

Arts and Crafts of Kashmir: Semantic Field Approach

Dr Shabina

Assistant Professor

Department of Functional English

Government Degree College, Ganderbal

Abstract: *Meaning has been studied for thousands of years and has been described in a variety of ways by scholars. Plato believed that words or phrases related directly to the actual objects they pick out. Aristotle was of the opinion that relationship between words and the world is indirect, mediated by social convention. Gottlob Frege drew a distinction between the sense of a linguistic expression and its reference (the thing in the world that it picks out). So the meaning of a natural language expression is equivalent to both sense and reference; for example, the phrases 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' have different senses, but both have the same reference – namely, the planet Venus. We find various theories of meaning which have been proposed to discuss the notion of meaning. Semantic field theory holds that the meanings represented in the lexicon are interrelated, that they cluster together to form 'fields' of meaning, which in turn cluster into even larger fields until the entire language is encompassed.*

Key Words: *semantics, semantic-field, arts, crafts, papier-mâché, shawls,*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Semantic field theory has remained a subject of great interest for a long time and the main contributions include the works of Jost Trier, Adrienne Lehrer, and John Lyons. The contributions of E. A. Nida, G. N. Leech, and D. A. Cruse also need to be mentioned. In this regard, there are a number of terms like the Semantic field theory, Lexical field theory, and Word field theory that are more or less distinguished, but the usage for the current chapter will employ the term the semantic field theory. Pertinently, Asher (1994, V.4:2144) presents the following account of Lexical field theory, "Lexical field theory is the general name for those approaches in lexical semantics that reject the view that the vocabulary of a language is an unordered set of items, but that instead take the view that the lexicon is organized into groups of items that belong together on the basis of their meaning. A lexical field, then, is such a set of semantically related lexical items. A linguistic analysis of a lexical field takes the form of a description of the mutual relations among the items in the field, the basic structuralist assumption being that the semantic value of any such item is determined by its relative position in the field."

Semantic field theory holds that the meanings represented in the lexicon are interrelated, that they cluster together to form 'fields' of meaning, which in turn cluster into even larger fields until the entire language is encompassed. Thus sprinting, trotting, and jogging cluster into a field of running, which in turn clusters with many other verbs into a larger field of human motion, and so on to a field of motion in general. R.H.Robins (1964: 70,71) writes, "...The field theory of meaning is concerned to show that the lexical content of a language, its total vocabulary, or such of it as is available to a speaker at any time, is not a mere conglomeration or aggregation of independent items, and that the word meanings cannot be understood or adequately described as if it wereIn part the meaning and use of most words are governed by the presence in the language or availability in language to a speaker of other words whose semantic functions are related in one or more ways to the same area of situational environment or culture" (cited in Chhibber,1987:55,56)

A semantic field is an area of meaning which can be delimited from others in a language. Thus we might talk about a semantic field of *food* or *clothing* or *emotions*. Within clothing we find words for all the different kinds of garments, plus those for making and wearing them. Semantic field is a somewhat elastic term. Thus we could say that *animals* and *plants* are semantic fields, or we could group them together into a single larger field called *living things*. Semantic fields are composed of smaller groupings called lexical sets or sub-fields. Within *emotions*, we can identify lexical sets of words for 'love', 'fear', and 'anger' etc. Grouping words into sets or fields can be a useful way of learning vocabulary.

The semantic fields, as conveyed from the semantic field theory, provides a useful way to group, categorize and analyze the otherwise broad category of lexicon that makes up a language. The approach paves a convenient way to assemble words in a group known as semantic field that is words, in these semantic fields, share with each other semantic features.

2. ARTS AND CRAFTS:

The Valley of Kashmir has a rich heritage with respect to art and craft. The artistic genius of the Kashmiri people as expressed in the fields of shawl-making, embroidery, wood-work and wood carving, papier-mâché and

metal work holds a huge importance in the entire world. The arts and crafts of Kashmir testify to the Kashmiri artist being a true admirer of nature which is reflected in the polished mirror of the designs and decorative patterns of ornamentation of the Kashmir arts. The natural beauty of Kashmir arts and crafts has made it a point of attraction and fame through the ages.

