Chapter 6
CONCLUSION

This work has attempted to give a semiotic analysis of four selected novels that deals with the theme of South African Apartheid in a realistic manner and these novels can be treated in accordance with the chronology of their production or publication: being pre-apartheid, apartheid and post-apartheid. In the first chapter, an attempt has been made to provide a historical background to the system of apartheid, the worst kind of racial discrimination and segregation of the black people on their own soil and this chapter also discusses hypothesis, aims and objectives, methodology, tools of application and the need for study. In chapter second, this is followed by a conceptual framework for the analysis of four selected novels written by renowned South African writers, from a Semiotic perspective. The third chapter has devoted to a semiotic analysis of the pre-apartheid novel, Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton while the fourth chapter has presented a similar analysis of two apartheid novels, viz., Kaffir Boy, by Mark Mathabane which is an autobiography, and Ways of Dying by Zakes Mda. The fifth chapter has presented a semiotic analysis of a post-apartheid novel Disgrace by J.M. Coetzee. The common theme of all these novels is apartheid in South Africa in its different historical phases as treated by master novelists from South Africa who have written their novels in English. Each of these novels won universal acclaim and prestigious prizes in world literature, especially Coetzee’s Disgrace won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

6.1 FINDINGS

In this study, instead of the traditional elements of fiction for analysis and comparison, the two important notions of semiotic codes and semiotic archetypes have been employed. These two notions were proposed and their application was illustrated by two famous literary critics and creative writers, viz. Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco respectively. This section will present how the different codes and archetypes have been employed in the four novels selected for study.

6.1.1 DISTRIBUTION OF SEMIOTIC CODES

The distribution of the five Semiotic codes and the respective chapters in the four novels selected for study is presented in the table below which is followed by a brief interpretation of each novel on the basis of the distribution of these codes:
Table: Distribution of Semiotic Codes and the Respective Chapters in the Four Novels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Novel and No. of Chapters</th>
<th>No. of Narrative Codes* and the respective chapters</th>
<th>No. of Cultural Codes* and the respective chapters</th>
<th>No. of Semic Codes* and the respective chapters</th>
<th>No. of Hermeneutic Codes* and the respective chapters</th>
<th>No. of Symbolic Codes* and the respective chapters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Cry. the Beloved Country</em> Chapters : 36</td>
<td>14 (38.8%)</td>
<td>30 (83.33%)</td>
<td>14 (38.88%)</td>
<td>15 (41.66%)</td>
<td>3 (8.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book I</td>
<td>2,4,5,7,14, 16, 17</td>
<td>2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,17</td>
<td>-1,3,7,12,13,15</td>
<td>2,8,10,11,14, 16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book II</td>
<td>1,2,7,9,10</td>
<td>3,4,5,6,9,10,11,12</td>
<td>1,5,12</td>
<td>3,4,5,7,8,11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book III</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</td>
<td>1,3,5,6,7</td>
<td>-2,3,4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Kaffir Boy</em> Chapters : 54</td>
<td>45 (83.33%)</td>
<td>51 (94.44%)</td>
<td>42 (79.62%)</td>
<td>32 (59.25%)</td>
<td>19 (35.18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,13, 14,15,17,18,19,20, 21, 22,23,24,26, 27, 32,33,34, 35,36, 37, 38, 39,40,41,42, 43, 44,45,46, 47,48, 49, 50, 51,52,53,54</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13, 14,15,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29, 30,32,33,34,36,37,38,39,40, 41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,50, 51,52,53,54</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13, 14,15,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24, 25,26,27,28,29, 30,32,33,34,36,37,38,39,40, 41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,50, 51,52,53,54</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,17,18, 19,20,23,24,25, 27,28, 29,34,35,37,38,39,40, 42,45,46,47, 48,49,51,53</td>
<td>9,18,30,31,32,33,35, 36,38,40,42,43,44, 45,46,48,51,52, 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Ways of Dying</em> Chapters : 10</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>7 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
<td>1,3,4,5,7,9</td>
<td>1,2,3,5,6,7,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Disgrace</em> Chapters : 24</td>
<td>16 (66.66%)</td>
<td>18 (75%)</td>
<td>19 (79.16%)</td>
<td>12 (50%)</td>
<td>12 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>2,4,6,7,8,9,11,12,16, 17,18, 19,20,22,23, 24</td>
<td>1,2,3,5,7,8,9,10,11,13,15,16, 17,19,20,21,22,23</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13, 14,16,17,20,21,24</td>
<td>3,4,5,6,12,13,14,15,18, 19, 21,24</td>
<td>5,8,9,10,11,13,15,18, 19, 21,22,23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The percentages were calculated in terms of the number of each code and the number of chapters in each novel.*
This table gives an idea about the manipulation of the semiotic codes in each novel. However, this calculation need not be taken statistically impeccable and critically sacrosanct. It may be noted from the above table that the highest percentages of all the five semiotic codes have been employed in the novel, *Ways of Dying* where as correspondingly the lowest percentages are found in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The former was produced during the last phase of apartheid while the latter was written just before apartheid when the effects of apartheid were not as severe as in the peak of its period. The peak effect of apartheid is covered by *Kaffir Boy* which stands almost second in its distribution of the semiotic codes with slight variations with those of *Disgrace*.

