Hope of Death as the Possibility of Life: A Psychosemiotic Reading of Franz Kafka’s The Hunger Artist as the Narrative of Existence into Non Being

Bushra Naz
Lecturer of English
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Abstract
This study of The Hunger Artist explores how signs and symbols play a significant role in bringing the structured imagination of Kafka’s psyche and signification process on the surface of the narrative. As various signs encode different representations of experiences and the source of these representations is not only the subconscious and unconscious selves of the author and reader but also the communicative and linguistic context within which the experience is embedded. These entrenched sign complexes help to appreciate the in-depth dimensions of the meanings of the narrative by positioning it in a multidimensional theoretical framework of psychosemiotics. The underlined proposal of sign experience synchronizes with Freudian dream theory and spotlights the psychic structure of id, ego and superego manifested in the text at discourse level. This explicit display of the narrative within the particular perspective of the interpretation of signs and symbols has been argued in the light of theoretical assumptions of Sonne & Grambye’s (2006) model at discourse level corresponding to id, ego and superego for the purpose of this study. The underpinning logic of this study is to investigate The Hunger Artist as a discourse through a dialectical exploration to lay bare the conceptual contrasts and parallels portrayed in the form of inveterating and recurring significatory units to crystallize psychosemiotic theoretical configuration.

Keywords: Id/Ego/Superego; Signifier; Discourse; Paradigmatic; Syntagmatics; Condensation; Sublimation

This study takes up Franz Kafka’s The Hunger Artist for psychosemiotic analysis to explore various dimensions of meanings to discover Kafka’s unconscious and subconscious being. “Since he speaks with great penetration of his own problem as a psycho-neurotic, and since there is so much of Kafka’s vestigial infantilism in all of us, since as men we are all guilty, the critics have explored his symbolism to reconstruct the inner manner from his work”, as claimed by Webster (1950). Psychosemiotics takes The Hunger Artist as a set of sign connections and associations in the perspective of semiotic and psychoanalysis and observes the discourse of The Hunger Artist suggestive of writer’s unconscious self. As Gill (1992) postulates that a literary text is a net work of signs whose latent relations unfold the underlying structure of signification. The semiotic and psychoanalysis have been coalesced notionally by Kristeva (1989) as semiotic investigates the “plurality of signifying system of which each is one layer of a vast
whole”, and “psychoanalysis continues to explore language in order to study the speaking subject”. In this connection, the proposition of the sign and symbol phenomenon in The Hunger Artist has been contested in the subliminal context and scrutinized to see as to how these signifiers appear and what meanings they evoke at deeper level.

Psychosomatically, Jung’s (2002) argument is quiet pertinent to celebrate the emblematic and symbolic value of The Hunger Artist:

“Every creative is a duality...one side he is a human being with a personal life, on the other side he is an impersonal creative process”.

The novelty of The Hunger Artist lies not only in its counter hegemonic implication, that requires oppositional reading, due to the employment of signs and symbols, but also in its postmodern appeal and context of criticism which does not allow the reader to a simple and single reading. As Sharma (2006) argues that an original author always invents an original world whose artistic truth revealed when the real life epitomizes it in various forms and shades. It is for this reason, “Kafkan fantasy is emphatically logical”. Pascal, (1982) endorses the indeterminacy of meanings of Kafkan narrative as ‘Kafkan problem’ confining it to the narrative art ignoring the heterogeneity of signifiers. Kafka’s The Hunger Artist engages the reader within psychological, socio-cultural and contextual frames as Corngold (2007) argues with reference to the diversity and density of meaning of Kafkan text that “We know of Kafka’s horror of metaphor”

Thus, Kafka’s performance as an artist approves of the subversive reading strategies to deal with the aesthetic and philosophical conceptualities embedded within The Hunger Artist. As such psychosemiotics in its postmodern orientation provides a means to destabilize the text for the reconstruction of the meanings in a myriad of ways and presume the instability of meanings. From an unfixed standpoint The Hunger Artist is examined as has been argued by Derrida (1976) that the process of signification is not fixed rather dynamic and signifying processes hold multiple meanings. Therefore, this psychosemiotic study in its postmodern context is pluralistic in its bearing as well as pertinent to The Hunger artist as it is challenging and taxing and invites exploration and thus paves way for new possibilities.

