

## EXPLORING CULTURAL AND GENDERED IDENTITIES THROUGH COGNITIVE GRAMMAR IN *THE BAD MUSLIM DISCOUNT* (2021)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the construction of cultural and gendered identities in Masood's The Bad Muslim Discount (2021) through Ronald Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (CG). The study focuses on how linguistic choices shape the representation of identity, cultural difference, gender roles, and experiences of modernity. It employs a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive approach and analyses selected textual instances through key Cognitive Grammar concepts, including construal, profiling, figure-ground organization, trajector-landmark alignment, and perspective. The analysis shows that identities in the novel are not presented as fixed or isolated categories; rather, they are constructed through relationships between individuals, cultures, social expectations, and changing perspectives. Cognitive Grammar therefore provides a useful framework for explaining how linguistic structures make particular aspects of cultural and gendered experience more prominent while placing others in the background. The study concludes that the novel uses language to represent identity as dynamic, relational, and shaped by cultural and gendered experiences.*

**Keywords:** Cognitive Grammar, cultural identity, gendered identity, construal, profiling, The Bad Muslim Discount,

### 1. Introduction

Literary texts often represent identity through language, showing how individuals understand themselves and others within particular cultural, social, and gendered contexts. Masood's *The Bad Muslim Discount* (2021) presents characters negotiating questions of culture, religion, gender, belonging, and modernity across different social and cultural settings. These identities are not simply stated; they are constructed through the ways characters perceive, describe, and experience their worlds. Cognitive Grammar, developed by Ronald Langacker, views language as closely connected with human cognition and argues that meaning depends on how speakers construe and organize their experiences. Concepts such as profiling, figure-ground organization, trajector-landmark alignment, and perspective can therefore help explain how the novel linguistically highlights certain identities and relationships. This study applies Cognitive Grammar to explore how cultural and gendered identities are constructed through patterns of linguistic representation in *The Bad Muslim Discount*.

Moreover, literary texts are not simply collections of grammatical structures; they are linguistic constructions through which readers conceptualize characters, events, identities, places, emotions, and social relations. Contemporary stylistics therefore increasingly examines the relationship between linguistic form and cognitive experience. Cognitive stylistics, in particular, investigates how linguistic choices activate conceptual structures and guide readers' attention during the construction of textual meaning (Semino & Culpeper, 2002).

Within this broader cognitive approach, Cognitive Grammar (CG), developed principally by Ronald W. Langacker, provides a particularly useful framework for explaining how grammatical structures contribute to meaning. Rather than treating grammar as an autonomous formal component of language, Cognitive Grammar regards linguistic expressions as symbolic structures that associate form with meaning and conceptualization (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008). In this view, grammatical choices are meaningful because they reflect different ways of construing an experience.

This study applies Cognitive Grammar to selected extracts from Masood's *The Bad Muslim Discount* (2021), a novel that engages with questions of Muslim identity, gender, migration, cultural belonging, religious practice, violence, and the relationship between tradition and modernity. The selected passages are particularly appropriate for Cognitive Grammar because they contain recurrent linguistic patterns involving bodily experience, spatial relations, agency, concealment, movement, sensory perception, metaphorical construal, and perspectival positioning.

The study focuses on five CG concepts: construal, figure-ground organization, profiling, trajectory-landmark alignment, and perspective. These concepts provide a systematic means of moving from the identification of linguistic features to an interpretation of the conceptual meanings produced by those features.

## 2. Cognitive Grammar

Cognitive Grammar emerged from Ronald Langacker's work beginning in the late 1970s and was developed extensively in *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* (Langacker, 1987, 1991). Langacker subsequently provided a more accessible synthesis in *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (2008). Cognitive Grammar rejects the assumption that grammar constitutes an autonomous formal system independent of meaning. Instead, language is understood as part of general human cognition, with linguistic structures grounded in processes of conceptualization (Langacker, 2008).

### 2.1 Conceptualization

One of the central claims of CG is that linguistic meaning resides in conceptualization. Linguistic expressions evoke cognitive domains and provide particular ways of organizing and presenting experience. Grammar consequently does not merely encode pre-existing meanings; it participates in the construction of those meanings.

