

## **Employment of Humour: Ridicule and Revilement of Muslim Woman**

### **Abstract**

*This article uses the lens of the General Theory of Verbal Humour (Raskin, Hempelmann, & Taylor 2009) to examine the patterns of humour created in the selected sample of five E-media cartoons disseminated on the World Wide Web in the year 2017. Due to the hybrid nature of the sample, the critical terminology introduced by Kukkonen (2013) for studying comics and graphic novels has been employed to study the representation of a veiled Muslim woman in the cartoons. Owing to the increased importance of electronic media the (re)production of discursive image of Muslim woman and her veil as an icon of stereotypical representation needs to be critically examined for perpetuating stereotypes. This practice, which is a unique kind of oppression, deprives a Muslim woman from following the dress code of her choice and marginalises the women who consider veil a form of empowerment freeing them from the beauty game of capitalist society. This beauty game forces a woman to ensure gloss in her hair, the glow in her face and continues to force them to struggle to attain that (non-existent) perfect Barbie doll figure. This research establishes that the Muslim women are portrayed as a homogeneous group devoid of any individual characteristics. The flawed assumptions about Islam make her burqa appear like a stooge reflected in strikingly similar patterns in the cartoons.*

**Keywords:** *Cartoon, Stereotypical Identity, General Theory of Verbal Humour, comic studies, fabricated identity, Burqa/veil*

### **INTRODUCTION**

After the publication of Said's Orientalism in 1978, the construction of Islam as Europe's 'Other' has been discussed extensively. The phenomenon is still prevailing in the discourse of modern media. (Gilliat-Ray 2010; Zebiri 2011). Orientalism is the West's perspective of Islam as a static and backward doctrine that both shapes and

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**Ms. Azka Khan**

PhD Scholar

Department of English, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi

E-mail: [azkakhana@fjwu.edu.pk](mailto:azkakhana@fjwu.edu.pk)

reflects the western attitude towards Muslims. It is a reductionist view and a fabricated construction of Muslims in which the 'Orient' is seen as irreconcilably different from and inferior to the 'Occident' (Afshar, 2008; Bullock, 2002). These processes of *otherizing* categorized the Oriental as a member of 'a subject race' which needed to be ruled, disciplined, and civilised for their own good. It was thought that modern dynamism of the West should promote colonial endeavours to help the static and limited intellectual levels of the East. The unwillingness of the resistant Oriental subject was considered a problem by the West and it was, and still is, portrayed as the inability of the Oriental to grasp Western enlightenment and concepts. Orient was considered inferior and uncivilized and the Oriental woman was portrayed as alluring, bewitching and extremely dangerous (Stott 1992). Most often this fabricated identity was constructed by writers and painters without any real access to the lives of Muslim women. These fantasies based on *otherizing*, resulted in a deeply rooted biased belief that the Orientals' progress, despite their limited abilities, depends on mimicking the Occident.

The current research attempts to investigate the employment of humour and ridicule in the selected sample of cartoons to achieve the century old target of revilement of Muslim Woman. The paper comprises five sections. The first section reviews the evolution of the distorted image of Muslim woman in the previous century and the changes it has undergone over the turn of this century. The second section throws light on the relevant researches made in the field of semiotic analysis of the cartoons and also describes the importance of cartoons as a newly emerging genre. The third section elucidates the sample selection for the current research and theoretical framework of the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) as a method of analysis. The six focal points of analysis explained by Raskin, Hempelmann, and Taylor (2009) are briefly discussed for the clarity of the reader before their actual application on the selected sample of cartoons. The fourth section gives analysis of the Muslim woman cartoons. The last section sums up the findings and brings all the threads together to conclude the research.

