CHAPTER I

Introduction: Concept and Theory

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In any given situation of necessity, concept and theory undoubtedly become indispensable because without having or development of adequate idea or understanding about concept and theory, one may/cannot do justice and bring forth rationale of the study to certain appropriate height. In fact continuous conceptualisation and contextualisation of a theme topic, problem or issue definitely help build up solid concepts and theories at macro level. In this backdrop, thus, the introductory chapter concentrates to deliver and understand concepts and theories of cultural study, semiotics and semiosis and other relevant operational terms and definitions.

To be specific, main concern and objective of the present study *Semiosis of Manipuri Women: A Sociological Study* is to unravel fact, figure and database about Manipuri women and their status, role and allied activities in broad cultural context of Manipuri society. This is primarily a work of cultural study with application of concept semiosis from a sociological parameter. Because in present times, cultural study or culturology is an integral component of sociological exploration and therefore for developing a holistic approach such study is ubiquitously gaining importance and popularity. Indeed, cultural study employs theoretical and methodological tools like semiotics, cultural semiosis, social semiotic, semiotic sociology etc. which are basically critical and interpretative theories to examine everyday culture and practice in a specific society. Its study includes, among other issues, understanding and interpreting women's role in a given society. Since the concept of semiosis is ideal-typical to sociological enquiry, title of the present work is named so.

Semiotics

Semiotics or semiotic study is an umbrella term concerning science of signs. Etymologically, the word is derived from the Greek root word 'semeion' meaning 'a

sign'.[1] Semiotics deals with a systematic study of signs in all spheres of human experience. Its area of study includes cultural sign processes (semiosis), analogy, metaphor, signification and communication, signs and symbols. Classification of signs or sign system is based on its relation to manner of transmission. Process of transmitting meaning through codes used may be sound/letter that form word, body gestures, clothes we wear, etc. Codes are to be decoded to arrive at denotation, connotation or signification of meaning of codes. Codes can also be cultural values which cast new levels of connotation on every aspect of human life.[2]

The study of signs is not an exclusive modern conceptual development. In ancient times too, philosophers would ponder over role of signs in nature and human experiences. Plato and Aristotle are both said to have examined relationship between signs and world we live in.[3] Some speculate the English word 'sign' is derived from the Latin 'signum' before semiotics had its root in the Greek word 'semeion'[4]. It was Augustine (354 CE – 430 CE) who in the beginning of 5th century CE, for the first time introduced the idea of sign in the general sense, and its relation to cultural and natural phenomena. He pointed out that a sign is a genus to which natural and cultural phenomena alike are species.[5] The concept developed theoretically in Middle Ages with Aquinas (1204/5-1274), Roger Bacon (1214-1292), John Poinsot (1589-1644), etc. attempting to analyse the term and its relation with logic and cognitive philosophy.

Later, John Locke (1632-1704) became directly associated with study of sign. He first coined the term 'semiotics' from the Greek word 'semeiotike' meaning 'doctrine of signs' in English in his historic work, *An Essay concerning "Human Understanding" of 1690*.[6] However, according to John Deely, Locke had made an error in formation of the Greek word 'semeiotike' which if translated into Latin would be 'semiotica' and further translation into English would be 'semiotics' in plural form, where he would have rather meant the science according to suffix '-ics' used in English.[7] Whatsoever be the case, Locke mentions in his *An Essay concerning "Human Understanding", Chapter xxi of the Division of Science* (1690) that science may be classified into three kinds. According to him, all objects of human understanding fall under three categories – (i) first, 'nature of things as they are in themselves, their relation, and their manner of operation' which he called 'Physica /Phusike' or natural philosophy.

(ii) Secondly, 'that which man himself ought to do, as a rational and voluntary agent, for attainment of any end, especially happiness' which he called practica/ practike. And (iii) 'Third branch may be called semeiotike, or doctrine of signs; the most usual whereof being words, it is aptly enough termed also logike /logic: business whereof is to consider nature of signs, mind makes use of for understanding of things, or conveying its knowledge to others.'[8]

The term 'semiotics' stuck to its meaning thereof where many other later philosophers added to its conceptual development till Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1919), a Swiss linguist and Charles Sanders Peirce (1832-1914), an American philosopher came to the picture in the first part of 20th century to further define it in their own respective terms and thus develop it into a theory. **Saussure termed his theory as 'Semiology'** and found it to be closely associated with the field of linguistics of which he is the founder.[9] He studied structure and meaning of language for the very first time. On the other hand, **Peirce developed his theory of signs, termed it as 'semiotic'** which, according to him is closely related to logic.[10]

Semiotics, whose main object of study is signs, is closely related to linguistics and as Charles William Morris (1901-1979) in his work, *Foundation of the Theory of Signs* (1938) examined, can be defined as a group of three branches of semantics, syntactics and pragmatics. Semantics studies relation between signs and objects to which they apply. Syntactic refers to interrelationship between signs and its formal properties. Pragmatics deals with relation between sign system and people (or animal) who use them.[11]

By 1950's-60's, **Structuralism** became a prominent intellectual movement which began in France under influence of Saussure and his theory of Semiology. Structuralism assumes that any cultural phenomenon, activity or product is made up of many structural networks which carry significance and operate through 'codes' as a system of signs and can be decoded by a structuralist or semiotician. The concept of semiology was put to application to various fields of study. It was found that the concept had an important dimension in the field of cultural anthropology. Claude Levi-Strauss, a structural anthropologist, was almost the pioneer who, based on Saussure's linguistic model analysed such cultural phenomena as myth, kinship

relation, totemism and even modes of preparing food.[12] Umberto Eco also propounded that cultural phenomena can be studied as communication.

