

Bakhtin and Multiculturalism-Bakhtin revisited in Paoulo Coelho

Rehana Yasmin Anjum

Asst Prof. of English

Govt College Women University, Sialkot.

Sialkot, Pakistan.

Abstract

Mikhail Bakhtin(1895-1975),a Russian philosopher, thinker and above all a discourse theorist with his own linguistic philosophy was brought into the limelight in 1960s from the attic memory is considered to be a stir in the town. Bakhtinian philosophy of language can be defined in terms of his concepts about linguistic ability. His dialogism. a specie specific ('human not atomized'), considered to be a continuous dialogue ('dialogism') that is ever going never finalized ('unfinalizable'), created ('creative'), developed ('action and response'), evolved ('evolution') in a context ('social phenomenon'), bounded by a spatio-temporal frame ('chronotopes') between interlocutors ('I', 'me','other',and 'others') generates response in the listener by motivating the others to reflect their thoughts in the form of a live event ('heteroglossia'-'polyphony' The pivotal feature of this polyphony is the independence of different voices giving individuality to an expression. Paulo Coelho born in 1947 at Brazil as a 'dead boy' brought Bakhtin's dialogics in action in its fullest. He spent his early life in Brazil as a warrior's I while struggling for survival. This was this struggle that equates him with Bakhtin who was also an epitome of resistance against odds both physical and social . Multiculturalism in a broader sense is an amalgamation of different cultures where each allows the other a space for self expression as well as respect to preserve the identity of their community or nation on their own terms. The present study has compared both philosophers on thematic level to show that a multicultural society is the solution of today's extremism in attitudes on global level. The sample taken for comparison of themes is one novel 'The Zahir' of Coelho. It reflects some of the major themes of the writer which are in the same vein of the philosophical genius of Bakhtin.

Key Words: Dialogism, Heteroglossia, Chronotop, Polyphony, Carnival. Multiculturalism

INTRODUCTION

Mikhail Bakhtin(1895-1975),a Russian philosopher, thinker and above all a discourse theorist with his own linguistic philosophy was brought into the limelight in 1960s from the attic memory is considered to be a stir in the town. Bakhtin born, brought up and groomed in Stalin regime was an epitome of resistance against the cliché ridden tradition. A significant voice, silenced by its habitat could no longer be concealed from the world outside Russia soon after his translations in foreign languages. Surprised the people by its rich repertoire of creative novelty and herald of change in the existing beliefs about typologies of discourse. Kept in between structuralists and constructivists related with Russian formalists, he stands alone with his bent towards subjective freedom and internal relations within language. He was not a Marxist but associated with Formalists because he was a system builder which was based on open ended connections. He always valued Vygotsky's ideas who believed that all that is internal in the higher mental functions was once external...the internalization of language as a social tool.(Vygotsky,1991).Gave priority to parole over langue.

Bakhtin's main interest was presentation of a linguistic theory that was based on his dialogic principle, called dialogism, deeply rooted in society. Reversing the equation of generation of meaning within sign and another sign (as structuralism believes) to the existence of meaning in language USE. He gave the utterance a primacy over system as a live event. His firm belief in the presence of an eternal dialogue as a basic ingredient of all pervasive human verbal communication in contrast to a monologic authority brought a puff of fresh air in the existing linguistic theory.

Bakhtin placed this dialogue in frames of time and space without which it cannot be understood. This is his concept of 'chronotopes' that brings a connectedness. Things do not occur in themselves but in relation to others ('a relative reality'). So context is very important as truth can be established by addressivity, engagement and commitment in a particular context ('denial of transcendence of difference') in an ever changing world of discursive struggle ('carnavalesque') a popular culture with centripetal and centrifugal forces posing threat to 'folk' and 'festive' languages.

