



# Analysis of Saraswati Goddess Image in a Textbook: A Semiotic Study



Komang Trisna Dewi <sup>a</sup>, Ketut Artawa <sup>b</sup>, Putu Utama <sup>c</sup>, Ni Ketut Ratna Erawati <sup>d</sup>

Manuscript submitted: 18 April 2021, Manuscript revised: 9 May 2021, Accepted for publication: 27 June 2021

## Corresponding Author <sup>a</sup>



## Abstract

This is study that examines the meaning of the image contained in the Saraswati text. The study of its meaning includes denotations, connotations, and myths. This type of research is qualitative research with descriptive method to explain the phenomena contained in the images. The theory of Roland Barthes is used to describe and explain the phenomena found in data. The primary data from this study are pictures and secondary data is text of Saraswati. The method applied in this research is critical observation and recording. The results of this study are (1) seen from its function, the images can facilitate understanding the message conveyed by the researcher of the book on Saraswati consciousness. (2) the study of image that mean denotations and connotations, most of which contain a belief believed to be true until now, in other words the fairness in a culture is the result of connotation, if the connotation remains a myth, the stability of a myth will form an ideology. (3) The current phenomenon, myth is not just a myth but has evolved into something that is revered which is believed to be able to describe birth happiness and concern which is often called a cult.

## Keywords

connotation;  
denotation;  
meaning;  
myth;  
semiotic;

International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities © 2021.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## Contents

Abstract.....	152
1 Introduction.....	153
2 Concepts and Theory Framework.....	153
3 Research Methods.....	154
4 Discussions.....	154

<sup>a</sup> Hindu State University I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar

<sup>b</sup> Hindu State University I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar

<sup>c</sup> Udayana University, UNUD, Denpasar

<sup>d</sup> Udayana University, UNUD, Denpasar

4	Conclusion .....	157
	Acknowledgments.....	157
	References .....	157
	Biography of Authors .....	159

## 1 Introduction

Phenomenally, science means life with consciousness implied in the text of Saraswati. The existence of this text is known by the world because it is a basic principle of science. Text like this can be famous because it has values that are very relevant to educational values. This can be seen from the readers of the textbook from various ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Theoretically, the cognitive status of a meaning, in the logical positivism tradition there are differences between explicit and implicit meanings which are seen as differences between cognitive and emotive languages. So that vocabulary of denotation and connotation is very interesting to look more closely at. In a certain context, the denotation meaning is cognitive in the form of semantics, while the connotation is extra semantic because it includes knit emotional stimuli, which are less cognitive value (Ricoeur, 2005).

Empirically, the teachings contained in the Saraswati text are very good to interpret in everyday life, because the basic meaning of science in this world is reflected in the text of Saraswati which is full of educational nuances. By understanding well the messages conveyed can change the way to behave, behave, and believe as a Brahmachari. This change certainly has a reason, one of which is the meanings contained in the image that refers to the contents of the Saraswati text. Based on the phenomenology associated with the theory of the objects of this study, there are several issues revealed. The problem is whether the meaning of the image contained in the Saraswati text and why that meaning becomes a myth in the world of Education. The picture in Saraswati's text is very important to be studied, seeing from the two volumes that speak English and seven volumes in Indonesian language are able to reflect the message conveyed from the entire contents of the Saraswati text itself (Andriotis, 2011; Cutting, & Murphy, 1990).

Saraswati text is very interesting to examine more deeply, besides the text is a text that is very thick with elements of science, it is also a well-known text in all corners world. This is evident from the translation of the Saraswati text with hundreds of language versions in the world. So, by understanding in depth the messages conveyed in the picture in the Saraswati textbook, it will be able to open up broader insights about the phenomenon until now (Allan, 2007; Brownell et al., 1984).

## 2 Concepts and Theory Framework

The concept is a thought abstracted from a phenomenal, semiotics is a field of study that investigates all forms of communication that occur through means of signs and based on sign systems Segers (1978), or fields of study of signs and all things related to signs: the way they function, their relationship with other signs, their delivery, and their acceptance by those who use them (Eco, 1979). In theory, a sign is anything that expresses something other than him. The sign is generated through a signification process which is a process that combines markers and markers (Barthes, 1982). Therefore, in principle semiotics studies how meanings are made and how reality is represented, which may be evident in the form of "text" and "media". Semiotics focuses on exchanging any message in a word or communication and also focuses on the signification process.