Furthermore, some **semioticians** applied it to natural sciences as to nature and adaptation of living organisms to their world and also prediction they seem to make about their world. This communication of information is dealt with in biosemiotics or zoosemiosis. Biosemiotics is especially associated with Jacob Van Uexkiill (1864-1944) who studied sign processes in animals.[13] Zoosemiotics was termed by Thomas A. Sebeok (1920-2001), an American student of Charles William Morris who studied non-human signaling and communication system.[14] According to him, there exists a communicative relation between an organism and its habitat. He also unfolded relationship between Semiosis (activity of interpreting signs) and life. This observation was picked up by Copenhagen-Tartu Biosemiotic School of which Yuri Lotman (1922-1993) was a founding member. He studied culture from a semiotic angle. It was he who initiated the concept of semiosphere.[15]

Jacques Lacan applied the Saussurean model to Freudian psychoanalysis to interpret 'the unconscious' is structured 'like a language'.[16] Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965) was also a follower of Saussure who developed a formalist approach to Saussure's structuralist theories and developed a scientific calculus of language in his work "*Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*".[17] Roland Barthes (1915-1980) applied structuralist and semiotic method to general field of everyday modern culture in his "*Mythologies*" (1957). In his early writings, he described a literary text as 'second-order semiotic system', which means a literary text uses primarily, a first-order semiotic system of language to develop a secondary semiotic structure.[18] Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917-1992) is another name to be reckoned with modern semiotic studies as he promoted a structural version of semiotics called 'Generative Semiotics', and evolved a paradigm shift of focus from signs to systems of signification.[19]

Semiotics is again deeply related with communication studies. More often than not, the two disciplines seem to overlap each other. Both are concerned with deciphering of meaning of data send by the source to the receiver. However, semiotics lays its importance in study of signification more than communication, an observation as offered by Marcel Danesi in his *Messages and Meanings: Introduction to Semiotics* (1994).[20]

Although semiotics and linguistics are considered similar as they both study signs, linguistics is confined to language; whereas semiotics encompasses signs in all mediums and exhibits a wider range of sign systems and sign relations. Semiotics also differs from philosophy of language which deals with natural languages or languages in general, while semiotics is rather concerned with non-linguistic signification. Philosophy of language is related closer to linguistics whereas semiotics is more relevant to humanities (literary theory) and cultural anthropology.

In recent times, semiotics has gradually evolved as a discipline of repute. It is found to be extensively relevant in literary criticism, in understanding mass media (audio/visual), culture, etc. It has become a major discipline of study in philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, art, designing and even in study of law.[21]

Social Semiotics

Social semiotics is a branch of semiotics engaged in study of human practices in specific socio-cultural situation. It is interested in identifying and examining meanings from social perspective and also studying the ability of human processes of interpretations or semiosis in developing individuals and societies. It aims at social practices of making meanings out of visual, verbal or aural aspects. Various systems of meaning-making, e.g., speech, writing or image are termed as semiotic modes.[22]

Social semiotics is also concerned with how humans interpret meanings, how semiotic modes are formed by interests and ideologies of social nature and how they conform to social changes. It focuses on the variability of semiotic practices. Signs are means by which humans use and adapt them to make meanings.

Michael Halliday, a linguistic theorist, is a name associated with social semiotics as he adapted the term to linguistics in the title of his book, *Language as Social Semiotic*. According to him, any semiotic system (codes) is formed for three important purposes or '*metafunctions*'. They are –

(i)   *Ideational metafunction* – representing ideas about world,

(ii)   *Interpersonal metafunction* – projecting interaction between producer and receiver of a sign,

(iii)   *Textual metafunction*– bringing coherence between ideas and interactions into meaningful texts and making them relevant to their context.[23]

Gunter Kress and Robert Hodge in their work, *Social Semiotics* (1988), stress on utility of semiotic systems in social practices.[24] They indicate that semiosis is an active process where meaning is not based on rigid structures or predefined cultural codes. Rather, it is determined by Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of infinite semiosis where interpretations are made of material world and cultural practices. Social Semiotics also highlights how societies and cultures maintain or shift these conventional bonds between signifier and signified. Its main purpose is to develop analytical and theoretical frameworks which can explain meaning-making in a social context.