The Hunger Artist is seen as an ensemble of signs and signifiers arranged together analogous to the assortment of situations and events corresponding to various aspects of inner self and personality. These significatory units help to comprehend the narrative placing it in the semantic field of socio-cultural and psychological lineaments mediating with intellectual and philosophical proceedings. As has been put forward by Singh (1990) that it is the domain of imaginative reinstatement where we realize the psychic formation where words, signals, events necessitate the status of exceedingly stimulatingly semiotic signs, and these signs or words and objects are associated through the third dimension of ideas or images which in turn induce certain other feelings, emotions and ideas. The underlined proposal of sign experience synchronizes with Freudian dream theory and spotlights the psychic structures of id, ego and super ego manifested in The Hunger Artist at the propositional, enunciation and discourse level for the establishment of the meanings. Psychosemiotics hypothesizes that signs and symbols ascertain and generate meanings in organized patterns as has been argued by Greimas (1975) that language does
not provide a system of signs rather supplies a mechanism for the assemblage of structures of signification.

Interpretation of sign hypothetically depends on the unconscious subject. According to Freud (1953) human being can be understood in terms of aspects of personality i.e., id, ego, and super ego. Id stand for the basic instinctive urges and deals with physical world completely. Id develops into the stage of ego which rests upon the conscious forces of mind and is directly affected by externalities. It observes reality principle and respects the code of contradiction along with the categories of time and space, dealing with the conscious and credible forces of nature. Superego deals with the reflective activities at symbolic level. Id, ego and superego manifest themselves through the medium of unconscious, subconscious and pre-conscious which exert a dynamic influence on the human self. In turn the unconscious and subconscious manifest themselves through dreams. Dreams are the manifest content as well as show the stage of development of a being in evolution. The visible content has the underlying content in the form of conflicting, introverted and reticent tendencies of the individual. The interpretation of the dream is done employing the rule of language opus and composition in the words of Gill (1989) “this mental image is a kind of motivational power which is the object of intellect…we follow the sequential order of pragmatics and syntagmatic”. In this respect, displacement refers to paradigmatic and pragmatic and condensation refers to syntagmatic processes through which an idea is transformed in the language form of metaphor and metonymy. Condensation refers to the combination of various ideas into one signifier and displacement illustrates “the distortion of dream thought”. In this way language works as a cognitive code to represent abstract schemata. As has been argued by Lacan (1979) that unconscious is structured like language.

Theoretically, the purpose in exposing the interlocked and entwined concepts is to determine the fundamental dialectics of Kafka’s unconscious and subconscious self as has been consented by Clarke (1987), in the context of semiotics that “signs are the mental expressions of man”. This reading presupposes the decomposition of the significatory units, compounds of symbols and sign complexes leading to the semantic reconstruction of the text following Halliday’s (2003) assertion that no discourse is objective or natural, it reveals a flow of meaning thus provides a site for the interplay of the predictable and unpredictable. Therefore, psychosemiotic theoretical framework assists to understand the conceptual content. Moreover, explores the indispensable aspects of socio-cultural, ideological and psychological phenomenon of The Hunger Artist by discovering symbols, signs for recognizing the issues of unconscious subject.

The discourse level addresses ideologies and ultimately reconciles with intellectual precepts of The Hunger Artist. Linguistically, this superego state resurfaces through the signifiers dealing with the deeper meaning and demonstrates them in corresponding phases of situations and psychic states in a pattern of signs in conjunction with one another evoking metaphorical meanings and emblematic aspects of The Hunger Artist. Thus demands an unleashed appreciation on the part of the reader as Murray (1951) substantiates that the superego is a symbolic embodiment of the strict continence as a projection of writer’s own psychological self. In this relation, psychosemiotic reading at intertextual plane refers to the study of themes resulting in textual interrelationship of signifiers, requiring a counter hegemonic reading of the text. Intertextual reading lacks
independent meanings as Allan (2000) refers it relational to beliefs, ideas, and socio-cultural situation.