Umbrella theory from this research is semiotic theory which is the result of thoughts from Roland Barthes. Barthes is a follower of Peirce. He also uses the term signifier and signified. This idea is known as the Order of Signification, which includes Denotation and connotation. Denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship of markers and markers to reality resulting in explicit, direct and definite meanings, while connotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between markers and markers in which the meaning is not explicit, indirect and uncertain (Barthes, 1995). In Barthes's theory there is also a myth. Myth according to Barthes lies in the second level of marking. When a sign has connotation meaning, it means the denotation meaning is a myth (Barthes, 1995).

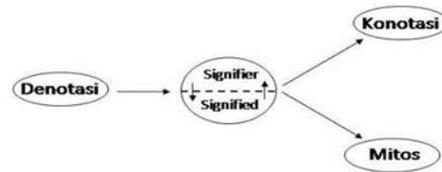


Figure 1. The meaning of connotation and denotation

Color is also an important element that can be analyzed by semiotics. Color is a vibration or a particular wave of something that is received by the retina, or color is a vibration emitted by an object, there is a light that hits the object, directly received by our eyes (Brownell, 2000; Rykiel, 1996). So, each color has its own meaning. In interpreting an image can be done with two approaches, namely:

- 1) Denotative, explicit data / information in the image. The picture is read like a note or essay that tells the object as a whole.
- 2) Connotative, implicit things that arise in the observer's thinking.
- 3) Myth, a belief that has been believed by many people.

### 3 Research Methods

This type of research is qualitative research with descriptive method to explain the phenomenon contained in the images contained in the Saraswati text. The research subjects are the images contained in the Saraswati text and the object of this research is the problem that is examined. Based on the theoretical framework in this study, the primary data from this study are images and secondary data is the Saraswati text. The method applied in this study is the observation and recording of critical uses to relate empirically to the meanings contained in images in the text (Johnson, 2008; Imai, & Gentner, 1997).

### 4 Discussions

The above theoretical foundation is used as a tool to describe or explain the phenomena contained in some data in this discussion. In a text usually contains an image which is one of the core elements of the book. The presented image must have meaning, and each person has the right to interpret the image in accordance with his thoughts. Expressed and implied meanings can be studied using semiotic science. The role of images in a textbook is very important, because in addition to being able to attract the interest of readers, images can also be a means of criticism and suggestions. So, images are not just decorating a book, but also as a media conveying messages that are explicit and implied to the reader (Borgs et al., 2010; Martin, 2009).

The data chosen as the material for the analysis of this study are images in the Saraswati textbook. Two pictures in the Saraswati textbook have been taken (Syakur et al., 2018; Krisnawan et al., 2019). Based on the above description, that in interpreting an image can be done with two approaches, namely denotative and connotative. The approach is carried out to reveal the meaning of the denotation and connotations contained in it, the study are as follows:

## Data 1



Figure 2. Saraswati

In the Saraswati textbook on the cover there is a picture of Saraswati. Saraswati is depicted as a beautiful, light-skinned woman dressed in white, signifying the purity of true knowledge. She may be depicted near a flowing river, relating to her early history as a river goddess. Her mount is the swan, symbolizing her ability to discriminate between good and bad. She is pictured stood on a white *Nelumbonucifera* lotus, indicating her association with Absolute Truth and with enduring purity. Occasionally she is associated with the color yellow, the color of the mustard plant flowers that bloom at the time of her festival in the spring. She is dressed modestly without ornaments or jewels, representing her preference for knowledge over material things.