Phenomenological Sociology

Phenomenological Sociology is an interpretative approach to social life. It attempts to identify meanings people find in their world of things, persons and events, perspectives from which people see themselves and others, and motives that underlie their behaviour. This approach provides the best motive and most correct purpose for any social or behavioural science. Philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) designated the term '*phenomenology*' as a principle of philosophical and scientific method.[25] This method sets aside all presuppositions and suppressing hypotheses and seeks to devise such techniques of observation, description and classification to find structures and connections in nature which do not yield to experimental techniques. Phenomenological philosophy, in Husserl's opinion, must bring us at least to an absolutely presuppositionless science. His quest was based on a search for essences free from cultural or social sphere.

Phenomenological Sociology is an applied approach to study of social world derived from phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl and interpretative sociology of Max Weber by German theorist Alfred Schutz (1899-1959). Schutz is considered leading exponent of Phenomenological Sociology introducing the same to American Sociology. He incorporated Weberian concept of '*verstehen*' or subjective understanding into his system. Schutz agrees with Weber that the essential role of social science is to be interpretative that is to understand subjective meaning of social action. For him, everyday world is inter-subjective because it is shared, and we continually interact with others and interpret their actions.[26]

According to Alfred Schutz, three interrelated types of inquiry are necessary for a phenomenology of the social world.

(i)   The first is a clarification of basic concepts involved, especially those of 'subjective meaning', 'action' and 'inter-subjectivity'.

(ii)   The second is development of distinctions and categories to help in understanding dynamics and structure of world of everyday life. Schutz introduced the term '*multiple realities*' for world of dreams, of science, of religion, as well as everyday world. An individual's understanding gets a jolt when any change is attempted from one world to other.

(iii)   The third is formulating a scientific method for generating theories. Here he differentiates between first-order and second-order constructs. The first-order constructs are typifications used by ordinary actors based on common sense knowledge to define world and guide their actions in it. The second-order constructs are ideal types constructed by sociologists on basis of observing first-order constructs of people. This is how meaning emerges in everyday life.[27]

Semiotic Sociology

Phenomenological sociology provides a programmatic guideline but it is difficult to put to actual use. If a synthesis is brought between phenomenological sociology and structuralism (semiology) of Saussure and pragmatism (semiotic) of Peirce, then articulation of meaning or connection of the object and the sign by the interpretant can be understood as an '*intentional act*'.[28] This synthesis would lead towards *semiotic sociology*. According to Risto Heiskala, a theorist, it is essential to develop a research programme for semiotic sociology on basis of cultural and social theory. Semiotic sociology will be an approach of vital importance as the future work in cultural theory or would act as a basis in cultural theory. It will constitute an assimilation of theoretical work and empirical social research which will enable researchers to undertake an interesting study of society in near future.[29]

We observe that cultural meaning and institutional structure of society are closely connected as a continuum. If we are able to supplement this view with a **neo-structuralist theory** of meaning, we will consequently understand society as a

coherent whole of layers of articulations of meaning.[30] As such, two theories propounded by Saussure and Peirce respectively are of utmost importance and relevance in this regard and discussed below:

Saussurian Theory of Semiology

Ferdinand de Saussure, father of modern linguistics, coined the term 'semiology' from the Greek 'semeion' (sign), to indicate **theory of semiotic studies of language** in his *Course in General Linguistics (1916)*. He was instrumental in applying laws of linguistics to study semiology. He insisted that semiology maybe envisaged as a science to study role of signs in social life; "a science that studies life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek semeion 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, and what laws governs them. Since science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of general science of semiology; laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within mass of anthropological facts".[31] He cited here that to find out true nature of language, one has to understand its relation with other semiological apparatus. According to him, rites, and customs, etc. can be studied as signs, which will bring into focus its inclusion in semiological system and can be elucidated by laws of semiology that govern to arouse consciousness level of them.

In this regard, Saussure offered a dyadic or a two-part model in study of sign – signifier (*significant*) and signified (*signifie*). The signifier represents sound-image which is material or form (physical) that which can be seen, heard, smelt, touched or tasted. The signified represents concept which is purely conceived in mind and therefore abstract. Association of two constitutes sign, and is referred to as signification. He claims that a word carries no meaning inside or has no exclusive covertness. Instead, a linguistic sign (e.g. a word) maybe interpreted as not a connection between a thing and a name, rather it is between a concept and a sound image or sound pattern.[32] Compared to spoken word, writing is considered a separate and secondary sign system of language. To Saussure, writing is signifier, sound which relates to speech the signified which are inseparable. They are interlinked in mind and

each is dependent on other. Hence, meaning of a sign is structural as well as relational. The signifier and the signified co-exist in relation to each other. A sign makes sense only in relation to other signs. Its value also relies on its relation to other signs within system. He distinguishes value and signification of a sign by citing example of French word 'mouton' which means English word 'sheep'. But value of the two signs differ so much so that in English, the meat of this animal is called 'mutton' and not 'sheep' whereas in French, 'mouton' is referred to both.[33]