Langacker describes linguistic structures as symbolic assemblies, emphasizing the relationship between form and semantic structure. Grammar consists of patterns through which symbolic structures are assembled into increasingly complex expressions (Langacker, 2008).

### 2.2 Construal

Construal is one of the most important concepts in Cognitive Grammar. It refers broadly to the ability of language users to conceptualize and portray the same situation in different ways. Two expressions may refer to substantially the same event while directing attention toward different participants, relationships, or aspects of the event.

This principle is particularly valuable in literary analysis because writers continuously make choices about how an experience should be presented. Recent research confirms the importance of construal for literary and narrative analysis. Allan (2024), for example, demonstrates that construal is closely connected with tense, aspect, deixis, speech representation, spatial and temporal markers, perspective, and vocabulary in narrative discourse.

### 2.3 Figure and Ground

The figure-ground distinction concerns the organization of attention. The Figure is the entity that receives primary conceptual attention, whereas the Ground provides the surrounding context against which the Figure is understood. This principle is useful for investigating textual foregrounding and backgrounding.

In literary discourse, figure-ground organization can reveal whose actions are made prominent and whose experiences remain secondary. It can consequently illuminate representations of power, agency, victimhood, and social hierarchy.

## 2.4 Profiling

Profiling refers to the aspect of a conceptual structure that a linguistic expression specifically highlights. A linguistic expression activates a broader conceptual domain but directs attention toward a particular component within that domain.

For example, expressions relating to the niqab can activate the broader conceptual domain of religion, modesty, gender, and identity while profiling covering, visibility, or bodily restriction. Profiling therefore provides a useful analytical tool for examining which aspects of cultural experience become particularly salient in a text.

## 2.5 Trajector and Landmark

The concepts of Trajector (TR) and Landmark (LM) describe the organization of relationships within a conceptual scene. The Trajector is the primary participant being located or characterized, whereas the Landmark provides the secondary point of reference against which the Trajector is conceptualized (Langacker, 1991).

This distinction is especially productive for analysing literary representations of social relationships. For example, in a clause representing a man physically attacking a woman, the male aggressor may be profiled as the Trajector while the woman is represented as the affected participant. Such configurations can reveal how grammatical structure constructs agency and power.

## 2.6 Perspective

Cognitive Grammar recognizes that conceptualization is inherently perspectival. A situation may be construed from different vantage points, and linguistic choices can position the reader in relation to a character, event, or fictional world.

The significance of perspective for literary analysis has been emphasized by cognitive-stylistic scholarship. Harrison (2017) extends Cognitive Grammar toward a cognitive discourse grammar, demonstrating how concepts such as construal, grounding, reference-point relationships, and action chains can contribute to the analysis of literary experience.

## 3. Cognitive Grammar and Literary Studies

The application of Cognitive Grammar to literature has developed considerably. Harrison, Nuttall, Stockwell, and Yuan (2014) brought together studies demonstrating how CG can illuminate literary meaning, action, ambience, empathy, multimodality, experience, and literariness.

Harrison (2017) subsequently proposed an extension of CG toward a cognitive discourse grammar, applying Langackerian concepts to contemporary fiction and examining how linguistic choices simulate experience during literary reading.

More recently, Giovanelli and Harrison (2025) have demonstrated the continuing relevance of CG to literary analysis, describing construal phenomena as a basic architecture for analysing literary texts and examining how readers are positioned in relation to fictional worlds.

Allan's (2024) study of immersive narrative further demonstrates that construal can be connected systematically with narrative techniques including perspective, deixis, tense, aspect, vocabulary, and spatial-temporal organization.

Recent work also demonstrates the expanding methodological application of Cognitive Grammar beyond traditional literary interpretation. Voice et al. (2025), for example, investigate cognitive stylistics and construal in forensic discourse and explicitly address intercoder reliability and replicable feature identification, indicating that cognitive-stylistic analysis can be developed through more systematic qualitative procedures.