From these simple statistical details one can draw certain inferences as under:

i) The effects of apartheid were not as severe in *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Ways of Dying* as they were in *Kaffir Boy*.

ii) *Kaffir Boy* is more realistic than the other three novels, being a true autobiography.

iii) *Disgrace*, in spite of being a post-apartheid novel, still displays some vestiges of apartheid as illustrated by its protagonist who behaves like Byron’s Don Juan or a Casanova.

iv) If the first novel i.e., *Cry, the Beloved Country* reveals an implicit faith and devotion to Christianity on the part of its protagonist Kumalo; in *Kaffir Boy*, the protagonist’s faith in Christianity or in his tribal religion is not established as he does not believe in any kind of organized religion, despite his mother’s increasing faith in God, particularly in Jesus Christ.

v) So far as religious faith is concerned both *Ways of Dying* and *Disgrace* are neutral because Toloki, the Central character of *Ways of Dying* does not show his faith in any religion in particular except his faith in the effects of death. He considers death, as a theme or commodity for making money in a truthful way. The title of the novel is highly paradoxical in the sense that its true meaning could be “*Ways of Killing*” i.e., how innocent and poor blacks were being killed by the police as well as by the blacks themselves. But the author approaches the theme from the victims’ perspective and hence he uses the intransitive verb *dying*, instead of *killing*. Thus the title itself shows the
passive attitude of the blacks in suffering under apartheid. Secondly Prof. Lurie, the protagonist of Disgrace, openly declares his atheism even though his own rationalism, so-called self-respect, intellectualism and literary sensibility reveal certain moments in life when he experiences the real pangs of love and truthfulness which constitute his own principles or personal religion despite his self-deceiving arrogance.

6.1.2 INTERPRETATION OF SEMIOTIC CODES

Now a code-wise analysis shows that in terms of the Narrative code Cry, the Beloved Country and Disgrace are simple and uncomplicated narrative mostly following the chronological thread of the story except for a few flash-backs or recollections of the past. Likewise, Kaffir Boy is also a simple and uncomplicated narrative purely chronological in the narration of its events and major episodes understandably because it is not pure fiction being a real autobiography. It’s main plus point is its realism. Thirdly, Ways of Dying is almost modern in narrative texture because, every chapter in the novel consists of one or two flash-backs. Another specialty of Ways of Dying is its use of Magic Realism. In the narrative technique, one can find that in Cry, the Beloved Country and Disgrace, the technique of Third person point of view of narration is used while in Kaffir Boy; it is the First person point of view. But in Ways of Dying, it is the point of view of the collective community voice after the tradition of African folk lore. The Narrative code also shows chronological and topological progression of events and also juxtaposes present and past in each and every novel.