Yet in another context, Saussure reiterated that another aspect of relational concept of meaning is its differential identity. He stressed on difference between sign, particularly oppositional difference, what is called 'negative identity'. He cites examples of life/death, nature/culture, etc. where meaning of a term is arrived at in contrast to what other is not. Concept is not defined positively, instead negatively in contrast to other concepts in same system. This conception is purely based on structural analysis. Saussure claims that though both signifier and signified are considered differential and negative when separate, the combined form of sign is indeed a positive term.[34]

In accordance with continuous exploration and analysis, Saussure's first principle of language is arbitrariness of sign, or in other words, linguistic sign is arbitrary. He emphasised that there exists no connection between signifier and signified, i.e., between sign and its meaning since he claimed that no word carries any meaning inside. It is a 'signifier' a representation of some object, 'signified' or object, to be conceived in mind, in order to constitute a meaningful sign. Once a sign is established in linguistic community and develops a historical existence, it cannot be changed any more. When it is used socially within a codified system, it earns a connotation which gets inclusion in culture of sign-users. As a result, Saussure understood that examination of signs was a science where we arrive at an understanding based on experiences of how human beings combine bodily reaction or language into words and other abstract concepts. His theory on the arbitrariness of signs directs him and later semioticians to emphasise that every means of expression used is based on human conventions, social as well as cultural. Principle of arbitrariness of linguistic sign can be applied to whole sign-system or semiological system. Saussure referred to other sign systems such as deaf and dumb alphabet, social customs, etiquette,

religious and other symbolic rites, legal procedures, military signals, and nautical flags.[35]

In an extensive as well as intensive process of exploration Saussure's second principle of language states that the signifier which is based on sounds is related to time and hence, it is linear in nature.[36]

Charles Sanders Pierce's Theory of Semiotic

Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher, who founded philosophical pragmatism, used the term 'semiotic' to develop his sign theory in 1860s. It was closely related to logic as medium of enquiry and process of scientific discovery. He offered a triadic or a three-part model as his basic sign structure i.e. signifying elements of signs or sign vehicle, object and interpretant. The 'sign', as Peirce used, can be considered as signifier, for example, 'smoke'; object as the signified, e.g. 'fire' signified by 'smoke' and interpretant as signification that arises out of sign/object relation. Peirce termed the first part of a sign, i.e. signifying element as 'sign' or 'sign-vehicle' or 'representamen' or 'representation' or 'ground'. For second part of sign, i.e. object, Peirce says that it is that which determines the sign. It should possess certain features which are necessary for its determination. Third part, interpretant is the most important and innovative aspect in Peirce's sign theory. The interpretant is understanding or more often than not, translation of sign/object relation. Again Peirce also affirms that sign determines an interpretant in such a way that we understand characteristics necessary signifying relation between sign and object. For instance, 'smoke' determines an interpretant sign for its object, 'fire' drawing our understanding to relation between 'smoke' and 'fire'.[37]

Peirce's sign theory of 1867-68 is generally regarded as his early initial stage. During the period, he expounded that a sign determines or generates an interpretant sign which further becomes a developed sign of object which again needs to be interpreted and generates a further interpretant and so on. As an outcome, we get an infinite chain of signs which he termed as *infinite semiosis*.[38] He claimed that an infinite chain of signs precedes any given sign and also proceeds to ad infinitum. In this early account, he also classified three types of signs, namely, *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. First, when a sign possesses some qualities of its signified object, it is called an *icon*. One of

Peirce's examples of icon is portrait. Secondly, when a sign has direct, causal connections with its object then sign is called an *index*. Peirce cited example of weathercock. Thirdly, if there is a general or conventional connection between sign and object, then sign is called a *symbol*. Examples are words, traffic lights, etc. At this early stage of his sign theory, he put more stress on symbolic signs rather than other two.[39]

Peirce also considered relation between sign and cognition. For him, every thought is a sign. For nomenclature, he called it thought-signs. In 1903, Peirce made extensive developments of his sign theory that he expounded in 1860s. This was second phase of his theory of signs. During this stage, he classified signs into ten kinds. He concentrated on importance of signs as within focus of philosophy and logic. Over and above, he dismissed his early notion that an infinite chain of signs precedes any given sign. During this stage, he put extra stress on iconic and indexical signs. Obviously, he begins with three elements of signification, i.e., sign-vehicle, object and interpretant. He says, signs can be classified into three more type in accordance with distinction of three areas of main feature of a sign-vehicle. They are *qualisigns, sinsigns* and *legisigns*. *Qualisigns* are those signs whose signifying element depends on qualitative feature; e.g. a coloured chip as a sign for paint where colour isonly quality that matters. *Sinsigns* are those signs whose sign-vehicle employs existential or causal connection with its object; e.g. smoke and fire. The third is called *legisigns* which are signs whose sign-vehicles are based on conventions and laws; e.g. traffic lights.[40]

Peirce also claimed that signs could be classified according to way their objects performed in signification. If signification needs that sign displays quality of object, it is an *icon*. If signification requires sign exhibit existential or physical connection with object, it is an *index.* And thirdly, if signification insists sign uses some conventional, habitual or legal connection with, it is a *symbol*. Though he had propounded this classification earlier, by 1903, he felt that icons and indices cannot be truly identified without being partly symbolic or conventional. He also realised that a sign may possess a mixture of iconic, indexical and symbolic features.