Psychosemiotics provides a room to decipher the textual code of The Hunger Artist independently following Black’s (2006) assertion that signifiers “create an image of reality by connecting apparently quite disparate objects”. The role of signs and symbols, in decoding the socio-cultural or ideological phenomenon has been discovered through the tropes which control images and theme. Lee (1992) authenticates this by arguing that language constitutes an important part of our ideology. The analysis represents realities, value judgments and rationalizes to reflect or depart from the cultural and ideological social patterns following Gounelas’ (2001) judgment that identifies symbolic patterns as narrative strategy and ideological medium as well as recognizes “signifiers are polyvalence” in terms of “radical destabilization”. Hunger artist’s hunger and quest for secret nourishment is the main theme of the narrative. This textual strategy of organizing the quest for ‘secret nourishment’ is brought by the conceptual organization of the similar and opposite underlying relations foregrounded in the arrangements of signifiers. Circus and the hunger artist serve as compound of significatory components to underpin the logic of human existence and his search for meanings.

Argumentative and ideological level encompasses the network of the fields of action with the interplay of their conceptual oppositions and how they organize a semantic universe that underlies the surface structure of the text. Paradigmatic and syntagmatic choices occurring in different signs and symbols have been scrutinized in depth to make an observation of the surface level. Eco’s (1984) declaration is appropriate that a symbol relies on a large extent on the cultural matrix and reader’s context. The narrative opens ‘the hunger artist’s world of signs and symbols evoking the struggling myth of Christ and the mythological origin of salvation in a Jewish symbolic order. However, the images of the appetite of the hunger artist are paradoxically and psychosemiotically overwhelmed by the hunger and food signifiers. The discourse is situated and overshadowed by the reflection of the search for the meanings of life and existence evoking the myth of Buddha and Christ in the Judeo-Christian symbolic order and symbolizes hope of death as the possibility of life. The signs of the hunger artist and death caution the reader to the subversive disposition of the text which is exceeded paradoxically by the images of food and life as his text is redolent with them. The hunger artist’s will to attain a control over his instinctive desires and his volition to attain transcendence is axiomatic of the ambition to go beyond the predetermined limitations Providence has established for him, offering the disordered prospect of the life into death. These signifiers expose the abstract ideologies hidden in the narrative. As the hunger artist foregrounds the socio-ideological and psychological inscription of the life of Kafka as a subject by bringing it in contrast to the modern society. Kafka has coalesced and juxtaposes these symbols to determine the organization of the narrative as a psychosemiotic text.

The Hunger Artist possesses a subversive character. It foregrounds the signifiers of holy inscription of the hunger artist’s search for spiritual autonomy in a materialistic society. As Schiffrin (1987) argues that these signifiers signpost the discussion. An examination of the signifiers of the narrative indicates that there is little evidence to support Kafka’s claim either the hunger artist is a circus artist hired by circus, or, on the contrary, a man about whom people were conscious that he was enjoying “some secret
nourishment” as “for their elders he was often just a joke that happened to be in fashion”. However, the argument of Lacan (2003) is apposite that meanings are born in metaphoric structures, which designate and verify the substitution of signifier for signifier. In both the psychoanalytical tradition and literary practices, there is a tendency to search the unknown recesses of mind which is also followed by The Hunger Artist as it hypothesizes the existence and need of a spiritual truth. Gounelas (2001) drawing upon Lacan vindicates the truth that language is the manifestation of repressed tendencies by arguing “If language, as we have seen, is constitutive of reality and meaning, it is desire which is its permanent condition. Desire emerges, as Lacan says at the moment of its incarnation into speech”. The Hunger Artist as a signifier implicates itself like the double image of existence and spirituality a kind of paradox. The conception of the existence and spiritual hunger experiences the repression in the text that forces the potentially ‘anxiety-provoking’ events, situations and notions distant from the access of the consciousness. In this sense, the repression provides a medium to display those withholding disagreeable impressions of personality at the echelon of superego. The narrative shows a marked deviation from the existing modes of discourse concerned with the conscious, preconscious, unconscious and subconscious structures where objective delineation of ideas is abandoned, and makes room for psychoanalytic theory that investigates the unconscious materialization of the ‘latent content,’ which generates the ‘manifest content’ to enter into the symbolic organization of the discourse. It is through the operation and signification of paradox and metaphor in the discourse, the narrative is developed.

