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## **How Do Signs Indicate Identity Or Meaning? An Analysis Of Film/Novel *Pinjar***

### **Using Pierce's Semiotics Model**

#### **Abstract**

The field of semiotics examines films through the lens of the signs and symbols that are present in cinema. In addition to being a component of the media and culture, the film is also considered to be a piece of literature. The Pierce Model was utilized in order to carry out the process of performing a semiotic analysis on the film. In this article, the research focuses just on the first postulate of the Pierce Model, which is the sign postulate. The Pierce Model itself contains three primary postulates. This research piece explores the meaning of signs in both semiotics and cinema in relation to the society of the Indian Subcontinent as it is depicted in the film. The setting for this discussion is the Indian Subcontinent.

**Key Words:** Semiotics, Pierce Model of Semiotics, Film, Film Studies, Cinema Studies, Partition of Indian Sub-continent, Bollywood

#### **Introduction**

There is a sign for every imaginable type of representation that you can think of, and they all may be found here. Labels, comparisons, analogies, metaphors, symbols, significations, and exchanges are some of the topics that are explored in the field of semiotics, which is also known as the study of signs and the processes that produce signs. The use of language is one example of a system of signs that is commonly used. Film has its own language, much like other visual and audio mediums do. The only thing that a real interpretant can agree on is that a sign can only represent its object when it is placed in its ground. When we discuss semiotics, we are not merely referring to signs; rather, semiotics encompasses a wider range of topics. It also encompasses linguistic signs, natural signs, and symbolic signs, all of which reflect attributes and responses in a manner that is analogous to the other two (Bergman & Paavola, 2003). Not only does the Pierce Model of Semiotics have an interest in the media as a whole, but also focuses

primarily on motion pictures. For the purpose of this investigation, a film from Bollywood was chosen because of the significant part that semiotics and signs play in the medium of film.

Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel inspired Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar*. The film's theme is India's 1947 split. The film opens with a small group of Sikhs performing religious teachings in public before being attacked, invoking the partition of India. The film's Muslim protagonist, Rasheed, falls in love with Puro, a Hindu girl. Puro's great-uncle kidnapped Rasheed's granddaughters. Rasheed was chosen to avenge the family. Rasheed jumped at this great opportunity since he loved Puro. He kidnapped Puro, engaged to Ramchand, with his family's consent. Puro tried to flee Rasheed after being kidnapped, but he wouldn't allow her. He escaped before she got home in the middle of the night. Her parents rejected her because she sullied the family name and they feared being attacked in their Muslim-dominated area. Her only option was suicide. Rasheed was waiting as she jumped into the village well. She accepted her fate and lived with Rasheed after he brought her back. Her son embodies her. *Pagli*, a madwoman who roams the town, appears midway through the film. Puro was surprised to find her body in the street with her newborn. Puro adopts that kid afterwards. Puro's sister and brother married Ramchand's sister. Once India and Pakistan split, riots broke out on both sides. Ramchand and his family were ambushed on the journey to India, and Lajjo, Ramchand's sister and Trilok's wife was captured. Puro made arrangements to visit her family and friends when she learned a caravan was coming to her hamlet. Ramchand said her Lajjo was kidnapped. She would find her. She went door-to-door in the village as a saleswoman and found Lajjo in a home. He and Rasheed discussed rescuing her. When Lajjo escaped, Rasheed rode her away. Rasheed and Puro visited her at the border before she left with Trilok and Ramchand. Ramchand refused Trilok's request to take Puro to India because he believed she was comfortable where she was and there was no reason to uproot her again now that she was an adult. Puro said to Trilok, "If any lost girl returns back to her family then feel that Puro too has returned to her family."

## **Literature Review**

The study of signs and sign processes is called semiotics, sometimes known as semiology after the writings of French philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure (Semiosis). Many facets of language are explored, as well as how it is used for signaling and deciphering signs, titles, analogies, metaphors, symbols, and significations. It is generally acknowledged that language is a system of signs. Moreover, a universal language based on sound and picture is used in film. The term "semeiotics," which translates as "observant of signs," comes from the Greek word semeion means "a sign, a mark" (Liddell & Scott, 2007). The phrase was first used in English by

Henry Stubbes in 1670, and he did so in a very specific context to allude to the branch of medicine that deals with symptom analysis. Ferdinand de Saussure believed that the social sciences were where semiotics was most effectively used:

A science that examines how signs function in social interaction is conceivable. In general psychology, it would fall under social psychology. We'll refer to it as semiology (from the Greek word for "sign" *semeîon*). It would look into the laws governing signs and their nature (Peirce, 2014).