Peirce believed that signs could also be classified as to their relations with their interpretant based on their qualities, existential facts, or conventional characteristics.

When basis is on qualitative features, sign is termed as *rheme*, when it is based on existential facts, sign is a *dicent*, and when based on conventional features, sign is a *delome* or *arguments* as Peirce would term them.[41]

Eventually, what we derive from this classification is that a sign can be classified in terms of some combinations of its three elements, i.e., as any one of its three types of sign-vehicle; then as any one of its three types of object; and finally as any one of its three types of interpretant. Since a sign has a sign-vehicle, it can be classified as either a *qualisign*, or a *sinsign*, or a *legisign*. Again, since a sign has an object, it can be classified as either an *icon*, or an *index*, or a *symbol*. And finally, since that sign will also determine an interpretant it can be classified as either a *rheme*, or a *dicent*, or a *delome*.

Rules for permissible combinations are three elements of a sign. (i) Classifications of sign elements such as sign-vehicle, object and interpretant as qualities (*qualisign*, *icon* and *rheme*), existential facts (*sinsign*, *index* and *dicent*) and conventions (*legisign*, *symbol* and *delome*). (ii) Classifications of dependable elements as quality, existential fact and convention according to classification of sign elements: in this sense, from perspective of quality, a *rheme* maybe *icon* and *qualisign*, *icon* and *sinsign*, *icon* and *legisign, index* and *sinsign*, *index* and *legisign*, and *symbol* and *legisign*. Again, from perspective of existential fact, a *dicent* maybe *index* and *sinsign*, *index* and *legisign*, and *symbol* and *legisign*. Further, from the perspective of convention, a *delome* maybe *symbol* and *legisign*.[42]

During the period of 1906-10, Peirce proceeded to present a final account of his theory of signs. During this final stage, he was concerned with developing relation between semiotic process and processes of inquiry. He was also concerned with relationship between signs and philosophy to find logic behind scientific discoveries. He realised that instead of an infinite chain of signs, there exists a definite end to inquiries where one understands object completely and from where proceeds no further interpretant of that object. To bring into focus distinction between semiotic process and process of inquiry, Peirce identifies two objects for sign, *immediate* and *dynamic*. Peirce distinguishes between object of sign as it is understood in semiotic process which is called *immediate object* and object of sign as it appears at end of that process which he called *dynamic object*. D*ynamic object* is comprehended at end of

inquiry after object generated a chain of signs, whereas *immediate object* is object which we come across at any given stage in process of inquiry or semiotic process.[43]

What Peirce did to objects of sign, he applied it to interpretants too and subsequently, he developed three kinds of interpretants, namely, *immediate interpretant*, *dynamic interpretant* and *final interpretant* to understand way a sign stands for an object. He explains an *immediate interpretant* as a general definition of understanding of sign/dynamic object relationship. A *dynamic interpretant* is described as understanding of sign/dynamic object relationship at any particular semiotic stage in chain of signs. And *final interpretant* is the understanding that we arrive at of *dynamic o*bject at end of inquiry. *Final interpretant* is of vital importance to our understanding as it is point of coincidence of *immediate object* and *dynamic object* and *final interpretant* also serves as a criterion for interpretation of signs.[44]

Peirce believed that there can be a classification of *sixty-six signs*, but no clear account of these is complete and final. Strictly speaking, as in manner of the 1903 typology, they can also be identified with ten elements of signs and signification, of which having three qualifying classes, and then permissible combinations. These ten elements include six sign elements in addition to four other elements that focus on the relation between signs, objects and interpretants.

Undoubtedly, final typology is of good work. Except that it is not very clear whether incomplete and brief nature of final account will be able to overcome problems it posed at the end. For, Peirce is known for making various changes in terminology and skilful detail alongwith neologism from one piece of work to next. In all his works of philosophy, he engages in all sorts of experimenting with terminology when he makes an attempt to drive in his own ideas or express same phenomenon from diverse standpoints.

Semiosis

Semiosis is a term initially used by Charles Sanders Peirce. The term has been coined from the Greek word 'semeiosis' which is derived from verb 'semeio' which means 'to mark'.[45] Peirce as well as Saussure realised that form of speech and writing alone was inadequate in producing significant interpretation of language sign systems.

