

To Laugh or not to Laugh: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Humour Employed in *Khabardaar*

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Abstract

Although the primary function of humour is to make people laugh, it also plays a major role in shaping people's attitudes. Apparently the function of humour is to generate laughter in order to amuse people and release their tension but verbal humour also involves the use of language to construct or deconstruct people's identity. The aim of the current study is to explore the identity constructed through the humour employed in one of the programmes: *Khabardaar* telecast on Express, a Pakistani News channel, in order to unmask the hidden ideologies. Being a qualitative case study, instances of verbal humour taken from different shows of the programme are analyzed within the framework of *Critical Discourse Analysis*. The data analysis reveals that in most of the cases the physical features of people, including their obesity and skin colour, are made the target of humour. The study exposes injustice against such people who are considered physically unattractive, according to our cultural notion of attractiveness and addresses the issue of inequality highlighted by Fairclough (1995). The humour is not just confined to the physical appearance of people but also involves ridiculing people on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, and nationality. The paper ends with a note of recommendation for the TV channels in general and the comedians in particular, that advertently or inadvertently, become agents in spreading hatred and intolerance against individuals and groups leading to further reinforcement of different forms of prejudice that already exist in our society.

Keywords: Humour; Tendentious humour; Identity construction; Stereotyping; CDA

Introduction

Humour is a part of social discourse that generates laughter. Although humour does not come under serious discourse, according to Weaver (2011), "it can have a range of serious effects" (2). These effects can be observed at both individual and societal level and can therefore be analyzed from both psychological and socio-cultural perspectives. Gouine (2004) is of the view that "humour does not dismiss the seriousness of the situation, but displays

the severity for others to see, understand and mock" (39). It would not be wrong to say that sometimes humour as an indirect tool acts as a more powerful means of expression than any direct discourse of serious disposition. Just as humour can have different effects on individuals and groups and can convey meanings that can be offensive, as is the case with tendentious humour (intended to humiliate others) it can take different forms. In most of the cases humour is intentional and therefore contrived, but it can also be accidental in some cases, as it may occur unintentionally because of the inadequate command of the target language on part of the speaker or writer or because of the slip of tongue or pen. Nevertheless, in intentional humour that is often based on ethnicity, race, or gender, the target is made the object of ridicule that may take the form of prejudice leading to stereotypical judgments against the entire group. There are numerous examples of such jokes in Pakistani society that are targeted against Pathans, Memons, Sikhs, and above all against women, particularly in their role as wives, which have resulted in the emergence of stereotypes against these groups. The implication of these jokes has far more serious repercussions than people realize, as with the increase in their popularity, there is an increase in the level of acceptance of the underlying stereotypes which reinforce the prejudice against the targeted group. Not only do such intergroup jokes have a shattering effect on the psychology of the individuals who become the direct recipients of such jokes, the social harmony of the society is also negatively affected. What is more disturbing is that the members of the targeted group begin to see and judge themselves through the lens of the existing stereotypes that blurs their identity as members of a distinct group and result in the development of a negative self-image that at times gives birth to inferiority complex.

This means that besides the categorization of humour as intentional and accidental, humour can also be categorized as tendentious and non-tendentious. The type of humour that is based on ridiculing one's own group is self-deprecating in nature while the one ridiculing different groups or individuals is tendentious or disparaging humour. It is the second type of humour that is the focus of the current study. Humour, whether it is tendentious or non-tendentious, can be either achieved through the use of pun, hyperbole, or other word play. Whatever linguistic resources are employed for deprecating or tendentious humour, the risk of its content offending the targeted social or religious groups is always present. According to Ermida (2009), "humorous targeting is morally objectionable, especially if it manipulates material that is prejudicial and offensive to groups or individuals" (102).