### **Gendered Orientalism and Stereotyping of Muslim Woman**

Many scholars from multiple disciplines have probed into the matter of Muslim woman portrayal in the previous century. The discursive strategies of *otherization* have caricatured her initially, as an oppressed gender, having little opportunity of intellectual growth and, eventually, as a wayward potential threat (Zubaida 1995; Garcia-Ramon et al.1998). These stereotypes not only paved the way for the imperialist's expansionism but also helped the west to define *us* against a distorted

image of *them*. These arguments still hold water where an access to discourse allows the current prejudiced construction of the Islamophobic image of a Muslim woman in the E-Media. Exploring the perspectives on female converts has given birth to a very interesting study based on the interviews of the female converts and their relatives based in Britain (Ramahi & Suleiman, 2017). The study concludes that most of the family members had expressed that they would not have so much trouble in reconciling with the idea of conversion had it been any other religion. Their perception of Muslim women as sensual but oppressed and religiously motivated towards violence both on state and individual levels was problematic for them. Most of them confessed that the original oriental perspective is directed towards the Arab/Muslims outside Europe but still the Muslim converts are evaluated in the same light. The same idea is reflected in an earlier research. Muslim man was constructed as blood thirsty, violent and aggressive from the very beginning of the Oriental Scholarship (Alsultany 2012, Jarmakani 2008). However, the recent bigoted perceptions of Islam are fuelled by association with extremism and terrorism in the post 9-11 world. This in addition to Muslim man, Muslim woman is also portrayed as stooge in the contemporary E-media. (Zebiri 2011).

### **Political Cartoons: A Site Where Political and Popular Cultures Merge**

The accelerated interest in the political cartoons in the recent years has made them a potent inter disciplinary research field. Sani et al. (2012) argues that the political cartoons have acquired the status of distinct multimodal genera in the media discourse which are being examined for various interesting features. For example Sani et al. (2012) have traced out the use of lexical items such as interjections in the production of satirical impressions and their distribution in the linguistic units accompanying these cartoons. Since this multi modal genus touches the boundaries of education, psychology, sociology, health, politics, religion etc. the use of loan words and their coinage is really interesting. This genre is unique in the sense that the political criticism can be easily disguised by the use of technical evasion under the visual pun in this process of the reconstruction of reality.

Despite occupying a small place in the corner of a newspaper, this medium can be used to maximize as well as minimize the significant qualities of the subject to convey the intended message. By moulding and reflecting the public opinion, political cartoons also offer the vent mechanism by reducing aggression about different conflicting issues. Cartoonists frequently use references from popular culture in connection with political culture and this makes them entertaining as well as provocative (Connors 2007). Medhurst and Desousa (1981) identified “four major

*inventional topoi*” which merge the political concepts with the popular notions. These four topoi are discussed below briefly.

- 1) *Political or Religious Common Places* is the process through which the current issues from miscellaneous domains e.g. terrorism, war, election, economy and foreign affairs may be tied to a particular political or religious group or a public figure.
- 2) The *physical exaggeration* used in the cartoons involve age, appearance, posture, facial gestures and the moral values of the person or group in focus.
- 3) At times there are certain short-lived themes, related to ephemeral issues, called *situational themes*. Such themes usually demand background knowledge of the issue under hand for the complete perception of message by the audience. Thus these situational themes serve a two way purpose. They act like “inventional storehouse” and contain the rhetorical material which the draughtsman uses to create the drawing. At the same time these transient situational themes function as a “tool box” for the intended viewer in interpreting the message.
- 4) The last of the four topoi is the *cultural allusions*. These include references drawn from mythology, folk lore, literature and fictional characters.

While discussing the cartooning as a non-elitist form of media communication, Bisson (2014) appeared to explore the heavier side of this issue. The researcher proves that American political cartoons not only evoke anger but also offend, either intellectually or accidentally, a vast number of people. The art of cartooning usually portrays people in a negative way. Positive Caricaturing is very rare. This conclusion demands serious attention that some of the political cartoons not only become hate speech, they also incite violence. Bisson (2014) quotes, a radical cartoonist, Art Young who said, “To have a life as a cartoonist of the kind whose pictures ‘never hurt’ is my idea of futility” (Dewey n.d, p.68)

### **Typology and Attribution of Pictorial Narratives**

Sonesson (1988) suggests that identifying a narrative order in pictorial material may be a little problematic but this can become easier if different categories of graphic discourses are understood. Four different categories of graphic discourses are explained by Sonesson (1988). Out of them the first one, named *the temporal series* includes the moving pictures or cinematographic films and is not applicable to the current research. The other three are explained below.

- **The temporal set** is the name given to the images arranged in some sequence and related to a common theme. Comic strips, photo novels or graphic novels are examples of this category.
- **A single static picture** which is depicting different actions of the same event and represents various phases of the same issues is called a *multi phasic picture*. This type of picture can be easily analysed with the help of semiotic square for developing the narrative. A multi phasic picture is usually divided into panels.
- **Implied temporality picture** is the fourth category of pictorial objects. This category contains a well-known action scheme or a prototypical representation of an event, known as *pregnant moment*.

