

The semiotic analysis of the poetry of the poet Mahagama Sekara

(The content analysis is based on 10 poems in the book “*Heta Irak Payai*” written by Mahagama Sekara)

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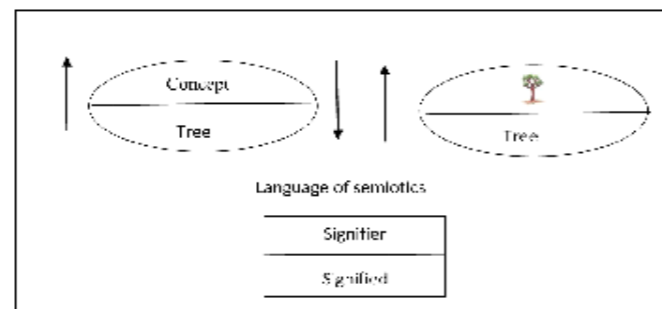
Introduction

When analyzing the philosophical perspective of any work, it is possible to speculate its use of Semiotics. When paying attention to the free verse generation in Colombo among various poetic generations, it is crystal clear that the modern poet wanted to perceive the human mind based on the gamut of individual experiences through being detached from the odes of the ancient poetic tradition. As a result, the modern poet is distanced from similes and metaphors used in the old poetic language. Mahagama Sekara is a poet who entered the tradition of poetry in an era when it was very hard to come to a precise and clear conclusion of the future of Sinhala poetry in terms of free verse tradition.

Even though a literary work doesn't occur by a divine force, three crucial elements have been named by ancient Indian intellectuals such as excellence, sense and practice. Excellence is having innate wisdom and creative skill on a particular subject. Sense is the knowledge and practicality in life. The ability of choosing congenial and non-congenial elements for a literary work is named as sense by the intellectuals and repeatedly engaging in composing literary work is practice. When analyzing the semiotics of a work, the writer's creative power too has a direct impact on it.

The word, “Semiotic” has been extracted from the Latin word “Semin” which gives the meaning “sign”. It has been analysed as the system of signs in symbolism and their task in creative work. The concept of expression that language consists of signs and symbols is connected with the Semiotic. The professionals in semiotic express that language consists of a system of signs based on various discourses. This research has been done based on the semiotic analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure. In his analysis, he divided the sign mainly in two parts.

1. Signifier
2. Signified

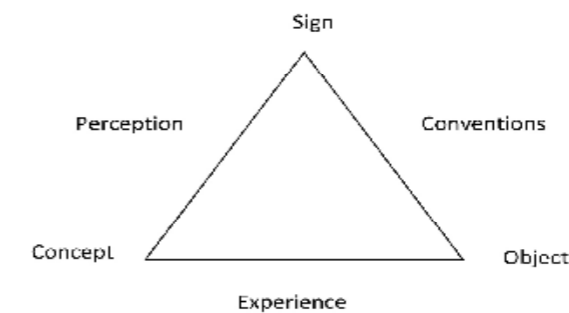


In this regard, the abstract condition of an image, object or sound is identified as the signifier. In other words, here the word “tree” is a signifier. The signified is the image which comes to your mind immediately after you hear the word “tree”. In other words, this is a concept which is represented by the signifier. This research is conducted in line with the semiotic analysis. The



professionals in semiotic, reveal that the sign is a combination of the signifier and the signified. We can capture the hidden concepts in the language via semiotic analysis.

Mental process applied to the signs



“Amberto Echo” says that signs generate emotions which are true or false as well as good or bad. When Plato introduces the sign in semiotic, his attention is paid to the image of the name. Thereby he points out that the sign is identified by the iconicity based on the academic imitations and imaginations. Verbal signs are natural and traditional. He also explains that ideas are independent representatives of words.

The sign is in operation along with a mental process. Charles Sanders Peirce analyses it in this manner.

It is manifested hereby that there is a combination between the sign and the concept. There is also a link between the concept and the object. The concept and the object are connected by the experience of man. Moreover, convention is the result of the combination between the concept and the object. It could be the connection among the culture or the society or the social class. Charles Sanders states that the sign could be identified in terms of this methodology.

Charles Sanders also introduces three types of various signs.