Saraswati has four arms, representing the four aspects of human personality in learning: the mind, intellect, alertness, and ego. These four arms also represent the 4 Vedas (the sacred books of the Hindu faith), which in turn represent the 3 forms of literature, poetry, prose and music. She holds in her hands a book (prose), a rosary of crystal beads (poetry) and a vina (music). Her final hand holds a pot of sacred water, which represents the purity of these three arts and their power to purify human thought. The picture certainly contains a meaning, the meaning contained in it is:

- 1) Denotation meaning; there is a lotus image which is the name of the genus for aquatic plants. Plants grow on the surface of calm water. Flowers and leaves are on the surface of the water, coming out of stems from rhizomes that are in the mud at the bottom of ponds, rivers or swamps. The stalk is in the middle of the leaf. The leaves are round in shape or a wide oval shape is cut on the fingers to the stem. The surface of the leaf does not contain a layer of wax so that the water that falls onto the surface of the leaf does not form water droplets. Flowers are usually placed on the surface of a pond or lake that is clean and clear. A beautiful woman or goddess who is a beautiful and beautiful female figure. Four-handed is having four hands that can be used to hold four things. The one who can have these four hands is only a god that is believed by Hindus. Ganitri is a purple fruit with seeds that are quite large and are commonly used as jewelry making beads. The wood has high economic value. Holy library is a collection of knowledge. Vienna / fiddle is a type of stringed musical instrument. Geese are large water birds that can live in water, land and air. Peacocks are very beautiful birds. Usually, peacocks live in the tropics. They like to eat seeds, shoots of leaves, various insects, and worms. Although these birds have large bodies and often walk on the ground, peacocks are the largest birds that can fly.
- 2) Connotation meaning; thoroughly viewed the location of the image is in a beautiful lake. Dewi or Goddess symbolizes a beautiful, gentle strength. Armed four is the symbol of the Chess Weda Samhita, namely: Reg Weda, Sama Weda, Yajur Weda and Atharwa Weda, which is a sacred source of knowledge of Hinduism which contains a collection of God's words. Ganitri symbolizes that science is endless to be studied throughout the ages. The sacred library symbolizes the means to perpetuate these sciences, so that they can be passed on to subsequent generations. Vienna / fiddle symbolizes science which influences and expands aesthetic and beauty. The lotus symbolizes science as sacred. Why lotus flowers, because even though their bodies are in mud, they are kept clean. Besides this, lotus or padma roots on the ground, stem daunya in water and flowers in the air, symbolizes the ability to live in three realms (bhur-bhuah-swah). A goose symbolizes strength in three worlds (bhur-bhuah-swah), because

---

Dewi, K. T., Artawa, K., Sutama, P., & Erawati, N. K. R. (2021). Analysis of Saraswati goddess image in a textbook: a semiotic study. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(2), 152-159.

<https://doi.org/10.29332/ijssh.v5n2.1361>

it can live on all three elements of nature (in water, land and air). In addition, swans also symbolize wisdom / wisdom to distinguish between good and bad. Even though he looked for food in cloudy places, he could tell which one he could eat and which he could not. Geese are also sensitive to external stimuli. Such is expected for those who have knowledge. Peacocks symbolize authority. The peacock does look graceful and authoritative.

- 3) Mythology; Goddess or the figure of a beautiful woman is believed to make people interested in approaching and learning all things related to the woman. A beautiful and authoritative goddess illustrates that science is something very interesting and amazing. The beauty of Dewi Saraswati is not beauty that can stimulate the arousal of lust. The beauty of Dewi Saraswati is a dignified beauty. Indeed, the knowledgeable person will cause extraordinary attraction. Therefore, in Kakawin Niti Sastra there is a mention that people who are without knowledge, are not very attractive even though they are young, of good character and of aristocratic descent. Such people are like bright red flowers but without smell at all. While the cakepan or palm leaves brought by Dewi Saraswati are symbols of science. While genitry is a symbol that science is inexhaustible. Genitri is also a symbol or tool to do japa. Japa is a spiritual activity to chant the name of God over and over again. This also means that demanding knowledge is a human effort to get closer to God. This also means that science that teaches to stay away from God is a heretical knowledge.