Famous logician and creator of philosophical pragmatism Charles Sanders Pierce (1839–1914) described semiosis as an irreducibly triadic process where an object logically determines or influences something as a sign, which in turn determines or influences something as an interpretation or interpretant, which is itself a sign, leading to still more interpretants. According to Bergman and Paavola, Semiosis is carefully designed to assure its own survival (Bergman & Paavola, 2003). The object can either be (1) immediate to the sign, or the object as it appears in the sign, or (2) dynamic, or the object as it truly is, on which the immediate object is based. The object can be anything from a quality to a truth to a law to a fictitious figure (Hamlet). A sign's final or normal interpretation, which conveys the sign's ultimate implications about its object, has the best likelihood of agreeing with any given actual interpretant. The interpreter can be (1) immediate to the sign, conveying what the sign expresses right away, such as the typical meaning of a word; (2) dynamic, conveying a state of agitation; or (3) final or normal. In addition to synthetic, linguistic, and symbolic signals, he also included resemblances like similar perceptible qualities and indicators like reactions in his conception of semiotics.

The signifier and the signified are the two components of every sign. The study of signs in language revolves around the distinction between a signifier (a group of sounds) and a signified (an idea or concept). According to Saussure's theory, which had a big impact on structuralists, meaning is created in the mind and then communicated through language. According to Peter Berry, language actively transforms the world rather than just labelling or recording it. It's also critical to remember that Saussure holds that the sign is entirely arbitrary, which implies that there is no fundamental relationship between the sign and its interpretation. Semiology, according to linguist Saussure, is the study of how signals operate in social contexts, whereas semiotics, according to philosopher Charles Pierce, is a formal philosophy of signs that is closely related to logic. According to him, a symbol is just an item that has symbolic meaning for its audience. He argued that every concept contains a message.

Danielle Rizzo claims that, the film *Pinjar* concludes with Rashid committing a heroic deed, elevating Puro to a position of power. By releasing his grip on her, he frees himself and

Puro from their assigned roles. Right now, Puro makes a decision that will alter the course of their lives forever (Rizzo, 2005)." According to Mr. Anu Kumar, "Pritam's novella starkly reflects the violence Partition inflicted on women through its chief narrator, Puro, a Hindu woman who is abducted by a Muslim named Rashid right before her wedding. Her new name, "Hameeda," is tattooed on her arm, and she gets married to Rashid not long after. Her parents no longer remember Puro, and her history has been wiped clean (Kumar, 2021). Mr. Fareed & Alam narrate, "Thousands of women on both sides were kidnapped from their families and raped during Partition. In the wake of Partition, the governments of India and Pakistan established a procedure to reunite these women with their families. Only about 10% of the 33,000 Indian women who were taken to Pakistan voluntarily returned home. Only about 20% of those kidnapped to India from Pakistan decided to go home. This is the world we live in, and this is a story that deserves to be told (Fareed & Alam, 2021). In the scenario of all these statements, we can see that the film is multi-religious, multi-themed and multi-colored.

### **Research Methodology and Data Collection**

A qualitative approach was taken for this investigation. Within the scope of this investigation, the semiotics provided by the Pierce Model will be utilized. The Semiotic Pierce Model was utilized to conduct the analysis of the data obtained from the selected film. Only the first premise of the Pierce Model—signs—will be discussed in this research paper. Although the Pierce Model has three postulates—signs, objects, and interpretants—only the first postulate, signs, will be discussed. The film serves as the primary source for all of the material, and this film has been transcribed and digitized so that it may be accessed online.

### **Data Analysis**

*Pinjar* is home to a multitude of signs that show a wide range of topics in a wide range of environments. These signs can be found all throughout the city. A gathering of Sikhs may be seen chanting a hymn before the film begins. This scene takes place in a Sikh temple. The sacred symbol of Sikhism is embroidered on the turban worn by the leader of the organization. The vast majority of them are donning turbans and neckties in various hues of blue and orange. It is also possible to watch individuals participating in the religious chorus holding harmoniums and *chimtaas* (Figure: I).



**Figure: I**

Several events took place in 1947, during the time of the partition. The following scene shows the outbreak of the violence that has been going on between Muslims and Sikhs. The religious sign of Sikhism is worn on the turban by Sikhs (Figure: II), and this symbol points in the direction of the Sikhism religious sign. In a later part of the film, we discover that there is a banner advertising a congressional town hall meeting hanging at the main junction (Figure: III).



**Figure: II**



**Figure: III**

The scene then abruptly changed to one that was filled with human fatalities and violence. A blood vessel can be compared to a harmonium because both can be fractured and shattered. The blossoming of friendship and harmony are being stifled by the thorns of hostility. In this picture, a deceased Sikh may be seen wearing accoutrements that are significant to the Sikhism religion, such as a sword and a belt (Figure: IV). Later on in the film, the religious sign of numerous gurus and saints is painted on the wall of the house, and it can be seen by the audience (Figure: V).