When a skimmer meets with a cartoon, entrance into an event, a story or a situation occurs. The message is understood by focusing on the interplay of image and the accompanying caption. A short analysis results in a smile after the reader perceives the thoughts, mood, feelings, humour, and criticism of the cartoonist. Cartoonists use exaggerated incongruities and distortions to create humour and ridicule, to mock the intended target by communicating the desired message. Appropriate setting, humorous characters, suitable costumes and witty situations are chosen to convey a lot with less linguistic material. The complex thoughts that may require extended written material can be concentrated and expressed through a single metaphor in a cartoon. The most important techniques involved are condensation and domestication. *Condensation* merges stereotypes with symbolic metaphors and reduces complex phenomena to their essential core with the help of a single cartoon. *Domestication* familiarizes the complex and unfamiliar concepts into something familiar and concretizes on highlighting mutually found elements and masks the unique factors by focusing on repetitive patterns facilitates mental adjustments. (Morris, 1993)

### **Terminology Borrowed from Comic Studies: An Emerging Academic Discipline**

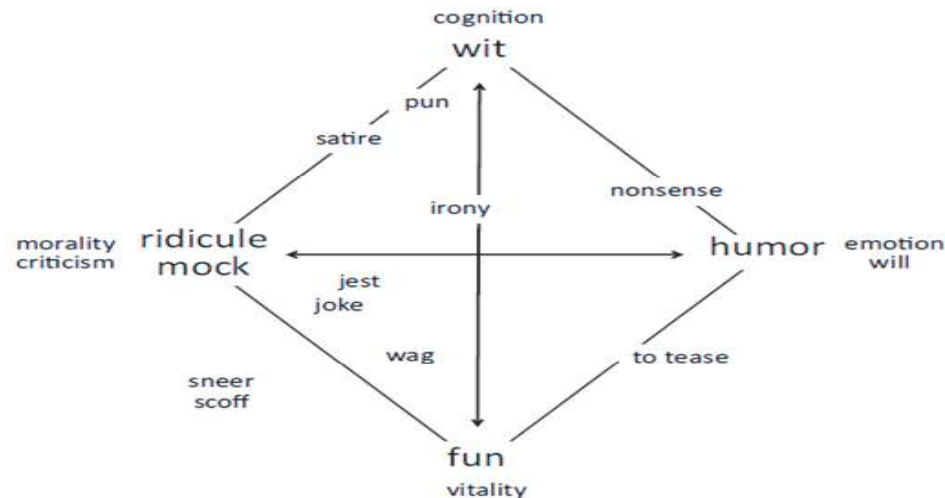
To analyse the sample for this research work, help is taken from the detailed study made by Kukkonen (2013) about Comics-Specific Signs. She provides the technical terminology to figure out the *conceptual metaphors*, *pregnant moments*, *double time scheme*, *spatial quality of speech bubbles*, *speed lines*, *the onomatopoeic effect* of the linguistic items and *temporal quality* of caricatures. The *panels* are the boxes, inside which the characters are set. The linguistic units can accompany the image in the form of a *caption*, may be placed in a *speech bubble* or in a *thought balloon*. The *tail of the speech bubble* and the *dotted line* of the thought balloon point to the character. For the study of caricatures and comics, the *body schema* or the composition of images demands special attention. It involves not only facial