Vienna is a type of musical instrument, which in Bali is called fiddle. His voice is very melodious and melancholy. This symbolizes that science contains a very high beauty or aesthetics. Lotus flower is the symbol of Bhuana Agung where God Almighty is. This means that the sacred knowledge has Bhuana Alit and Bhuana Agung. Lotus is also a symbol of holiness as the essence of science. Goose is a type of poultry that has good traits which are not fighting and like to live harmoniously. Geese also have the ability to choose food. Although the food mixes with dirty water but what goes into the stomach is just good food, while the dirty water comes out by itself. Thus, people who have mastered science, their wisdom has the ability of *wiweka*. *Wiweka* means the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad and the right with the wrong.

Padma flowers or lotus flowers are flowers that symbolize the universe with its eight points of wind (*astadala*) as God's location. Peacocks are a symbol of authority. People who are able to master science are people who will get authority. In this connection, Swami Sakuntala Jagatnatha in the book *Introduction of Hinduism* explains that the knowledge that can be possessed by someone will cause those people to be selfish or arrogant. Therefore the knowledge must be left to Dewi Saraswati so that the owner becomes full of authority because selfishness or arrogance has been removed by the holiness of Dewi Saraswati. Science is to provide service to humans and nature and to offerings to God Almighty.

#### *Data 2*

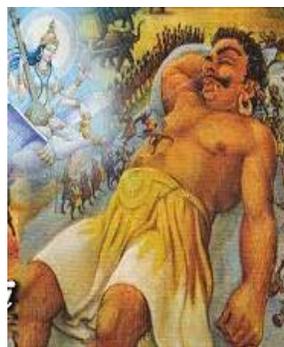


Figure 3. Kumbakarna

This picture shows that a giant and Dewi Saraswati. A giant named Kumbhakarna. According to one of holy book named *Utara Kunda*, there were couple Resi Waisrawa dan Dewi Kaikasi who had 4 sons and one daughter. One of their son named Kumbhakarna. Based on picture, Kumbhakarna is sleeping and many people around his body. Actually, those people want to wake Kumbhakarna up from his sleep but unfortunately they fail because Dewi Saraswati is on his tongue. She is there to safe human being from Kumbhakarna's wish to

Dewa Brahma that can give bad effect to human being safety. The picture certainly contains a meaning, the meaning contained in it is:

- 1) Denotation meaning; there is a giant. A giant is an imaginary or mythical being of human form but superhuman size. He has big body that really has different size with normal human being. People always relating a giant with his habit that like sleeping as his behavior. Picture shows Kumbhakarna is sleeping and no body can wake his up. Dewi Saraswati is in his tongue. Tongue is one of human sense with the function are for tasting and speaking. The reason Dewi Saraswati stays in Kumbhakarna's tongue is to bend his tongue when Dewa Brahma came to give boons to Kumbhakarna so it can safe all of human in the world from Kumbhakarna's strength and greedy. Dewi Saraswati has meaning as beautiful goddess that always safe the world from evil.
- 2) Connotation meaning; a giant means a person of extraordinary powers. A legendary humanlike being of great stature and strength who have bad character and habitual. They like destroy environment, human and everything around them. They are evil and everyone scared to them. Based on picture, we find dewi Saraswati stays in Kumbhakarna tongue. Tongue is the muscle in the mouth that pressing against teeth in order to speak, as well the home of taste buds. Tongue also means language, like the German tongue, or the Cajun tongue. As a verb, tongue means "lick," as in when the dog tongues your empty plate.

## 4 Conclusion

The results of this study are:

- 1) The study of images that mean denotations and connotations, most of which contain a belief believed to be true until now, in other words the fairness in a culture is the result of connotation, if the connotation continues to cause a myth, an ideology is formed.
- 2) Based on phenomena in present life, symbols in Saraswati Goddess shown that how knowledge is very important for our life and never dies.

Each symbols that hold and around by Saraswati Goddess have their meaning for truth knowledge. In other words, it has developed into a stream of beliefs that are believed to be able to describe birth and concern through knowledge.

### Acknowledgments

We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier version of this paper.

