



# Form and Meaning Semiotics in the *Red Ihrams* Play Narrated by Davood Kianian

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Received: 25.06.2015

Revised: 30.07.2015

Accepted: 25.08.2015

## Abstract

The text of "*Red Ihrams*" play contains multiple meanings based on specific perspectives that present all the goals in an orderly complex with expressive symbols. The verbal signs narrated by the narrator also guide the reader with some cues toward deciphering. Now the question is that, the play "*Red Ihrams*" narrated by Davood Kianian has what signs system in itself and includes what codes? It is believed that symbolic language and symbolic expression is paramount to the rational and logical expression with regard to the semiotics science, as symbols have the capacity to express concepts, a wider range of implications would be represented to provide perceiving the text as the literary theorist called it "Semiotics". The present study attempts to analytically investigate the codes of the sign system in "*Red Ihrams*" play narrated by Davood Kianian with philosophical-ideological, sociological, and artistic functions.

**Keywords:** Semiotics, Form, Meaning, Play, Red Ihrams, Davood Kianian

## Introduction

Semiotics is the study of the sign systems. Semiotics tries to identify these systems in order to explore the codes and read the world of the work. The present study attempts to define semantic signs of the text narrated by the author with the help of semiotics. In this regard, the play of "*Red Ihrams*" written by Davood Kianian from the book of "*Hajj the Greatest Demonstration in Human World*" was reviewed in an analytical descriptive study, so that the signs mentioned in the narrative structure be decrypted through analyzing the explicit and implicit meanings of the text. In other words:

- Attempting to identify important and main factors of input of signs and symbols into the structure of the "*Red Ihrams*" play from outside.
- Attempting to identify the position of symbols and signs in the "*Red Ihrams*" play.
- Implications and codes of the text of "*the Red Ihrams*" play.
- Special contracts in the "*Red Ihrams*" play.

In the meantime, the ways meaning is produced in the minds of the audience faced with "*Red Ihrams*" appears important. By opening this process and the

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way passed in which meaning is recognized, certainly indication of sign systems, different implications, and axes appears necessary.

## Theoretical foundations and text analysis of "*Red Ihrams*" play

Structuralists began their studies from language base and continued their work with examining structural elements of texts, their composition, relationships and encryptions to understand how meaning is created through the underlying rules and contract systems. In addition, the contracts are related to development of the general and stylistic forms within the dramatic works, and may have different functions for the reader and writer of the text (Austin Vasawna, 1386: 30-29). Considering these and applying them to the *Red Ihrams* play, we can understand the most important elements that Davood Kianian have considered in writing this play. Also it can help us in the structural analysis of the text to introduce connotations of this work. These elements are as follows:

- The play is made up of two main parts.
- These parts are founded on the basis of Hajj rituals.
- In both parts there are no dialogues and whatever we see and read are actions of



Muslim pilgrim characters based on Hajj rituals.

- Allegory and symbolism are primary in the *Red Ihrams* play.
- Acting based on Wajib (mandatory), Mustahabb (recommended), Makruh (detestable), Haram (sinful), and Mubah (permissible) deeds is a needed for characters in the *Red Ihrams* play.
- Liberation, freedom and salvation of Muslim pilgrim character in the play is the goal.

We continue with a definition of sign and its variations and an introduction of structuralism method in reading a text, which we have made the basis for analysis of RedIhrams play, then we will introduce connotations of this work and the symbols used in it.

### Sign and Its Variants

God gave some eternal signs of himself by creation of the universe and spoke with man through his signs. Early humans communicated their desired concepts with each other through gestures, sounds and images. Thus, each of these complexes of sounds, gestures and images were converted into a vehicle to create meaning. These vehicles are called “signs” in semiotics. Through signs, we recognize what happens around us, think about them, reach and understanding through interpreting them, and through inventing and innovating them we create meaning and communicate with each other.

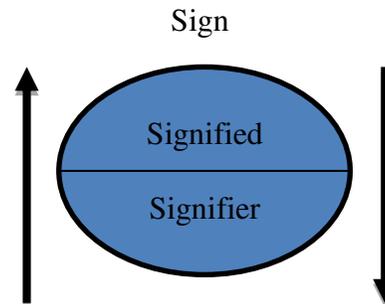
According to Saussure signs are of two parts:

1. A *signifier (signifiant)*, the form which the sign takes, in other words its material form or its tangible side; and
2. A *signified (signifié)*, the concept it represents, in other words its theme and meaning, or its hidden side.

