emotions of others around him. At the same time he had a passion for accuracy. it was seldom he expressed a view on what he himself thought. But regarding Cleon he does not try to hide the anger and contempt he felt. What he detests seems to be Cleon’s attitude to morality and power. (Warner 1980, p. 19)

Although *The Knights* had won the first place in the drama festival, Cleon’s popularity does not seem to have diminished. Sommerstein (1978, p34) says that it may be possible that the people among whom he was popular might not have attended the festival. This shows that although the entrance fee was provided by the state for the less privileged, some have not been affected by the theatre culture which was dominant at the time, the culture of which Athens was so proud of. If by this comment he meant that only the uncultured were followers of Cleon, it would be an unfair judgment. The unwavering popularity of Cleon is shown by the fact that he was, a few weeks later after the play was staged elected as one of the ten generals, a considerable honour. It is also believed that he had retained this office until his death.

The play is extremely powerful in its very direct political criticism. Even the final judgment proves that it had been an effective production. But the fact that Cleon continued to enjoy popularity

among the Athens proves several points worthy of notice. It shows that although mass communication might be extremely powerful and effective in its ability to impart a message to the audience, one could never predict their response. They would enjoy the production, perhaps even understand the message given, yet the receivers of the message might not act or decide accordingly. It certainly was not that the play was weak as a mode of communication. It could also be that the glitter of the personality or his behavior had submerged their ability of sense and capacity of selection. This in turn shows the impotence of expectancy attributed to the fidelity of the masses.

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