## References

- Allan, K. (2007). The pragmatics of connotation. *Journal of pragmatics*, 39(6), 1047-1057. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.08.004>
- Andriotis, K. (2011). Genres of heritage authenticity: Denotations from a pilgrimage landscape. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4), 1613-1633. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.03.001>
- Barthes, Roland. 1982. Center-City, Empty Center'. In empire if sign. Trans. Ricahard Howard. New York: Hill & Wang, 1982, pp. 30-42.
- Barthes, Roland. 1995. Myth Today; In Mythologies. London: Paladin, 1977, pp.109-159. Eco, Umberto. 1979. A Theory of Semiotics. Bloomington: Indiana Universty Press.
- Borgs, C., Chayes, J., Immorlica, N., Kalai, A. T., Mirrokni, V., & Papadimitriou, C. (2010). The myth of the folk theorem. *Games and Economic Behavior*, 70(1), 34-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2009.04.016>
- Brownell, H. (2000). Right hemisphere contributions to understanding lexical connotation and metaphor. In *Language and the brain* (pp. 185-201). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012304260-6/50012-8>
- Brownell, H. H., Potter, H. H., Michelow, D., & Gardner, H. (1984). Sensitivity to lexical denotation and connotation in brain-damaged patients: A double dissociation?. *Brain and language*, 22(2), 253-265. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X\(84\)90093-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X(84)90093-2)

- Cutting, J., & Murphy, D. (1990). Preference for denotative as opposed to connotative meanings in schizophrenics. *Brain and language*, 39(3), 459-468. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X\(90\)90151-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X(90)90151-6)
- Eco, U. (1979). *The role of the reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts* (Vol. 318). Indiana University Press.
- Imai, M., & Gentner, D. (1997). A cross-linguistic study of early word meaning: Universal ontology and linguistic influence. *Cognition*, 62(2), 169-200. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(96\)00784-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(96)00784-6)
- Johnson, M. (2008). Meaning and the body. *New Scientist*, 197(2638), 46-47. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079\(08\)60114-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079(08)60114-1)
- Krisnawan, G. N. A., Beratha, N. L. S., & Laksana, I. K. D. (2019). Commercial Automotive Advertising: Semiotic Study. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 5(3), 71-80.
- Martin, J. R. (2009). Genre and language learning: A social semiotic perspective. *Linguistics and education*, 20(1), 10-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2009.01.003>
- Ricoeur, P. (2003). *Philosophy of Discourse, Splitting Meaning in the Anatomy of Language*, trans. Musnur Hery. Yogyakarta: Ircisod.
- Rykiel Jr, E. J. (1996). Testing ecological models: the meaning of validation. *Ecological modelling*, 90(3), 229-244. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3800\(95\)00152-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3800(95)00152-2)
- Segers, R. T. (1978). *The Evaluation of Literary Texts: An Experimental Investigation Into the Rationalization of Value Judgements with Reference to Semiotics and Esthetics of Reception* (Vol. 22). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Syakur, A. A., Rusdiawan, R., & Sukri, M. (2018). Text of cigarette advertisement: A semiology study of Roland Barthes. *International journal of linguistics, literature and culture*, 4(3), 72-79.

### Biography of Authors

	<p>She is lecturer at Universitas Hindu Dharma Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar and has academic position as Lecturer for students majoring English Education Department and General English for Education department major students.</p> <p><i>Email: <a href="mailto:trisnadewi053@gmail.com">trisnadewi053@gmail.com</a></i></p>
	<p>He is Mr. Prof. Dr. Ketut Artawa, M.A He is lecturer at Udayana University and has academic position as Head of Linguistics Studi Program.</p> <p><i>Email: <a href="mailto:tutartawa@gmail.com">tutartawa@gmail.com</a></i></p>
	<p>He is Mr. Dr. Drs. Putu Utama, M.S. He is lecturer at Udayana University and has academic position as lecturer for students majoring sastra Bali and Linguistics.</p> <p><i>Email: <a href="mailto:pt_sutama@unud.ac.id">pt_sutama@unud.ac.id</a></i></p>
	<p>She is Mrs. Dr. Dra. Ni Ketut Ratna Erawati, M.Hum. She is lecturer at Udayana University and has academic position as Vice Dean III of Ilmu Budaya Faculty.</p> <p><i>Email: <a href="mailto:ratna_erawati@unud.ac.id">ratna_erawati@unud.ac.id</a></i></p>