

COUNTING ROLAND BARTHES'S SEMIOTIC ELEMENTS TO DEVDUTT

Pattnaik's Shiva

An Introduction

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Abstract

Life is symbolized something. In the way, Roland Barthes found his theory Semiotics. French Semiotician discovered the real-life happenings to experience some trust in symbols and created a whole new world to the definition of symbols. Making a way to the opinions or perspectives which people assumed to be the myths. Juxtaposing Devdutt's *Shiva: An Introduction* to Semiotic elements. The

five different kinds of semiotic elements like Hermeneutic, Proairetic, Semantic, Symbolic, and Cultural to Devdutt's *Shiva: An Introduction*.

Keywords: Barthes, Devdutt, Shiva, Signifier, Signified.

Barthes was a French theorist and semiotician. His famous *Mythologies* made their mark on readers. This proves the signs and symbols of his writings, done with the next semiotic writer. Barthes popularized the semiotics but beforehand the father of semiotics was Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, semiotician, and philosopher. When Saussure had explained, his binary oppositions of semiotics, “*sign—signified, meaning—value, language—speech, synchronic—diachronic, internal linguistics—external linguistics, and so on.*” (Wikipedia)

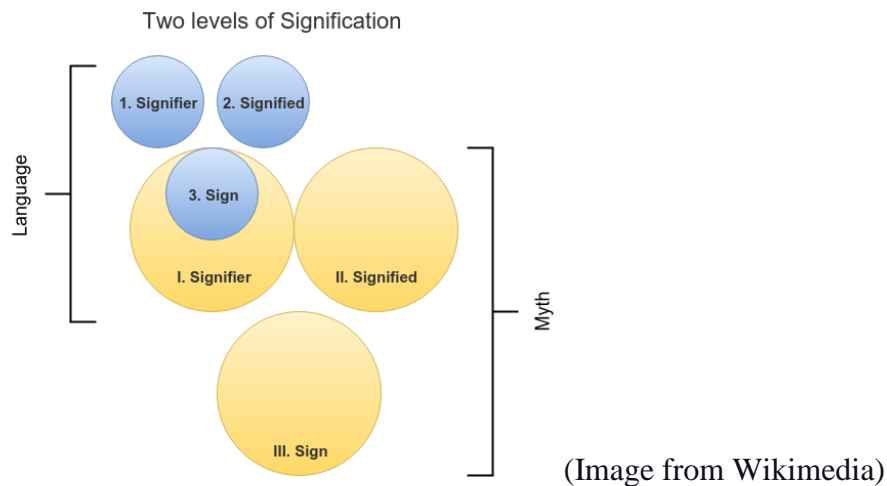
After Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce wrote on the theory of semiotics. Before Barthes, Peirce made clear about the semiotics in a different view of Saussure, as Wikipedia mentions:

Peirce argued that logic is the formal study of signs in the broadest sense, not only signs that are artificial, linguistic, or symbolic but also signs that are semblances or are indexical such as reactions. Peirce held that "all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs", along with their representational and inferential relations.

Peirce also explained semiotics or semiosis. He defined three processes of determination, a first was determined or influenced to be a sign. The second process which determined by the object. The third process is determined by the interpretant. Barthes in his book *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), framed semiotics into three branches, Semantics, Syntactic/Syntax, and Pragmatics. The three

branches have different perspectives, Semantics represents signs and symbols without meaning. Syntactic/Syntax represents structures of signs and symbols. Finally, Pragmatics represents psychological, biological, and sociological which involve the functioning of signs or symbols.

Barthes in his *Mythologies* wrote about the theory of semiotics with myths. As Indians believe myth as devotion and scriptures from ancient. Barthes argues about people's opinions in the first place and how do people see other people's habitual actions. Barthes explains the two levels of the signification of semiotics.



This paper follows the semiotic elements of Barthes which has five different codes. They are Hermeneutic code or enigma code, The Proairetic code, The Semantic code, The Symbolic Code, and The Cultural code.

The Hermeneutic code or enigma code which considered to be the mystery one which Barthes attempted in audience guessing, revealing secrets at an unexpected time. The Proairetic code or action code in which future action takes place. The Hermeneutic code and Proairetic code create tension in the plot of the writings. The Semantic code has connotation meaning, a meaning which hideous in the plot.

The Symbolic code is similar to Semantic code, which has deeper meanings than Semantic code. The Cultural code is typically either religion or science, this code particularly refers to sayings, proverbs, cliches, and other word meaning sets.

Devdutt is an Indian mythologist, illustrator, speaker, and author. He is best known for his Hindu folklores and fables. A doctor turned to a writer, made him urge to write on Indian mythologies, as he says

I have personally experienced it. I am trained as a medical doctor. I did not want to study surgery. Don't ask me why? I love mythology too much. I wanted to learn mythology. But there is nowhere you can study. So, I had to teach myself. And mythology doesn't *pay. (TED Talks,2009)

Devdutt's first book *Shiva: An Introduction* published in 1997. This non – fiction explains the life of Lord Shiva and his attainment of devotion. *Shiva: An Introduction* reveals Lord Shiva's 108 names and their reason. Devdutt did several pieces of research and made the non – fiction, a fantastic piece. Shiva is known as Destroyer and he is the one who destroys evil in the universe and brings peace. Mostly in India, people always get devoted to Lord Shiva, totally surrendering themselves to the lord. People have dimensional opinions of sacred temperament. In India, people who fear lord Shiva believed that when a wrong deed has been done, lord Shiva opens his third eye to destroy the wrong and the punishment would be severe.