Modern research on disparaging humour is based on one of the three major theories: *the disposition theory* proposed by Zillmann and Cantor (1976); *the misattribution theory* proposed by Zillmann and Bryant (1980); and *the prejudiced norm theory* by Ford and Ferguson (1994). All these theories have one thing in common and that is the enjoyment of disparaging humour on the part of people who do not belong to the targeted group, making them look down upon the groups or individuals they already dislike, which in turn inculcates a sense of superiority in them leading to a further enhancement of their self-esteem which occurs at the expense of downgrading others. It cannot be denied that people's response to disparaging humour can either make it socially acceptable or unacceptable. Ermida (2009) has made an apt comment: "humour may function both as a unifying force and as a divisive one in interpersonal relationships" (93).

Besides the specific categorization of humour theories, Günther (2003) divides humour theories into three broad categories: *release theories*, which provide psychological explanation of humour; *incongruity theories* that focus on the formal characteristics of humour which involves an attempt to bring two or more incongruous elements together to create humour; and *superiority theories* which explain the role of humour in establishing or breaking social networks. Because superiority theories take into account the socio-cultural dimension of humour, they are relevant for the current study.

In addition to the broad categorization of humour theories, Günther (2003) in his extensive study on jokes presents taxonomy of conversational humour dividing it into thirteen categories. Some of the most frequently employed categories include: playing with words (use of pun); narrating a funny story; using vulgar language; insulting others; creating funny situations (fantasy humour); violating social conventions; generating implicature; and the use of exaggeration. The current study focuses on one of the thirteen categories that deal with tendentious humour which involves insulting or criticizing out-groups.

Aim of the Study and the Research Questions

The study aims at analyzing the use of tendentious humour---humour that may lead to further segregation and prejudice in society by demeaning individuals and groups. Following are the specific research questions that the study aims to answer:

1. What kinds of verbal expressions are used to create humour in *Khabardaar*?

2. What kinds of people and/or groups are mostly made the target of tendentious humour in the programme?
3. How does the humour employed in the programme affect the identity of the targeted groups in general and the individuals in particular?

Literature Review

Research on humour has been carried out in a variety of contexts, particularly its effects, which have been studied on learners of different age groups in the classroom setting with the aim to show a link between humour and successful learning (Garner, 2006; Gurtler, 2012; Klein, 1985; Lundberg & Miller, 2002; Torok, McMorris, & Lin, 2004). The results of these studies provide enough evidence indicating a strong correlation between humour and effective learning. Although humour has been the focus of research for several years, it has become a major area of research in Linguistics after the emergence of Critical Discourse Analysis, which aims at discovering the underlying ideology behind the use of language and the repercussions it has. This is the reason that disparaging humour targeting different groups has begun to attract researchers in the last couple of years, particularly focusing on gender related jokes (Abrahams & Bippus, 2011; Eyssel & Bohner, 2007; Ford, 2000; Ford & Ferguson, 2004).

Besides research on gender-based humour, there is a respectable body of research literature on ethnic and racist humour as well (Billing, 2001; Boskin & Joseph, 1985; Davies, 1990; Gonzales & Wiseman, 2005; Katz & Schiffman, 2005; Lowe, 1986; Oring, 1991; Schutz, 1989). One such study focusing on ethnic humour was conducted by Oshima (2000) using a mixed methods survey on ethnic jokes in Hawaii, which is a multi-ethnic Oceanic State of USA. The study employed a survey questionnaire which was distributed among different organizations including schools and universities; total 604 individuals responded to the questionnaire. Besides using questionnaire, the researcher also interviewed some participants representing different age groups and professions. The results of the survey report that the majority of the participants look at ethnic humour in a positive way as there is a general acceptance of ethnic jokes in Hawaii. The reason for this acceptance is the nature of ethnic jokes. Since the ethnic jokes in Hawaii do not aim at downgrading ethnic groups, they are seen as a means of diffusing aggression resulting in inter-ethnic tolerance which is necessary for the harmonious co-existence of different ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the results of this study cannot be generalized as the nature of ethnic humour varies from one culture to the other and so does the response to it.

