Lakshmi Bandlamudi
E.V. Ramakrishnan *Editors*

Bakhtinian Explorations of Indian Culture

Pluralism, Dogma and Dialogue Through History

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In 2010 when one of the editors, Lakshmi Bandlamudi, was in India as a recipient of a Fulbright Award, had given few lectures at the Forum on Contemporary Theory in Vadodara and at that time suggested to the Director, Prof. Prafulla Kar, to convene a Bakhtin conference in India to explore and reactivate inherent dialogicality in the intellectual traditions and cultural histories of India. Prof. Kar responded with a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment. In order to bring this proposal to fruition, Prof. Kar left no stone unturned and without his relentless efforts, insight, and leadership the proposal could not have culminated into a conference. My deep gratitude to Prof. Kar for his willingness to be my interlocutor; he patiently heard my suggestions and proposals and added his perspectives and practical suggestions and made the event possible. In the process, I gained a friend, philosopher, and guide that I deeply value.

An international conference titled "Bakhtin in India: Exploring the Dialogic Potential in Self, Culture and History" was convened at Gandhinagar, Gujarat from August 19–21, 2013 and we were the conveners. It was organized by the Central University of Gujarat (CUG), Gandhinagar in collaboration with the Balvant Parekh Center for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences, Vadodara and the Forum on Contemporary Theory, Vadodara and the event was sponsored by the Indian Council for Social Science Research, New Delhi. Selected papers from this conference constitute the current volume.

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Lakshmi Bandlamudi is Professor of Psychology at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York. She is the author of *Dialogics of Self, The Mahabharata and Culture: The History of Understanding and Understanding of History* (Anthem Press, 2010) and *Difference, Dialogue and Development: A Bakhtinian World* (Routledge, 2015) and *Movements with the Cosmic Dancer: On Pilgrimage to Kailash Manasarovar* (2006), in addition to several papers in peer reviewed journals in the areas of dialogic consciousness and socio-historical epistemology. She is a recipient of Fulbright Nehru Award in 2010 and was a CUNY Distinguished Fellow in 2013–14.

E.V. Ramakrishnan is a bilingual writer and translator who has published poetry and literary criticism in Malayalam, his first language, and English. Among his critical books in English are *Indigenous Imaginaries: Literature, Region, Modernity* (2017); *Interdisciplinary Alternatives in Comparative Literature* (coedited, 2013); *Locating Indian Literature: Texts, Traditions and Translations* (2011); *Making It New: Modernism in Malayalam, Marathi and Hindi Poetry* (1995); *Narrating India: the Novel in Search of the Nation* (edited, 1999); and *Indian Short Story 1900–2000* (2001). He wrote six critical books in Malayalam. He has published over two hundred research papers in the areas of his specialization such as comparative literature, translation studies, culture studies, literary theory, and post-colonial studies. He is presently Professor Emeritus at the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Intellectual Traditions of India in Dialogue with Mikhail Bakhtin

Lakshmi Bandlamudi and E.V. Ramakrishnan

So many bodies

So many opinions

But my Beloved is in every body

Though invisible

<div align="right">(Sant Kabir)</div>

No Nirvana is possible for a *single* consciousness. A single consciousness is a *contradictio in adjecto.* Consciousness is in essence multiple. *Pluralia tantum.*

<div align="right">(Mikhail Bakhtin, Appendix II. Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. 1984b: 288)</div>

Diversity of language is worth keeping because diversity of cultures and differentiation of soul-groups are worth keeping and because without that diversity life cannot have full play; for in its absence there is a danger; almost an inevitability of decline and stagnation.

<div align="right">(Sri Aurobindo, Diversity in Oneness. 1997: 496)</div>

The soul is the self-coincident, self-equivalent, and self-contained whole of inner life that postulates another's loving activity from outside its own bounds. The soul is a gift that my spirit bestows upon the *other.*

<div align="right">(Mikhail Bakhtin, Art and Answerability. 1990: 132)</div>

A mystic poet (Sant Kabir) and a multidimensional thinker (Sri Aurobindo)—both from India—celebrate the incredible diversity in Oneness that is necessary to enrich the soul and keep the culture on the move and away from decline and stagnation. From another part of the world a Russian thinker—Mikhail Bakhtin—argues that

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nirvana might be a sought-after ideal by an individual, but the processes of reaching it is not based on the sole efforts of the individual, and the soul—be it that of an individual or a culture—is inevitably dependent on the *spirit* of the *other* for its enrichment. Given the shared concerns and values between a culture and a thinker, a conference was convened in Gandhinagar, India in August 2013 to mark the formal arrival of Bakhtin in India and this volume is an outcome of that conference.

Few cultures can boast as much as India about the incredible diversity in every realm of life and Mikhail Bakhtin is one of the few thinkers of the 20th century to have had a deep fascination for the plenitude of differences in the world and hence the affinity between the thinker and the culture of India only seems natural. The soul of India has always been at the confluence of cultures and hence offers a veritable feast of divergent ideas, colorful customs, and disparate convictions through multiple languages and diverse faiths and Bakhtin is bound to take special delight in engaging with these features of a culture that he so cherished and celebrated. The philosophical and literary traditions and histories with open-ended and unfinalized texts that stand under the banner of plurality is also capable of bringing Bakhtin's works readily under the very same banner. India has always been a parliament of languages, where meanings must be negotiated and the other must be accommodated and this sheer reality of culture necessitates a dialogue. One could very well argue that long before the principles of dialogue took shape in the western world, these ideas, though not labeled as such, were an integral part of intellectual traditions in India.

However, at the very outset, we need to recognize the inherent paradox in the culture with its built-in contradictions. As much as we find principles of dialogicality in full force in the culture, we also see and feel the forces of dogma with its stubborn social hierarchies and unyielding views on social structures. Therefore, we cannot celebrate the dialogicality in certain pockets of culture at certain historical moments, without being mindful of the ugly and violent dogmas that have also been so pervasive in the culture. Therefore, it would seem pernicious to discuss dialogue by ignoring dogmas. This is very much akin to what Bakhtin would argue about dialogism; we cannot talk about it without recognizing the strong monologic impulses in individuals and culture. Hence, the real question is about the cultural forces that contribute to the building up of dogmas and about how the creative forces of dialogism mediate the breakdown of dogmas.

Furthermore, even as we acknowledge that Indian heterodoxy is remarkably capacious and ever-present, we must also recognize that a simple assemblage of divergent ideas does not constitute dialogue. It only creates a potential for a dialogue. The reality of differences undoubtedly necessitates a dialogue, but whether individuals respond to that call, or whether or not cultural conditions enable the necessary dialogue is an open question. It would be a dubious claim that just because the culture is composed of diverse elements, dialogicality is automatic. In our current globalized world, terms such as dialogue and diversity have become fashionable and these words are certainly convenient political tools to cover serious problems of rigidity. Hence, a mechanical leap from variations in culture to

dialogicality would be erroneous and would disregard the philosophical depth and complexity.

A Bakhtinian reading of classical Indian texts could be quite prismatic—refracting and evoking multiple dimensions of the immediate cultural landscape—and moving gradually into the horizon of mythic consciousness, only to blur the boundaries between here and now and what lies beyond in time and space, while pointing out the sensible, the sensuous, and the spiritual. It would be more than an analysis of images of culture; it is an exercise in imagination to creatively rethink and reorganize the cultural montage and capture the vivid moments of human experiences. Only a dialogic understanding of our past would enable us to figure out what needs to be preserved and revived and what needs to be corrected. It is in this spirit that Bakhtin's arrival in India becomes mutually beneficial and meaningful. However, it does not imply a mechanical import of ideas; rather it is an occasion to reclaim, reactivate, and recognize inherent dialogicality in the culture, history, and philosophies. At the same time, Bakhtin is not necessarily a key to open up dormant dialogicality in the texts; instead, he is an active participant in a great dialogue—a necessary outsider's perspective capable of seeing things that an insider cannot. Bringing the deep-rooted dialogicality of literary and philosophical schools of India to the forefront, need not and indeed must not make Bakhtin an incidental figure, for he offers some very sharp analytical tools that are well suited to make sense of a variety of home-grown genres in India. The spell of story in India is ubiquitous; it is a simple vehicle of truth and a preferred mode of communicating psychological, metaphysical, and social thought and this activity of *storying* not only lends itself well to Bakhtinian analysis, but also adds new dimensions to the very philosophy of dialogue.

Mikhail Bakhtin: The Man and His Ideas—A Paradox

A paradoxical tension exists between the man, his ideas, and the reception of his ideas and we need to be mindful of this tension to give a fair reading and thoughtful application of his works. In their authoritative biography, Clark and Holquist (1984) claim that Bakhtin considered himself to be a philosophical anthropologist at heart, probing into the interconnections between individuals, texts, cultures, and histories. His works that span several decades passing through the most tumultuous period in Russian history display incredible insights into the diversity of the world, and yet he was not an academic empire builder and nor was he driven by a single question or overriding concern. His works are capacious enough to accommodate every angle in an idea, and every voice, however feeble, gets a fair hearing. Hence, Bakhtin's open-ended ideas invite various schools of thought to appropriate him as their own and this appeal to everyone leaves him in a deeply ironic situation; either not understood by anyone in a comprehensive manner or appropriated and misappropriated by everyone. For that matter,

everything about Bakhtin is contentious; his intellectual roots, his personal life, his academic life (his doctoral dissertation on Rabelais caused furor then and continues to generate controversy to this day), and even his identity (authorship of several books) are in dispute.

Paradox seems to be the very essence and power of Bakhtin and it is not restricted to the matters of mind, but also extends in its most concentrated form in matters of the body. Bakhtin's physical body was his curse and his savior. At a very early age, he was afflicted with osteomyelitis and thus suffered from constant pain, inflammation, and ulcers, and hence was forced to be answerable to the painful demands of the flesh. In common with many intellectuals in the then Soviet Union, Bakhtin was sent to jail in 1929 and in few months his diseased body came to his rescue. The bone disease flared up and he was moved from a prison cell to a hospital ward. By 1938, when he was barely in his early 40s the severity of disease forced the amputation of his right leg almost up to his groin. Struggling with his deformity, Bakhtin wrote the most provocative account on the power of corporeality. The physical confronted the metaphysical and body found its rightful place in philosophy.

From various accounts of his life, the image that emerges is that of an interesting and complex human being; a thinker who advanced the dialogic in all sincerity often displayed "single-voiced" behavior in his close social circle because he was confident that competing ideas were sufficiently debated in his intra-psychic realm. He took great delight in the bawdy language of the marketplace, but in his communications the language was polished. He insisted on philosophical rigor, but his writing methods were sloppy due to lack of discipline in verification procedures for citations, and so on. Attention is drawn to these aspects of Bakhtin only to emphasize that an unorthodox thinker demands and unconventional approach. Emerson (1997) observes,

> In the place of God, Bakhtin deified the everyday interlocutor. A creature made neither for prayer nor parenting, he reigned in a world of philosophical conversations carried over endless tea and cigarettes in small room in the dead of night. (p. 5)

Given this characterization of Bakhtin's world, one must enter that cold and congested room somewhere in Russia with a preparation and willingness to listen: listen to the voices in the texts that Bakhtin is engaging with; listen to the conversations Bakhtin has with these voices; and listen to Bakhtin's voice ruminating on the deeper meanings of texts.