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1. Symbolic signs
2. Iconic signs
3. Indexical signs

There is no clear combination between the sign and the object. A place which is full of water is interpreted as the ocean by language. The particular letters for ocean are united in such a way which interprets that meaning. That idea is not interpreted when the letters are written individually by way of o-c-e-a-n. In this type of signs, it can also be identified that there is no direct combination between the object and the concept. (Winfried North- Handbook of Semiotics)

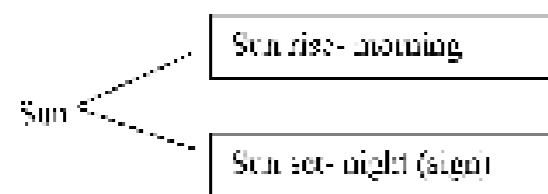
Religious paintings and sculpture can be cited as examples for iconic signs. The indexical signs are the signs which have a direct linkage with the particular word. For example, dark clouds are a sign of impending rain.

Umberto Eco divides signs mainly into two categories.

1. Natural signs

This is again divided into two sub categories.

- i. The natural phenomenon introduced by the sign



- ii. The sign explaining the para humanising factor.

Chicken pox- God's ailment

2. Artificial signs

This also has two categories

- i. Introducing something deliberately

Barking-dog

- ii. Introducing primary tasks deliberately

Chair – availability of seating

Apart from these, signs

1. Introduces subsidiary tasks

Necklace- affluence

2. Collective tasks

Police uniform- uniformity and the unity of the tasks

(Guillenmett , Lucle; Cossette Psiane ; The Semiotic Process and the Classification of Sign)

In semantic analysis, it is easier to investigate deep ideas than analyzing the meaning of the words. The importance of the role of the sign is that it acts exposing us to the things that we know. (Cobley and Janz 2000)

This research attempts to study how Mahagama Sekara has demonstrated these signs through this research.

It could be identified in Semiotic analysis that Sekara, who did various experiments in free verse has tried to evoke a deep social discourse through words by way of irony.

The objectives

The main objective of the research is to study the semiotics used in Mahagama Sekara poetry. Apart from that the sub objectives of the research are,

- To study the free verse tradition.
- To identify the social reality perceived by Mahagama Sekara as a poet.
- To identify novel creative trends in the poem.
- To identify the semiotics of the poetry via discourse analysis

The Research problem

To investigate the nature of the semiotic used in Mahagama sekara's poetry.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the research is that he has attempted to entertain the reader by generating semiotics through simple and ironic language with a realistic texture.

Methodology

The main methodology of the research is the method of content analysis based on 10 poems written in his book "Heta Irak Payai".

Study Area

The research is limited to 10 poems coming in the poetry book of Mahagama Sekara, "Heta Irak Payai"

1. Obe digati Nil Es Walata...
2. November....
3. Haduwa....
4. Himi...
5. Oba Hinahena Wita...
6. Nelum Kolaya Matha...
7. Siththaraneni...
8. Noliyu Kawiyak...
9. Ma Obe rath Adara Urana Wita...
10. Kusalane...

Selected Poems

01. Obe digati nil as wala lassanata
Eda mahath adaranyak Upani mata
E lassana daka
Ma sitha
Math wee athi bawa dana
Oba
Sitha matha helamin
Nek lesin mayam balum
Ahinsaka e asata
Kapatikam Iganweeya
Thawath ma math karana adahasin
Dan E asa
Lassana natha
02. Janawari Masayeni
Awrudda arabune

- Ma punchi dawaswala
Eheth
Dan eya patan ganne
Novamber masayen
Novamber masaye oba magen wen uneth
03. Ma oben ura gath
haduwen
Oba mage athmaya ura gathi
04. "Himi
Nubage Kaya pibida
Ma sirura badana wita
Nubata drohiwa
Masitha ohu samaga ekathu wei."
05. Oba hinahena wita
Mulu lowa
Oba samagin Sina sei
Oba walapena wita
Mulu lowa
Oba athahara sina sei
06. Nelum kolaya matha
Pini bidha
Pokuna amatha melesa Kiyeya
"Sohoura
Oba
Mata wada madak loku
Diya binduwak pamani

- 07. Siththaraneni
 Kiyanu mana mata
 Oba adina gahanu ruu siyallama
 Hadu kadulin kima
 Santhosayen sitina
 Gahaniyak penwanna
 E wita
 Mama ayage ruwa adinnam
- 08. No liyuu kawiyak men
 Sitha thula
 Oba naliyai
- 09. Ma
 Obage rath adara urana wita
 thana puduwa
 Ershiyawen barawa kalu pahawa
 Udu huruwa
 Edesa balamin siti
- 10. Kusalane
 Luu
 Midiusa
 Kusalane
 Hadaya gani
 kusalane
 Luu
 Wisha uwa
 Kusalane
 Hadaya gani

Only the semiotics of the poetry are hereby analysed.