The paradox of Kafka’s hunger artist is ambivalent as he is not what he seems to be. The hunger artist’s signifier is equivocal that he is not only an artist but also a man who is in search of his identification as a human being, seeking salvation. Therefore, Kundera (1991) argues that Kafka always seems to be interested in exploration of “hitherto unknown aspects of existence”. In this relation, “barred cage” is too equivocal. The cage of the body in which the shackled soul is trying to seek freedom is tantamount of the cage of the instinctive desires with which man is born. It serves to be a reversal of that disagreement which is made with the help of The Hunger Artist and proves artist’s claim that “during his ...forbade it” and the denial of cage and hunger artist is made through the claim that “not every watcher, of course, was capable of understanding this”. The signifier of cage serves as a cobweb, which is the result of man’s contemplation, reflection, wisdom and meditation. It helps to understand, rationally and skeptically, the mystery of man’s being and situation but does not liberate him to exercise his free will. As the hunger artist is enslaved in this cage – the cage of his wisdom - and any means to liberate him is nothing but a dream. Hunger artist’s relation with the cage where “clock” is the only piece of furniture brings him in relations to world where he has been hurled down to live his life by setting his relation with God.

The signifiers of clock and the time play a central role in this background. The clock is a microcosm of time in which the hunger artist moves and shows the struggle of mankind from specific to universal level. As Ricoeur (1984) opines with reference the technique of the fluidity of time that time becomes a human time. In this association, this clock shows the entire world in which he lives. Clock is a symbol of chronological time which has linear direction and neither stops nor hark anyone. Man, on the other hand, wants to incarcerate it, and does not seem to yearn for any other landscape. Barred cage, clock and bed of straw constitute his whole world. These visions and references to time in
the narrative show man’s awakening and the positioning of man’s wisdom by the construction of time symbols as a narrative technique. The employment of such a technique presupposes Kafka’s struggle as an original man who is in constant journey against the “natural law” to discover the mystery of human existence by his wisdom; to wash out the ‘originals sin’ of ignorance. As, has been argued by Mann, in the backdrop of Kafkan biography, (1946) that ‘Kafka was haunted by all sorts of fears and apprehensions, ideas of original sin, of guilt and punishment where the basis of his feeling and thinking”. In this relation, the hunger artist’s struggle for transcendent is actually the struggle of Kafka as a Jew to coordinate with God to atone for guilt, to take off the burden of ‘original sin’.

Embedded in The Hunger Artist is the psychological dilemma that “not every watcher, of course, was capable of understanding it”. Rather, “the fast had really been rigorous and continuous; only the artist himself could know that he was therefore bound to be the sole completely satisfied spectator of his own fast”. It signifies Kafka’s religious and Zodiac belief that he has been promised salvation. The hunger artist’s timeless journey is the journey of man towards God, and mirrors the reconstruction and completion of the human soul which can be earned by self-sacrifice, acts of penitence, and complete submission to the will of God, the cause of goodness, ethical virtue, and opting religious and moral complacency. Hence in this way “the narrative takes its lead from the concept of association of ideas” (Sim, 2002). In this regard, the demonstration of the signifiers of food appetite and morsel in contrast to fasting and hunger add additional dimensions to the usual interpretation of the hunger artist. The quest of the “secret nourishment” basically indicates his endeavor to save his “self”; the self of the human specie. The hunger artist is the projection of eternal God whose self is overwhelmingly undefeatable force. This timeless journey is the reflection of the self-imposed punishment of man to pay back the original sin.

The “heaven” and “clock” are again brought into opposition but are linked together by patterning the signifiers paradoxically in the narrative structure. The contrast of the heaven and clock symbolically reflects on man’s situation in the modern materialistic world across clock time to yield and surpass the physical limitations to discover what lies behind the seven skies. The signification of eternal time is a reversal of time which hunger artist wants to gain by disposing the clock time off in terms of continuing his fasting even after the laps of forty days. The hunger artist’s desire to discover the obscure self of human being by attaining the self denial is, in fact, an attempt to solve the human predicament by reaching the state of timeless ecstasy where the ultimate truth reveals itself to get final autonomy. The clock here signifies the ever historical search of man to ascertain the human predicament and its solution to provide meanings to his existence.