Bakhtin opposes monoglossical dominance ('linguistic hegemony') to avoid 'language death' for this he prefers selection of stable types of utterances ('speech genre') that is flexible giving freedom to the speaker within its set of chronotopes. (novel over poetry). A narrative in which everyone gets an equal chance of expression than a monologue (epic). He calls speech genres a tabloid discourse with its own rules according to its usage. An utterance as a molecule consists of words as atoms which constitutes a discourse on the higher level ('ideological'). A chain of events which triggers action and counteraction in the participants as an unending process, dissipating thought ('idea') in novel individual varieties ('subjectivity'). Even when one is alone he is in a state of dialogue either with his surrounding or with his inner self ('internalized dialogism'). Bakhtin separates being from I as a subject of the utterance and believes in co-being as an essential part of the being. Polyphony and heteroglossia are the concept which reinforce his dialogism standing for the presence of multiple voices instead of an authoritative voice of a dogma. His pluralistic Polyphony is of nominative type among the two types imitative and nominative.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to present comparison between the philosophers of two different times. Today's fiction is considered to be of lower quality and people do not give that respect and whetage to the fiction writers and their works which is given to the writers of the past. Paulo Coelho has influenced the thoughts of the millions. Bakhtin on the other hand was kept in forgetfulness. When Julia Kristeva brought his philosophy in limelight world respected the views of this philosophy seriously. The purpose of the study is to show that both shared almost same theories therefore must be appreciated on the same level. Both were in fever of a coexistence among individual as well as collective thought. This is much needed panacea of the current problem of fundamentalism and extremism.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Today's world is in dire need of philosophers like Bakhtin who taught how to discover oneself in order to get a balanced approach towards life. When we learn to give space to other's thoughts and learn the art of coexistence, life becomes worth living. We are bounded by temporal and spatial bounds what we do today can become part of a universal theme if we are ready to become a useful part of this universal design of harmony, like actors playing their role accurately in this carnival of life. So it is a type of resistance against mono-culturalism-the desire to enforce one social and cultural order on all members of a society and then the world on a larger scale. Paulo Coelho's message is also same discover thyself. This study will bring a

change in thought about commercial writers who live in today 's world. It will provide a new beginning to the philosophy of Bakhtin revisited in the works of Poulou Coelho.

Sample Size

Coelho's characters seek reality through dialogue by indulging in communication at all levels. These dialogues unfold the main themes of the novel which are usually obstacles both physical and psychological. Such intrigues are depicted through dialogues which unfold the internal personality of the character whether it is Santiago of *The Alchemist*, Chantal Pym of 'The Devil And Miss Pym' or Esther of *The Zahir*...he develops his characters through their speech which is always in a continuity never finalized. Coelho's characters are tied with each other with social and family ties having a very strong sense of belonging not only with their surroundings but also with their own self. These are all common men and women who are leading apparently a normal life but suddenly rise one day to know the ultimate truth objectively. The readers relate themselves with these characters as usually they are unnamed. Now let us discuss *The Zahir*.

Significance of the Sample Selected

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do we need a philosophy in the current scenario to promote linguistic tolerance?
- To which extent Bakhtinian philosophy is presenting a solution to the psychological problems of individuals?
- How far Poulou Coelho is similar to Bakhtinian Dialogism?

Elaboration of the Research Question

The current study has a hypothesis that poetry is difficult to translate. It is so because meaning is often distorted when someone translates the work of a language and culture to another language and culture both on the level of lexemes and syntax. This is due to cultural expressions that are difficult to transfer from SLT to TLT. These seem to pose problem. But situation becomes more difficult if it is the translation of poetry which requires additional things to take care of. These are stylistic devices used, poetic form employed, figures of speech used, and retention of musicality and rhythm of poetic verse. If poetry is symbolic it adds to the problem of untranslatability if the translator is not able to understand the personal lexicon of the poet.

The poet's biography tells us about various periods of the poet's life, his poetry should be read keeping in view the context in which it was written. (Appendix-F)

One has to correlate poet's life's different periods with his creative output in order to understand the underlying reality. To be better placed we need pragmatic knowledge to judge the degree of allusions which take the reader away from reality or towards reality. This conceptual paper will tell us how different people have interpreted Faiz's message. As far as Parveen Shakir is concerned these two poems belong to two distinct periods of her life. (Appendix-G) This would be a comparative cum descriptive study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study has an introduction comprising the purpose, the background and significance of the study. This leads us to our research question. This is to be studied after

selection of an appropriate sample. This sample would be analyzed on the basis of our purpose of the study. Then the conclusion would be drawn.