Kashmir region is bestowed with rich arts and crafts, be it the woodworks, papier-mâché, embroidery and carpet or shawl making. The woolen and silken carpets of Kashmir remain unparalleled on the national scene for quality and design. The crewel embroidered *pašmi:na*, and embroidered *raphal* shawls, pattern of *kan'i* shawls, intricate wood carving, production of flora design in *papier-mâché* goods, etc., are some of the world famous crafts of Kashmir. Crafts in the valley vary from embroidery to shawl weaving, wood carving to *papier-mâché*, carpet weaving to *namdi* weaving and much more. The rich cultural heritage has passed on from on from generations.

3. SHAWLS:

In the valley of Kashmir, Shawls have a very prestigious position and these shawls may vary in quality. The shawls may be defined in terms of three categories *Woolen, pašmina and šahtu:š*. The *raphal* shawls are cheaper and coarse in texture as compared to the *pašmina* shawls. Cost of these shawls exclusively depends on the quality of the shawl and the stitch work done on it. Most expensive shawl is *šahtu:š* also known as ring shawl as it can literally pass through the ring and its material is known for the softness, lightness and warmth. There are various types of embroidery on these shawls; the *stitch work* and *so:zni:* work are very common. Embroidery is usually done with the usage of three. *ô:r* or hook work is another type of embroidery work.

The *pašmina* shawl is woven with an embroidery pattern by using the dyed thread and warp. Artisans very expertly make the peculiar designs on these shawls depicting the nature like birds and trees, architectural designs or mythological figures. Sometimes embroidery is done with such mastery that both the sides of the shawl look same. This shawl is known as *ja:mivar* and costs in lakhs of rupees.

The words in this sub semantic field include:

Shawls/Shawlbañi

pašmina

raphal

šahtu:š

ja:mivar

Kanishawl

do:rukha šal

palida:r

do:rida:r

ni:mda:r

činarda:r

bada:mda:r

kandipoš

be:lida:r

4. CARPETS:

Kashmiri carpet is very famous throughout the world. Kashmir is known for the pure silken carpets that too knotted, knots denote the durability of the carpets and knots per inch is the easiest modes of durability measurement. The base of the carpets is usually made of cotton and sometimes silken base is also there. These Kashmiri shawls are hand woven and there is particular language that denotes the design to be carried out on the carpet. The material that is mainly used in these carpets include wool, silk, staple and yarn.

The art of weaving carpet arrived in Kashmir at the time of Sultan Zainul Abidin from the Persia and it is one reason the design from Persia dominate the carpet designs with a very little variation from the natives.

The items in this sub semantic field include:

ka:leenbañi

ka:lba:phtô:lim

Carpet Designs

ča:nd čuThayda:r

philida:r

gamlida:r

ni:lam

hamda:ndabida:r

mehra:bda:r

šama:da:r

bada:mda:r

umarkhayyam
lailmajlu:n
darba:rda:r
šaklida:r

5. WOOD CARVING:

The wood carving is done only on the walnut wood and is available only in Kashmir. According to Trivedi (1996:55), "Wood carving is among the best cottage industries of Kashmir. The intricately carved designs and the fine grain of walnut wood makes its carved products among the most attractive to be found anywhere." The wood carving and fret work are with different depth levels. Deep carving is two or more inches deep and the popular motifs are dragon or lotus flower. Second comes the Shallow carving and is usually half inch or more deep, done on the entire flat surface, open or lattice work depicting the chinar motifs. Finally there comes the semi carving done on the thin panel along rim of surface containing the center motif.

There are four main types of wood carving done in Kashmir. These are:

- 1) Raised wood carving: in this type of wood carving, the surrounding wood is worked away leaving the design standing out.
- 2) Engraved wood carving: here the design is carved into the wood.
- 3) Undercut wood carving: in this type, the wood below the design is cut away leaving the design standing out delicately patterned.
- 4) Plain wood carving: in this, the article may be completely plain or it may have a little delicate engraving around the sides.