Through the character of the hunger artist, Kafka represents the relationship between body and mind, and the material and spiritual dimensions with the modern consciousness subordinate to the appetites of the body. The character of the hunger artist has been singled out of the physical world, and he no longer has anything to do with it. The physical world also with all its pleasures, pearls and glitters, for him, becomes useless. The psychosemiotic world of The Hunger Artist shows how the days and months have nothing to do with the eternal struggle of man to reconcile through the sufferings and tragedies to pay back the old wages of sin; the original sin. This
paradoxical doubling of physical and spiritual perspective, deals with the symbolic order of human existence at superego level. It has nothing to do with the age and time of the physical world. Man should not hope for salvation, for he can not atone for the guilt by enduring sacrifice as is done by the hunger artist by continuing his fast.

Parallelism is created by bringing the tyranny of time and fate together which is well expressed in the form of the clock and the duration of forty days. Psychosemiotically it enters the symbolic order not only by showing the tragedy and struggle of mankind but also man’s struggle to overcome his weaknesses to please God. God, to whom he fails to please, Who, becomes nothing but a mercileless Father and pronounces a decree for his disobedient son in the form of ruthless death. In this regard, Mann (1946) argument substantiates the very fact that “the God ...mercileless Father.”

The Hunger Artist emphasizes upon the difference between the time on the clock and time in the mind by casting time symbols over and over again. There is much substantiation, throughout the Hunger Artist, of the modern conception of time where the time is absent and this lack is demonstrated by the employment of time signs and symbols. Signifying isolation, fragmentation, and mechanical nature of contemporary age and man, Kafka presents the hunger artist as a symbol of soul, striving to transcend in order to get spiritual ecstasy in a clock less background. The clock strike but there is no mention of physical time. This constant striking and pleasure of the “only piece of furniture” shows that man’s life is transitional as well as commented with the bond of time.

The scheme of the time signifiers come into view and resurface in the whole narrative with regular intervals with the paradoxical propensities and foregrounds the psychosemiotic disposition of the “Kafkan problem” identifying the “speaking object” (Kristeva, 1989) truncated in the signs and signifiers of the text. It occupies significant place in Kafkan fiction. It is the presence of clock in the barred cage which signifies the tyranny of time and the transient nature of man’s life where time and never turns back, as in the form contrast to soul which is abstract and clock time illuminates the presence of existence in terms of a particular time span, which is fixed and limited. In the narrative, when gradually clock stops at a stage to strike or bang, shows the artist’s steady psychological detachment from the physical world.

This detachment and indifference from the physical time constructed by the random symbols anticipate the discursive and heterogeneous concoction of both spiritual and corporeal symbolic array. It is this stage that the hunger artist is shown caged but is escaped from the mechanical oppression of time, which fundamentally becomes his quest for eternal salvation by locating and identifying his lost self in socio-psychological differences. The fantasy offers him psychological autonomy and adventure. Constant reiteration of such phases and clauses such as “during these last decades”, “we live in a different world now”, “last few days”, “fortieth day”, “now”, “after any term of fasting”, “about forty days”, “then”, “often”, “in times like this”, “last few days”, “at now time”, “in times like his”, “many more days went by”, shows the constant reaffirmation of the absence of time. His unending self-hunger strike comes in the background of silence when clock stops clicking; even the change of date and day has also become the matters of past, signifies that his constant fasting dawns upon him the truth of ultimate reality.
The dichotomies of various signifiers continue in a zigzag manner throughout the narrative. The clock is also the symbol of earthy feelings, worldliness, and spiritual deterioration and decline of the modern man. Forty days feat of the hunger artist is appreciated but the continuity of the same strike gradually loses its appeal to the masses, and becomes fatal and destructible for him. Ostensibly, the absence of time is one of the prominent features of the postmodern fiction, and one of the sublime characteristics of the narrative. The absence of time, date, day and the clock stopping, basically, show the submission of the hunger artist to the law of nature which follows no calendar.

The Hunger Artist is redolent with the signifiers dealing with the presence of time. Anti clock expressions flow out of the text to show the artistic sequences built in the structure of the story where events are sequenced without maintaining the chronological order. It openly follows the modern conception of ‘time in mind’. The time, day, date and clock are brought in contrast in the first half of the story to the absence of time, day, date and clock in the later half to show the state of opposition in terms of physical and spiritual existence respectively. The conception of past and present has been made obvious. A new conception of narrative time has been given in hunger artist. Temporal setting of the story is set against the absence of time to emphasize a logical sequence that occurred instead of sequence of events as has been observed by the narrator in terms of progression. The swinging between past and present liberates the story from the shackles of chronological time. As the story moves away from the chronological order and so does the ticking of clock gradually.