Finally, one needs to be sensitive to the plight of intellects operating under tyrannical conditions. There is always more to be said and what was said is hinting at something else or something beyond. Writers, philosophers, and religious leaders under Soviet rule had to learn to write in riddles or frequently swallow their thoughts, as there was always the risk of being banned or jailed or, even worse, killed. Bakhtin has had first-hand experience of living in single-voiced, rigid, and un-free world and thus gave a most persuasive philosophy on the potential for growth in a multi-voiced, flexible, and free world.

Epic/Novel Contrast in Bakhtin's World and Epic-Novel Fluidity in the Indian World

In much of the Western world, the novel is a much-preferred and celebrated genre and Bakhtin also advanced this idea and saw the novelistic genre as a significant break from the epic genre. In contrast to the novel, which is continually evolving in real present time, Bakhtin (1981) says that the "epic past" is the "absolute past" and "it is both monochronic and valorized" (p. 15) because it represents "a world of 'beginnings' and 'peak times' in the national history" (p. 13) and hence the epic distance cannot be covered by the contemporary world. According to him, the epic hero is not in the zone of familiar contact and hence the character is sealed off and complete. Such a characterization has no validity in the Indian soil, as that country's epic texts are alive, open, immediate, and incredibly influential. In interpreting the epic texts, the phenomenon we observe is a movement between novelization and the canonization of ancient texts (Bandlamudi 2010). As living texts, they absorb cultural trends and forces of history.

The epic Ramayana is a *kavya*—and hence has a beginning and an end—and yet is open to heteroglossic layering and furthermore the text has been rewritten in practically every regional language, thereby bringing in local customs and sensibilities. Dialogue and dialogic relations characterize *The Mahabharata* in every dimension and although a later text it is far more open-ended and inconclusive. The very structure of what we may loosely refer to, as "Vyasa's text" is an extraordinary form of nested dialogues. The *Adi Parva* begins with Ugrasrava narrating to the curious sages assembled in the forest of *Naimisha* on what was narrated by Vaisampayana during the snake sacrifice performed by Janamejaya. About the life of the text, Sukthankar (1933), who was instrumental in compiling the critical edition of *The Mahabharata*, observes: "we are compelled to assume that even in its early phases *the Mahabharata* textual tradition must have been not uniform and simple, but multiple and polygenous" (p. lxxxix).

Much of the diversification of the text could be attributed to back and forth movement between textual and oral traditions and also from translations into various Indian languages. Cultural history indicates that translations of epic texts into regional languages were accompanied by shifts in culture. In these translations, the local literary traditions enter into the narrative creating a dialogic relation between the *marga* (the pan Indian) and the *desi* (the local). For instance, Sarala Das, while translating *the Mahabharata* into Oriya, excluded the philosophical discussion between Arjuna and Krishna, which provided the substance for the great philosophical text called the *Bhagavat Gita.* The native reader's lived reality is brought closer to the translated text by incorporating folk tales and motifs from the everyday life of the community. Here it is obvious that translations in modern Indian languages were not oriented towards 'theoretical thinking' but 'the actual once-occurent world', a distinction that is basic to early Bakhtin. The poets of the regional languages inhabited multiple worlds that were not homogenized into single wholes. They understood that their primary responsibility was to the speech

community of which they were a part. Translation for them becomes a mode of negotiating the other in the society and culture. For Bakhtin, 'aesthetic seeing' can become 'participative thinking' only when one accepts the orientation toward the other as a condition of one's existence and cultivates 'empathy' as an essential feature of one's life and art. It is this ethical position that characterizes the poetry of Indian languages at its foundational moment.

This may be illustrated with reference to the language of Malayalam. Translation was the means by which the literary culture of Kerala was defined and refined over a period of five centuries from 1500 CE. The standardization of Malayalam into a modern literary language that can confront the marginal and the latent in the culture happened through Thunchath Ezhuthachan's (c. 16th century CE) translation of the *Ramayana* that was done in the *manipravalam* mode. *Manipravalam* embodies a dialogic spirit because it combines the Dravidian and Sanskrit strains in Malayalam into a new creative medium. According to *Leelathilakam,* a work on grammar and rhetoric from 14th-century Kerala, *mani* signifies 'jewels' and *pravalam* means 'corals', the former standing for Tamil and the latter for Sanskrit (Mukherjee 1999: 225). Ezhuthachan made it possible for Malayalam to assimilate the high seriousness of Sanskrit and the earthly wisdom of Tamil that represent two experiential worlds with conflicting orientations. The impulse to bring them into a dialogic relationship is made possible through the idiom of *manipravalam* that hybridizes Malayalam and enables it to confront the other within its experiential domain. Malayalam becomes a site of engaging the elite and subaltern through the polyphonic structure of this hybridized language. What made this dialogic relationship possible was the Aryan–Dravidian synthesis that happened in the social system of Kerala during its formative phase. Ezhuthachan's challenge was to devise an idiom that can address a speech community divided into several castes in the feudal hierarchy. Ezhuthachan is compelled to devise a dialogic mode to negotiate the complex plurality of his society.

Here we shall illustrate the manner in which *manipravalam* functions in the text. In one of the most famous passages, Rama, while instructing his brother, Lakshman on the transient nature of earthly existence, compares the world to a frog "trapped in the throat of a snake, (the frog) still pleading for food (unaware of its impending death)" (Paniker 1999: 202). This is an everyday image drawn from the life of ordinary people and conveys the contingency of the everyday world. In the same passage, Rama also says that worldly joys go past like lightning and human life is "a fleeting thing" (ibid.). In the original Ezhuthachan uses a high-sounding Sanskrit phrase, *kshanaprabhanjalam*, to convey the transient nature of human life and the world. In the space of a few lines we are given two contrasting metaphors derived from two discourses pointing to a common theme. This is what makes *manipravalam* a dialogic mode of address. Thus, during its very formative phase, Malayalam interiorizes the social contradictions manifest in its linguistic structure into a creative force that can forge a participatory space of experience.

The novel did not originate in India as an imitation of the Western model. The social dynamics of the 19th century could no more be articulated in the prevailing genres which partook of ideological forms and genres which carried the stamp of

classical and neo-classical periods. While commenting on "the extra-artistic reasons and factors that made possible the construction of the polyphonic novel" in Russia, Bakhtin argues that "the multi-leveledness and contradictions of social reality" was a major contributing factor for the emergence of the form (Bakhtin 1984b: 27). As he says: "the epoch itself made the polyphonic novel possible" (ibid.). This is also true of Indian society. In the West, the trajectory of modernity gained ground over a period of three centuries. But in India the epoch-making changes took less than one hundred years as a society steeped in traditions of various kinds, confronted and accommodated various strands of modernity in every walk of life from the domestic to the public, from administration to law and justice, and from education to culture. However, modernity did not exhaust the multiple worlds in which an Indian lived. The large-scale changes initiated by colonialism contributed towards a redefinition of human subjectivity in India. The modern Indian subject could be narrativized only in new genres. Genres such as autobiography, essay, lyric poetry, travelogue, short story, and the novel emerged in response to the crisis of experience and expression. In this sense, all these are dialogic genres that embodied in themselves multiple points of view that were available in Indian society as it confronted modernity. Namwar Singh has argued that in India we tend to consider the novel as a derivative form without realizing that there are socio-political factors shaping the new genre of prose and the novel. He considers the rebellion of 1857 as the First War of Indian Independence, following Marx, and believes that "the country and the novel were born together" (Singh 2002: 4–5). The ideological axis of colonial oppression and nationalist awakening created a multi-leveled society with several internal contradictions that resulted in the search for new forms of expression.

As Anderson's formulation of nationalism suggests, nations need to be simultaneously both ancient and modern as well as secular and sacred. The Indian novel as a dialogic genre gave expression to the contradictory impulses of colonial modernity that pulled in different directions. Even as the new Indian novel spoke on behalf of the common people, it embodied a largely elitist view of the nation. In a novel like *Anandamath* (1882/2005) by the Bengali writer Bankimchandra Chatterjee, the author gives expression to this ambivalence when he portrays the cult of the *santaan* (child), which was devoted to the ideal of liberating the motherland. He glorified celibacy and renunciation as ideals and portrayed a hermitage in the heart of the forest where the members of the cult congregated. While the nationalist project had a secular ideal rooted in modernity, this novel uses a revivalist discourse monumentalizing the past. The Hindu past is appropriated in favour of a modern nationalistic discourse, rendering members of religious community invisible. In fact, the Muslim figures in the novel as an antagonist. Julius Lipner, in his introduction to the translation of *Anandamath,* comments on the "Sanskritic theme" present in the novel: "…in the context of the nationalist (and protonationalist) agitation in 19th-century Bengal, this theme of the transformative use of *tapas* acquired by a celibate life-style was adapted to bring about nationalist/ patriotic goals" (Lipner 2005: 57). The moment of colonial modernity was marked by a pronounced ambivalence to the very ideals of the secular-modern that demanded allegiance from the modern subject. The modern Indian novel becomes a

dialogic enactment of such subliminal conflicts that could not be resolved in the prevailing discourses of tradition or modernity. Despite Bankim's obvious ideological proclivities, the novel as a dialogic form allows us to view the marginalized perspectives and this contributes to the emergence of a self-critical consciousness.

Dialogicality and Philosophy of Language

Dialogue is a multi-leveled concept and it must be acknowledged that at a macro level, Truth is dialogic. Our view of the world and life is dialogic. Bakhtin (1984b: 293) asserts that, "Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in a dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree and so forth." For the realization of dialogue in life, one must have a dialogic conception of truth and deploy a dialogic method to explore, understand and represent life. The reason that verses of great Indian mystics from every faith—to name a few, Ghalib, Annamacharya, Kabir, Tyagaraja, and Tukaram to Guru Nanak—remain alive is because their conception of Truth was dialogic. Relationship was everything, and in mind, body, spirit, soul, and deeds they participated in a dialogue with their creator and their fellow human beings and so their words continue to speak to us. For them, it was the feel for faith that reigned supreme, while the dogmatic codification of religion became shadowy and insignificant.

The next sense is that language in action can only be dialogic. No human activity is possible without language and hence every utterance by its very definition is dialogic (Bakhtin 1986). Bakhtin's interest was not in the 'word' but in the *life of the word*. Who is the speaking subject, to whom are the words directed, who is the listening subject, and what is his or her response to the utterances? These questions are fundamental in determining meanings.

Almost 1500 years before Bakhtin, Sanskrit grammarian/philologists saw language as the kinetic energy of human consciousness that sets everything in motion. We do not know if there was a circuitous route through which philological traditions from India reached Bakhtin in any form, but it is worth noting that Bakhtin carefully studied many German philosophers like Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, and others who were greatly influenced by philosophies of language in India. That aside, Bakhtin had similar metaphysical and epistemological concerns that Bhartrhari had.