Some of the words making up this sub semantic field are:

khatamband

I) Wood carving tools

tu:r
litir
tari randi

II) Types

mo:j
mo:jba:d̄m
mo:jl̄h̄r
ša:šte:z
šašbara:n

III) Shapes/designs/types

m̄rbi
čo:ras
poš
bada:m
rasti
tabil
so:zin'

Papier-Mâché

Papier-mâché is the most famous handicraft of Kashmir and is mostly exported to the European countries. The process of making papier-mâché begins with the soaking of paper until it disintegrates. Then the whole paper is pounded to fine pulp and added with the adhesive. The material is shaped over moulds and given particular shapes and left to dry. These moulds are then painted black that is the base color and left to dry again. Later Motifs are designed in gold or silver colors. Bed lamps, pen boxes, decorative are the common papier-mâché items made.

The words in this sub semantic field include:

Papier-Mâché

kala:b
gotsh
karku:t
astar
sapheid katir
kaharba:
bišam
bo:r
rang ti ro:gan
naka:š

6. CHAIN STITCH AND CREWEL WORK:

Chain stitch, be it in the wool, silk or cotton, is done by hook rather than by needle. The hook is referred to as *ḍ:r*, and hook work covers a much larger area than needle work in the same amount of time.

Crewel is basically similar to chain stitch. It is also chain stitch done on a white background, but here the motifs, mainly stylized flower, do not cover the entire surface, and the background is not embroidered upon. Wool is almost invariably used in crewel work and color ways are not as elaborate as in chain stitch. This fabric is available in bolts, and is sold by the length. Crewel work is also executed on curtains, rugs, wall hangings and is considered as one of the finest quality of embroidery work in Valley. They make excellent household furnishings being hand or machine washable.

The words in this sub semantic field include:

ḍ:r

ja:mi

ša:l

Depending on the amount of chain work done, Kashmiri shawls are named accordingly as:

- i) when the work is done at, only, two ends, the shawl is known as *palida:r* shawl
- ii) when the work is done at all the four ends, it is known as *du:rdar* shawl. And this *du:rdar* is crafted in two ways, *ba:da:m du:r* (almond shape) and *čina:r du:r*.

7. WILLOW WORKS OR WICKERWORK:

The art of making baskets with the willow is the famous handicraft in valley and especially in the Hazratbal area of Srinagar city. The willow that profusely grows in the lakes and marshy land is dried and many beautiful things are made of it. The items like lamp shades, baskets, tables and chairs, etc., are especially made.

Some of the words related to this sub semantic field include:

ka:n'i

bā:s

bā:skan'i

(*ka:n'i*, *bā:s*, and *bā:skan'i* are materials made from willow that grows in lakes)

A large number of things are made from this wickerwork, like

<i>me:z</i>	table
<i>po:ši da:n</i>	flower vase
<i>kita:b ræk</i>	book case
<i>šingga:r Dabi</i>	make up box

8. ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD:

The semantic field of arts and crafts is analyzed on the basis of source as follows:

Word	Source
<i>ša:l</i>	Persian
<i>ša:lba:ph</i>	Persian
<i>da:r</i>	Persian
<i>jami</i>	Persian
<i>posh</i>	Sanskrit
<i>ka:li:n</i>	Turkish
<i>da:n</i>	Persian
<i>tu:r</i>	Sanskrit
<i>ḍ:r</i>	Sanskrit
<i>bā:s</i>	Sanskrit
<i>me:z</i>	Persian
<i>ba:da:m</i>	Persian
<i>kani</i>	Sanskrit
<i>šama</i>	Arabic
<i>darba:r</i>	Persian
<i>be:l</i>	Sanskrit
<i>astar</i>	Persian
<i>šakli</i>	Arabic
<i>mehra:b</i>	Arabic
<i>kita:b</i>	Arabic
<i>ræk</i>	English

The analysis of this field also shows the presence of compounding. For example,

<i>darba:r+d:ar</i>	Persian+ Persian
<i>be:l+da:r</i>	Sanskrit+ Persian
<i>kandī+poš</i>	Sanskrit+Sanskrit
<i>šakli+da:r</i>	Arabic+ Persian
<i>šama+da:r</i>	Arabic+ Persian
<i>ba:da:m+da:r</i>	Persian+ Persian
<i>pali+da:r</i>	Sanskrit+ Persian
<i>bās+ka:n'i</i>	Sanskrit+Sanskrit
<i>kita:b+ræk</i>	Arabic+English

The semantic field of arts and crafts beautifully portrays that picture of Kashmir for which it is famous all over the world, be it carpets, shawls or Papier-mâché items.

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