expressions but also body language, gestures, movement of hands, way of sitting. Observing these things gives important clues about the basic power relationships between the characters and help to interpret the message clearly. The words in the speech bubble have an *onomatopoetic quality*. Thus the size and boldness of words show the volume of sound. Smaller and thinner letters mean subdued speech whereas bold and bigger letters imply loud speech. It would be helpful to understand here that a *minimal narrative* is a chain of events which sets up a conflict. This conflict keeps the viewer wondering about what will happen after it. A picture is said to be captured in its *pregnant moment* if it tells about the past and present of the characters in the image. Closely related to the pregnant moment is another special quality of comics. Usually a *double time scheme* is working in a pregnant moment, e.g., a character may be shown eating and talking at the same time. The cartoonist usually uses speech bubble to show her speech while at the same time her gestures show her eating. The *facial gestures* and the *gaze patterns* of the cartoons are always embedded in the narrative context and cannot be understood independently. The gaze of comic characters also helps us infer what is going on in the panels. e.g., if the characters gaze is fixed on something, no matter how unimportant otherwise, it automatically gains importance. Thus the fixed gaze or the *averted gaze* guides the viewer's gaze.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There has been an onward debate about the production of humour in any discourse whether it is emotions of surprise and satisfaction, disparagement and criticism, or hostility and feeling of superiority that causes the laughter. This question has been explored for a long time and one thing has had a consensus so far. The (negative) attitude of the producer of humour or ridicule is accentuated towards its alleged target of laughter. Humour is usually pointed against a distinct person or group, most often on political, ethnic, religious or gender grounds. Creation of humour is a huge and multiform phenomenon in its totality and it is difficult to incorporate and explain all its aspects in a single linguistic theory. Humour is considered a universal psychological mechanism based on paradox created by different complex intellectual and emotional stimuli. Kyratzis (2003) argues that any humorous discourse is created by apprehensive, self-defensive or assaulting impulses. When the unloading of these impulses occurs the result is creation of laughter. That is why many cognitive theorists have suggested that metaphorical references from varied domains are brought together in the script of jokes (Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner 2000). Creation of humour also involves use of linguistic oppositions which seem contradictory or contrary in one situation but their interplay creates a humorous discourse. The resultant ambiguity comments on one real situation but

evokes another unreal humorous situation. This simultaneous existence of actual and non-actual, expected and unexpected states of affairs, predominantly highlight certain features or peculiarities of personality, which are the actual target of mockery. In case of ethnic mockery the recurrently appearing universal negative attributive labels such as being filthy, dumbness, cunningness and stinginess are associated to different ethnic groups. (Reichl, 2005)



**Illustration of the lexical field of humour with an aggression /affiliative horizontal and a cognition/vitality vertical dimension by Schmidt-Hidding 1963 (as cited in GTVH by Raskin, Hempelmann, & Taylor 2009)**

Before GTVH, Schmidt-Hidding (1963) proposed a two dimension model to graphically structure the four subfields closely related to humour (as cited in GTVH by Raskin, Hempelmann, & Taylor 2009). These include humour, ridicule/mock, fun, and wit. Change in the degree of aggression changes aggressive ridicule/mock to non-aggressive humour. The decrease in the degree of *cerebrality* changes a joke from cerebral wit to crude fun. *Cerebrality* is closely related to intelligence and cold, hard facts, instead of emotions and physical slapstick. These two dimensions, degree of aggression and degree of *cerebrality* create a two-dimensional plane on which the four terms from the field of humour are located and result in the formation of the following chart.

**Knowledge Resources of the General Theory of Verbal Humour**

The General Theory of Verbal Humour (henceforth GTVH by Raskin, Hempelmann, & Taylor 2009) proposes a six level hierarchy of *knowledge resources* for analysing

the semiotic symbols involved in creating humour. Therefore, this theory is considered most fitting to analyse the ridicule created in the Muslim woman cartoons. The following are the six GTVH information sources as analytical categories for the Muslim women cartoons used in this study:

**(1) Situation.**

The temporal and spatial dimensions in which a humorous discourse is created possess utmost importance. These involve places shown in the cartoons, time depicted, objects and participants of the discourse and the activities presented in the humorous text. The situation tells about the setting of the narrative segment.

**(2) Language.**

The linguistic item reinforces the message conveyed by the graphic image. The punch line or the jab line may be in the form of a caption, speech bubble and a thought balloon. The exact wording of the humorous text gives placement to the functional elements that constitute the discourse.

**(3) Logical mechanism (LM).**

In a humorous discourse the problematic element is portrayed with a distorted and playful logic. The word logic is not to be confused with the formal deductive logic; rather it should be taken in the looser quotidian sense which involves rational thinking and trying to make sense of the message being conveyed. This type of logicity involves reversals and chiasms of false analogy and false priming, tricks involving polysemy and homonymy in pun on the words.

**(4) Target.**

Target is the personalised or caricaturised object involving political/religious people/groups, ethnic/racial groups, or social institutions presented as ridiculous in the discourse. There would be very few jokes without any well-defined target. Usually the exaggerated form of stereotypes of the target group is presented to create humour.