The apparent configuration of the narrative is proscribed by immanent sign ensembles ingrained in the discourse and reflects the tremendous skill of Kafka as a psychologist in the words of Rahv (1952) “an artist of neurosis”. The hunger artist’s consciousness develops toward intellectual height and confirms the evolution of the hunger artist from the ego to the superego level through signs and symbols of time. The constitution of time durations and division of narrative in multiple strands of time are out-and-out a mental experience, happening and occurring in the mind of the artist, leading towards intuition and psychological experience. The narrative proclaims the presence of time but as an absolute, definite, eternal, and universal entity. In this relation, The Hunger Artist’s world appears in conformity with the universal nature of time rather than the time of the clock or calendar.

It is within this nexus of signifiers “Food” and “appetite” is brought, constantly, in contrast to each other throughout the story to intensify the magnitude of difference between instincts and soul. Here we are confronted with Kafka’s dilemma being a modern man, who has lost God and in a constant quest to recourse to God. He is born with body, which is dependent on instinctive desires and retains them till the time, instinctive needs are fulfilled. He is spiritually empty. This spiritual vacuum and lack is not man made for which he blames God who does not reveal Himself to man except for death. And it is because of this revelation of the truth that the hunger artist expresses: “I have to fast, I can’t help it”. For the surprise of the overseer “because” said the hunger artist, lifting his head a little and speaking with his lips pursed, as if for a kiss, right into the overseer’s ear, so that no syllable might lost, “because I could not find the food I liked. If I had found it believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else.”
A corollary to the human failing in The Hunger Artist is the pronounced damnation. The self-damnation is basically an excuse to blame God for not providing him the channel to restore his relationship with God. The hunger epitomizes the ambivalence towards human body. He blames the instinctive desires, his biological apparatus and social needs to secure his ego from eternal damnation. He seeks refuge in the thought and philosophy of pantheism when man and God were one and were separated to show his might, grandeur, sublimity as Creator. The hunger artist, thus, is an exercise to remind God that once they were one, sublime, unyielding, undefeatable, inseparable, and had the relationship of unison. The signifier of God represents the unconscious ideal hero of the man.

The torment, agony and turbulence the hunger artist suffered from, is, in fact, the suffering on the part of the whole humanity. “Since it was not the hunger artist who was cheating, he was working honestly but the whole world was cheating him of his reward”. In this relation, the image of the hunger artist gives an impression of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion symbolizes the atonement for the sins of the mankind. After questioning the human existence, the hunger artist rationalizes the human passions and is crucified like Jesus Christ mercilessly. “Leopard” is the symbol of merciless Father, who comes when man fails to atone for his original sin to help to save the sufferer to transcend, and waits for the final verdict from God. Kafka’s religious pathos shows that he is not only aware of God’s being but also that He is cruel and merciless and at the same instance, the hunger artist enters the psychosemiotic order of desire which becomes visible “at the moment of its incarnation in speech” in the words of Lacan (1991).

Simultaneously, the symbolism of the death scene is outwardly Christian. For Christ’s quest for spiritual truth and struggle against the physical world resulted in his crucifixion. As the words of The Holy Bible manifest:

> And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

*(Luke, pp. 1091)*

In the same vein, the hunger artist’s search for the ‘secret nourishment’ and realization of the pointlessness of physical existence leads him towards a tragic end. This conception of death, a forced death or perhaps a desired death, provides Kafka with a source to discover and rediscover the link and communion between the human being and God. In this relation, Webster (1950) asserts that “Kafka knew that, although there were a thousand places of refuge, there was only one place of salvation”. However, the hunger artist’s urge “why stop fasting at this particular moment after forty days of it? He had held out of for a long time; why stop now”, indicates his moment of the fulfillment of resurrection. He keeps on thinking “why he should be cheated of the fame he would get for fasting longer, for being not only the record hunger artist of all time, which presumably he was already, but for beating his own record by a performance beyond human imagination”. The desire of the hunger artist to see himself unbeaten and triumphant beyond the human imagination is the unconscious desire for resurrection that “Are you still fasting? ..... understood him”. *(pp. 276)*