Similarly, Nørgaard (2025) emphasizes that literary texts construct characters, settings, experiences, feelings, and ideas through language and situates cognitive stylistics within the broader development of grammar-based literary analysis.

These developments establish that Cognitive Grammar is not limited to sentence-level grammatical description; it can provide a theoretically grounded approach to the interpretation of literary discourse.

#### 4. Research Gap

Although Cognitive Grammar has been increasingly applied to literary texts, much of the established scholarship has concentrated on canonical literature, narrative immersion, contemporary fiction, free indirect discourse, poetry, and general stylistic experience.

There remains considerable scope for applying CG to contemporary South Asian fiction dealing with Muslim identity, gender, cultural difference, and Orientalist representation. In particular, *The Bad Muslim Discount* offers an important context because it negotiates competing conceptualizations of Islam, Pakistan, the Middle East, gender, modernity, tradition, and cultural belonging.

The present study therefore contributes by applying a focused Cognitive Grammar model to selected passages from the novel and demonstrating how particular grammatical and lexical choices construct these cultural and ideological meanings.

#### 5. Statement of the Purpose

Comparatively limited attention has been given to how cultural and gendered identities are linguistically constructed through cognitive processes. The problem addressed by this study is therefore the lack of a Cognitive Grammar-based analysis explaining how linguistic choices shape the representation of cultural difference, gender roles, and identity negotiation in the novel.

#### 7. Methodology

##### 7.1 Research Design

The study employs a qualitative, interpretive textual-analysis design. Qualitative analysis is appropriate because the purpose is not to quantify grammatical structures but to interpret how linguistic forms contribute to conceptualization and literary meaning.

##### 7.2 Text Selection

The primary text is Masood's *The Bad Muslim Discount* (2021). A purposive selection of extracts was made on the basis of their relevance to the study's analytical categories. The selected passages include representations of: niqab and female identity; patriarchal authority; domestic violence; honor killing; Muslim religious practice; Pakistani cultural identity; sensory experience; modernity and tradition; freedom and confinement; urban environmental experience; and cultural difference and Orientalist discourse.

##### 7.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis follows five stages:

**Stage 1:** Identification of significant lexical and grammatical constructions.

**Stage 2:** Identification of the relevant Cognitive Grammar category.

**Stage 3:** Analysis of the construction's conceptualization.

**Stage 4:** Interpretation of the resulting representation of character, culture, identity, or social relationship.

**Stage 5:** Consideration of the broader ideological and literary significance of the representation.

##### **Cognitive Grammar (CG) as its theoretical framework**

This study adopts Ronald Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (CG) as its theoretical framework, which conceptualizes language as an integral part of human cognition and views grammatical structures as meaningful symbolic units rather than autonomous formal structures (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008). The study particularly draws on the key concepts of construal, figure-ground organization, profiling, trajector-landmark alignment, and perspective to examine how linguistic

choices shape the conceptualization and representation of events, participants, relationships, and experiences in the selected text (Langacker, 1987, 1991). Construal serves as the central analytical concept, focusing on how the same situation can be presented from different conceptual viewpoints (Langacker, 2008); figure-ground organization examines how certain entities or events are foregrounded while others are backgrounded (Langacker, 1987); profiling identifies the aspects of a conceptual structure that receive particular prominence (Langacker, 1987, 1991); trajector-landmark alignment explores how participants and their relationships are organized within a scene (Langacker, 1991); and perspective investigates the viewpoint or position from which situations are presented and conceptualized (Langacker, 2008). Together, these concepts enable the study to move beyond the identification of grammatical forms and examine how grammar directs attention, foregrounds particular elements, constructs relationships, and creates specific viewpoints and meanings within the text (Langacker, 2008).

### **Application of Cognitive Grammar to the Selected Extracts**

Cognitive Grammar provides a useful framework for examining how linguistic choices construct particular ways of conceptualizing people, events, relationships, identities, and social practices. In the selected extracts from Masood's *The Bad Muslim Discount*, the concepts of construal, figure-ground organization, profiling, trajector-landmark alignment, and perspective reveal how the narrative directs the reader's attention toward cultural and gendered identities.