Therefore, semiosis has been developed to initiate a relational study between language and other human and non-human sign system. It connotes any form of activity, conduct, or process that involve signs including production and communication of meaning by establishing relationships between signs which are to be interpreted by an audience.[46]

Generally speaking, it is a sign process. It is observed that its concern lies in producing of signs rather than signs themselves. Semiosis involves triadic and cyclic models of relations as Peirce had done in explaining his sign theory or semiotic. Three factors involved are sign vehicle, designatum and interpretant; interpreter maybe considered as a fourth factor. According to Charles Morris, a trend-follower of Peirce, attributes of being a sign, a designatum, an interpreter, or an interpretant are things that share or participate in process of semiosis from a relational perspective. Hence, in his work, *Writings on the General Theory of Signs,* he explains that semiotic is interested in study of participation of ordinary objects in process of semiosis.[47]

The three factors of a sign that form the triadic relation of semiosis maybe analysed from different dimensions. For instance, relation of signs to objects is called *semantical dimension of semiosis* and its study is termed as *semantics*. Relation of signs to interpreters is called *pragmatical dimension of semiosis* and its study is called *pragmatics*. And relation of signs to one another is termed as *syntactical dimension of semiosis* and its study is called *syntactics.* Morris further used some other terms to specify relations of signs to signs, to objects and to interpreters. He used the term '*implicates*' for semantical dimension of semiosis, '*designates*' and '*denotes*' for pragmatical dimension of semiosis, and '*expresses*' for syntactical dimension of semiosis.[48] In this way Peirce defined semiotic and semiosis to establish his theory on high popularity.

Thus, science of semiotic employs certain specific signs in order to discuss or study signs. Semiotic acts as a language to discuss about signs. Its three branches, namely, *syntactics*, *semantics*, and *pragmatics* which deal with syntactical, semantical and pragtical dimensions of semiosis respectively use specific terms. It is necessary to find relation between terms in different branches. Different signs are needed to differentiate relations and these constitute whole semiosis process.[49]

Further discussion and elaboration of these concepts not remain confined within selected scholars. Thomas A. Sebeok, in his book, *The Doctrine of Signs,* vividly analyses process of semiosis as stated by various other semioticians. He mentions that semiosis is a process which studies the history of mankind or the formation and development of family to modern state, from kinship to the federation of nations which depend on a variety of social, political, economic, moral, cultural and religious codes.[50]

Semiosis involves encoding and decoding of messages or codes belonging to an indefinite variety of contexts which humans keep on sending and receiving. Codes or messages, thus transmitted, can be converted from one interpretation to another. To derive meaningful information, sign has to be filtered out from other unwanted messages or data. Sebeok is of opinion that process of semiosis requires two components – *observer* and *observed*, and mutual interaction between the two. He affirms that laws and rules assigned to process of semiosis are only actual laws of nature. To comprehend semiosis or sign-process, situations that constitute transmission and reception of signs valid and feasible need to be recognised and examined.[51]

Cultural Studies

Cultural studies is an academic field of studies which embodies a holistic approach that has gained importance and popularity worldwide in recent years. It has its foundations in critical theory and Marxist literary criticism. It is concerned with study of contemporary culture based on its holistic nature. Cultural studies combines various theories and studies such as feminist, social and political theory, history, philosophy, literary, media and communication, art, etc. to examine cultural phenomena in various societies. It aims to decipher the manner how meaning is created and delivered through various practices, beliefs, and social, political, economic structures within a given culture.

Semiotics has become a major approach to cultural studies in late 1960s as a consequence of Roland Barthes' works and writings. Also, British school of neo-Marxist studies applied semiotics of culture to literature and art, especially in work of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. The latter established first institution for

cultural studies called *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS) at University of Birmingham in 1964. The Centre became very popular as an international intellectual movement under the directorship of Stuart Hall who succeeded Hoggart.[52]

Culture and '*cultural studies*' played a significant role in unsettling established disciplinary boundaries (e.g. of history, sociology or literature). Cultural studies has functioned as both agent and symptom in the reconfiguration of the disciplinary structure of the humanities and social sciences.

Since a variety of disciplinary backgrounds entered into cultural studies, it produced not a synthesis but an inter-disciplinarity where different theoretical or methodological preferences find expression. One of the differences of opinion relates to that between more 'textual' and more 'sociological' approaches, or, broadly speaking, between more humanities and more social science-oriented ways of conceptualising cultural studies. Incidentally, the most worthy and novel contribution to cultural analysis emanated from cultural studies when the two approaches converged. In simple sense, cultural studies deal with relationship between culture and society. Though, anthropology (study of culture) and sociology (study of society) became two separate disciplines right from 1950s, cultural studies aims at not only emphasising inseparable bonds between the two, but it also attempts to blur boundaries between them. Hence, cultural studies do not treat 'culture' and 'society' as two separate entities.[53]

Richard Hoggart in his work, *Uses of Literacy* (Hoggart, 1957) was pessimistic about shift of the English working-class culture towards a mass culture brought about by mass media and mass literacy during early to mid-20th century.[54] He also worked to bring a comprehensive focus on the social significance of popular culture as a key locus for the understanding of ordinary people's everyday lives.