Sanskrit linguist and grammarian Bhartrhari (c. 5th century CE) discusses his doctrine of language and reality in his three-volume classic work, *Vakyapadiya*—literally meaning 'sentence-word'—and in these texts he argues against reductionism in the study of language and advocates a holistic approach. Therefore, as a "collection of words" only the sentence is capable of expressing "inalienable meaning" (*Vakyapadiya* II 1977: 56). For Bhartrhari, the meaning-bearing unit is *sphota* (lit. spurt); similar to Bakhtin's utterances because when words are strung together they become an indivisible whole, assuming different intonations and connotations. For both Bhartrhari and Bakhtin, language is not a closed formal system, but a live event that humans engage in, and hence Bhartrhari insists on

being attentive to *sabdana vyapara*—the business of negotiating sounds and meanings and Bakhtin proclaims that 'we own meanings.' Bhartrhari felt the vibrations of consciousness—*spanda*—in linguistic transactions and Bakhtin heard the voices of consciousness in the social discourse.

Despite similarities in their approach to language, it is important to note significant differences. In the Western world, philosophies of language, broadly speaking, all into binary categories: some like de Saussure privileging the *la langue*—structure of language while others like Bakhtin and Wittgenstein focusing on *la parole*—language in action that produces myriad meanings. Bhartrhari, on the other hand, proposes a holistic doctrine on language that upholds the inseparability of *langue* and *parole*. He offers a comprehensive account of language in a multilayered fashion —at phonological, syntactical, semantic and sociological and, ultimately, at the cosmological level—even while pointing out the inevitable disjunctions and achieved alignment between these levels. Such philosophical traditions with a long history put India at the forefront of advancing dialogical studies.

Philosophy of the Act and Self/Other Relations in a World of Differences

In order to get a full grasp of the Bakhtinian oeuvre, it is important to study his early works as they lay the philosophical foundation for his later works. For Bakhtin, abstract concepts do not have a stand-alone status; instead, they gain validity and veridicality only through lived-life and ground realities and answerable acts. Unlike Immanuel Kant, Bakhtin had very little interest in fixed categories and operational definitions. In the Kantian world of transcendental aesthetics, concepts gain validity once they pass through a priori categories and synthetic judgments. In such a highly abstract world, there are no traces of life experiences because local space and time are considered contaminants. Whereas, Bakhtin shunned *phantom* philosophies, be in aesthetics, ethics or epistemology. In his early work—*Toward a Philosophy of Act*—Bakhtin (1993) writes:

> Life can be consciously comprehended only as an ongoing event, and not as Being *qua* a given. A life that has fallen away from answerability cannot have a philosophy: it is, in its very principle, fortuitous and incapable of being rooted. (p. 56)

For Bakhtin, being rooted in ground realities and lived life is of paramount importance and he insists that even the philosophy of religion must be informed by living and participatory faith; otherwise, it can easily become a dogma (Bakhtin 2001). Tagore (1985) was acutely mindful of this danger and that is why in his critique of *Nationalism*, he forcefully argues that ideologies and revolutions when divorced from lived realities become vacuous and dangerous, as he says, "… personal man is eliminated to a phantom, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machines, with no twinge of pity or moral responsibility" (p. 7). Tagore captures this dilemma in his famous literary work

Ghare Bhaire (*The Home and the World*, 1916)—showing sharp contrast between Sandip, the charismatic, seductive and nihilistic *swadeshi*[1] leader and Nikhil, who is ever sensitive to ground realities even while managing to push some silent revolutions. Tagore is persuasive in communicating that an abstract ideal can become an easy tool for hegemony.

Sri Aurobindo (1997) also cautions about ideals removed from ground realities evaluating life, because abstract "reason seeks to understand and interpret life by one kind of symbol only, the idea" (p.182) and when this idea that has emanated from a specific context is generalized, it results in forced subordination of many actually lived lives to an abstract idea. Thus, the main concern for Tagore, Bakhtin, or Aurobindo was the danger of subjective ideal turned into a universal objective truth.

Bakhtin's early philosophical works are primarily a challenge to Kantian transcendental philosophy. For Bakhtin, the knowing subject can never overcome his or her unique position in time and space and since we cannot transcend our solipsism, this epistemological reality calls for the necessity of the other. The interdependence between self and others emerge from this necessity. Bakhtin (1990) constructs human relations based on a triadic equation—*I-for-myself, I-for-others* and *Others-for-me*—and the disjunction between these ever-evolving equations creates the space to bargain, plead, reject, and retaliate. Bakhtin (1993) insists that the guiding principle in self/other relationship is "*non-alibi in Being*" (p. 40) because each and every voice must retain its uniqueness and individuality. Bakhtin problematizes many common traits that we observe in individuals: the desire to achieve significance in the lives of others, or striving to win fame and glory or being driven by the will to be a hero or even the strong need to quench the thirst to be loved, because such needs cannot be fulfilled by the efforts of the self and hence must be left to the prerogative of the other. Love is a gift of life and it cannot be demanded and similarly, the one cannot be a self-appointed savior of the other, because such needs and actions constitute invading the consciousness of the other. These ideas are far too familiar in the Indian ethos because the supreme secret of an ancient civilization has emphasized the value of *nishkama karma*—dispassionate action and *sthitha pragna*—steady equanimity and in Bakhtin's works we recognize the reverberations of ancient wisdom.

Politics of Caste: Negotiation, Resistance and Retaliation in the Novel

The conflicting points of view that inform the discursive regime of the Indian novel may be illustrated with reference to *Indulekha* (1889/1964), a Malayalam novel that gained fame for its 'literary' merits. At the heart of the novel is the conflict between the patriarch of an old joint family and his English-educated nephew. The novelist

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[1]Swadeshi literally means 'self rule' and it refers to independence movement of India.

O. Chandu Menon, who portrayed the love between Indulekha and Madhavan as a radical reformist step that could revolutionize society, had opposed the colonial government's attempt to reform the marriage system in Kerala. Such ambivalences were characteristic of many reformers of the late nineteenth century. In *Indulekha,* the narrative embodies the voice of the upper-caste communities, the Nairs and the Brahmins. In fact, the novel stages a transfer of culture capital from the Brahmins to the Nairs who were the first to become educated in English join colonial administrative service. Its plot centers around a series of shifts in power formations: from matrilineal joint family to nuclear family; from feudalism to capitalism; from Brahmin-centered hierarchy to a Nair-centered hierarchy of upper castes; from Sanskrit to English; and from village to city. Sanskrit was considered the language of tradition and ancient wisdom, while English embodies the voice of the modern. In the novel, the literary discourse of Brahmins is represented in the Sanskritized Malayalam of the neo-classical period. However, the Anglicized syntax of the novel heavily leans towards everyday Malayalam as spoken by Nairs and the Brahmin becomes the other in the discursive structure of the novel. What *Indulekha* does is to create a new field of cultural capital for the elites, negating and neutralizing the dominance of the neo-classical tradition in literature. Once the legitimizing authority of his cultural dominance is questioned, Suri the Brahmin becomes a clownish figure. What O. Chandu Menon demonstrates is that his ritualistic status is no longer included in the scheme of modernity. He fumbles and misquotes a Sanskrit verse in the presence of English-knowing Indulekha. 'English' now becomes a value system signifying a series of elements such as rationality, scientific temper, individuality, discrimination and resistance to feudalist attitudes. *Indulekha* is characterized by the "deliberate multi-styled and hetero-voiced nature" of the novelistic genre. The author inserts Sanskrit *Slokas,* parodies, retold dialogues, letters and similar attributes of the novelistic genre that Bakhtin discusses (Bakhtin 1984b: 108). It also abounds in the use of double-voiced discourse, which makes it possible for the author to depict the speech of the character and also reveal the author's attitude towards him. As Bakhtin says in *The Dialogic Imagination*: "In such discourse, there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while, these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they—as it were—know about each other… Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized" (Bakhtin 1981: 324).

While writers like Bankimchandra and Chandu Menon were imagining the nation from an elitist perspective, there were authors from the lower caste who subverted such symbolic representations of hegemonic structures of power. *Saraswativijayam* (lit. meaning the 'triumph of Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge') was written in 1892 in Malayalam by Kunjambu Potheri, soon after the publication of *Indulekha* by Chandu O. Menon (1889/1964) to challenge the oppression of the lower castes. At the very beginning of the novel we see a young boy from the lower caste being brutally punished for singing songs when a Brahmin was passing by. His family is evicted from their small piece of land. The boy was abandoned for dead and the colonial government registers a case of murder against the Brahmin who now flees from the village. His Nair servant is arrested. Years later, the Brahmin is arrested from Banaras where he was living under an assumed

name and brought to trial. Here the story takes an unexpected turn. The lower-caste boy who was punished by him had gone to a missionary school and got educated and it is in his court that the trial now takes place. The Brahmin's family that was excommunicated also had joined Christianity like the lower-caste boy and his granddaughter who is called 'Saraswati' is now the wife of Yesudasan, the judge. The novel is highly critical of the caste system, which is evident in its repeated critique of the Hindu dharma. Each chapter in the novel has an epigraph from a sacred text of the Hindus. These passages bring out some seminal questions from these texts at the beginning of the chapter and then continue to narrate events illustrating the condition of the lower-caste Hindus in modern Indian society. This creates a dialogic relation in the very body of the text between the code of dharma and its practice by the upper-caste Hindus. The injustice and brutality of the caste system is not only revealed through the novel but the justification of the caste system put forward by the Hindu texts is also shown as untenable in a civilized society. In creating such an 'intertextual' narrative, the author points to the deep asymmetry where ethical questions cannot be answered within the purview of the prevailing moral codes. What makes this novel deeply dialogic is the double-voiced tone of the narrative, which in telling the lower caste oppression constantly invokes the larger emancipatory ideal of the lower castes, anchored in social justice, freedom and equality.

The World of Carnival: Liberating Laughter and Folk Sensibilities

The world of carnival with its boisterous laughter, coarse language, grotesque body images and excessive indulgence in food and liquor, according to Bakhtin (1984a), brings wholesomeness to our cultural life. In the carnival space and time we see the world not through the rational dictates of the mind, but through the body principle. Only in this inverted world does one manages to breakdown the oppressive hierarchies and pull the veil of false claims and peel layers of hypocrisies.