**(5) Script opposition (SO).**

Fully or partially opposed scripts are an essential requirement to create humour. Three basic types of opposition or contradiction can be identified between real and unreal situations evoked in a humorous text. These are normal/abnormal, actual/non-actual, and possible/impossible.

**(6) The narrative strategy (NS).**

Every cartoon in this study is a *minimal narrative* which has a chain of events leading to a conflict. This organization of the events/ actions in the humorous text is called the narrative strategy. It may be shown by a small dialogue, a tricky riddle, or panels of cartoon carrying a punch line. The cartoonists have to be careful for not spoiling the jab line by being redundant.

**Sampling Strategy for the Current Research**

Non-probability sampling strategy – specifically a purposive sampling technique is used in the current research. The Internet, being a very resourceful medium, is inherently customized to perform with *pull technologies*. For the purpose of this research this feature of internet has been of great use where the World Wide Web is considered a huge corpus of cartoons. The pull technologies involve a specific user request to pull the data from the World Wide Web to the user's computer. Pull technology may be used in four different ways, including requesting mail, loading web pages, downloading information from the Internet, and web syndication to a newsreader. The drastic changes in the recent research trends of social sciences and humanities have turned the World Wide Web into a dynamic corpus (Sproull 1986). Its use as a tool for data collection in the form of search-engine-based corpus is extremely helpful in understanding the new trends on E-Media (Sha, 2010). The hybrid nature of sample consisting of caricatures made it suitable to consider the World Wide Web a huge corpus of caricatures. The web links of the sites have been given under the image. Many other linguists, sociologists and anthropologists have already suggested this peculiar use of both Google and World Wide Web (Parnian, Martin, & Conrad 2003). By using *pull coding or client pull* the following key words on Google images are used to collect the sample for this study:

*Muslim woman caricatures\cartoons, Burqa caricatures, Muslim woman images, Pardah caricature, Funny Muslim woman caricatures*

The pull code is an effective and economical way when a researcher wants information related to a specific item (Lim, 2013). Except for the last search keyword, the rest of the statements are neutral in their connotation. The results of these different terms are surprisingly similar and no major differences in the images retrieved with these searches are found. Most of the caricatures that appeared in one group are also recovered during the second search. All the cartoons retrieved in this way are not included in the research and they are filtered on the basis of the following two criteria.

- They are disseminated on the World Wide Web within a year's time span between January 2016 and December 2017. This timeframe is selected to retrieve the latest images on the E-Media.
- The collected data is further filtered for the presence of at least one linguistic statement in the form of captions, speech bubbles or thought balloons. Caricatures not having any piece of linguistic communication are not included in this study. The idea behind this criterion is that the linguistic units are not simply statements used to describe the picture but tell great deal about the value judgment of the artist by conceptualizing and reinforcing the overall messages given by the caricature.

The data of cartoons for the current research work is collected with the main aim to search for the immediate visual rhetoric that any internet user could reach by a simple click. Keeping this in mind, cartoon selection is not systematically controlled per *artist* or per *news websites*. The visual and graphic imagery available on the internet serves the purpose of shaping human perceptions. Therefore the purpose of current research is served through this method of data retrieval. The humor, used in the biased stereotypes of Muslim women created for the wider international community, is reached through this sample. It should be noted here that numerous new websites are created every day and added to the list. Thus the Google Image searches as well as other search engines retrieve images and links of different web pages, but these links are liable to change in short time. Furthermore websites and blogs are arranged in the order on the basis of “search engine optimization” of Google. This means that the websites which pay the highest fee grab the topmost positions in the search results. An important aspect of the re-use or re-contextualization of visual imagery and text is related to the authorship of these images.