Raymond Williams in his book, *Culture and Society, 1780*-1950 (1958) also points out that the understanding of culture is inseparable from and vital to the understanding of society as a whole. Williams presents an expansive concept of culture and believes that it is a 'natural' common and constitutive dimension of any human society. In his later book, *The Long Revolution* (1961), he defines culture as 'a description of a

particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour'. He refers to common meanings that underlie the lived experiences of the everyday.[55]

After World War II, there was a noticeable upward mobility in economic, social and cultural conditions of working classes resulting in rapid increase in an all pervading mass consumer culture. Cultural studies acts as critical response to these socio-cultural change, which indicated the advent of capitalist modernity as a '*way of life*' considered universal in developed West. Underpinnings of cultural studies aimed at analysing structures, practices and experiences of this way of life.

But later on, notions of '*common culture*' became less convincing and acceptable due to a shift from modern to post-modern concepts of culture. According to some theorists, different strands of cultural studies developed focusing on different intellectual and political concerns. One strand is the '*commodities theory of culture*'[56] or capitalist culture which is grounded on never-ending accumulation of commodified cultural forms and images. This is termed as '*popular culture*' which has become an area of empirical research within cultural studies.[57] It studies popular media and culture, their modes of production and circulation, and tries to assess people's reactions to popular culture. Adorno and Horkheimer are some critical theorists who followed this trend of studies. Another strand of studies focused on state inspired by Louis Althusser's and Michel Foucault's works is '*discipline theories of culture*'.[58] State becomes a disciplinary apparatus which is involved in connection between knowledge and power, and also makes individuals and groups to experience process of normalisation, examination and observation.

A third category is '*hegemony theory of culture*'[59] which also lays its focus on state though stresses on role of the social movements and civil society such as churches, voluntary organisations, etc. This paradigm shift towards cultural politics or cultural hegemony was noticeable as political powers changed hand in U.K. in 1970s. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian thinker (of the 1920s and 30s) had shown his concern that capitalists employed everyday culture as a weapon to control working people socially and politically. This is what he termed as *cultural hegemony*.[60] Marxist's view of power as a class versus class struggle gave way to the rise of cultural studies as a matter of class alliance. Cultural studies aims to analyse ways in which subjugated

groups resist and respond actively against political and economic domination. Subjugated are not passive followers of dominant class and its ideology. New outlook of cultural studies is that everyday people also play significant roles in shaping the world.

In recent times, cultural hegemony is replaced by post-modernism. Jean-Francois Lyotard in his book, *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) elucidates how shift of focus is from *meta-narratives* (grand, hegemonic projects) to multiplicity of *petite narratives* and language games. In this regard, cultural studies undertake to address a kind of representational politics which focuses on '*recognition theories of culture*'.[61] This becomes a major interest of cultural studies at end of 20th century and is associated with a shift from notions of culture as a means of communication (or meaning) to notions of culture as communities (or identities). Its interest also lies in seeking out cultural recognition and social justice by dominated and exploited groups and individuals. It analyses social and political construction of identities to figure out dominant or subordinate identities grounded on nation, race, ethnicity, diaspora, (post) coloniality, indigeniety, gender, and so on. In this respect, cultural studies connects with other critical studies like feminism, queer theory, race theories, and multicultural and postcolonial studies. Cultural studies displays a general affinity towards desires of liberation of subordinated identity groups. However, it also embraces an attitude of deconstruction and de-mythologisation towards the essentialist tendencies of said groups.

Eventually, this phase gave way to another strand of cultural studies analysis based on '*globalisation theories of culture*'[62] in recent years. It threw light on ever-increasing '*de-territorialisation*' of culture related to globalisation. Cultural studies examines transnational and cross-border flows of people, goods and images, and overall displacement of nationally or locally bounded notions of culture. Cultural studies aims to study the local and the global inter-twinnings, travel and tourism cultures, transnational media cultures, migration and diasporic changes, internet cultures and political and cultural effects of unsettling notions of place, identity and belonging. It also plays an important role in analysing local and global forms of resistance to western imperialism, emergence of global terrorism, and prospect of a global environmental crisis in wake of 21st century.

Cultural studies nowadays is a truly multi-disciplinary endeavour as its perspective with precision is the focus on '*culture*', as it problematises culture as '*site of struggle*' and looks at culture as a terrain of political struggle. Literary critic Terry Eagleton is of the opinion that this approach to 'culture' is attributed with a political dimension when it falls into the trap of domination and resistance. This inter-twinning of 'culture' and 'politics' in concrete context is the loci of cultural studies analysis.[63]

However, there are also other approaches to cultural studies where culture is not highlighted from a politicised perspective. American scholars have placed cultural studies on a pragmatic and liberalist plane, and concentrated on the subjective reactions to, and uses of mass culture. Cultural studies began in United States in mode of literary and cultural criticism known as '*the new historicism*' in early 1980s.[64] New historicists do not treat a text in isolation from its historical context, though it does not mean to return back to social and intellectual history as a 'background' setting to understand a work of literature, or to study a work of literature as a 'reflection' of worldview characteristic of a period. New historicists rely on historical and cultural implication of production, meaning effect and interpretations of a literary text so as to locate the '*situatedness*' of that text within social practices and institutions that form culture of a particular time and place. They try to investigate how a literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes.