In terms of the Cultural code almost all the novels are very rich in their treatment of the cultural elements before, during and after apartheid in South Africa. In Cry, the Beloved Country, the poor living conditions of the black people in Ndotsheni and Johannesburg are depicted through several archetypes which serve as an Icon, among the trichotomy given by Charles Sanders Peirce, of the whole black community in South Africa during the apartheid years. Being an autobiography, Kaffir Boy holds mirror to the piteous life of the black people in Alexandra. In South Africa, during apartheid, police raids were rampant in tribal homelands. Blacks were beaten up and humiliated in the hands of police. Some instances from the novel are placed below:
Sirens blared, voices screamed and shouted, wood cracked and windows shattered, children bawled, dogs barked and footsteps pounded. I was bewildered; I had never heard such a racket before. I was instantly seized by a feeling of terror. (7)

“What’s the matter, Mama?”

“Peri-urban is here.”

“Peri-urban!” I gasped and stiffened at the name of the dreaded Alexandra Police Squad. To me nothing, short of a white man, was more terrifying; not even a bogeyman. Memories of previous encounters with the police began haunting me. Will the two fat black police men with sjamboks and truncheons burst open the door again?

“Speak up, boy! Or I’ll let you taste my sjambok!” and thereafter spit in my face and hit me on the head with a truncheon for refusing to tell where my mother and father were hiding? (8)

I glanced at the window; it was getting light outside. I saw two black policemen breaking down a door at the far end of the yard. A half naked, near hysterical, jet-black woman was being led out of an outhouse by a fat laughing black policeman who, from time to time, prodded her private parts with a truncheon. (12)

All these above mentioned instances shows the terrible conditions of the black people in South Africa as a part of Cultural code and the conditions of the Africans in the novel serve as an Icon of the condition of the whole black community in South Africa. In Ways of Dying, Toloki’s experiences as a Professional Mourner are the instances of the Cultural code in which the traditional practices of the black villagers, particularly those at the funeral ceremonies like cutting of hair of the relatives of the deceased and throwing soil into the grave according to seniority of households and not of age etc. are described which serve as a Symbol, among the Pericean trichotomy, of African culture. In Disgrace, the Cultural code reveals the kind of life in Cape Town where white males can have unscrupulous sexual relations with women whom they come across in order to satisfy their sexual urge. Consider the following paragraph in this context:
He is mildly smitten with her. It is no great matter; barely term passes when he does not fall for one or other of his charges. Cape Town: a city prodigal of beauty, of beauties. (12)

The Cultural code here serves as an Icon of the life of the white males after the end of infamous system of apartheid in South Africa.

The Semic code has also been manipulated very well by all the novelists in their novels because each novel holds mirror to the social, political, economic, religious and cultural affairs of the fictional space and time. In Cry, the Beloved Country, the very first chapter presents two opposite Semic codes, the richness of one geographical area followed by another area which is dry, barren and drought-struck. Consider the following passage from the novel:

THERE is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke; and from there, if there is no mist, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa.

The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh. The lightning flashes over them, the clouds pour down upon them, the dead streams come into life, full of the red blood of the earth. Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are the valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them anymore. (7-8)

Symbolically, the two Semic codes respectively represent as an Icon of the prosperity of the white rulers and the starving black masses of South Africa. In terms of Semic code, Kaffir Boy vividly signifies the miserable life of adolescent children in the slum of Alexandra. Johannes and his family had been starving without food. Consider the following passages from the novel:

First there were the locusts. My mother would often take us children to the veld on the outskirts of the township, and there, from sunup to sunset, we would scour for locusts, which were so hard to spot because of the camouflage provided them by the veld’s yellowed
grass and stubble. We would return home weary and sunburnt, carrying small jars half-filled with grasshoppers. (62)

Then there were the black, prickly worms called sonjas. These worms closely resembled leeches…….The worms, my mother told me, flourished abundantly in the swamps of some of the tribal reserves.