Therefore, sign is a whole resulted from the bond between signifier and signified that the relationship between the two is called “signification” (Zeimaran, 1383, pp. 41-42).

This relationship is shown in Saussure’s figure with an arrow. In addition, the horizontal line

in the figure represents a hypothetical separation of the two elements of signifier and signified in the sign.



**Figure 1. Signifier and signified relationship in the sign (Sojudi, 1382, p. 22)**

It should be noted that the separation of signifier and signified occurs only in the mind. Notably, similar concepts as signifier and signified are known as form and content in art criticism. Louis Hjelmslev, referring to the same issue states: “One can consider the dichotomy between signifier and signified as “form and content”. In this context signifier is the form of sign and signified is its content or theme”. (Zeimaran, 1383, p. 42). Each in the art system can refer to several signifieds and each signified can be expressed by a number of signifiers. This is what leads to personal and collective styles in the field of art and what makes it difficult to determine the type of signs. However, Pierce examined sign from other perspectives too. He suggested many classifications for sign some of which are quite complex. One of his famous classifications that has attracted attention of many Semioticians is the classification of signs based on the relationship between sign and subject or the very signifier and signified. It contains three parts:

- *Sign vehicle*: the form of the sign;
  - *Sense*: the sense made of the sign;
  - *Referent*: what the sign 'stands for'.
- A. *Sign vehicle*: in the sign vehicles the signifier is not the same as the signified,

rather it implies the signified according to an arbitrary or purely contractual relationship. In other words, this relationship has to be learned, like the symbols Davood Kianian used in *Red Ihrams* play such as Jamarat as a sign of the devil; the triad Jamarat as a sign of wealth, force and deception, or three faces of devil that Abraham (AS) stoned at different places and drove him away; sacrificing sheep as a sign of sacrificing Ismail and a sign of obedience before God; Ihram as a sign of birth, death and simplicity; Arafat as a sign of cognition; and Muzdalifah as a sign of wisdom.

- B. *Sense*: in sense signs the relationship between signifier and signified is based on similarity. That is the signifier is the same as the signified in some ways (the look, sound, feel, or smell), in other words, it has some qualities of the signified. In the *Red Ihrams* play, seeing the mask enemy is a sign of Saudi soldiers who attacked Iranian pilgrims in 1987.
- C. *Referent*: The signifier in sense signs is not arbitrary, rather it is in a physical (or causal) way associated to the signified. This relationship can be observed or inferred as in natural signs (e.g. smoke, lightning, footprint, acoustics, non-synthetic odors and flavors).

So in *Red Ihrams* play the Ka'aba is the referent for the house of God, blood flowers on white ihrams of the pilgrims are a referent of martyrdom.

### **Analising the text of the Red Ihrams play based on Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Axes, and time and spatial relations**

The principle of structural semiotic analysis is based on paradigmatic and syntagmatic methods. The value and meaning of one sign can be analyzed and discussed by one of these methods, in syntagmatic analysis the 'order' of linguistic elements (signs) is focused, as opposed to paradigmatic analysis which provide substituting

words (of the same type to calibrate shift in connotation). In this case, we understand that syntagmatic method determine the temporal and spatial relation in the surface of the text; however, paradigmatic refers to those signs which are "absent" in the surface of the text.

Accordingly, in both parts of this play we face seven Muslim pilgrim characters who should perform their Hajj practices in 13 steps based on the Obligatory Hajj. But sometimes they do contrary to that in each step. This is a symbol of defiance from the commandments of God, apposing His commands, orientation to one's own wills and worldly desires, and dominance of personal passions which are a kind of deconstruction in spatial relations. Among them we can mention the following:

- Putting House of God (Kaaba) on the right during circumambulation.
- Praying Back to the Kaaba and facing Jamarat.
- Stopping in the Sa'i and riding a carriage pulled by other people.
- Nail polishing, wearing make-up, and combing the hair.
- Donning the ihram garment at Place of Ibrahim (Muqam Ibrahim) and Hijr (stone of) Ismail.