The cartoons posted on the Internet may not have a clear authorship and the artist may not be known. The political cartoons which are published in the news websites or official comic sites are usually signed by the artist. In contrast to it, political cartoons or social caricatures published on propaganda websites as well as personal activist blogs do not always claim authorship. This fact has two effects. Firstly they are offered as rights free by the cartoonists for public use. Secondly this provides greater freedom to the artist since they do not have to claim the responsibility of any offensive results. It is found out during the analysis that these *no name and copy rights free* cartoons use a lot of historic stereotypes and serve the purpose of reactivating the past imagery of the *inscrutable Orient*. Many other website administrators or bloggers re-contextualize these cartoons out of their original

context without reference to its original source. A problem faced during the data collection process is that the content disseminated on World Wide Web is constantly live, modified and removed. Many instances arise when the same cartoon is published on more than one websites. If they fell outside the date range of current study they are not included in the sample. Some caricatures originally published on different dates, are re-published within the time period set for this research. Such cartoons are included in the study. The reason for including them is that irrespective of their original publishing date, these caricatures are republished in a new textual environment and are communicating with new audiences. In such cases both the sources are cited.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The cartoons are analysed against the six analytical categories proposed by the GTVH which include situation, language, target, narrative strategy, script opposition and logical mechanism. However, the technical terms introduced by Kukkonen (2013) have been employed to make the meaning clear.

### Figure 01

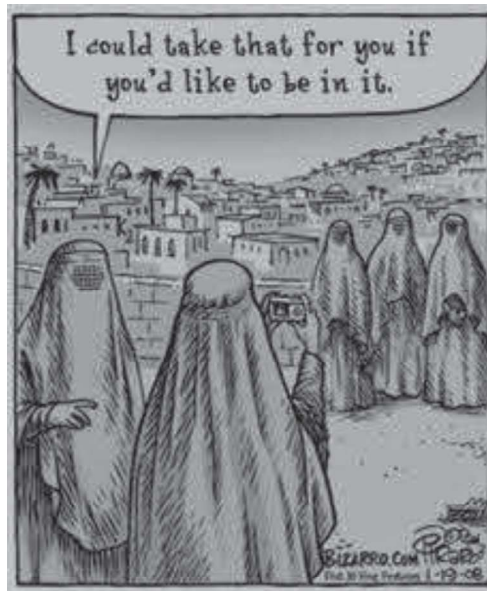
#### 1. Situation.

Figure 01 contains five burqa clad women standing in two groups of two and three women each. The top of the cartoon contains a speech balloon and the tail is pointing towards one of the women facing the viewers. The only woman with her back at the viewer is holding a camera in her hand and is about to take a snap short. The background of the cartoon contains buildings and some trees where two features demand our attention. Two domes and three trees of dates are visible in the backdrop. The facial expressions and the body schema of all the five women are not visible due to the burqa but the meaning is modulated by her gestures.

#### 2. Language.

The cartoon contains only one linguistic statement in the speech bubble, saying, *I could take that for you if you'd like to be in it*. The direction of the tail pointing at the woman along with the gesture of the hand confirms the speaker. Other than this all the women are identical in their appearance owing to the blue burqa, called *shuttlecock burqa* because of its resemblance to the shuttlecock used in badminton. This type of burqa is associated with the remote areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly, tribal areas and Afghan culture across the borders. The fact that this burqa is used in no other part of the world serves the purpose of an identity marker. The cartoonist's use of this dress for the Muslim figure

shows that he wants the five human figures identified as conservative Muslim women.



**FIG 01**

<http://freethoughtblogs.com/taslina/2012/06/03/we-have-enough-muhammad-cartoons-why-not-some-burqa-cartoons/>

### 3. Logical mechanism (LM).

The humour is created by exaggeration of an attitude which is considered a nonsensical practice by the cartoonist and the resultant paradox shown in the cartoon. The LM working in this cartoon does not resolve the incongruity introduced due to the script opposition completely, rather its partial and playful resolution resulting in the creation of humour.

### 4. Target.

The presumed stupidity of the Burqa clad Muslim women shown in the cartoon is the target of ridicule in the cartoon. They are not distinguishable due to the identical loose garment worn by them. The viewer is only able to recognise the front position or back position of these women because of the small patch of net like fabric meant to be in front of the eyes to ensure visibility of the path in front of them. The main theme in the cartoon is to portray the practice of burqa as an absurd social behaviour. On top of it the desire to be in a group photo where neither the identity is visible nor the person is distinguishable adds to the absurdness attached to the Muslim woman.

**5. Script opposition.**

The normal/abnormal contrast is shown in the cartoon by the offer made by the woman talking in the cartoon. The irony lies in the fact that if all the burqa clad Muslim women appear the same in the photo, what difference does it make whether she is included in the group photo or not.