Carnival as a practice and as a philosophical and theoretical construct has had a very long history and an immediate presence in Indian culture. Fed with tales of Akbar and Birbal and Krishnadevaraya and Tenali Ramanna, the wise fool is all too familiar to generations of Indians. The phenomenal world, according to Hindu cosmology is one grand trick and laughing at the metaphysical flimflammery is a significant moment of awareness and liberation—liberation *in* the world and *not from* the world. People from all walks of life gather at the carnival space to shed their inhibitions, their sense of uniqueness and false sense of superiority, to find relief from the serious drone of cerebral activity. While seriousness grants power to revered entities, laughter as a corrective measure redistributes it. Carnival is a platform to mock at all revered entities. Laughing at lustful mendicants and bishops is not a wholesale rebuke of holy men, but a caution against wholesale valorization

of holy men. Falsehood is a close companion of power and that is why the attendants of the Lord—the *gana*s, as the cosmic clowns and jesters of the pantheon are always in a fact-finding mission to deliver hard truths. The *Pramatha Gana*—the Principal Attendant—Ganesh (the Hindu elephant god) with his incongruous body and gluttonous appetite, according to the *Natya Sastra*[2] presides over the comic sentiment. Commenting on Bharata's *Natya Sastra,* the philosopher Abhinavagupta (c. 950–1016 CE) explains the comic sentiment as *kuhaka,* meaning the tickling of *kaksa*—armpits, or literally "hidden place" (Siegel 1987). Abhinavagupta saw laughter as a tactile equivalent of intellectual and aesthetic processes in which the hidden and untouched zones of meaning making spheres are brought to life. Open societies and open minds must never fear parody and laughter because it pulls the individual away from dogmatism. Bakhtin (1984a) explains that Rabelais built his theory of laughter based on the "Hippocratic novel" in which Democritus's laughter was based on a "certain spiritual premise of the awakened man who has attained virility" (p. 67). Laughter is mind's equivalent of bodily virility enabling it to act and produce new forms of knowledge.

In the cultural history of India, the folk expressions have periodically nourished the mainstream traditions of theater and poetry. The popular domain of the folk resisted the hegemonic structures of power embodied in the great traditions of the *bhadralok*, or the elites. Folk laughter was essentially subversive and was not bound by the protocols of stylized movements in theater. While commenting on *bhavai,* a type of folk-theatre in Gujarat, Erin B. Mee comments:

> Bhavai, an open-air Gujarati community theatre honouring Goddess Amba, begins with a Ganesh-puja (literally sacred offerings to God Ganesha) followed by a dance by Goddess Kali, and the appearance of a comic character who functions as society's conscience by pointing out social problems, and then proceeds with a series of plays depicting social, political or religious themes. (Mee 2008: 3)

Tamasha, a folk form of performance in Maharashtra, known for its music, pageantry, mime, and dance, incorporates a section known as *batavani* that contains "jokes that satirized a current event or person in power" (ibid.). It is significant that laughter is an essential component of many such folk forms throughout India. Those who enacted major roles in these forms came from lower castes. Hence it can be seen that the subversive laughter in folk expressions provided a critique of the caste system and its feudal authority.

In 18th-century Kerala, a new genre called *thullal* was devised by an eminent poet, Kunchan Nambiar (1705–1770) to enact mythical stories through song, music, and dance. He devised this new genre by adapting devotional dances like *patayani*, which was popular among the 'avarna' castes. He also used ritual dances of possession common among the lower castes. Nambiar took his themes from the great tradition, but carnivalized their articulation through *thullal.* His larger objective in using the carnivalized forms was to critique a social system plagued by divisions of caste, feudal arrogance, and Brahmin dominance. Rich Freeman has argued that

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[2]Natya Sastra is a treatise on dance and drama given by Bharata Muni.

Nambiar's works are "the culmination of hybridizing movements between performance and text that are indicative of the caste and class tensions historically built into Kerala's literary practices" (Freeman 2003: 489). In retelling the myths of the great tradition, Nambiar uses conversational rhythms and colloquial diction to lampoon the high culture and its interpretation of the world. Bakhtin, while describing what he means by the"carnival sense of the world", says that works belonging to the carnivalized genres are characterized by "mighty life-creating and transforming power, and indescribable vitality" (1984a: 107). This is precisely what we experience in Nambiar's poetry, as the division between the serious and the comic breaks down as the carnivalized word simultaneously addresses both the upper and the lower castes. It has to be remembered that *thullal* was performed outside the temple premises while *Kathakali*[3] and *Koothu* were confined to the sacred precincts until the beginning of this century. While narrating the well-known stories from the Hindu mythology, Nambiar digresses from the main story to comment on contemporary Kerala society and its exploitative caste hierarchy. Since Nambiar's verses were accompanied by music and dance, they could directly address the common people drawn from the non-Brahmin castes. Brahmins and Nairs are singled out for satire in most of his *thullal* narratives. Elaborate feasts, processions, preparations for battles, verbal arguments, community rituals, humiliations suffered by the mighty and powerful etc., recur in his descriptions, providing him ample opportunity to comment on the greed, gluttony, and timidity of the upper castes. The hierarchical order of the divine world of the eternal and the human world of history collapse into each other, in the carnival laughter of his poetic narratives. He exploits the inherent contradictions between Malayalam and Sanskrit to critique the contradictions within a society, which is hierarchically organized. In a well-known passage, he compares Sanskrit and Malayalam with reference to their reception among the learned elites and the common masses:

> Men of culture would like to listen to Sanskrit verse;
> but the vulgar cannot find any delight in it.
> Before an audience of the common people
> who are out to see some folk-show
> only the lovely, shapely language of Kerala is proper.
> If we present the sound and fury
> of pedantic Sanskrit verse,
> the common man won't make head or tail
> of such odd and obscure concoctions
> and he will just get up and leave the place. (Paniker 1999: 336)

Kunchan Nambiar's poetry communicates a self-critical perspective which later deepened the search for democratic and reformist movements in the 19th century.

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[3]Kathakali is a four hundred year old classical theatre form from Kerala in which male actors with facial masks and elaborate costumes, perform mythological narratives drawn from Hindu epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

In sum, carnival is faithful to interior truth and internal freedom. The inverted world of carnival disrupts the hierarchically organized world that sees itself as the norm, to suggest other possibilities and hence it catalyzes individual and collective consciousness.

Essays in the Volume: A Brief Introduction

Long before the arrival of Bakhtin's ideas in India, philosophies from India, particularly the discourses in philology, reached the Bakhtin Circle. One of the most prominent members of the Bakhtin Circle, Michael Tubianskii, was an Indo-Tibetan scholar who brought Hindu/Buddhist perspectives into the Circle. Craig Brandist, an intellectual historian who heads the Bakhtin Center at the University of Sheffield, traces the circuitous pathways (in Chap. 2) through which Indian philosophies reached the European soil and the complicated relationship that European intelligentsia and, in particular, the Soviet scholars, developed with the esoteric texts from India.

Carnival in all its dimensions—colorful festivities, boisterous laughter and mockery of authority—has been an integral part of cultural life in India. There is a deep regard for the wisdom of folly embodied in the *vidusak*—the ritual clown or the wise fool in performance traditions, whose acts are blatantly anti-philosophical and anti-establishment, but whose intent is to restore the philosophical injunctions of the parent-religion. Sunthar Visuvalingam's chapter (Chap. 3) is an exposition of 'transgressive sacrality' as depicted in the Bhairava tradition[4]. The chapter introduces the reader to Abhinavagupta's works on the aesthetics of laughter and the Tantric tradition and draws crucial distinctions from Bakhtin's discussion of the carnival. Sunthar points out that while Bakhtin saw carnival as having the liberating potential in response to the rigid Stalin era, the carnival in India is seen as part of an ever-present dialectic between order and chaos and interdiction and violation. Since the carnivalesque has been so intricately woven into the Hindu mainstream through the semiotics of transgression, Sunthar argues that the resources of tradition could be brought into the global arsenal to disrupt various forms of existing and emerging tyrannies.

As a French Indologist and philosophical anthropologist, Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam (Chap. 4) engages in a deep comparative analysis between the original works of Rabelais (which she reads in French, meaning that little is lost in translation) and Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais and Abhinavagupta on transgressive laughter, which has at its core the principle of 'freedom' (*svatantra*). The chapter takes the reader into the Rabelaisian world in medieval France with its bold defiance against all forms of authority. According to the author, Bakhtin's reading

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[4]The word in Sanskrit for "horrifying" is "Bhairava". Because the revealed Truth is horrifying Lord Shiva got the name "Bhairava" and this is part of Tantric tradition.

of Rabelais is limited because it is meant to resist the Stalinist oppression; whereas, the liberating world of Kashmir Saivism sanctions freedom from compulsions that come from within and the social taboos that are imposed from outside. The author argues that the school of Kashmir Saivism is built on two seemingly contradictory movements of *sankoca*—the philosophy of ascent, contraction and abstraction— and *vikasa*—the philosophy of descent, expansion, and the concrete, and that the interplay between these two exercises lead to freedom and self-realization. Elizabeth argues that the comprehensive philosophy of Abhinavagupta, unlike Rabelais and Bakhtin (whose views in comparison are somewhat limited), offers a holistic and cogent philosophy of laughter that has the liberating potential at the psychological, sociological, political, and spiritual levels.

Based on interviews conducted by the author with the renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Malavika Sarukkai and on other published materials about the performer (the recent film *The Unseen Sequence* made about her dance), Lakshmi Bandlamudi (Chap. 5) reviews and applies key concepts of aesthetics in Bakhtin's theory of dialogism like architectonics (how disparate elements are grouped together and consummated to achieve an aesthetic whole) and answerability (the perennial dialogue between the creator and the created) and shows how these concepts are manifested in the dance of Malavika Sarukkai. The chapter weaves in ideas taken from Abhinavagupta's commentary on *Natya Sastra*, to show the dialogic sophistication that existed in the ancient treatise on dramaturgy. The author argues that in the choreography of Malavika Sarukkai, *kaala* (time) stretches simultaneously into the ancient past—passing through the living present—to move towards an open future and these multiple temporalities serve as the very basis of Malavika's aesthetic vision.

Travel narrative is one of the oldest genres of writing. The wandering in the physical space for a curious soul is an occasion to discover various modes of thinking and understand different cultural practices to appreciate the incredible plenitude of differences in the world. Furthermore, the physical journey allows one to question and disrupt stubbornly held ideas in order to reorganize the inner being and discover the hidden nooks and crannies of the inner landscape. Jasbir Jain (Chap. 6) traces the spiritual wandering of Guru Nanak, who sought to learn, debate, question, and eventually evolve through his dialogic encounters with different others. The author discusses and demonstrates how features of dialogicality find expression in Guru Nanak's travels.

The novel was the much-preferred genre for Bakhtin and he strongly felt that only the novelistic genre, unlike poetry and drama, was fully capable of embodying dialogicality. In his essay, E.V. Ramakrishnan (Chap. 7) proves otherwise: he engages in a Bakhtinian reading of the rich poetic tradition in India, ranging from Bhakti to Sufi poetry to demonstrate the dialogic sophistication inherent in them. Unlike Vedic texts which were primarily monologic, the Bhakti poetry emerged from lived experience and sought a lively relationship with the divine. Ramakrishnan also shows how Bhakti and Sufi traditions informed and enriched each other and both were less concerned with codified religion and rituals and concentrated more on feeling the power of divinity in the lyrical beauty of poetry.

When dialogicality appears in full force, be it in Bhakti, Sufi, or Buddhist *therigatha* traditions, we find that exchanges between faiths become so effortless and respectful and Ramakrishnan's essay demonstrates their coexistence in the cultural literary traditions of India.