Commonly stated, in the usage of literary devices, similes and metaphors have been rarely employed. Equivocation has been the major technique used in most of the poems.

The use of techniques and Semiotics

Poem Number	Poem	Simile	Metaphor	Equivocation	Pun	Hyperbole	Repetition
1	Oba adina gahanu ruu siyallama	-	Figurative	yes	-	-	-
2	Mama ayage ruwa adinnam	-	-	Yes (Inherently expressed departure)	-	-	Yes (Repetition)
3	Haduwa	-	-	Yes	-	-	-
4	Ma	-	-	Yes (adjective)	-	-	-
5	Oba beshena wita	-	-	Yes (human nature)	-	-	-
6	Kiyanu mana mata	-	-	Yes (Sarcasm)	-	-	-
7	Santhosayen sitina	-	-	Yes (Specific about woman)	-	-	-
8	Kawiyak men	Manly	Manly	-	-	-	-
9	Ma	-	-	Yes	-	-	-
10	Kusalane	-	-	difference	-	-	-

The point of view, the use of theme and the semiotics

Poem Number	Theme	Point of View	Reality/Fantasy	Symbols
1	Guilt Eased	First person Point of view	Remain of reality	The construction of the world has been brought closer to the reader by the use of symbols.
2	Seduction			
3	Love			
4	Lust			
5	About human nature			
6	Social discrepancy			
7	Wounded			
8	Unexpressed love			
9	Lust			
10	difference			

Discourse analysis in Mahagama Sekara’s poems

The semiotic of the particular work could be critically analyzed by symbolic discourse analysis. Discourse analysis could be done on several level according to the poems.

1. Personal discourse
2. Social discourse
3. Cultural discourse

Though the person agrees with many things there is no particular idea of how that agreement was made. Power and force have been indirectly used for that. According to the personal discourse, it is an analysis regarding the relationships developed as social creatures. In the analysis of the man and woman relationship, the belief that a woman has to be inevitably subject to man’s care is a figment of imagination and thus the thinking of man and woman is contradictory. These factors are discussed in the personal discourse. Mahagama Sekara has aptly used this critical social analysis in his poetry.

The following factors which could be identified in the personal discourse analysis, appear in his short dramas.

- Personal etiquette - personal attitudes
- Personal opinions - personal knowledge
- Social factors - the knowledge of character stories

There are many variations of the main analytical features as defined by the social discourse analysis. Therefore, the thinking of man and society at large is exposed. In the analysis of Mahagama Sekara’s poetry, it is evident that he has analyzed society deeply. In this regard, his main focus has been on,

- External social relationships – democracy/aristocracy
- Group relationships – criticism/racism
- Sex

Moreover, his analytical perspective is evident in areas such as

- Social expansion – multi culture
- Social cultural etiquettes – team spirit in the society
- Discrepancies – attitude
- Opposition

The attitude towards culture is plays a major role in culturally analyzing the discourse. A human being breathes culture even before he is born. He has been a cultural animal even

The title, language and the Semiotics of the poem

Poem Number	The title for the poem	Symbols	The use of language	Symbols
1.	The titles have been not used	The script has been made to build up a discussion on poems in line with the reader's imaginative strength.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using only the familiar words - No complex words - Using very simple words - The words of the poet "Kusadhara" (the cup) are divided outlining the image of a cup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compelling the reader to perceive the poem through his life - Suggesting the fact that certain main phenomena
2.				
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before his birth. In other words, all the relationships in human life are connected to an immense cultural network. The poet is using this cultural discourse for his work. The poet's probing and questioning of cultural identities is strikingly demonstrated through the choice of very simple words when addressing the reader via poetry.

Conclusion

The poet has entertained the reader by generating semiotics through simple and ironic language with a realistic texture.

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