METHOD

As a novelist Paulo Coehlo has produced many memorable novels and characters, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss all of them. One of his novels, *Zahir*, has been selected as sample. This novel has been thoroughly analyzed on thematic level. The purpose of the study is to draw a comparison between the works of Bakhtin and Coehlo on thematic level, this is done by going through some major novels of the same writer, namely, *Alchemist* (A Pilgrimage of a soul in his own quest), *The Winner stands Alone*, *Eleven Minutes*, *Brida*, *The Devil and Miss Prym*, (fictional), *The Pilgrimage*, *Valkyries* and *Aleph*, (autobiographical), *Zahir*, (a pilgrimage) has been selected to discuss the basic themes.

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Zahir

The *Zahir* as the name depicts is related with the exterior. Taken from Islamic mythology it is an object that traps the one who look at it. This was the title of Borges (1969) short story. This is a story of a world famous writer whose wife, Esther disappears and he searches for her to know the reason of this breach of conjugal trust. He meets a friend of his wife, Mikhail who takes him to a place where people use to gather and narrate their own experiences in order to revive the old tradition of folk talk to share each others' problems. The theme here is that reality is many facets and sometimes we cannot see the whole picture from one spectacle. Someone else's view as an outsider view may prove helpful. This was a new experience for the writer so is surprised and thinks that first he has to find himself. He discusses this with Marie his recent love this who suggests him to go for this search. He goes in search of *Zahir* as well her through foreign lands. Marriage is compared with a track of railway which always stay but never join each other. He goes from France to Kazakhstan symbolic of a stagnant life towards a mysterious land of unseen potentialities of the soul. Finally he reaches her and understands the secret of his heart from this quest. The secret is need of communication among humans in order to save relationships.

Organizational Patterns

The novel starts with an introduction and the is divided in parts like, *I am a free man*, *Hans's question*, *Ariadne's thread*, *The return to Ithac*. It is a journey from unknown towards known for moral, spiritual, and intellectual illumination. As the contexts keeps on changing so is the language leading towards polyphony and heteroglossia.

Foreshadowing

The consistent mentioning of the *Zahir* and blood soaked pieces of thread are ominously present throughout the narrative shows foreshadowing. A narrative voice is there that comments on the growth of different characters.

Irony of the situation is that the characters searching for others start searching for their own self and find actual presence in the interior of their soul instead of exterior.

Affective Issues Related to the Work

It raises certain questions in the mind of the characters through dialogues.

Do we have friends? What is freedom? What is love?

What is this we call Identity? Do we know ourselves?

How others see us?

Vocabulary

Language is very simple as the syntax is very simple but localized version of language are there which are according to the class and context of the speakers.

“The novel is designed not to be an artificial construct but rather to represent the subjectivity and multiplicity of the real world, which, in Bakhtin’s age, is Einsteinian” (Stone, 2008, p. 413).

“The whole of Bakhtin’s break through, known as polyphony, is to introduce “a third perspective into the author-hero relation—that of the reader” (Stone, 2008, p. 411). It is evident in Coelho’s work, that he is conscious of this third perspective, for at all times he posits himself as the implied protagonist who is in intimate dialogue with himself and by extension with his readers, who, by reading his novels, share his quest for answer, but as readers not co-writers (Figueredo, 2012) Time and Space as Dialogic-Textual Coordinates the action of the novel.

The third point of view on the world of the novel had the same decentering effect on Bakhtin’s early Kantian aesthetics as did Einstein’s introduction of another observer on a Newtonian physical world. Bakhtin began to use a relativistic worldview in his 1929 invention of polyphony but realized it to be relativistic decades later. When Bakhtin goes to formulate an approach to literary time that hinges on change, multiplicity, and an intimate bonding of space and time, Einstein reemerges in his writing as a key intellectual precursor says Figueredo (2012) in his study. Bakhtin’s (1937-1938) essay “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel”, introducing a literary fusion of time and space in the hybrid idea of a chronotope, is a significant intermediary step between his early and late explications of polyphony (as cited in Stone, 2008, p. 411). Within the text, the space-time coordinates are apparent for the sake of the construction of the literary world. The dividing line, however, becomes more and more dissolved, because the sequence of events becomes more symbolic, rather than having to adhere to a linear notion of reality. For Bakhtin: The very idea of a chronotope, an appreciation of time that is dependent on the position of the actor, requires a degree of instability that excludes the possibility of absolute time and space. Without a solid scientific foundation, the chronotope is merely an abstract critical term and not the cultural and material reality Bakhtin desired. We see his greater project for the novel—the interweaving of the novelistic world and the real world of the reader—emerging at this point. But it has not fully appeared, and thus this comparison is not bold enough to topple the distinction between an aesthetic world and the physical world. Instead it binds the two with a rigid parallel existence, formally maintaining this distinction while simultaneously and subtly (in parentheses) beginning to undermine it.