There is a considerable body of research on the use of disparaging humour (Burmeister, 2015; Maio, Olson, & Bush, 1997; Olson, Maio & Hobden, 1999). In one of the studies on disparaging humour, Parrott (2013) investigated the use of such humour in comedy clips shown on TV and the audience's reaction to those clips. Using content analysis followed by an experiment, the researcher discovered the frequent use of humour targeting weight and physical appearance of people in the comedy clips. It was also discovered that the audience present in such shows gave approval of such disparaging humour through their response in the form of laughter. Furthermore, the results of the experiment used in the study reported negative effects on the self-esteem of people who considered themselves over-weight. Disparaging or offensive humour has also been extensively studied in media in different parts of the world (Burmeister, & Carels, 2014; Ford, 1997; Fouts & Vaughan, 2002). However, there is hardly any research on the use of humour either in Pakistani context in general or Pakistani media in particular except one study by Khan (2015) that deals with the breaking of Grice's Maxims for creating humour in two Pakistani sitcoms. Since no research on tendentious humour has been carried out in Pakistani context so far, the current study is undertaken to fill this gap. The study is different from the studies referred to in this section because of its use of CDA for analyzing the humour employed in one of the Pakistani comedy shows.

Methodology

This qualitative study employs the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the nature of verbal humour employed in different shows of *Khabardaar*, a comedy talk show which was first telecast on Geo News with the name of *Khabarnaak*, but is now telecast on Express News Channel four days of the week (Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday). Since the research is rooted in qualitative paradigm using case study design, instances of verbal humour are selected from different shows of *Khabardaar* telecast from January 2016 to April 2016. The shows were downloaded from an internet website (given in the reference list) so that the examples can be noted down and transcribed for analysis. Since the humour employed in the programme is mostly in Punjabi, the examples are not only transcribed using Roman transcription but an English translation is also provided in each case for the convenience of the readers.

The instances of verbal humour categorized as disparaging or tendentious humour, are selected using purposive sampling technique. These instances are divided into sub-categories depending on their specific nature and are

analyzed using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. The reason for using CDA as a framework for analyzing the data is the ability of CDA to unmask the ideologies that remain concealed otherwise. The same point is reinforced by Mayr (2008) who states that “CDA is concerned with exposing the often hidden ideologies that are reflected, reinforced and constructed in everyday and institutional discourse” (10).

Data Analysis

Khabardaar is a unique show because it is a bilingual programme in which Urdu is used for discussion on serious issues while Punjabi is employed only for humour. The use of Punjabi exclusively for humour in this show is in itself an instance of injustice to the language and its speakers as the non-Punjabi speakers have begun to associate Punjabi with fun and have developed a misconception that Punjabi language is fit only for cracking jokes assuming that the Punjabis are mostly engaged in non-serious discourse. *Khabardaar* is not the only show that has promoted the use of Punjabi for cracking jokes in the show; the same trend is prevalent in other comedy programmes on different channels, as a result of which Punjabi has begun to be associated with humorous rather than serious discourse. The use of Punjabi for creating humour in different TV programmes, particularly its use in *Khabardaar*, has affected the image of Punjabi speakers in general and Punjabi language in particular. This misrepresentation of Punjabi speakers and their language can be seen as an instance of injustice and inequality when seen from the lens of CDA. Besides confining Punjabi to the function of ridiculing people through tendentious humour, the expressions that are used for referring to the people with the intention of creating humour are derogatory and imply prejudice against certain individuals and groups and this prejudice against minorities cannot be treated as light humour; rather it is a matter of serious concern under the umbrella of CDA, as according to van Dijk (1993), CDA “studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted in text and talk in the social and political context” (352). Discourse cannot be analyzed in isolation as both the causes and effects of discourse are equally important. Whether discourse is serious or non-serious, its implications cannot be ignored.