#### **1. Construal**

Construal is particularly evident in the representation of female religious identity and control. In the statement, "*Once Azza ran out of the house without her niqab... He locked her in a room and didn't feed her for three days*" (Masood, 2021, p. 259), the construction "*ran out*" construes Azza as an agent attempting to move beyond a restrictive domestic space, while "*locked her in a room*" construes the male figure as an agent exercising physical control. The contrast between movement (*ran out*) and confinement (*locked her in*) produces opposing conceptualizations of freedom and restriction. Similarly, "*She was going to leave her phone behind, ditch the niqab and abandon her email accounts*" (Masood, 2021, p. 326) construes liberation through a series of dynamic verbs *leave*, *ditch*, and *abandon* which conceptualize identity as something that can be physically discarded. The linguistic construction therefore presents the niqab not simply as clothing but as part of a social identity from which the character seeks distance.

The same mechanism operates in "*I hadn't been permitted to leave home in Baghdad without my niqab. Nothing had changed*" (Masood, 2021, p. 131). The passive construction "*hadn't been permitted*" backgrounds the authority responsible for restricting Safwa while foregrounding her lack of agency. However, the later statement, "*Maybe freedom is addictive, like the fruit of a poppy*," reconstrues freedom as a substance capable of producing dependency. This metaphor conceptualizes freedom as an experiential force that changes the individual's relationship with social restrictions. Thus, through construal, grammatical and metaphorical choices guide the reader toward interpreting female agency as emerging through resistance to imposed restrictions (Masood, 2021, p. 131).

Construal also operates in the representation of honor and violence. In "*I should've thrown you out when you were born. I should have killed your mother...*" (Masood, 2021, p. 256), the modal construction "*should have*" retrospectively construes violence as an action that, from the speaker's perspective, ought to have occurred. The subsequent statement, "*Only dishonor and misery comes from weakness*," constructs weakness as a causal source of social suffering, thereby presenting honor as a conceptual system through which violence can be rationalized. Likewise, "*he shot them both in the head and then he shot himself as well*" (Masood, 2021, p. 307) construes honor-related violence as a sequence of deliberate actions, while "*attempted honor killing*" (Masood, 2021, p. 362) linguistically packages violence within the conceptual domain of honor.

## 2. Figure–Ground Organization

The figure–ground principle demonstrates what the narrative places in the reader's immediate conceptual focus and what it relegates to the background. In *“Abu struck my right cheek with the back of his hand, and my head twisted sharply”* (Masood, 2021, p. 128), Abu is the primary Figure because he occupies the agentive position, whereas the narrator becomes the affected participant. The grammatical organization therefore directs attention toward the exercise of male physical power over the female body. This foregrounding becomes even stronger in:

*“Abu would hit me for any reason at all... until I was afraid to move at all around him. And then he hit me for my silence...”* (Masood, 2021, p. 128).

Here, Abu's repeated actions form the Figure, while Safwa's emotional and physical responses constitute the Ground against which his violence is understood. The repeated foregrounding of *“hit”* constructs violence as a dominant feature of the relationship.

A similar figure–ground arrangement occurs in *“Karachi was screaming at its inhabitants and they were screaming right back”* (Masood, 2021, p. 11). Karachi is linguistically foregrounded as the Figure through the human action *“screaming,”* while its inhabitants become participants responding to the city's condition. The city is consequently conceptualized as an active social entity rather than merely a geographical location. Likewise, *“the city drowns a little”* (Masood, 2021, p. 14) foregrounds Karachi as a vulnerable entity, while flooding and inadequate drainage constitute the background conditions through which the city's vulnerability is understood.

## 3. Profiling

Profiling is especially significant where particular aspects of cultural and religious experience are made conceptually prominent. In *“She entered the prayer hall wearing a full niqab, a black, flowing garment with a veil that covered everything but her pale green eyes”* (Masood, 2021, p. 184), the description profiles the niqab and the eyes. The lexical contrast between *“covered everything”* and *“exposed eyes”* directs attention to concealment and visibility. The subsequent statement, *“Her exposed eyes, however, were not modest,”* profiles the eyes as the unexpected site through which the narrator evaluates the concept of modesty. The linguistic construction therefore destabilizes a straightforward association between physical covering and moral modesty.