Elephants are an integral and important part of ritual traditions in Kerala and, therefore, the narrative assumes various characterological profiles in the legends and myths of Kerala. Bini B.S. (Chap. 8) examines elephant stories in *Aithihyamala* —a compilation of stories and accounts of events from regional oral traditions and Malayalam adaptations of stories from Sanskrit and Tamil traditions—to explore the dialogic potentialities in the narrative and performance traditions where the divine, the human, and the animal intermingle, communicate and fulfill ethical obligations towards each other. Through careful textual analysis, Bini shows how the linguistic tropes move in multiple directions that enable various characters to negotiate with alterity and, in the process, the author argues that we detect answerability between art and life and between Gods, humans and animals.

In a multilingual and multicultural country like India, translation is not just a necessity, but also an integral part of Indian consciousness. Pooja Mehta (Chap. 9) observes that the very activity of translation is as old as the civilization itself and the dialogicality inherent in the activity is articulated through the back and forth movements between *vad, anuvad*, and *samvad*. Pooja builds the argument on the observation made by G.N. Devy that Indian consciousness is a 'translating consciousness'—thereby affirming the dialogic transition and transformation between languages and between private thought and public speech.

In her provocative essay, Jyoti Rane (Chap. 10) observes that the socio-political conditions and historical time that gave birth to novel in Western Europe were very different from the conditions in which the novel emerged in India. Bakhtin argues that the novelistic genre, unlike the epic genre is unmistakably heteroglot and evolves amidst the contradictory forces of culture, thereby absorbing the multiple voices of the society. Rane argues that the novel as Bakhtin saw it could not have emerged in the unyielding hierarchy that characterized Indian society. If the novel is emblematic of human consciousness, as Bakhtin claims, Rane asserts that such a view cannot be extended to Indian consciousness, as it is steeped in mythology, which, according to her, makes no room for answerability. Furthermore, she argues that the novel as a genre in Indian languages emerged only after the English language established itself as the preferred language among the elite class in India and thus the colonial hegemony further strengthened the existing hierarchy. Rane's views on Indian mythology and the history of novel in India are highly contestable and hence this essay invites counter-arguments.

What is the relationship between Man and Machine and how do they mutually transform each other? The relationship between human intellect and tool use and production was at the heart of Karl Marx's dialectical materialism and a central concern for Russian theorist of the mind—Lev Vygotsky. In his chapter, Atanu Bhattacharya (Chap. 11) explores the potential dialogic interrelationships between digital technologies and pedagogy. The author asks if digital technologies in pedagogy bring about a paradigm shift within the humanities curriculum and, more

importantly, mediate a conceptual shift in the socio-cultural politics of pedagogy. The digital platform is open to all and thus has immense potential to create dialogic exchange on many levels and Atanu's contribution explores the way in which this potentiality could be actualized in teaching humanities and social sciences.

The relationship between lived life and narrativized tale is never a mechanical representation: if anything, the experiences and narrative enter into a dialogic relationship, transforming static memory into dynamic remembering. Paromita Chakrabarti (Chap. 12) gives a Bakhtinian reading of Meena Alexander's memoir —*Fault Lines* to show how the profile of the autobiographer emerges and re-emerges in a changing world. Through her careful reading, the author discusses the complex and contradictory relationship between memory and discursive representation and how the ambiguous contours of language leave the text open-ended for other possible interpretations.

A comparative analysis between Naipaul's early work *An Area of Darkness & India* and his later work *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is a classic study in the transformation and evolution of consciousness. It is a movement from stubborn monologism, which marks Naipaul's early impressions of India, to the fluid dialogism that characterizes his later work. Jasmine Anand (Chap. 13) gives a refreshing Bakhtinian reading of Naipaul's later work to show how the author freely decenters himself to hear the voices of variety of people and how they give meaning to mutinies. In his early work, Naipaul the author and India the nation and the subject remain static, frozen, and single-voiced, whereas in his later work, the author invites various others to co-author the idea of India and, hence, becomes multi-voiced and dynamic. Jasmine's analysis captures that evolution.

The final chapter in this volume affirms the open-ended and unfinalized nature of Indian civilization that has always been active in exporting and importing ideas through active engagement with various civilizations. Therefore, when Foara Adhikari (Chap. 14), a polyglot (proficient in various Indian and non-Indian languages) reads the works of a Francophone West African writer—Ahmadou Kourouma—the sensitivity and sensibility of an emerging scholar who grew up in a hybrid culture becomes visible. She rightly poses the question—dead text or living consciousness—and answers that texts, individuals, and civilizations are not static entities to be analyzed, but living beings to be dialogued with, so that we may learn, understand and eventually transform.

The essays assembled in this volume demonstrate the versatility of Bakhtin's analytical categories in understanding the incredible diversity present in Indian culture. Furthermore, from the iconoclastic wisdom of carnival to aesthetic vision of performance traditions to varieties in social speech types that characterize India, not only enter into a dialogue with Bakhtin's ideas, but add more depth and dimension to the very idea of dialogue and it is this promise, we hope that would be valuable and insightful to scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

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Chapter 2
From Indo-European Philology to the Bakhtin Circle

Craig Brandist

Since the appearance of Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism* in 1978, several significant studies have subjected the Indo-European paradigm in philology to critical examination.[1] Said argued that it was 'the extraordinarily rich and celebrated cultural position' of philology that 'endowed orientalism with its most important technical characteristics' (Said 1978: 131). The idea that Sanskrit, along with the major European languages and cultures, had derived from a common Indo-European ancestor played an important role in shaping European perceptions of the East. While important technical advances in the study of languages are undeniable, from the outset philology had been bound up with institutional and ideological factors. The rise of the discipline is inseparable from the history of the study of the classics and of Biblical exegesis, for matters of dogma depended on philological issues and grammatical details. The Christian church accepted this 'secular' science before all others, and had an important influence on the questions philologists asked. This heritage was largely obscured by the end of the nineteenth century, by which time philologists claimed to be casting the light of rational thought on mythical beliefs and religions, stripping away dogma and superstition. Yet this positivist attempt to trace the path from mythical to scientific thinking was combined with a Romantic search for original linguistic roots that could lead the researcher to glimpse truths about the birth of language itself. The idea developed that the most significant languages of Europe derived from ancient Indo-European or Indo-Aryan ancestors who had conquered huge areas and that the imperial

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[1]Among these one may mention Olender (1992 [1989]), Benes (2004; 2008), McGetchin (2009), Trautmann (1997), Arvidsson (2006).

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powers had inherited the polytheistic dynamism of Indo-Europeans. They were the inventors of mythology, and now the masters of art and science.

The particular form that scholarly perceptions of India took varied considerably from country to country. After an initial flirtation with such Romanticism, British Indology became increasingly motivated by administrative concerns, with an antiquarian interest in ancient cultures driven by an urge to create a 'pragmatic and descriptive corpus' that would be useful in developing an effective colonial administration (Goldman 2004: 31). Ideological factors tended to reside in a sense of European peoples and culture being more highly evolved than that of their colonies, and thus having a historical legitimacy in dominating a subject people (Goldman 2004: 34–35). Matters were different in Germany, however, which was emerging from French domination and developed a nationalist ideology based on the profundity of German *Kultur* against the superficiality of French *Zivilization*. Where the French could claim the heritage of Roman civilization and the Latin language, Germans could claim a connection to the more ancient and, they argued, more noble language and culture of Sanskrit (McGetchin 2009: 18). Indo-European philology thus took off in Germany with more enthusiasm than elsewhere in Europe. Indo-European was variously denoted as Indo-Germanic and later Indo-Aryan as philological and biological discourses became more entwined and racism became an ever greater component of philological discourse. It is important to note that there was much disagreement among philologists about the extent to which philological and biological discourses should interpenetrate, and some changed their minds over the course of the nineteenth Century. Max Müller, the German professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, for instance, began by talking about the entwinement of language and race, but later recoiled from this as the implications were developed by much less enlightened thinkers (Bosch 2002: 201–207). Symptomatic of the growing racism was that the posited Indo-European homeland shifted from India ever more closely to Europe, with most people writing in the field by the end of the nineteenth Century settling on southern Russia, especially the area around the Caucasus mountains as the original Indo-European homeland (McGetchin 2009: 153–162; Benes 2004).

In any case such philology encouraged a dichotomy between Indo-European and Semitic languages and cultures, with the latter increasingly designated as stagnant and outside universal historical progress and the former dynamic and expansive. The central Christian heritage of Europe could now be designated as non-Semitic as the key aspects of European cultures were viewed as having migrated from the original Indo-European homeland and undergoing a process of degeneration along the way. Philology could trace language and the archetypes of myth back to their points of origin and so cleanse language and culture of what Müller called the 'disease of language' that led peoples into superstition (Bosch 2002: 260–265).

Late Imperial Orientalism

While British cultural evolutionists like Andrew Lang (1904: 211) had criticised this way of thinking, it was in Russia that the ideas were subject to the most profound criticism. Indeed, an ideology critique of European philology developed in Russia and the early USSR decades before the appearance of Said's book. This was not initially an anti-imperialist critique, but would become so in the wake of the October Revolution.

The Russian Empire could not be justified on the basis of being merely a bridge between Indo-European realms, but it needed to be considered a unique civilization, an arena for the interaction of national cultures including, but not limited to, the Indo-European or 'Indo-Aryan' family. Russian orientalists thus needed to study Russia's 'own' orient, and to undermine the stereotype of the progressive west and stagnant east that dominated British and French orientalism (Tolz 2011). The historian of Central Asia, Vasilii Bartol'd, for instance, argued that a universal 'law of evolution of societies' must underlie scholarship, resulting in a trend towards 'the gradual convergence of an ever greater number of separate societies' (1977 [1911]: 208). He argued that 'the history of the ancient East, just as much as that of Europe, was determined by the influence of one nation on another and the distribution of the culture of one or several advanced nations over an ever wider geographical region' (Bartol'd 1977 [1911]: 233–234). The benefit of Empire, especially the Russian Empire, was that it facilitated the convergence of cultures, and the sooner those with a 'lower' culture are assimilated into a state with a 'higher' culture the better placed they will be to actively participate in the universal process of cultural exchange. The unbiased study of the East was crucial because 'the peoples of the East will believe in the superiority of our culture all the more when they are convinced we know them better than they know themselves' (Bartol'd 1963a [1900]: 610).

At the same time Russian philologists, especially Aleksandr Veselovskii, one of the founders of comparative literature, was undermining the theory of the migration of Indo-European narrative, arguing this replaces historical scholarship with mechanical movement through space. Motifs, roots etc. may arise in different places due to common conditions of life and psychology and one needs to understand that when borrowing occurs there must be a historical convergence of the thinking of the lending and borrowing cultures. This presupposes some shared foundation in the forms of life of a given epoch, and that give rise to corresponding psychological processes (Gorskii 1975: 173–181). Patterns of borrowing in literature cannot be traced simply by pointing out analogous motifs that may in actual fact be 'universal, an autogenous expression of common forms and notions that existed among all peoples at a certain stage of development' (Veselovskii 2004: 504). Rather, an investigation of borrowing must be based on *plots*, 'that is combinations of motifs, complex tales, with a chain of moments, the consistency of which cannot be accidental' (Veselovskii 2004: 504). Moreover, once a borrowed plot formation is introduced into a new milieu, its meaning is necessarily transformed as it is

assimilated into the popular consciousness. In this sense, it is no different from the stock of traditional plots and motifs that one generation inherits from another. One can therefore trace regularities of plot, motif and genre in narratives from all over the world, even if they have not come into direct contact.