According to Fairclough (1995) it is important both for linguists to be sensitive to how discourse is shaped by and helps to shape social structures and relations, and for sociologists to be sensitive to how social structures and relations are instantiated in the fine detail of daily social practices, including discourse (65).

On the basis of the analysis of the data using CDA, eleven categories emerge. All these categories manifest power abuse and inequality. Given below are the details for each category.

Obesity

Obesity is stigmatized not only in the western world but also in many Asian countries. People who are over-weight are made fun of as a result of which they feel marginalized. A society's attitudinal evaluation of people and their physical traits can, to a certain extent, be attributed to the representation of the traits of people and their group identity in a positive or negative way. People start believing in the reality that media construct and the same holds true for the ideology the media promote. Our judgment about people is often filtered through the lens of media which can also sometimes distort our own perception of reality leading to a biased judgment of out-group and in-group members. Obese characters are often made the target of jokes in media as a result of which those who belong to the out-group (the ones who are not obese) also make fun of obese people in real life. According to Burmeister (2015), "media depictions of obesity related stereotypes can affect viewers' expression of attitudes and beliefs about obesity" (15).

There are numerous instances of verbal expressions used in *Khabardaar*, in which obesity is made the target of humour. Referring to one of the comedians, Agha Majid, as 'drum' in one of the shows of *Khabardaar* telecast on March 24, 2016, Honey Albela, another comedian, does not only insult the direct recipient of this word but also all those who are obese. Agha Majid is also referred to as *aaRu* (peach) on many occasions in the same programme, to draw a comparison between the man and the fruit based on the round shape. Other terms used to refer to him are: *moTa* (fat), *garma* (a local fruit which is similar to watermelon in size and shape but different in taste and colour), *haathi* (elephant), *saa~D* (bull), *dumba* (sheep), *truck*, etc. He is also criticized for his over-eating, which is evident from Honey Albela's comment: "*aaRu da meda bot vaDDA e*" (This peach's (referring to the fat actor) intestine is very big). On another occasion in the same show, Honey Albela tells the audience about the same person (who he does not leave any chance to criticize): "*eda zaati tanduur e ae siraf apne lai roTi banaa~da e*" (He has a personal oven in which he makes *roTi* only for himself). In almost every show of *Khabardaar*, Honey Albela as well as the other comedians pass such humorous comments to ridicule him. Even the host does not hesitate to attack his obesity.

In '*farhang-e-aasafia*' that is one of the segments of the show, the host, Aftab Iqbal, discusses some Urdu words and their pronunciation and meaning for the purpose of educating the audience. Sometimes he also discusses some Urdu idiomatic expressions in this segment. In one of the segments of '*farhang-e-aasafia*' telecast on April 8, 2016, while he was discussing the idiom '*maamlakhaTaaime~paRna*' which means 'delay in work', Honey Albela distorted the idiom pointing towards the fat actor "*tera maamla khaTaaai vich na imoTaaai vich pegaya e*" (Your issue is not delayed but fattened) which was another attack on his obesity. Burmeister (2015) has succinctly summed up the role of media in the stigmatization of obesity:

...the combined message presented in entertainment, news, and commercial media tends to be that to be overweight is to have a correctable character flaw. These messages could have an effect on the way viewers think about people with obesity in real life by affecting their attitudes and beliefs about the causes, consequences, and potential solutions for obesity. (p.7)

This kind of ridicule of those who are obese inculcates inferiority complex in such people and can shatter their self-esteem. In order to escape such disparaging humour, they start avoiding social gatherings; some of them even resort to instant weight-reducing pills which can put their health at stake.