CONCLUSION

Bakhtin as a philosopher has a multidimensional influence of his theory of dialogism on the literary scene of the day. His concept of the unseen presence of continuous dialogue with everyone and in everyone has opened up the blind alleys of tyranny, dogmatism and autocracy throughout the world soon after his introduction to the masses. As a habitant of a world of widening horizons with things yet to discover, issues yet to settle, problems yet to resolve this message of mutual negotiation and negotiation with one’s self would prove a panacea for the sick humanity.

In Coelho, the reader is made aware of prior readings and of a correlation between the writer as reader of the universe and Einstein’s theories. Coelho takes it further into an analysis of the

meaning of a quest that drives his protagonists to travel, to write, and to connect with others. Stone (2008) stated that "Einstein was a great reader of the universe, able to see something hitherto unnoticed. Bakhtin admired such talented readers and strove to be one himself" (p. 417). In *The Zahir*, the references to Einstein are the most explicit, compared to Coelho's other novels. We find, for instance, outright mentions of Einstein in the section mentioned above (midway through the novel), as well as discussions of the idea of energy and its relation to the metaphysical. On page 91, we see an example in the following dialogue, a memory of the narrator discussing this with his wife Esther; their conversation encapsulates the theme of the book and the meaning of the *Zahir*:

"We need to find a way of channeling all this, of allowing the energy of this pure, absolute love to flow through our bodies and spread around us. The only person so far who has helped me understand this is a rather other-worldly interpreter who says he's had revelations about this energy."

"Are you talking about the love of God?"

"If someone is capable of loving his partner without restrictions, unconditionally, then he is manifesting the love of God. If the love of God becomes manifest, he will love his neighbor. If he loves his neighbor, he will love himself. If he loves himself, then everything returns to its proper place. History changes.' History will never change because of politics or conquests or theories or wars; that's mere repetition, it's been going on since the beginning of time. History will only change when we are able to use the energy of love, just as we use the energy of the wind, the seas, the atom." (Coelho, 2005b, p. 91) It is through this dialogue of the man and the woman, and through the stages of their interaction that problems are solved.

Implications for multiculturalism

This novel is set in different lands so it promotes tolerance and multiculturalism. A much needed thing in the world of blood and flesh, to save humanity from crippling materialism. A pilgrimage in the quest of one's soul is a worth pursuing goal.

References

- Andrew, R (2009). *In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and heteroglossia*, Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (2004) *Dialogic Origin and Dialogic Pedagogy of Grammar: Stylistics in Teaching Russian Language in Secondary School*, *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 42.6: 12-49.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1990) *Art and Answerability* (K. Brostrom, Trans.) (Austin, University of Texas).
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. (C. Emerson Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bakhtin, Michael (1981): *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Transl. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Ed. by Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: U. of Texas Press.
- www.rupertwegerif.name Contains recent papers and draft chapters of Dialogic Education and Technology
r.b.wegerif@exeter.ac.uk Centre for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (n.d.) [online] [Accessed: 10.12.2013] Available from: <http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/>
- Bakhtin, M. M., & Medvedev, P. M. (1928). *The formal method in literary scholarship*. (A. J. Wehrle Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Borges, J. L. (1969). *Complete works: A universal history of infamy* (Obras completas: Historia universal de la infamia) (8th ed.).
- Coelho, P. (2005a). *Eleven minutes*. (M. L. Costa Trans.). New York: Harper Perennial.