Main exponents of New Historicism were post-structuralists Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault and others. In recent developments, culture is considered as a set of signifying systems. New Historicism aims to study a social production or event to arrive at meanings it has for people involved in it. It also tries to find out general forms of conventional codes and ways of thinking that generate meanings within cultural system.

Another approach of importance is Feminist cultural studies. It involves contributive viewpoints from varied subjects such as art history and psychoanalysis. Pioneers in this form of cultural studies are Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva and others. They are engaged in process of thinking about woman and women, about images and metaphors, about social orders and social systems leading to the thinking about humanity. They are concerned with issue of dehumanised part of humanity for sake of privileged part of humanity. Feminist cultural studies dares to imagine that feminine

is not a lacking other, or an empty space but a creative form of human thought, politics and aesthetics which will generate an impact on Women's studies that would create a better future for humanity.[65]

Within the sphere of cultural studies, idea of a text is not confined to only written language, but also films, photographs, fashions, etc. which constitute all meaningful artifacts of culture. This has widened concept of culture in recent times. To a cultural studies researcher, culture is composed of traditional high culture (culture of ruling social groups) and popular culture, besides everyday meanings and practices. The latter components have become crucial point of focus of cultural studies.

Cultural Semiosis

Nowadays, cultural semiotics is a major approach to study of culture as a signifying system constituted by signifying practices. It is a science which employs standardised methodological tools to understand production, organisation and transformation of meaning through use of signs. It is also considered as a critical method, originating from literary analysis to assess the everyday cultural practices and beliefs. Cultural semiotics became popular with publication of *Mythologies* (1957) by Roland Barthes. He reportedly pointed out concealed myths which endured formation and spread of social facts and values in western societies. Yuri Lotman's contribution to cultural semiotics is through his notion of '*semiosphere*'.[66] It stood for a common space for varying semiotic systems such as subcultures, cultures, language, societies, etc. In his work, *Universe of the Mind* (1990), he distinguished inner and outer boundaries, core and periphery, and explained dynamics of a semiosphere.

Cultural studies also adopts semiosis or cultural semiosis as an important and influential tool in tracing cultural signs and signifiers embedded in cultural practices and beliefs, and in social, political and economic structure of society. This approach is heavily indebted to notion of *unlimited semiosis* propounded by Umberto Eco and Carlo Sini. Both of them relied on Charles Sanders Peirce and his triadic model of semiosis. To explain '*unlimited semiosis*', Eco in his book, *Theory of Semiotics* takes the cue from Gertrude Steins' line "A rose is a rose is a rose" and proceeds to describe it as a case of overcoding which is not exactly necessary or useful. The reason he provides is that it has a propensity for indicating several possibilities of disseminating

information. This will lead the receiver of information to connect with different connotative subcodes. Investigating these subcodes will arise to a multiplicity of interpretations which describe directions and dimensions of semiosis.[67]

The Italian philosopher Carlo Sini also ascertains Peirce's concept of an infinite chain of signs preceding to as well as proceeding from any given sign. He believes sign-relation does not end in one meaning; rather the same meaning turns into a sign for later interpretants. Hence, interpretations of signs are infinite leading to unlimited semiosis. That is, interpretative process bears neither beginning nor end.[68]

Julia Kristeva, a pioneer in field of feminist semiotic studies and semiotic theory, introduced and developed semiosis or cultural semiosis as social action producing change. She affirms that signification arises out of relation between *semiotic* and *symbolic*. In a symbolic formation, signifier indicates objects and aspects of natural and cultural reality. In differential movements of semiosis, signifier becomes part of a flow of language – such as, as expressed in poetry, horror, melancholy, love, faith, and estrangement. Kristeva extends to identify subordinate state of women as something cultural.[69]

In recent times, cultural semiosis, with its various framework of signifier and signifying spaces, accounts for study of paintings, reading of pictorial representations in terms of gestures and bodily space, understanding of women's role as to why it is one of invisible signs of visibility, women's space as an unspoken absence in cultural production and discourse, and even filmic space. In doing so, cultural semiosis enters spaces of everyday language, visuality and symbolisation, and attempts to read, understand and interpret them theoretically. It also provides some tools for holistic academic field of study generally termed as *cultural studies*.[70]

Conclusion

This chapter is a systematic attempt to conceptualise and elucidate both concepts and theories regarded inevitable to present work. An attempt is accordingly made to define and illustrate different theories and approaches to develop an understanding in a way which is appropriate and easily comprehended. Relevant and suitable operational terms and definitions are incorporated wherever necessary. Relevance of these used concepts and theories as a part of sociological study has been highlighted

and therefore we can argue that necessary methodological tools to study cultural practices of a given society are undoubtedly diversified and complex but they reveal profound magnitude of a particular culture as a whole. Synthesis of micro and macro studies, undertaken at regular intervals, adds a new arena of study to cultural study and culturology further. The succeeding chapter will elaborate on framework of study and other vital aspects relating to research methodology and data collection which, of course are regarded imperative in any study and work.