Skin Colour

People with dark complexion are stigmatized and marginalized in our society and this stigmatization occurs often at the expense of the glorification of people with fair complexion on media through the advertisements of fairness creams. In contrast to the glorification of fair complexion, one can observe a completely opposite projection of people with dark complexion in comedy shows aired on different channels. Such people are ridiculed on the basis of their skin colour which is unfair as it promotes the concept of inequality on the basis of skin colour which is one of the forms of discrimination. The humour used in *Khabardaar* is also used for targeting people with dark complexion. In one of the shows of *Khabardaar*, Honey Albela's comment on the dark and bald character, who is made to sit silently behind him and other comedians, is highly derogatory, as pointing towards him, he says : "*e saanusaza den vaasterakheyave*" (He is made to sit here as a punishment for us).

In another show of *Khabardaar* telecast on Feb 28, 2016, a person who is introduced as a journalist, reporter and a columnist is ridiculed for his dark complexion and features. Honey Albela, while talking to the other comedians, looks at him and says: "*edamu~te vex lagda e Shahrukh nu tin*

vaariyarqaanhoya e” (Look at his face! It seems as if Shahrukh<an Indian film celebrity> has suffered from jaundice three times). Commenting on the journalist’s looks, Honey Albela further says: “*yaqiinkarojado~ da e paaiayave menu ae chaavaalaDilip Kumar lag raya e*” (Believe me! Since this person’s arrival, this person selling tea <pointing towards the man selling tea>has begun to appear Dilip Kumar to me).The person selling tea is always ridiculed for his dark complexion and therefore in order to humiliate the journalist, Honey Albela compares the reporter with that person and arrives at the conclusion that the journalist is uglier than the one selling tea. Both the remarks on the person who is presented as a journalist and a reporter are humiliating as his complexion is made the target of deprecating humour which can be highly offensive.

Physical deformity

Besides targeting obesity, people with different forms of physical deformity, like those who stammer and the ones who are squint-eyed or suffer from some form of visual impairment are also targeted through disparaging humour. For instance, the character of a squint-eyed police constable, who is also shown as partially blind, played by one of the comedians, may be very disturbing for the squint-eyed and the visually impaired people. The frequency with which he is ridiculed and the way he treats others and is himself treated through the verbal assaults can have a shattering effect on the psychology of people with such defects. In one of the shows of *Khabardaar*, the host Aftab Iqbal, while interviewing the squint-eyed police constable, asks him how many children he has to which he replies six. Honey Albela interferes in the interview and says: “*tin ne par enuchhenazaraa~de ne*” (There are three but they appear six to him), which is an attack on his visual impairment. On another occasion when a woman seeks Hanif’s help, Honey Albela says with an element of wonder: “*Hanif to~ teedekaarvaalemadadnaima~gde*(Even Hanif’s family members do not seek Hanif’s help).

Government Institutions

Not only are the people with physical deformity laughed at, the police department is also made the recipient of humiliation and ridicule, implying that the department inducts people who are not physically fit for the job. The role of an SHO and his subordinates in one of the acts played by the comedians in different shows of *Khabardaar* present a very negative image of the police department to the outside world. It is true that humour can be an effective way of criticizing government institutions that require improvement; it cannot be denied that making fun of these institutions to the point of

ridiculing them can have an adverse effect on their performance as they begin to consider themselves as incompetent as they are projected on media. It is pertinent to mention here that because of the negative projection of police in Pakistani media, Pakistanis have stopped respecting their police and disrespect breeds disrespect. Programmes like *Khabardaar* have further tarnished the image of police in the eyes of people through negative stereotyping. Wood believes that “When we stereotype, we use a general label to define specific members of a class” (2001, p. 115). Wood’s statement holds true for Pakistani Police force that has begun to be negatively stereotyped as corrupt and incompetent despite the presence of competent and honest police officers. Moreover, the characters that are made to play the role of police in *Khabardaar* are all shown to be unfit for the job carrying the implication that the people employed in government institutions are not capable of the job they are given. The role of an SHO played by Agha Majid in *Khabardaar* is an example of the criticism leveled against police officers in general, implying that they are not only physically unfit but are also incompetent and indulged in corruption.