**Figure: IV**



**Figure: V**

The following picture is a dialogue that is taking place between two different males. Because Islam encourages its followers to maintain beards, the two of them both sport facial hair, which can be interpreted as an outward symbol of their commitment to the religion (Figure: VI). In the illustration labelled (Figure: VII), we can see a barber shaving a man, and it is also made quite evident that there is a young child present. In the background, there is a portrait of Quaid-e-Azam that is hung up on the wall. The setting of this scene can be determined to be in Pakistan based on this evidence. The papers are being written on by a soldier who is wearing two stars on green shoulder stripes. A Lieutenant in the Pakistani army; a clear indication of his military standing (Figure: VIII).



**Figure: VI**





**Figure: VII**



**Figure: VIII**

The book *Pinjar* has a great deal of cryptic clues and symbols. At the beginning of the book, the symbol of *Om* may be found hanging in Ramchand's home. According to Hindu mythology, the term refers to God.

On the main gate of the house, they had written '*Om*' (Zaman, 2009, p. 789).

A little while later, the "*Ram Ram*" sign is brought up for discussion. This is a popular phrase that Hindus will utter when they are present during a tragic event or any other type of tragedy since they believe it to be a portent of impending doom.

Puro remembered that, once a bangle of a girl was really broken while wearing her bangles then the nearby women began to pray for the safety of her husband uttering '*Ram Ram*' (Zaman, 2009, p. 792).



Following his ordeal as a captive, Puro eventually finds his way back to his family and ties the knot. This information is revealed in following chapters of this book. Both Puro and Rashid follow the Hindu religion, but Puro is more devout than Rashid. Rashid heeds the counsel of Raheema's mother and has the new name Puro tattooed on her arm so that people will forget who she really is. The fact that she recently changed her name to Hameeda is another evidence of sign, as the following example demonstrates.

When she advanced her left arm on the saying of Rashid then *Hameeda* was written on her arm with deep words (Zaman, 2009, p. 804).

In addition, we find out that *Pagli*, a prominent character, passed away not long after she gave birth to a kid. After her passing, members of the Hindu religion asserted that she was a member of their faith since she bore the symbol of their religion, the *Om*, on her arm in the form of a tattoo. The letter *Om* can be seen as a symbol pointing in the direction of an awareness of one's own identity.

These are just words; I myself have seen the word *Om* on her arm." Some of them enforced on these words (Zaman, 2009, p. 828).

During the time of the partition of the Subcontinent, the story centres on the mysterious disappearance of a number of young ladies. Lajjo is one of the individuals in question. Puro embarks on a search for Lajjo in the hopes of bringing her back together with the people who care for her. During one of her forays into the village, she finds the time to pay Lajjo a visit. He examines her arm closely, as if doing a temperature check to see if she has a fever. Her Hindi name, Lajjo, was permanently affixed to her arm in the form of a tattoo. In the lines that follow, we can see that the term "Lajjo" functions as yet another marker throughout the narrative of "*Pinjar*."

On the arm of girl was written in Hindi, Lajjo but she did not utter a single word (Zaman, 2009, p. 852).

Puro and Rashid have located Lajjo hiding out in a house in the hamlet, and they have the intention of kidnapping her so that they can transport her back to her family in a secure manner. Throughout the course of one night, Rashid concocts a plan to flee her away from the village well, and Puro shares some information with Lajjo on a sign. Lajjo won't have to worry about Rashid getting the ring for a while, she promises her. When Rashid arrives to pick up Lajjo late at night, one of the indications that he uses to show Lajjo is the ring of Puro. Lajjo is unaware of the other indicators.

The face of Rashid was merciful. Rashid showed Lajjo the ring of her hand (Zaman, 2009, p. 859).

The last thing that is mentioned in the passage is that Puro has the name Hameeda tattooed on his arm. In spite of the fact that Lajjo was able to escape, the next day she went back to the house where she had been held captive. The kidnappers are requiring her to produce identification documents before they would allow her leave the residence. Puro was taken aback by his statements for a little period of time; but, as soon as she recalled the name that was tattooed on her arm, she blurted out, "Hameeda."

Brother! Your doubts are unending. Behold it, my name is Hameeda." Standing on the threshold, Puro showed her name, written on her left arm (Zaman, 2009, p. 863).

## Conclusion

In accordance with the Pierce Model of Semiotics, a particular element of semiotics has been discussed in this article. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the manner in which the film incorporates symbols that are specific to a given geographical area or religious tradition. An examination of the information was carried out in a manner that was consistent with a postulate of the Pierce Model. In the future, researchers could apply any other postulate from the Model to the film, or they could apply the same concept to a different film. Either way, they could use the Model.

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