The Revolutionary Period

While such work undermined exclusive focus on European literature, and late imperial orientalists worked tirelessly to undermine stereotypes of the East and developed a searching critique of the Eurocentric bases of European orientalism, all of this was done in the name of preserving the Russian Empire. A shift in perspectives followed the Russian defeat by Japan in 1905, which was the first defeat of a major European power by an Asian power.[2] Since the time of Catherine the Great, Russian policy towards non-Russian minorities had been 'geared towards eliminating any historical political and social structures which had developed independently from those of the Great Russians and which were different from them, and to replace them with the general structures of the Empire' (Löwe 2013). Now intellectuals within the colonies of the Empire became more assertive, and after a brief period of relaxation the Imperial administration resumed its reliance on repression rather than the liberal imperialism advocated by the orientalists. It was only with the collapse of the Empire that scholarship really began to free itself from the imperial agenda. The Revolution destroyed the Empire and discredited the whole idea, from 1922 replacing it with the idea of the USSR as a voluntary union the component parts of which had the right to secede. There was a significant transfer of resources from the metropolitan center to the former colonies and intense study of the cultures and traditions of the various peoples of the USSR, including its Moslems and Buddhists (Hirsch 2005; Martin 2001; Smith 1999). Nations were delimited and more than 100 languages were standardised and developed into a print culture. Nationality now clearly appeared as the result of state policy rather than the political recognition of a pre-existing national psychology. There was now a vast amount of practical survey work undertaken and a significant advance in knowledge about the non-European parts of the USSR. The progressive elements of the pre-Revolutionary paradigms in oriental studies and philology were integrated into an anti-imperialist worldview.

Members of the Bakhtin Circle worked in some of the institutes that were set up as part of this very project. Voloshinov and Medvedev worked at a research institute that was originally the Veselovskii Institute and then became ILIaZV

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[2]There is extensive literature on the war and its impact. For discussion of the perspectival shifts among Asian intellectuals because of the routing of the Russian fleet at the battle of Tsushima see Mishra (2012), Sareen (2007), Marks (2005), and Rodell (2005). On the impact within Russia, see Frankel (2007) and Bushkovich (2005). On the wider impact in challenging Eurocentric assumptions, see Jones (2007).

(*Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut sravnitel'noi istorii literatur i iazykov Zapada i Vostoka* [Scientific Research Institute for the Comparative History of the Literatures and Languages of the West and East]). Among its central aims was the study of:

(1) Problems of international and intra-national linguistic and literary exchange on the basis of the socio-economic, political and general cultural interaction of peoples and countries.

    (a) The interaction of linguistic units (national and class languages, ethnic and social dialects and so on);

    (b) International literary exchange in connection with the social development of peoples and countries that are in literary interaction.

(2) The study of the languages and the oral art (*tvorchestvo*) of the contemporary city, village and the national minorities of the USSR, along with the bordering peoples of East and West on the basis of their socio-economic, political and general-cultural development (cited in Brandist 2012: 386).

The focus on developing a historical and comparative methodology that would encompass equally the East and West was of considerable importance, and the institute brought together people specializing in many different cultures of the world within collective research projects. Voloshinov's work on *Freudianism* and on *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, and Medvedev's *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* were written as part of a project on sociological poetics at this institute (Brandist 2008). Voloshinov and Medvedev then helped Bakhtin to publish his work on Dostoevsky in the same series of monographs published by the institute. Sociological poetics sought to establish sociological bases for the study of oral and written forms of literature and for the comparative study of plots across a wide range of cultures.

The Bakhtin Circle Indologist: Mikhail Tubianskii

While scholarship about the Bakhtin Circle has concentrated on general philosophy and studies of European literature, it is of no small significance that two members of the Circle were prominent Leningrad orientologists: the specialist in Japanese (and later, Chinese) literature Nikolai Iosifivich Konrad (1891–1970) and the Indologist Mikhail Izrailovich Tubianskii (1893–1937). Here we shall be mainly concerned with Tubianskii, who worked at the Asiatic Museum and the Institute for the Study of the East in Leningrad. In 1927, he was one on the people who set up a short-lived Institute of Buddhist Culture in 1927. Tubianskii was very close to the ideas about the comparative approach to language and culture developed at ILIaZV, as he wrote in an article of 1927:

> Nobody has yet written a history of European culture through comparisons with that of the far East or India. Nobody has carried out these comparisons, though it is quite evident that much, very much, in European culture would appear to us in a completely different light if we were able to juxtapose one to the other. This task is inescapable, for the comparative method is the categorical imperative of science. We cannot with any surety pass judgement on any phenomenon of European culture while it appears to us as only one of a kind, with which there is nothing to compare, just as it is impossible to judge a language if one knows only one language – one's own. (1990: 176)

Tubianskii unfortunately remains little known among Bakhtin scholars, and in Russia he is chiefly known to specialists in Buddhology.[3] He was a student of perhaps the most important Russian Sanskritologist of the time Fedor Shcherbatskoi (generally transliterated in English texts as Theodor Stcherbatsky), and his work fitted into that of the school of Indology and Buddhology led by Shcherbatskoi and Sergei Ol'denburg (Ostrovskaia 2012; Ermakova 1998, 2011). Where German Indologists were almost exclusively focused on the ancient India of the pre-Vedic (before 1500 BCE) to classical Sanskrit (400–600 CE) periods, Russian orientalists also paid attention to materials in contemporary Indian languages and religious practices. Tubianskii had a good command of Bengali language and literature, and he was the first person who taught this at Leningrad University.

Tubianskii also worked with texts in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan as part of the Leningrad school, which criticised the 'philologism' of Western orientalism for sealing the study of dead written monuments off from the living traditions of which they were a part, and for disregarding the work of Indian scholars as unsystematic and in need of illumination through the application of Western scientific paradigms. Typical of this attitude was the French Buddhologist Louis de La Vallée Poussin, who claimed that '"incoherence" was one of the "chief features" of Indian thought and described traditional Buddhist scholasticism as the confused product of men who never clearly realised the principle of contradiction' (Chilton and Oldmeadow 2009:188). In a book of 1922 the German orientalist Helmuth Glasenapp argued that for the peoples of the East 'religion is everything', thus 'the ability simultaneously to hold as true different, even views contradicting one another in this form is the specific property of the Asiatic spirit' (Glasenapp 1922: 317). Reviewing this book Tubianskii argued that such claims are based on a superficial assumption that fails to consider Asian conceptions in the light of the comparative-historical method in philology and the results of the history of world philosophy. From Parmenides through to Hegel the same duality of truth as discussed by Indian thinkers has been a constant concern (Tubianskii 1962 [1925]: 302).

The Russians indologists took a very different approach. They presented *Mahāyāna* Buddhism in scientific terms, treating it as a system of pure logic and reason. This was particularly developed in the work of Shcherbatskoi, who drew upon the ideas of the Baden School neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936) and Russian academic neo-Kantian philosophers Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii (1856–1925, one of his teachers) and Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin (1870–1952, who

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[3]For a more sustained consideration see Brandist (2015b).

studied under Vvedenskii soon after Shcherbatskoi graduated) to find a priori criteria that corresponded to categories found in systematic Buddhist texts (Shcherbatskoi 1995 [1903–1909] Part 2, 167, 216).[4] The most developed argument along these lines was Shcherbatskoi's two-volume *magnum opus*, *Buddhist Logic* (Stcherbatsky 1930–32), which was published in English. While neo-Kantianism developed into a new type of abstract metaphysics according to which the object of knowledge is fully constructed by indwelling categories of thought, the application of assumed universals to the analysis of non-European cultures did not assume any hierarchical relation between cultures. The object of Buddhist philosophy now became a 'critique of experience' in the Kantian sense, according to which popular belief could be judged in relation to logical absolutes as defined in theoretical texts. While this inevitably entailed some elitism, the Buddhologists held that this philosophy needed to be understood as something that had emerged in polemics with opponents, especially Brahmin orthodox philosophers. The 'dialogic' structure of Indian philosophical discourse was something the school insisted upon, holding that it was impossible to examine one system without studying all the others since the propositions of each of the systems contained responses to the alternative views of its opponents, which were at once taken into account, assimilated and often even appropriated. Thus, as Ermakova puts it, the history of Buddhist thought should be understood as a 'non-systematic attempt to forge a critical perspective on the world and knowledge' (Ermakova 1998: 252–253). As Chilton and Oldmeadow argue, Shcherbatskoi thus 'aimed to demonstrate that Buddhist philosophy ought to be treated on a par with that of Europe and that Indian philosophers should be recognised as rightly belonging among the pantheon of the great thinkers of human history' (Chilton and Oldmeadow 2009: 190). He paid considerable attention to post-canonical Buddhism, and published important works on the logical systems and epistemology of important Sanskrit texts which, he held, should not be translated literally but, rather, could be adequately conveyed by means of a European philosophical apparatus.[5] Translations of Indian texts had a dual audience, specialist orientalists capable and responsible for judging the extent to which the translation devices used accurately convey the *thoughts* of Indian philosophers, and readers unfamiliar with any Eastern language but interested in the history of philosophy.

Shcherbatskoi held that in India, and in countries where Buddhism had spread, the theoretical conceptions were just as significant and robust as in the

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[4]Shcherbatskoi cited Lapshin's 1910 book *Problema chuzhogo 'ia' v noveishchei filosofii* (The problem of the alien 'I' in recent philosophy) as an important influence, while Lapshin subsequently showed the influence of Shcherbatskoi in 'Problema "chuzhogo ia" v indiiskoi filosofii' (The problem of the 'alien I' in Indian philosophy, 1947). Lapshin argued in the latter that the philosophy of the East 'supports in a brilliant way the fact of the unity of human reason' and that this unity appears because 'homogeneous or similar ideas, and even a complex of ideas arise in different civilizations completely independently of each other' (Lapshin in Berniukovich 2008: 241). For an extended discussion of the relationship between the two thinkers see Berniukovich (2008: 239–44).

[5]Lapshin pointed to the Buddhist-inspired ideas of Schopenhauer as an example of this in practice (Berniukovich 242). For a more general discussion see Shokhin (1998) and Lysenko (2009).