The problem with *Khabardaar* and other comedy shows is that things are exaggerated for generating humour and the danger with this kind of exaggeration is that people start making overgeneralizations which result into stereotypes. Once labels begin to be assigned to individuals and groups, there is an obvious increase in the degree of inequality and the conflict between the powerful and the powerless aggravates. The result is the emergence of more instances of injustice against the marginalized groups and the individuals who do not conform to the ideals created by the society in general and the media in particular.

Physical Features

Tendentious humour can also involve ridiculing people on the basis of their appearance and physical features, which implies violating the code of ethics. Such deprecating humour may generate laughter but it can have a long-term shattering effect on the self-esteem of people who are not physically attractive and beautiful.

In the segment titled: *Naseer Bhai’s challenge*, anyone from the audience or a live caller sings a song from any old film and Naseer Bhai has to tell the name of the singer and music composer. Since he has an excellent memory, there is hardly any song that he fails to tell the details of. Honey Albelia often teases Naseer Bhai by passing insulting remarks on his appearance and the way he

speaks. Even when he gives accurate details of the song, he is often made the target of humour and when he is unable to provide the details, which rarely happens, Honey Albela passes highly derogatory remarks. In one of the segments of *Khabardaar* telecast on April 23, 2016, Naseer Bhai could not tell the details of the song that a live caller sang as a challenge. In response to Naseer Bhai's failure, Honey Albela said: "***edagoaache hoe tittarvarga mu~ hogaya e***" (His face is resembling a lost pheasant). Comparing him with a bird he attacks Naseer Bhai's physique. Since he is short and thin, he is compared to a bird.

Besides Naseer Bhai, there is another person whose looks are targeted. He is given the character of a eunuch who is made to look very ugly and is named Sheetal. Whenever there is a segment in which the comedians play the role of eunuchs and sing and behave in their style, Sheetal is particularly made fun of and becomes the victim of disparaging humour. In one of the shows telecast on March 24, 2016, Honey Albela comments on Sheetal saying: "***North Korea ne jeRabambnaibanaya ode vichmasaala Sheetal da paayasi***" (Sheetal's ingredients were mixed in the bomb that North Korea made). In another show telecast on April 24, 2016, Honey Albela asks the host: "***sab to Drona paaRkeRa e***" (Which is the most horrifying mountain?). The host, Aftab Iqbal responds "Nanga Parbat" which is also given the title of "the killer mountain". On hearing the host's response, Honey Albela asks surprisingly: "***bot xaufnaak e? Sheetal to~ vi zyaada?***" (Is it too horrifying? More horrifying than Sheetal?). Honey Albela further says: "***Sheetal nu asi Nanga parbat to phaRayasi***" (We caught Sheetal from Nanga Parbat). In the examples cited here, highly pejorative language is used for creating humour. By commenting on Sheetal's features and her complexion, the comedians marginalize all those people who are not physically attractive.

Sheetal is a man in the guise of a eunuch and is apparently always targeted because of not being physically attractive. However, deeper analysis reveals the hidden ideology behind the tendentious humour that Sheetal becomes a victim of. Through the humour targeted at Sheetal, eunuchs are also ridiculed. Since they are the suppressed group and are relegated to a very low status in Pakistan, they are the victims of discrimination at every level. Nevertheless, the strange thing about the humour targeted at Sheetal, who is in the guise of a eunuch in *Khabardaar*, is that Sheetal's own community members (the other comedians playing the role of eunuchs) also use pejorative language to ridicule her.

Gender

It cannot be denied that our attitudes about people belonging to the stereotyped groups are often the result of our exposure to such stereotypes through media. Media not only has the power to alter people's attitudes and opinions but it also has the power to strengthen the already held beliefs which may not be too strong otherwise. Although one can find numerous forms of discrimination practiced in different societies, gender discrimination is one of the most frequently observed forms of discrimination and this discrimination is more obvious in media, particularly on TV. Whether one observes advertisements or daily soaps or comedy shows, one can find several instances of gender bias against women, which becomes more obvious if the discourse is analyzed within the framework of CDA. The programme under analysis in this paper is no exception. In fact, after the passing of the bill in favour of women empowerment in the Punjab Assembly, there are quite a few shows of *Khabardaar* telecast in the year 2016 that carry a special segment on this issue in which women empowerment itself is made the target of disparaging humour implying that women empowerment may disempower men. The ideology that is promoted through these apparently humorous acts implies the legitimacy of male dominance, disapproving the idea of women empowerment.