- Coelho, P. (2005b). *The Zahir: A novel of obsession*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Coelho, P. (2013). *Manuscript found in Accra* (M. J. Costa Trans.). New York: Random House.
- Einstein, A. (1952). *Relativity: The special and the general theory*. (R. W. Lawson Trans.). New York: Random House.
- Einstein, A. (2007). *A stubbornly persistent illusion*. (S. Hawking Ed., with a Commentary). Philadelphia: Running Press.
- Goddard, B. (1993). Intertextuality. In I. R. Makaryk (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of contemporary literature and art studies*, ISSN 2159-5836 October 2012, Vol. 2, No. 10, 925-937
- Gardiner, M.(1992). *The dialogics of critique M.M.Bakhtin and the theory of ideology*, Routledge
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Word, dialogue, and novel. Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art* (pp. 64-91). New York:Columbia University Press.
- Official site of Paulo Coelho. (1996). Press release. Retrieved from <http://www.paulocoelho.com.br/engl/>
- María Figueredo York University, Toronto, Canada *iterary theory* (pp. 568-572). Toronto:University of Toronto Press.
- Marchenkova, L. (2005) 'Language, Culture and Self: The Bakhtin- Vygotsky Encounter'. In: Hall, J.K. Vitanova, G. & Marchenkova, L. (eds.) *Dialogue with Bakhtin on Second and Foreign Language Learning: New Perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ and London: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 171-188
- Hodge &Kress.(1988), *Social Semiotics*, Cornell Uni. Press
- HWA Y. J.(1990) "Man and World", *Mikhail Bakhtin's Body Politic: A phenomenological dialogics*, 23: 85-99, 1990. Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Pam Morris (1994).*The Bakhtin Reader*, pub.Edward Arnold Nikulin, D. (1998). *Mikhail Bakhtin: Theory of Dialogue*, pub. Blackwell.
- Tomasello et al(2004).*Twelve-month-olds point to share attention and interest*,Article first published online: 17 MAY(2004) DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7687.2004.00349.
- Ricouer, P. (1977). *The rule of metaphor*. (R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, & J. Costello Trans.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Stone, J. (2008). Polyphony and the atomic age: Bakhtin's assimilation of an Einsteinian Universe. *PMLA*, 123(2), 405-421.
- Tornelli, P. (2001). Some Arabic and Islamic motifs in the works of Borges (Algunos motivos árabes e islámicos en la obra de Borges). Retrieved from <http://www.uiowa.edu/borges/bsol/pdf/tornielli.pdf>
- Valdes, M. J. (1994). The invention of reality: Hispanic postmodernism. *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, XVIII(3), 455-468. Paulo Coelho: The Author's Quest as Reader of the World María Figueredo York University, Toronto, Canada Paulo Coelho: The Author's Quest as Reader of the World
- Vygotsky, 1991:p36, qouted in "R Wegerif "From social interaction to individual reasoning: an empirical investigation of a possible socio-cultural model of cognitive development

APPENDIX

Quotes from the novel: "When someone leaves, it's because someone else is about to arrive - I'll find love again. "In order to be able to find her, I first had to find myself" . "The energy of hatred won't get you anywhere; but the energy of forgiveness, which reveals itself through love, will transform your life in a positive way." "in love there is neither good nor evil, there is neither construction nor destruction, there is merely movement. And love changes the laws of nature." "Love is an untamed force. When we try to control it, it destroys us. When we try to imprison it, it enslaves us. When we try to understand it, it leaves us feeling lost and confused." "The most important thing in all human relationships is conversation, but people don't talk anymore, they don't sit down to talk and listen"

"...I came to realize that I was always looking for myself in the women I loved." "...I had convinced myself that I could only be happy with her, not because I loved her more than anything and anyone in the world, but because I thought only she could understand me; she knew my likes, my eccentricities, my way of seeing the world.....I was used to seeing the world through her eyes." "...suffering occurs when we want other people to love us in the way we imagine we want to be loved, and not in the way that love should manifest itself - free and untrammelled, guiding us with its force and driving us on." "Our true friends are those who are with us when the good things happen. They cheer us on and are pleased by our triumphs. False friends only appear at difficult times, with their sad, supportive faces, when, in fact, our suffering is serving to console them for their miserable lives."