Finally, after analyzing the text of the play based on paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, time and spatial relations, and understanding the connotations, hidden meanings, and symbols used in it, it becomes clear that the aim of the author in narrating the self-orientations and desires of human being in the conflict and confrontation between the animal and spiritual aspects of the seven Muslim pilgrim characters of the play was to show the victory of man's godly aspect, his proximity to God, his unification with Him and reaching unity with Him which is the main purpose of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

### **Metaphor and allegory in the Red Ihrams play**

Almost everybody knows metaphor and allegory as a device in literature, but if we consider them only a literary device, we have distanced from their semiotic attitude. From semioticians' point of view they are not just literary devices. In fact, a meaning



formation process is conducted by human through metaphor and allegory devices. These techniques have had a significant impact on how we think and on shaping reality and have joined us to dominant ways of thinking in the society. “Jakobson recognizes metaphor as the replacement based on similarity, and allegory as the replacement based on proximity” (Sojudi, 1382, p. 124).

It should be noted that “the application of the two processes is by no means limited to the language and according to Jakobson it is possible in other sign systems, too. Therefore, the metaphor and allegory have a vital place, not only in all verbal behaviors, but also in all human behaviors” (Afrashy, 1381, p. 96). Now we turn to the use of metaphor and allegory devices in the *Red Ihrams* play narrated by Davood Kianian.

- Seven people from seven points of circumference of a circle: allegory of separation and pilgrims travel from different parts of the planet to land of revelation and house of God.
- Different clothes: a metaphor of the differences in race, color and language of pilgrims.
- Center of the circle: allegory of the ka’aba.
- Make-up and colorful costumes: attention to the desires and demands of the ego.
- Make-up of the face: allegory of interest in superficial beauties.
- Wearing shoes: allegory of opposition and disobedience to His command.
- Praying back to the Ka’aba: allegory of opposing the God.
- Stagnation at Sa’i: allegory of the difficulty of fight with ego.
- Clipping nails and shacing hair of face and head, polishing nails and combing hair: allegory of attention to the desires and demands of the ego.
- Forty-nine gravels: allegory of seven pilgrims.
- Duplication of the first person to seven others: metaphor of unity.
- Oneness of the mask-wearing people with the first six people and the barbers: metaphor of oneness of internal ego and external enemies.
- Beheading of the pilgrims by the mask-wearing people: allegory of the confrontation between the forces of good and evil.
- Illumination of the face of the first seven people group: metaphor of becoming sun like and allegory of spiritualization.
- Illumination of hands, faces, legs and all the body of the first seven people group: allegory of the gradual movement of pilgrims towards God.
- Seeing enemy in mask: metaphor of oneness of internal ego and external enemies.
- Pilgrims armed to stone: a metaphor of the cowardly attack of Saudi forces on Iranian pilgrims in 1987, as well as all the oppressed people of the world, especially the Palestinians.
- Explosion of light and light distribution in space: allegory of pilgrims’ martyrdom.
- Unity of light particles with pilgrims: allegory of spiritualization of the pilgrims and metaphor of the diversity in unity and unity in diversity.
- Emergence of three large Jamarah: allegory of wealth, force and deception.
- Blood flowers growing on white Ihrams of pilgrims: the metaphor of flowering of sacrifice and martyrdom.
- Cracking of the three Jamarah: allegory of the collapse of hollow powers of wealth, force and deception.
- The appearance of the sword in the house of Ka’ba: metaphor of the emergence of Imam Mahdi (AS).
- Saying Azan by the swordsman: allegory of the voice of truth and the universality of rule of divine justice.
- Gifting the flowers on the ihrams of pilgrims to the audience: allegory of the forgiveness, brotherhood, equality, and justice for everyone.

### Conclusion

With regard to the issues raised in this paper, we can conclude that structuralism approach in the analysis of connotations and symbols used in RedIhrams play are as of a sign system. This results



in the important point that the narrator created this work with reflecting on Hajj rituals and founded it on Wajib (mandatory), Mustahabb (recommended), Makruh (detestable), Haram (sinful), and Mubah (permissible) regulations. He has tried to save the Muslim pilgrim character in the battle and confrontation between good and evil by separating him from clothing and any superficial identity, social rules and imposed structures, and separation of the inner beliefs resulted from social life. Also,

by creating this work, he has tried to challenge the audiences world in the hidden layers of the play, in order to make him Abraham and Hagar-like in the fight with idols like narcissism (self) and Satanism (inhumane and immoral manifestations) by removing negative inner aspects and earning positive traits of characters that they plays to reach freedom and redemption that is the goal of this performing rituals (of Hajj).

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