Then there were the weeds called murugo. These greenish wild plants grew near lavatories….They feed on urine and makaka [shit]….Then there was the blood…(63)

The above instances are a typical representative of the miserable life of the blacks of all the slums that existed on the periphery of the city of Johannesburg and thus an Icon given by Charles Sanders Peirce. In Ways of Dying, Semic codes account of the socio-cultural details of the blacks who are killed by their fellow blacks. In Disgrace, the Semic code throws ample light on David Lurie’s character that he is a twice-divorced, crossing his middle age, highly educated, teaches at a prestigious university as a Professor and has no moral scruples. He is a great lover of Byron and consequently behaves like a Don Juan.

Language works as a tool for oppression against blacks in the hands of the whites. The signs boards also works as an Index as given by Peirce. During apartheid, in South Africa, whites always took help of various sign boards in order to spread system of racial oppression. Various sign boards like “Whites Only”, “Dogs and Blacks Are Not Allowed”, “Whites Only Beaches”, “Whites Only Buses”, “European Only,” “Non-European Only” etc are seen in the novel also. These sign boards works as signifiers that signifies racial hatred between blacks and whites. And all these sign boards and verbal remarks given by the whites are needed to be understood within the socio-cultural framework. In the case of the Symbolic code also all the novels rate high except the first novel (i.e, Cry the Beloved Country) where the confrontation between the blacks and whites is a secondary theme as part of culture because, its major theme is search or quest, i.e., Kumalo’s quest to find and meet his only son Absalom. For instance, the below given passage shows the journey of Kumalo for the search for his son Absalom and his sister Gertrude:

He put the paper into his wallet, and together they watched the train. As all country trains in South Arica are, it was full of black
travelers. On his train indeed there were not many others, for the Europeans of this district all have their cars, and hardly travel by train anymore.

Kumalo climbed into the carriage for non-Europeans, already full of the humbler people of his race…(14)

From the above instances it is clear that these sign boards work as an Index that spread racism. From Kaffir Boy, here are some instances of the sign boards of racial discrimination under Symbolic code:

The seven o’clock bus for blacks to Johannesburg was jam packed with men and women on their way to the white world to work. A huge sign above the driver’s booth read:

AUTHORISED TO CARRY ONLY 65 SEATED PASSENGERS, AND 15 STANDING. (185)

The zoo gatekeeper was a short white man with a fat face. Beaming, he told us that the zoo was all ours for the day because whites seldom came in great numbers on Tuesday. There were a handful of whites entering through the “Whites Only” turnstile we went through the “Non-Whites Only,” but once inside, whites and blacks walked along the same paths to see the same animals. “Why do they bother putting the bloody signs up if black and white people end up mingling once inside?” (203)

Thus my consciousness was awakened to the pervasiveness of “petty apartheid,” and everywhere I went in the white world, I was met by visible and invisible guards of racial segregation. Overtly, the guards – larger-than-life signs that read, European Only, Non-European Only, Whites Only, Non-Whites Only, Slegs Blankes, Slegs Nie-Blankes – greeted me, and led me as a blind man would be led to the door. I should enter through, the elevator I should ride in, the water fountain I should drink from, the park bench I should sit on, the bus I should ride in, the lavatory I should piss in.

The invisible guards, however, did not greet me as conspicuously to orient me about my place in life. Instead, remarks such as “You’re in the wrong place, Kaffir,” “We don’t serve your
“Who do you think you are, Kaffir?” “Are you mad, Kaffir?” told me it was still the guards of Jim Crow talking.

Because the guards of segregation were everywhere in the white world, and I saw black people who unwittingly disobeyed them cursed, beaten or thrown in jail, I became increasingly self-conscious with each step I took. (201-202)

In *Ways of Dying*, the Symbolic code shows how the black people themselves attack and kill their fellow blacks in the squatter camp that serves as an *Index* that indicates this cruel side of the black people who killed their fellow blacks. In *Disgrace*, the Symbolic code records the implicit and explicit rivalry between the whites and the blacks in South Africa even after the end of Apartheid. Lucy is raped by three Africans and the passage below describes the real picture of Apartheid even after its end in 1994. This passage shows the never ending hatred between the whites and the blacks:

> It happens every day, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy…. (98)

> …..‘This place being what?’