Profiling is also evident in *“My parents’ house always smells of saffron and lemons”* (Masood, 2021, p. 231). The sensory verbs and nouns profile smell as a central element of cultural memory, transforming the domestic space into a conceptual domain associated with particular foods, places, and experiences. Similarly, *“A ghazal was playing... [and] the night’s pleasantly perfumed air [was] scented by Ma’s precious jasmines”* (Masood, 2021, p. 67) profiles sound and smell, constructing home through multiple sensory experiences.

The same profiling mechanism occurs in *“black painting with silver Arabic calligraphy”* (Masood, 2021, p. 60), *“the thick wad of spices”* (Masood, 2021, p. 260), and *“takht—a large, low wood bench covered with a bedsheet”* (Masood, 2021, p. 34). These expressions profile culturally specific objects and material practices, thereby making Pakistani/Muslim cultural identity conceptually salient.

## 4. Trajectory–Landmark Alignment

The concept of Trajectory–Landmark alignment is particularly useful for examining relationships of power and dependence. In *“He locked her in a room and didn’t feed her for three days”* (Masood, 2021, p. 259), the male participant functions as the Trajectory, because his actions organize the scene, while Azza functions as the affected participant and the room becomes the spatial Landmark. The construction establishes a conceptual relationship in which male authority controls female movement and access to basic necessities.

Similarly, in *“Abu would hit me for any reason at all”* (Masood, 2021, p. 128), Abu functions as the Trajector, while the narrator is the Landmark-like affected participant against whom his actions are conceptualized. This alignment grammatically constructs a hierarchical relationship between the aggressor and victim.

The same relationship can be observed in:

*“Stay trapped here, with your legs closed, if you want. Or you can be a little more flexible and you’ll have a chance to live the life you want. Up to you.”* (Masood, 2021, p. 146).

Here, the construction places Safwa's body and sexuality within a conceptual relationship controlled by another speaker. *“Stay trapped”* conceptualizes her as physically and socially constrained, whereas *“be a little more flexible”* presents compliance as the condition for obtaining freedom. The Trajector–Landmark arrangement therefore contributes to the conceptualization of female agency as controlled by patriarchal power.

## 5. Perspective

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7. The concept of **perspective** is central to the extracts because many of them are presented through Safwa's first-person consciousness. In *“What had I done wrong before I’d even drawn breath, to be sent from heaven to Iraq, in this time, to Abu’s house?”* (Masood, 2021, p. 279), the interrogative construction establishes Safwa's perspective as one of confusion and existential injustice. The conceptualization of being *“sent from heaven”* to *“Abu's house”* creates a contrast between a positively valued heavenly domain and a negatively evaluated domestic environment.

8. Perspective is also explicit in:

*“All I could think about was the certainty that Abu was going to hurt me”* (Masood, 2021, p. 331).

The expression *“all I could think about”* restricts the conceptual field to Safwa's mental experience. The subsequent comparison, *“like lava becoming rock,”* conceptualizes Abu's gaze through an image of dangerous transformation. The event is therefore not presented from an objective external perspective but through Safwa's fearful consciousness.

The extract *“The weather can change quickly, Safwa”* (Masood, 2021, p. 41) further demonstrates perspectival complexity. Safwa explicitly recognizes the metaphor but rejects its literal applicability to Baghdad, showing that she simultaneously occupies the position of experiencer, interpreter, and critic of the metaphor. This metacognitive awareness gives her perspective considerable interpretive authority.

## 6. Construal of Cultural and Orientalist Representation

The CG framework can also illuminate the conceptualization of cultural difference in the extracts concerning Pakistan, Islam, and the Middle East. The statement *“The thing that surprises you when you enter a Pakistani home after a long absence is the smell”* (Masood, 2021, p. 231) construes the Pakistani home primarily through olfactory experience. The subsequent description of *“desi food”* as something that *“assault[s] their noses”* (Masood, 2021, p. 231) employs an aggressive action schema to conceptualize cultural food as an invading force. The expression therefore constructs cultural difference through sensory contrast.