Juxtaposing Barthes semiotics to Devdutt's *Shiva: An Introduction* brings a notary change which had reflective on myths, signs, and symbols. Bringing up Barthes

semiotic elements of five codes to indulge with Devdutt's work. The five codes are Hermeneutic, Proairetic, Semantic, Symbolic, and Cultural.

The Hermeneutic code compared to Devdutt's introductory part of *Shiva: An Introduction*, lord Shiva was the first creation of Brahma, the left half was a woman and the right half was a man. The mistake which Brahma done in his eternity. After his mistake, he never created humans for several decades. Then he created Prajapatis, later he created a woman in the Universe, named her Ushas. After creation, Brahma fell in love with Ushas and started to chase her in every form of creature. Ushas changed her appearance to cow and Brahma turned himself to bull, the creation of cow and bull made in the world. Then, the creation of mare and stallion were Ushas and Brahma turned themselves. Ushas and Brahma turned into goose and dolphin, then a mosquito, a crab, a lion, and a lioness.

This code can be compared that how Brahma stopped chasing Ushas and created every creature in the world. All other heavenly beings screamed for stopping Brahma. Here Devdutt explained the chasing which ends,

Brahma's brows arose a being, terrible in appearance, wild in disposition. He was Rudra, the howler. Rudra raised his bow with a menacing growl and let loose the fiery missile that struck Brahma and pinned him onto the sky. Ushas was saved!
(*Shiva An Introduction*, 2)

The Hermeneutic code refers to the mystery behind the chasing of Brahma and tension between the heavenly bodies that who going to stop Brahma brings the comparison to the semiotic elements of code.

The Proairetic code or action code compared to the incident where Lord Kama, a god of desire, was destroyed by Lord Shiva for an optimistic purpose. Lords of lords decided that Lord Shiva could marry Parvati after his first wife Sati passed away. They sent Lord Kama to seduce Shiva to get attracted to Parvati's beauty. The Kama took his bow pulled his arrow towards Shiva. Shiva's heart pierced with a love arrow. Devdutt writes,

Shiva's body that had forsaken desire once again felt a yearning for pleasure. But his still mind had no intention of dancing to the tunes of the flesh. He decided to quell the temptation, destroy its very source... cold-bloodedly, without anger. (22)

The Kama was destroyed by the opening of Shiva's third eye. His third eye created a fiery missile and scorched Kama's body and he became ash.

The Proairetic code or action code is connected with Shiva who demolishes God of Desire. The tension and action which the Kama had pierced Shiva's heart with love versus Shiva who scorched the Kama into ashes.

The Semantic code has connotative meaning in the plot of the book. There was an incident in Devdutt's *Shiva An Introduction*. Punyakasi was a virgin, her birth purpose was to kill the demon and she can't marry till her death, this was decided by Gods. Punyakasi longed to be like other women in the city. None of the men in the city married her. She prayed to Shiva to be her husband. Shiva asked for the bridal price, for which the Gods replied, "A sugarcane without rings, a betel leaf without veins and a coconut without eyes." (65)

These things which not exist in nature. Gods planned Shiva not to marry Punyakasi. The connotative meaning or semantic code which there was no sugarcane without

rings, a betel leaf without veins, and coconut without veins. The hideous meaning which Gods stopped Shiva not to marry Punyakasi.

The Symbolic code has deeper meanings than semantic code. In Devdutt's writings, Shiva can destroy evil and also love them unconditionally. "He who is rejected by everyone will always find refuge with Shiva" (75) As destroyer can also be seen with the people of good and evil. Shiva is called an 'agora'. Shiva had habits of smoking, liquor and he even looked ugly. One of the incidents in which Daksha, Sati's father, mentioned Shiva's personality and behavior,

Shiva wanders in cremation grounds with a rowdy bunch of renegades consuming intoxicants that are forbidden in decent society. He sings and dances wherever he wants to, with little heed to decorum and protocol. He has no home, no possessions, no family, no vocation; he is a no-good drifter, ritually impure, unsuitable for any of my daughters especially Sati, he said. (13)

This happened when God arranged a wedding between Sati and Shiva. The Cultural code is compared to Shiva's devotees who worshipped him wholeheartedly. The code represents the culture of India, mainly in the beliefs of Hindu. Devdutt says, Shiva is an important god of the Hindu pantheon. He has been worshipped for over 5000 years and is still popular as ever. All Shiva – *bhaktas* bow before the same linga, chant the same mantras, perform the same pujas, but to differentiate people he represents different things – from the simple to the sublime. (117)

The Cultural code represents the people who trust their religion, follow their principles, whether the story of Shiva happened or not, people had fear of him whenever they do wrong deeds. Knowing Shiva that certainly true plot or

imaginary myth, culture has been followed from 5000 years to the current technological world.

To conclude, Barthes's semiotic elements can be compared to Devdutt's *Shiva An Introduction* by including his semiotic elements which have five codes. The signifier message that Devdutt's *Shiva An Introduction* had been successfully signified that it reached the audience.

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