Besides this, there is only one female comedian in the programme who is made to play different characters and she is often criticized for her masculine style of discourse. There are some other female actors who rarely appear in some special acts and when they do they are also ridiculed.

Ethno-linguistic Minorities

Discriminating people on the basis of their ethnicity and language is yet another common feature found in societies that lack ethnic and linguistic tolerance. In some shows of *Khabardaar*, Saraiki language is made fun of. For instance, one of the comedians is often shown speaking Saraiki in *Khabardaar* but whenever he does so, he is ridiculed for his Saraiki accent. The humour used in *Khabardaar* is mostly tendentious as it manifests prejudice against the marginalized groups, whereas "for marginalized groups, humour may be used strategically to challenge powerlessness (for example, gallows humour) and to turn dogma on its head, to identify and comment on paradoxes" (Longo, 2010, p. 123). Unfortunately, humour employed in *Khabardaar* mostly humiliates individuals on the basis of their appearance and target ethno-linguistic minorities, which does more injustice than justice to these groups. Analyzed within the framework of CDA, one can find

numerous instances of injustice through the use of tendentious humour in the programme which reinforces the prevalent discrimination against certain ethno-linguistic minorities in the country.

Poverty

People who belong to the lower socio-economic strata of the society are relegated to an even lower position through the remarks passed on them in *Khabardaar*. What is done in the name of humour is sheer insult of the working class community, which includes barbers, butchers, cobblers, and labourers. In one of the shows telecast on April 9, 2016, Honey Albela in the character of a butcher asks a customer who is made to look poor, “*tusi vi goshtlena e yachhichhRe*” (Are you also here to buy meat or the leftovers?). By looking at his clothes and the overall appearance the butcher assumes that the person cannot afford to buy meat. Instead of sympathizing with that poor person, he makes him the target of deprecating humour.

Neighbouring Countries

The humour that the comedians employ in *Khabardaar* is not just limited to ridiculing their own country but also extends to the neighbouring countries which can lead to the emergence of conflicts rather than resolving them. In one of the segments titled: *Ibn-e-batuta*, Aftab Iqbal takes the audience to a virtual tour of a certain country. In this segment sometimes, the vegetarian dishes of some of the countries that the host introduces are used for creating humour that is targeted at countries where people are mostly vegetarians. In the show telecast on January 29, 2016 while the host was introducing some of the delicacies of Nepal which are purely made of herbs, vegetables, beans and bamboo shoots, Honey Albela comments “*Nepal ikGhariibmulk e othaysher vi sabzikaande ne*” (Nepal is a poor country where even lions eat vegetables). At another point in the same segment, another comedian comments on the ingredients of one of the dishes the host was talking about, saying: “*Sir me~ kasamchukkekennava~ ae bot Ghariib ne*” (Sir I swear they are very poor). Honey Albela adds further: “*aeDeGhariib ne keaenakollobia vi e tekaala ae eDeGhariib ne keenakol laal lobia vi nai e.*” (They are so poor that they have black beans. So poor are they that they do not even have red beans).

In our culture, people love to eat meat and consuming meat is considered a sign of being affluent. However, this is not the case in every society. There are many countries where a vast majority of people are vegetarians and Nepal is one such country. Ridiculing any society because of the consumption of

vegetarian food does not make any sense and can be seen as an instance of extreme form of injustice and discrimination. The comedians passed several comments on the country's economy without even thinking for a second that Pakistan's economic position is not stable either as there has been an increase in the number of people living below the poverty line in the last few years in Pakistan.