**6. Narrative strategy.**

The mockery in the figure 01 is created by introducing the viewer/skimmer to a small narrative structure consisting of only one dialogue in the speech bubble. The dialogical part of the cartoon helps the skimmer to understand the event taking place in the cartoon. The punch line in the speech bubble comments and highlights the absurdity of the situation by setting a pattern of expectations and breaking it in a mocking way. The narrative strategy is following a three sequence pattern denoted by AAB, where two instances establish a pattern and the third one violates them. The two events building expectations are a) a group of woman taking a group photo, b) one of the group members offers the photographer woman to do this job for her. The third event, that disrupts the narration and creates central humorous complication, is the fact that it does not make any difference who is in the group photo and who is not included in it as the women are indistinguishable.

**Figure 02****1. Situation.**

A bearded man is shown talking and a burqa clad woman is standing beside him. The taps and shower in the background show that they are standing in a bathroom. The fixed gaze of the bearded man makes the bathroom curtain the third important character in the minimal narrative built in the cartoon.

**2. Language.**

The bearded man with a cap is shown in the middle of the cartoon. His long loose robe confirms his identity as a Muslim man. His face is turned away from the woman in burqa on the RHS (right hand side) of the image. The speech bubble pointing towards the man says, *you look gorgeous today, dear....* The second speech bubble is an answer by the woman who clarifies his misconception about her position.



FIG 02

<http://freethoughtblogs.com/taslima/2012/06/03/we-have-enough-muhammad-cartoons-why-not-some-burqa-cartoons/>

### 3. Logical mechanism.

The humour is generated by situational irony and exaggeration of the confusions created by appearances versus reality. This narrative segment makes use of *double time scheme*, as both the utterances are written there but the skimmer arranges them in a chronological order by relating them to the accompanied images to make meaning.

### 4. Target.

The target of ridicule is the similarity of appearance of burqa clad woman and the bath room curtain. The *otherization* of the burqa clad woman is highlighted by caricaturizing her into an object of mockery and equating her to an inanimate object due to her appearance.

### 5. Script opposition.

The normal/abnormal contrast in this cartoon is represented through the misconception of the bearded man who is trying to praise his wife but confuses her with the bath room curtain. There are two conflicts here. Firstly the same burqa gives her the same appearance every day so what is the point in telling her that she looks gorgeous particularly that day. Secondly and more humorously, her husband is confusing the bathroom curtain with his wife and actually praising the curtain instead of his wife.

## 6. Narrative Strategy.

English language script is studied from left to right. For this reason the events taking place in the figure 02 consist of two speech acts and they must be read in the left to right order so that the humorous effect of the punch line can become apparent. The placement of punch line in the humorous cartoons is very important. The absence of a punch line in final position in the text is the defining difference between jokes and anecdotes. Tsakona (2003) differentiates between the jab line and the punch line on the basis of their placement in the text. If it occurs at the end of the text, it is called a punch line whereas a jab line may appear anywhere in the text. They also have another difference in terms of their functions in the development of narrative. A jab line does not disrupt the development of the main interpretation of the narration in the text, whereas a punch line forces a new reinterpretation of said interpretation. The answer by the burqa clad woman is therefore a punch line because it occurs at the end of the incident and it helps the viewer interpret the statement uttered by the bearded man.

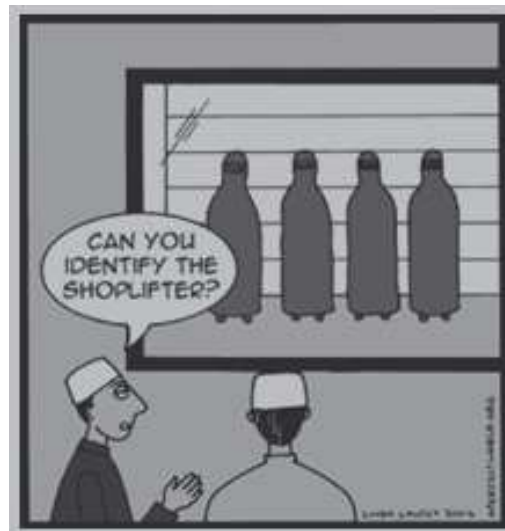
### Figure 03

#### 1. Situation.

Two men with caps are shown in a conversation with a speech bubble pointing at one of them. The hand gesture and the gaze of eyes tell that they are talking about the four identical burqa clad women with nothing visible but their shoes. The spatial relation shows the two men are foregrounded in the cartoon whereas the four women are put in the background.