> ‘This place being South Africa.’(112)

So far as the *Hermeneutic code* is concerned, *Kaffir Boy* is rated the highest because the novel ends on an inconclusive note or suspense whether Mark would be able to contribute to the end of apartheid in South Africa even though he realizes his dream of going to America on a tennis scholarship. The next place in the Hermeneutic code goes to *Cry, the Beloved Country*, because Kumalo, the protagonist, in his ripe old age after passing through a lot of suffering, witnesses only the beginning of the construction of a dam by Jarvis and other whites but he does not know whether his dream would come true. Thus the ending of the story is inconclusive and ends on a note of suspense though optimistic. Further, the Hermeneutic code dominates in this novel also in the form of Kumalo’s long quest for his lost son and its resolution in their meeting and the death of his son by the sentence of hanging by the government
court. Here, Kumalo’s quest for his son and his sister serves as an \textit{Icon} of the various people in the rural villages, during apartheid, whose sons, daughters, sisters and brothers have gone to the cities and never returned back. In the novel, thus the puzzle of his quest is resolved finally by the death of his son. The third place in the role of the Hermeneutic code goes to \textit{Disgrace} because in this novel also, the central character, Professor Lurie is on constant quest of physical, emotional and intellectual gratification. He fails on these fronts and hence his life ends in disgrace, thus justifying the title of the novel. The Hermeneutic code in \textit{Ways of Dying}, takes care of the suspense about the relationship between Toloki and Noria.

6.1.3 ARCHETYPES

The next important notion employed in the present analysis is ‘archetype’ as introduced by Umberto Eco. The following are the archetypes that are commonly shared by the novels under study.

a) Racial discrimination, segregation and apartheid. This found in all these novels. The only exception is \textit{Cry, the Beloved Country}, but this novel also predicts apartheid.

b) Rural poverty and exploitation of poor peasants by local chiefs. This is also found in all the novels under study.

c) The wretched life of the poor and jobless blacks in the ghettos. This is the third archetype that recurs in all the novels.

d) Perverted life style of innocent and jobless black youth in the ghettos: gangsters, rape, violence, murder etc.

e) Prostitution, gambling and drinking in ghettos (shebeens)

f) Blacks hating and killing fellow blacks or acting as informers to the police. This is mostly found in \textit{Kaffir Boy}, but appears in the other novels also in some form or the other.

g) Some liberal whites, particularly the English, helping the blacks in South Africa, before and during apartheid.

h) Womanising, self-righteous attitude, arrogance and intellectuals on the part of Prof. Lurie are the archetypes in \textit{Disgrace}. 


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As can be seen from the analysis above in terms of Semiotic codes and Archetypes, it has been proved beyond doubt in this study that a Semiotic analysis can be an effective, new and objective approach to the study of fiction.

Keeping in view the analysis of these texts from semiotic perspective, one can noticed how different semiotic codes and archetypes help in the transmission of meaning in giving a realistic picture to the narrative by portraying different scenes, episodes, characters, dialogue and above all the moving human situation obtaining in South Africa focusing on its slum areas inhabited by the black workers who suffer from the misery of unemployment, poverty, dirty environs and above all from fear of the police and imprisonment, during the pre-apartheid and apartheid period in South Africa whereas the last novel which is a post-apartheid novel, the situation is almost reverse but this novel also displays some vestiges of apartheid. For these reasons, all these four selected novels can be described as ‘cult novels’ after Umberto Eco (1976).

However, the present work does not claim any finality or comprehensiveness. Unless this approach is applied further to other works of fiction and other genres, its effectiveness and validity cannot be finally approved. The present attempt is only a beginning. It is hoped that future writers and researches will throw more light on this approach of which the present work is first of its kind, at least in the Indian context.

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