Lack of Proficiency in English

Just as proficiency in English is seen as a sign of being educated and refined, lack of proficiency in it is equated with lack of sophistication and refinement in Pakistani context, and therefore people who cannot speak fluent English become the recipient of insult through disparaging humour in our society. One example is that of the Pakistani celebrity Meera, whose English is frequently targeted in different comedy shows and *Khabardar* is no exception. Although Meera's English is the target in many programmes, *Khabardaris* is one step ahead of other comedy programmes in this regard, as Honey Albela often mimics Meera's style of speaking and makes fun of her English. In every other show of *Khabardar*, he suddenly switches to 'Meera mode' and the audience approves of it as evident through their response in the form of laughter. It is not just the comedians who through their discourse promote the linguistic hegemony of English but the audience's reaction does the same which is in a way an endorsement of the concept of linguistic inequality witnessed in multilingual countries, especially the ones with colonial history. It is true that Pakistan, being a postcolonial country, cannot neglect English as it also enjoys official status in the country, but it is equally true that the glorification of English at the expense of the national and indigenous languages has led to a class divide in the country and disparaging humour targeting people's inability to speak English is one such example.

Mughal History

Besides criticizing people on the basis of their appearance, ethnicity, lack of limited proficiency in English and low socio-economic position, Mughal emperors are also made the target of deprecating humour in the show. Not only do the comedians make fun of the Mughals but the host of the show also speaks against them. The expression of negative attitude towards the Muslim rulers in a Muslim country seems to serve the purpose of tarnishing the image of all the Mughal emperors not only in the eyes of the non-Muslims but also in the eyes of the young Muslim generation. The act the comedians perform to portray Mughal period is an obliteration of the dignity and the power the Mughals enjoyed during their reign. One example of the humiliation of the

Mughals through the use of disparaging humour can be witnessed in the show telecast on 20th of April, 2016 in which Honey Albelia as Shehzaada Saleem says: “*aksar me haathi nu abba ji keh de nava~*” (I often call the elephant my father). In the same act while looking at the maids he says: “*bakria~ haardiya~ kaniza~ rehgayya~ ne*” (Only goat like maids are left). In the first utterance, he insults his father by comparing him to his elephant because of his size while in the second utterance he insults the maids by comparing them with goats. This kind of discourse is not in accordance with the dignity and the status of any of the Mughals as the Mughals used to employ a highly sophisticated and formal language. Even their servants were trained to use highly refined language. Instead of highlighting the accomplishments of the Mughal emperors, the comedians including the host of the programme present a negative image of them.

Conclusion

After analysing instances of humour used in *Khabardaar* within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, it is evident that the humour employed in this comedy show is promoting the notion of inequality by further marginalizing the suppressed. Moreover, the humour used for ridiculing the historical figures and the contemporary societies is demeaning. There should be a comprehensive media policy based on strict adherence to ethics in order to discourage this kind of deprecating or tendentious humour. The study being limited in its scope was restricted to the analysis of verbal humour only in one comedy programme. A large-scale study using content analysis can be conducted on the nature of tendentious humour employed in other comedy shows on different Pakistani channels in future. Besides analyzing the nature of humour in comedy shows, a survey can also be conducted to find out people’s reaction to such humour to be able to discover how it affects their perception of the individuals and groups that are targeted through such deprecating humour.

It is evident through this research that media have the power to influence people’s thoughts and know how and when to promote a certain ideology. People unconsciously begin to endorse the ideas that media project and reject those that media disapprove of. This ideological manipulation that media perform takes place in such a subtle manner that people do not even realize that their way of perceiving reality has been transformed. Moreover, this transformation takes place more rapidly through the use of humour than through any other means.

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- Note:** All the instances of humour analyzed in the paper are taken from different episodes of *Khabardar* downloaded from www.playit.pk.