Similarly, *“If there is another group of people that sweats the small stuff as profusely as Muslims do, I have not come across them”* (Masood, 2021, p. 216) uses the bodily expression *“sweats the small stuff”* to construe Muslims as excessively concerned with minor matters. Here, profiling and construal work together to foreground a generalized characterization of Muslims.

This becomes particularly significant when read alongside McLeod's discussion of Orientalism. The claim that *“The Orient is not just different; it is oddly different—unusual, fantastic, bizarre”* (McLeod, 2000, p. 44) demonstrates how Orientalist discourse construes the East through difference and otherness. Likewise, the characterization of the Orient as *“timeless,” “changeless,”* and *“static”* (McLeod, 2000, p. 44) represents Eastern societies through a

conceptual frame of stasis rather than progress. Cognitive Grammar helps identify how such representations are constructed linguistically through profiling, construal, and perspective. The statement “*Orientalism makes assumptions about gender*” (McLeod, 2000, p. 45) is particularly relevant to the extracts concerning niqab, honor, marriage, and female mobility. The repeated profiling of women's clothing and bodily restrictions can therefore be examined as part of a broader conceptualization of gender and cultural difference.

### 7. Conceptualizing Modernity and Tradition

The extracts on religion also reveal contrasting conceptualizations of past and present. In:

*“In order to improve their fortunes, Muslims needed to regain God’s favor... A return to the way things were done before would surely bring a return to the glory that had come before.”* (Masood, 2021, p. 20),

the verbs “regain” and “return” construe religious revival as a movement backward toward an idealized past. The past is profiled as a source of “glory,” while the present is implicitly conceptualized as deficient. The expression therefore creates a past-as-glory / present-as-decline conceptualization. The same contrast appears humorously in:

*“my father asked her if she wanted to sell our car and buy a camel instead”* (Masood, 2021, p. 20).

The car–camel contrast creates opposing conceptual domains of modernity and tradition. The car profiles contemporary mobility, whereas the camel profiles an imagined return to the Prophet's historical context. From a Cognitive Grammar perspective, the humor emerges from the juxtaposition of two incompatible conceptual frames.

Similarly, “*The name of the celebration translates to ‘the Festival of Sacrifice.’ Yes, Islam has a marketing problem*” (Masood, 2021, p. 8) reconstrues a religious practice through the conceptual domain of marketing. The juxtaposition of religious sacrifice and commercial promotion creates an ironic perspective through which the narrator evaluates the cultural practice.

### 7. Personification and Environmental Construal

Cognitive Grammar is also useful for examining environmental descriptions. In “*under siege by its own climate*” (Masood, 2021, p. 10), climate is construed as an attacking force, while the city becomes a victim under siege. Similarly, the “*indifferent sun*” (Masood, 2021, p. 11) profiles the sun through a human psychological attribute, while “*Karachi was screaming at its inhabitants and they were screaming right back*” (Masood, 2021, p. 11) conceptualizes the city as a human participant engaged in reciprocal communication.

In “*every year, the city drowns a little*” (Masood, 2021, p. 14), the city is construed as a living organism capable of drowning. The subsequent image of “*Cars float along roads like rudderless boats*” (Masood, 2021, p. 14) constructs urban flooding through a water-and-navigation schema, turning roads into waterways and cars into boats. These expressions demonstrate how metaphorical construal allows readers to conceptualize environmental and infrastructural problems through embodied experiences.

Taken together, the five Cognitive Grammar concepts reveal that Masood's linguistic choices do not simply describe social reality; they construct particular conceptualizations of it. Construal shows how freedom, violence, religion, modernity, and cultural difference are presented from particular viewpoints; figure–ground organization demonstrates how women, perpetrators, victims, cities, and cultural practices are foregrounded or backgrounded; profiling identifies the specific bodily, sensory, religious, and cultural features made salient; trajector–landmark alignment reveals relationships of authority, dependence, and control; and perspective demonstrates how experiences are filtered through Safwa's consciousness and through the narrator's evaluative viewpoint. These mechanisms collectively contribute to the representation of gendered power, religious identity, cultural difference, modernity, tradition, and Orientalist discourse in *The Bad Muslim Discount* (Masood, 2021). The extracts can consequently be

interpreted not merely as instances of stylistic description but as linguistic constructions of social and cultural meaning, consistent with Cognitive Grammar's view that grammatical and lexical choices are inseparable from conceptualization (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008).