#### 2. Language.

The white skull caps of the two male figures and the blue burqas of four female images confirm the identity of all five humans shown in the cartoon as Muslims. The linguistic item is essential to comprehend the meaning of the cartoon. The only dialogue in the speech bubble says, *can you identify the shoplifter?* The body position and the hand gesture shows that the man whose back is towards the audience is the target of this speech act.



**FIG 03**

<http://freethoughtblogs.com/taslima/2012/06/03/we-have-enough-muhammad-cartoons-why-not-some-burqa-cartoons/>

### 3. Logical mechanism.

The humour is created by misapprehension of the fact that the four women are neither distinguishable nor identifiable from each other. Failing to recognise this, the man in blue clothes is offering the other man, presumably the witness of the crime, to identify the shoplifter from the four women with identical appearance. Facial expressions and the bored gaze of the man in blue communicate his wearisome mental state.

### 4. Target.

The target of jeer in this cartoon is lack of individuality of burqa clad Muslim women. The message is that when Muslim women wear burqa they lose their individuality and become a practical example of the cliché famous for Muslim women, “seen one seen ‘em all”. (Ridouani, 2011, p.03)

### 5. Script opposition.

The possible/impossible contrast is represented by the incongruity of situation shown through images and the linguistic item making the ridicule explicit by acting as the punch line. The shoplifter being referred in the conversation might be a burqa clad woman but now it is impossible to identify her among three other women of similar and identical appearance.

## 6. Narrative strategy.

Most of the jokes are limited in terms of narrative strategy and same is the case with this cartoon where the narrative is in the form of question/answer format. The question asked by the man tells about the incident which has happened before the moment captured in the cartoon. The conflict introduced through script opposition is not solved till the end providing the reason for the resultant contemptuous laughter. If the distribution of the humour along the textual vector is observed, we come to know that the presence of both, a narrative disruption and a humorous central complication creates laughter in figure 03.

### Figure 4

#### 1. Situation.

The cartoon consists of two human and one animal figure. The man with sunglasses is holding a letter in one hand and his dog's chain in the other. He is facing a burqa clad woman whose eyes and feet are visible. The dog is sniffing at her feet while the man is trying to insert the letter in the slit open for her eyes. The cartoon establishes a story world where the man is dressed in a Western suit and has taken his dog on a walk. Presumably he is not very familiar with the burqa which he mistakes for the post box slot.



FIG 4

<http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/i/islamic.asp>

## **2. Language.**

The cartoon does not contain any linguistic item and has been drawn for reading in the direction from left to right. First the man and his dog are observed. It seems that the man and his dog are out on a stroll and want to post the letter by putting it in the letterbox. No movement of any type is shown in the woman in burqa which helps to create the laughter.

## **3. Logical mechanism.**

The ridicule is created by means of failure of expectations and the analogy between the post box and the burqa clad woman. This joke plays precisely on the selection of the situation portrayed in the cartoon. The resolution of the incongruity never takes place and this is one prominent trait of absurd humour. An absurd humour, like the one shown in figure 4, is usually regarded as having no resolution (Attardo, 2002).

## **4. Target.**

In figure 04 the target of scoffing is the resemblance in the appearance of the burqa clad woman and a post box. This target is the easiest to understand and essentially, it reaffirms the fact that most jokes are aggressive and the aggression has a target. This target is usually known in common parlance as the “butt” of the joke. The burqa clad woman is held responsible for the jeer they receive due to their appearance.

## **5. Script opposition.**

The actual/non-actual contrast is represented through parallelism between a post box and a burqa clad woman. Neither a simple oppositeness of two scripts is enough nor a simple overlap of two scripts in a cartoon results in creating humour. Humour is produced when both these conditions hold simultaneously, as is the case in figure 04.

## **6. Narrative strategy.**

The local, textual instantiation is between the post box, the burqa clad woman and the misconception by the man trying to post a letter. The sniffing of the feet of the burqa clad woman by dog focuses the attention of the viewer on the shoes and tells the reality of the misunderstood post box. A number of intermediate scripts are also activated. These include lack of individuality and intellectualism, objectivation and a stooge like appearance of the burqa clad Muslim woman.