In the same connection, the character of Father as ‘Christ’ is, brought in the middle of the story to portray the Christ’s truth. “Father”, who is magnanimous, magnificent,
glorious and towering, is Christ. Father is a guide, protector and sage. The symbols of the Father and children have been brought instantaneously in the story when the hunger artist becomes conscious of the “troubled in spirit, and all the more troubled because no one would take his trouble seriously. What comfort could he possibly need? What more could he possibly wish for […] to fight against this lack of understanding, against a whole world of non-understanding was impossible”. These lines symbolically indicate the dilemma of the modern man generally, and of Kafka specifically.

In this unification, the psychosemiotic analysis substantiates and proves that Kafka’s art lies in revealing the dilemma of speechlessness, fragmentation, indifference and the consciousness of existence in his narrative as a consequence of psychosis. In practical terms, this means that Kafka has all the resources to invite multiplicity and diversity on the same plane of investigation. I have observed and analyzed this potentiality of Kafka under Psychosemitic scholarship not only on the plane of symbolic order but on the psychological plane in order to trace out the deep psychic structure embedded within the text.

The arguments are presented in the form of the signifiers in narrative such as *Food and Hunger*, *Life and Death*, *Knowledge and the Quest of Knowledge*, *Religion and Immorality*, *God and Humanity*, *Spiritual and Physical*, *Existence and Suffering*, *Salvation and Punishment*, *Sin, Duty and Right*, etc., recurring in the whole narrative with varying degree and compose the field of action and meanings. The death of the hero in The Hunger Artist, illustrates the unconscious resistance for death and a conscious endeavor for existence and life apparently of hunger artist but in truth they signify the psychological obsessions of Kafka providing source material to understand the “Kafkan problem”. These signs appear in an interconnected universe of ideas in the narrative in paradigmatic associations, syntagnostics linear orders, conceptual congruities or contrasts unfolding the unlimited semantic cosmos of the story through the paradoxical and metaphorical relations or binary oppositions.

In this association, the analysis of Kafkan fiction also attests the interpretation that psychology and linguistic alternatives impinge on each other and consequently show a consistency in the exploitation of hidden code of signs that is stranded in psychological evolution in terms of *id*, *ego* and *superego*. Hence, in this connection, the frequencies of signs and symbols of ‘bed’, ‘hunger’, ‘food’, ‘clock’, ‘time’, ‘God’, ‘death’, ‘room’, ‘hunger artist’s occupation with the salvation’, The Hunger Artist is not only the demonstration of obsessed psyche and structured imagination of Kafka, but also is the consequence of an intrinsic psychic incongruity between Kafka and the reticent propensities. Kafka’s consistency in the exploitation of these signifiers with incessant variations in terms of its symbolic order renders his complete personality.

This symbolic realization helps to understand not only sign phenomenon but also the psycho-neurotic aspect of the “Kafkan problem”. Furthermore, it helps to reconstruct his unconscious and subconscious aspects by way of sign choices and underwrites the importance of these signs and signifiers in relative entirety. Therefore, Kafkan problem is not only the rationale of this signification but is the result of this linguistic project in the Kafkan unconscious. As this debate outlines it clearly that I was not dealing with any aspect of Kafkan personality in terms of behavior rather with reference to the inner
sensibilities and patterns of thought which become obvious on the close analysis of the recurring signifiers as is evident in the analysis.

In the course of this psychosemiotic study I also have measured Kafka’s response and psychological patterning to the principal sources of condensation and displacement in order to show how Kafka has reconciled the apparent irreconcilable. Furthermore, the analysis also demonstrates how The Hunger Artist has unraveled the interlocked and interwoven signifiers to articulate Kafka’s aesthetics, predilections, fears, desires, loneliness, fragmentation, and sensibilities etc., which are foregrounded through this psychological signification in his narratives. It is through this psychosemiotic implication of deconstructive and counter-hegemonic reading that Kafka achieves indeterminacy of meanings which underscores enormity and immensity of suggestions as well as endorses patterns of psyche.

References