## 8. Discussion

### 8.1 Construal of Female Identity and Freedom

Masood constructs female identity through contrasting construals of freedom and confinement. In *"Azza ran out of the house without her niqab"* and *"He locked her in a room,"* the verb "ran out" presents Azza as an autonomous, moving participant, whereas "locked her in" foregrounds male agency and female restriction (Masood, 2021, p. 259). Similarly, the passive construction *"I hadn't been permitted to leave home"* backgrounds the authority responsible for restriction while foregrounding Safwa's limited agency (p. 131).

Freedom is further reconceptualized metaphorically in *"Maybe freedom is addictive, like the fruit of a poppy"* (Masood, 2021, p. 131). Here, freedom is construed as an addictive substance, suggesting that once experienced, it becomes difficult to relinquish. These contrasting constructions show how Cognitive Grammar explains female identity through different ways of construing agency, restriction, and psychological experience (Allan, 2024).

### 8.2 Figure–Ground Organization and Patriarchal Power

Masood's representation of patriarchal power is also shaped by Figure–Ground organization. In *"Abu struck my right cheek with the back of his hand,"* Abu is foregrounded as the active Figure, while the narrator is construed primarily as the affected participant (Masood, 2021, p. 128). The repeated construction *"Abu would hit me"* reinforces violence as the dominant feature of their relationship, while *"I was afraid to move"* highlights the resulting restriction of Safwa's physical agency.

Thus, grammatical prominence contributes to the conceptualization of male authority and female vulnerability. Cognitive Grammar does not assume that such grammatical forms possess inherently ideological meanings; rather, their significance emerges from the interaction of linguistic structure, contextual knowledge, and the reader's conceptualization of the situation.

### 8.3 Profiling Religious Identity

Religious identity is constructed through the profiling of clothing, bodily visibility, and practices. In *"She entered the prayer hall wearing a full niqab, a black, flowing garment with a veil that covered everything but her pale green eyes,"* the niqab and veil are profiled as markers of religious identity, while the exposed eyes create a contrast between covering and visibility (Masood, 2021, p. 184). The statement *"Her exposed eyes, however, were not modest"* further complicates the relationship between physical covering and moral modesty.

Similarly, *"leave her phone behind, ditch the niqab and abandon her email accounts"* places the niqab alongside technological and communicative objects, construing them collectively as elements of an identity that can be abandoned (Masood, 2021, p. 326). The verbs "leave," "ditch," and "abandon" therefore profile a conceptual movement away from an earlier religious and social identity.

## 9. Findings

The study finds that Cognitive Grammar effectively explains the construction of cultural and gendered identities in *The Bad Muslim Discount*. Construal shows that characters interpret cultural and gender experiences from different viewpoints, while profiling highlights particular aspects of identity and social experience. Figure–ground organization demonstrates how some identities and cultural differences are foregrounded against particular social backgrounds. Trajectory–landmark alignment reveals relationships of agency, dependence, power, and social

positioning between characters. Perspective further shows that identity is shaped by the character's social and cultural position and by the way experiences are viewed. Overall, the findings indicate that cultural and gendered identities are represented as dynamic, relational, and context-dependent rather than fixed.

## 10. Conclusion

The study concludes that Cognitive Grammar provides a useful linguistic framework for examining cultural and gendered identity in *The Bad Muslim Discount*. The analysis demonstrates that the novel constructs identity through different ways of viewing, organizing, and foregrounding experience. Cultural difference, gender roles, belonging, and modernity emerge through relationships between characters and their social and cultural environments. Thus, the study establishes that identity in the novel is constructed through language, cognition, perspective, and social experience, making Cognitive Grammar a valuable approach to the linguistic study of contemporary multicultural fiction.

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