Mediterranean of ancient times and condemned the prejudice that exact thinking was a European preserve. For instance, he criticized the British orientalist Berriedale Keith for arguing that it is 'really impracticable to discover with any precision the doctrine which Buddha in fact expounded' for failing to distinguish between systematic and popular texts (1931: 393). He argued '[a]ll Buddhist literature is divided into a *sūtra* class and a *sāstra* class. The first is popular, the second is scientific. The first is propaganda, the second is precision' (Stcherbatsky 1932: 868). In his 1919 book *Buddhist Philosophy*, another of Shcherbatskoi's students, Otton Rozenberg, showed that these conceptions were the key to understanding the Buddhist dogmatics of the canonical Sutras where we can also find strict definitions of concepts and special Buddhist terms.[6] Tubianskii's somewhat more diverse work was a continuation of this school of Buddhology. As well as working on such canonical texts as the Tibetan and Chinese versions of Indian tract on the science of logic, the *Nyayapravesa* (Tubianskii 1926), and preparing epistemological models of the ideas therein, he translated and edited the poetry, prose and memoires of the Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore. This was all while he was attending meetings of the Bakhtin Circle, and although we do not have transcripts of the discussions of the meetings, we can see that Tubianskii presented arguments that were the object of some discussion within the group. In the notes of Lev Pumpianskii we can find Bakhtin defending certain Christian doctrines about miracles, which Tubianskii had clearly questioned in a lecture, probably carrying out the same procedures of distinguishing between systematic and popular texts that were the staple of Buddhist studies in Russia at the time (Pumpiansky 2001). Bakhtin was, by this time, trying to overcome the abstract logicism of neo-Kantian philosophy by viewing the categories of validity less as a neo-Platonic realm of validity and more as principles embedded in culture itself. The universal categories of thought had become distilled during the emergence of man from the conditions of primitive societies. However, there may be a fundamental divergence between Bakhtin's own perspective and that of Tubianskii in that while the latter championed the study of the pantheistic modes of thought in Buddhist texts, Bakhtin's work of the time is strongly supportive of what we might call a 'philosophical monotheism', in which the *idea* of an infinitely just judge external to the phenomenal world is fundamental in guiding ethical conduct.[7] The significance of this

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[6]For a consideration of the methodologies of Shcherbatskoi and Rozenberg see Lysenko (2007).

[7]Indeed this permeates all of Bakhtin's work in one way or another, from his early *Philosophy of the Act*, through the modalities of *Author and Hero*, considerations of Dostoevskii's novel of ordeal, and all the way through to the later reflections on the role of the 'superaddressee'. This concern is a repeated concern of Bakhtin's Jewish friend Matvei Kagan, and goes back at least as far as the philosophy of the Marburg neo-Kantians who influenced them both. It should be noted that Tubianskii (1924) himself writes of Vaishnavism in similar terms, as a 'comparatively complete monotheism', the main content of which is 'to understand the whole of life as service to god', leading to ethical slogans and a struggle against the caste system.

in employing Bakhtinian categories in analyses of cultures where such a conception is absent is a matter requiring further study.

In 1927 Tubianskii, along with Ol'denburg and Shcherbatskoi published the plan for the Institute of Buddhist Culture in Leningrad, which was to be formed the next year, but continued its pathbreaking work for only two years before it was closed down by the new Stalinist authorities (Ol'denburg, Shcherbatskoi and Tubianskii 1927). Tubianskii never participated in the institute itself, for in 1927 he went on a planned year-long research trip to Mongolia where he worked on connections between Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhism. He ended up staying there until 1936, *inter alia* compiling a Tibetan–Mongolian dictionary, an explanatory dictionary of Tibetan medicine and a historical analysis of the traditional culture of Mongols, Buriats, and Kalmyks. The extended stay in Mongolia saved Tubianskii from the round-up of intellectuals at the end of 1928, during which Bakhtin was arrested, but after returning to the USSR he was arrested in 1937 and shot, exemplifying the fate of a number of other orientalists.

Marrism

The challenge to the dominant trends in the study of Indian culture and religion was a part of a larger critique of European scholarship about the East in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s. One figure who has achieved notoriety in this regard is the Georgian archaeologist and philologist, Nikolai Marr (1865–1934), who was rising to prominence in the late 1920s.[8] After proving himself as one of the leading philologists in the languages and literatures of the Caucasus, and establishing the archaeology of the Caucasus as a rigorous discipline, Marr had become a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1912. By this time he was already challenging the methodology of Indo-European linguistics and claiming, to the dismay of his colleagues, that the languages of the Caucasus were related to Semitic languages. After the October 1917 Revolution Marr opportunistically sought to yolk the pre-Revolutionary critique of Western orientalism with a more radical critique of Indo-European philology. The result was an eclectic and contradictory formulation with some wild exaggeration, but there were nevertheless some important aspects of an ideology critique.

Marr argues that although Indo-Europeanism claims a demythologised understanding of language and culture it is in actuality ensnared in myth as a result of complicity with colonialism. By the mid-1920s Marr was arguing that Indo-Europeanism is 'flesh and bone the expression of bourgeois society, built on the oppression of the peoples of the East by the murderous colonial policies of

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[8]A balanced assessment of Marr's work has proven possible only in recent years, though Thomas provided a fair assessment of his linguistic ideas as early as the 1950s. There is now considerable discussion of the phenomenon in Russian, but for a recent assessment in English see Brandist (2015a).

European nations' (Marr 1934 [1924]: 1). Yet if we actually look at the continent of Europe we can see a number of anomalies that are fatal to the Indo-European case, for the presence of languages like Basque and Etruscan at the heart of Europe undermines Indo-European ideology. Drawing on the long-established Biblical terminology of what Thomas Trautmann (1997: 42) calls 'the Mosaic ethnography',[9] Marr argued these languages were actually *Japhetic* languages. The idea came from the contention that the descendants of Noah's youngest son, Japeth, were considered to be the ancestors of the various European peoples. The Japhetic family of languages incorporated the languages of the Caucasus like his own native Georgian and were allegedly related to Semitic languages because they derived from a common ancient Noetic family. The languages of these original inhabitants of Europe 'crossed' with that of the Indo-Europeans who arrived later as invaders. While the Indo-Europeans claimed a central historical role, it was actually the Japhetites that were responsible for the achievements of the ancient world. As Marr claimed:

> …it has already been established that it was the Japhetic family, the Japhetic literary milieu [*pis'mennaia sreda*] that created and developed the first foundations of modern civilization, that it was mixing with the Japhetites that passed on cultural nobility to the Indo-European race, that it was crossing with them that produced the Greeks and Romans, the early appearance of civil society [*grazhdanstvennost'*] on the world arena, which was historically known in later times to the Romance and Germanic peoples. (Marr 1933 [1923]: 177)

By 1923 he was arguing that there were no such thing as families of languages but only certain systems that have emerged as languages crossed. Languages were evolving not from unity to plurality but the other way around driven by the development of the productive forces of society. Most extreme and risible, however, was that all languages evolved from the four primordial phonemes *sal*, *ber*, *ion* and *rosh*, and in the 1930s and 40s Soviet linguists were trained to break down all words into combinations of these phonemes. It is, of course, easy, and often justified, to laugh at such ideas, yet Marr was regarded as a genius by large numbers of scholars in history and philology more generally, and his ideas were massively influential. Scholars at ILIaZV certainly took many of his ideas very seriously, and for good reasons. While many of his linguistic ideas were fanciful to say the least, things looked differently if attention shifted to the emergence of literature from myth, the development of literary plots and poetic metaphor and the like. Marr had begun his career working on precisely such material, and he established the archaeology of the Caucasus as a significant discipline. Moreover, Marr's ideology critique of Indo-Europeanism rang true in a number of key areas, and his work does include perhaps the most insightful analysis of the role of philology is providing the scholarly basis for Orientalist ideology before Said. Indeed, Vera Tolz has recently shown that there is a genetic path from early Soviet oriental scholarship to Said (Tolz 2006: 132–133).

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[9]See also Poliakov (1974), Trautmann (1987, 213–222), and Arvidsson (2006, 13–22).

The Impact on Bakhtin

What does this have to do with the Bakhtin Circle? We have already seen how Konrad and Tubianskii had brought oriental concerns into the Circle, and how Voloshinov and Medvedev worked on establishing a common sociological basis for the study of literature. But ILIaZV also pioneered an important new way of studying literature called semantic palaeontology, based in part on Marr's ideas, but also on Veselovskii and the ideas of the German neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer. The key figures at ILIaZV were Izrail' Frank-Kamenetskii and Ol'ga Freidenberg, who combined ideas from, *inter alia*, Marr, Cassirer and the philosopher and philologist (and close friend of Max Müller) Ludwig Noiré to argue that language and myth arise in primitive syncretism based on primitive forms of labour (see Brandist 2011; Tihanov 2012). According to these scholars, analyses of the history of the forms of art must be linked to the laws of the emergence of thinking, from original 'diffuse' modes of consciousness in which language cannot distinguish between part and whole. 'Fantastic' modes of consciousness like animism and anthropomorphism are evident at this stage because the primitive mind is in the hold of 'mythical consciousness'. The general 'symbiosis of perceptions' of the primitive mind result in semantic 'clusters' or 'nests' and these form the basis of mythical metaphors and plots. With the development of more complex forms of production and labour, the division between mental and manual labour and the rise of class society leads to the gradual 'rationalization' of mythical plots (punctuated by qualitative transformations). Mythical plots are first transformed into folklore and ultimately into poetic and literary forms. This transformation involves the reformulation of plot structures so that rational explanation comes to dominate.

This progression was viewed to be a universal phenomenon, and parallel plot structures and rationalisations can be seen in all cultures, even if they had no direct contact. This was first outlined on a large scale in the collective work (edited by Marr), *Tristan and Isolda. From the Heroine of Love of Feudal Europe to the Matriarchal Goddess of Afroeurasia* (Marr (ed.) 1932), which exists in a number of mediaeval European texts but the same plot is present in a wide range of cultures. The scholars traced the plot back to a common myth of the Afroeurasian goddess Ishtar. What can be seen in the various versions if a progression from a mythical plot in which the act of sexual union is a metaphor for the powers of nature to a feudal romance in which the powers of nature are a metaphor for sexual union. The presence of parallel structures developing (contra Aristotle) from identity to comparison to analogy is constitutive of the development of human culture and is the precondition of literature as such (Frank-Kamenetskii 1935a). Such literary analysis combines close attention to the morphology of plot and metaphor in correlation with the historical transformations of social life. In articles from the end of the 1930s Frank-Kamenetskii specifically analysed the development of Indian literature from this perspective in his articles on poetic metaphor, 'Separation as a Metaphor of Death in Myth and in Poetry (Analysis of the Folkloric Motifs in Two Episodes

of the Mahābhātata)' and 'Adam and Purusha: Microcosm and Macrocosm in Judaic and Indian Cosmogony' (Frank-Kamenetskii 1935b, 1938), in which parallels between the creation myths of the *Bible* and the *Rig-Veda* are clearly drawn.

These ideas lie behind some of Bakhtin's most significant work of the 1930s. First is the historical analysis of plot as a series of spatio-temporal coordinates: the 'chronotope'. The rise of the novel, and the morphology of its plot structures, is specifically correlated with the forms of thinking and spatio-temporal orientations at specific points in history. This is, furthermore, correlated with a general process of rationalisation, of liberation from mythical thinking, and the rise of critical culture. The novel is the literary genre where this emancipation of thought and language from myth takes place, while poetry remains in the grasp of mythical conceptions. The key notion that derives directly from here is the notion of carnival and its associated ideas of carnivalesque semantic clusters and the grotesque. The syncretic pageantry of carnival is a revisiting of the syncretic mass from which Veselovskii viewed all art and language and emerging and it is from this that the semantic clusters that form the basis of the grotesque image of the body, where parts and whole are not clearly defined, the whole body, both biological and social, is dismembered, where the human, animal and vegetable are combined, where death and rebirth intermingle and the body is opened up to the world through feasting, procreation and defecation and the like. This revisiting of primordial syncretism is simultaneously the reactivation of the cultural forms and memories of pre-class society from within the bosom of class society itself. Moreover, in Bakhtin's book on Rabelais draws strong parallels between the *Rig-Veda* and Germanic mythology, with a correlation of the spatial orientation of mythical cosmology of the body of Purusha sacrificially dismembered and the social topography of the body of the people dismembered into different social groups (Bakhtin 1984: 351).[10] In the myth the social relationships are a metaphor for cosmic forces, while in literature the cosmic forces are metaphors of social relationships.

The presence of cultural constants, metaphors and plot structures, in cultures that never had any direct contact were, like Shcherbatskoi's correlation between Buddhist and Kantian forms of reasoning, developed as an alternative to the cultural and sometimes racial exclusivity of Indo-European cultures. However, where for Shcherbatskoi these forms of logic were the precondition of all culture, for Bakhtin, as for Frank-Kamenetskii and Freidenberg, the forms of logic themselves had a precondition: the forms of intersubjective orientation within the world that at the earliest stages of social life gave rise to the same semantic clusters which form the bedrock of all literary plots and metaphors. These survivals are resources for the

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[10]Brian Poole in his valuable study of the relationship between Bakhtin and Cassirer (1998, 547–549) points out that this connection is present in Cassirer's second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Mythical Thought* (1955 [1925]), with which Bakhtin was clearly familiar. Be that as it may, it was further expanded in Frank-Kamenetskii's article, and the crucial link between Cassirer's philosophy and Marr's semantic palaeontology had been clearly established in Frank-Kamenetskii's (1929) article 'Pervobytnoe myshlenie', which was published in the ILIaZV journal *Iazyk i literatura*.

negation of ossified forms of official culture and dogmatism, for over time, and through a dialectical struggle between mythical and critical symbolic forms, the forms became rationalized and self-conscious, leading to a simultaneous democratization and self-critical reflection on culture.[11] Any distinctions between East and West are thereby rendered secondary to the universal unfolding of culture from the tyranny of myth to the apparent freedom of cultural forms that recognise themselves as their own object.

Thus, Bakhtin's work on the novel emerges from a specific intellectual environment in which attempts to overcome the ideological dichotomy between East and West played an important role. While centred on European culture and literature, the Bakhtinian approach was meant to overcome the ethnocentrism of contemporary European philology. The most systematic exposition of this position was to appear only much later, in the post-war essays of Nikolai Konrad. Here it is argued that the task before scholars is 'the elaboration of a general theory, embracing every aspect of the history and culture of mankind, a theory built upon the history of all peoples, regardless of whether they are Eastern or Western, and verified by the historical experience available to us' (Konrad 1967: 27). The extent to which what I have called a 'philosophical monotheism' ultimately undermines such an attempt in Bakhtin's own work is an open question, but further consideration clearly requires an engagement with the wider intellectual environment within which the approach emerged. This is a precondition for the productive employment of Bakhtinian ideas in contemporary analysis of culture.

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[11]Here we clearly see the connection between Cassirer's discussion of laughter as an instrument of liberation from dogmatism, as discussed in the final chapter of his *Platonic Renaissance in England* (1953[1927]), with the Marrist discussion of the potentially creative role of semantic survivals, as discussed by Frank-Kamenetskii (1929) in 'Pervobytnoe myshlenie'.

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Chapter 3
Carnival and Transgression in India: Towards a Global Spring?

[For Elizabeth and Kim]

Sunthar Visuvalingam

Transgressive Sacrality and Semiotics of 'Hinduism'

The meaning and role of carnival is best understood through the semiotics of transgression.[1] A religion is defined by its imposition of a specific system of observances and interdictions, binding on all its adherents and even more so on its spiritual elite. "Transgressive sacrality" within a religious tradition violates the interdictions and observances of the tradition in question, but does not seek to replace the latter. Instead it lays claim to a superior degree and second order of spirituality derived precisely from the violation of socio-religious interdictions, the general validity and binding force of which is not questioned by the transgressor. Indeed, such transgressive sacrality cannot operate without the existence of such

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[1]The "transgressive sacrality" (TS) paradigm was originally, and more fully, elaborated in my seminal 1985 conference paper (Visuvalingam 2014), in relation to laughter, the clown, Abhinavagupta's esotericism, the question of ethics, and interreligious dialogue, before posing the liberating prospect of a "global spring" modeled on carnival. The semiotics of transgression, its Vedic roots, and the centrality of the consecrated (*dīkṣita*) brahmanical sacrificer and his tantric prolongations to the Hindu symbolic universe, were expanded in 1989 (Visuvalingam, Dīkṣita). Having vowed never to return unless formally invited to India—that I had left by April 1989 after living city-bound in Benares for 17 years—it was a pleasant surprise to receive an email in mid-August 2011 from an unknown Indian professor of psychology, Lakshmi Bandlamudi based in New York, asking me to deliver the keynote address to the "Bakhtin in India" conference (Gandhinagar, 19–21 Aug. 2013), though I had not yet read this Russian theorist. Whereas my 1985 TS typescript had been widely plagiarized, esp. by American Indologists among whom it had been freely distributed, Lakshmi had gone through much trouble to acquire the paper and rethink Bakhtin in its light. Only subsequent to that keynote address am I being invited with all expenses paid to Abhinavagupta conferences in India. Unfathomable though the will of God, I remain grateful to his willing if unwitting instrument.

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binding and powerful taboos, and often presents itself as an esoteric form of the mother-religion, the latter serving as the exoteric prerequisite and recruiting ground for it. Unlike heterodoxy, which publicly questions and challenges the authority of the mother-religion, the adepts of transgressive sacrality often paradoxically play the role of champions of orthodox religion in the public life of their respective communities. Thus, the brahmanicide god Bhairava, guilty of the most heinous socio-religious crime in Hindu society and whose mythic model is imitated ritually by transgressive ascetics like the Kāpālikas, is simultaneously the policeman-magistrate of the socio-religious order and the guardian of the territorial limits of the sacred city of Vārāṇasī. Where such sacrality finds expression in well-defined initiatic currents, like Tantricism or the Pāśupata "sect" in India, there is a graded development from the neophyte, observing more rigorous interdictions and a more intense asceticism than that generally prescribed by the public religion, to the adept, who is required to flagrantly violate even the most fundamental taboos of his society. This type of sacrality finds its most spectacular expression in the phenomenon of "ritual clowning" in "primitive" religions, like that of the Pueblo Koyemshi, where the highest specialists of the sacred publicly violate fundamental taboos before the half-terrified, half-amused spectators of the tribe, whose entire religion would seem to be founded on the observance of these very taboos, which the clowns indeed help maintain by their ridiculous negative example.

Carnival: Self-subverting Order and Creative Chaos

The riotous carnival that regularly punctuated the ordered life of traditional societies, such as the spring festival of Holi and the Muslim celebration of Muharram in India, was characterized by the collective suspension of religious norms and prohibitions. The licentious eruption of the animal body and base instincts was epitomized by comic behavior and universal laughter that embraced all and spared none. The religious life of archaic and primitive societies was structured around the alternation between order and chaos, the latter erupting typically and paradigmatically at the end of the ritual year but also reflected in festivals throughout the seasons and finding perennial expression in myth. This observation has been true of India already from the Rigveda, seen as a collection of sacred hymns around the New Year festival centered on the raising and felling of the Indra pole. The disorder that would have been sanctioned during this critical period of renewal is expressed in the mytheme of the "demons" (*asura*) overrunning the cosmos for a few days before it is restored by the king of the gods, Indra. What distinguishes the Hindu worldview from the modern Western outlook is the insistence on the precarious, yet necessary, internal balance between order and disorder, on according a positive value to creative chaos (Malhotra).

The collective manifestation most representative of the Bakhtinian carnival is the spring festival of Holi during which socio-religious and intergenerational hierarchies are overturned, aggressive impulses playfully expressed, sexual taboos violated, and otherwise-repressed negative emotions freely discharged as shared collective laughter (Marriott). This celebration of Krishna's adulterous dalliance

with the cowherdesses seems to have assimilated, aestheticized, and unified diverse preexisting local and tribal saturnalia into the Hindu semiotic universe deriving from the Vedic sacrifice. The squirting of colored water and throwing of colored powders by each on all and sundry is closely associated with this cherished scenario of the Krishna cult. In the Mathura region, where these mythic dalliances are localized, Holi is celebrated for over a week, during which period the usually submissive and coy womenfolk gang up to beat with staves their cowering menfolk, who are reduced to fending off the raining blows with wooden shields. Intoxicating bhang is liberally consumed everywhere and by everyone, which serves to further loosen up inhibitions in the collective exhibition of emotional bonding.

Holi begins with evening bonfires of branches collected by the local kids that commemorate the burning of the demoness Holikā in the Puranic story. Infuriated by Prahlāda's unswerving devotion to Lord Vishnu, his father Hiraṇyakaśipu orders his sister Holikā to enter the fire with his son on her lap expecting that the boon of non-combustibility she enjoys would result in his incineration. Instead, her protective shawl slips off to shroud Prahlāda, who emerges unscathed whereas his aunt is reduced to ashes. Adults undergo a special massage with mustard oil and have its residue, polluted by bodily secretions, burnt in the bonfire to rejuvenate the body. In effect, the (demon-) king desirous of immortality undergoes a fatal regression back to the fiery womb to be reborn as (his virtuous) 'son' (Prahlāda). The perpetual cremation at the burning ghats of Vārāṇasī is conceived as a Vedic sacrifice where the consecrated corpse is ritually assimilated to the initiate (*dīkṣita*) undergoing an inner death. Holi is celebrated the next morning with exceptional fervor in this sacred city, center of brahmanical orthodoxy and hence of Hindu caste-hierarchy, for the entire male population smeared with the residual ash from the bonfire are rendered transgressively equal by their shared symbolic status as initiates. In his description of the antinomian Kaula 'sacrifice' typically performed on the cremation grounds, Abhinavagupta, through a characteristic play of words, assimilates the funerary pyre (*citi*) to (the supreme) Consciousness (*citi*). Later in the day, after washing up, everyone dons clean new clothes and greets their peers by affectionately smearing dry colored powder on their faces. Multitudes of men gather in town squares, for example at the Assi crossing in Varanasi, where amateur "poets" recite impromptu verses and stories that are for the most part exercises in extended ribaldry that break otherwise strict sexual taboos concerning family members, even mothers.

The excesses of Holi translate esoteric notions into a popular festival. Even the liberal and ubiquitous, almost obligatory, consumption of bhang that serves to lift inhibitions and open "the doors of perception" has spiritual underpinnings for hemp is sacred to Lord Śiva and available in government shops in Varanasi. Not only is marijuana smoked by nonconformist Śaiva ascetics, but even orthodox and highly learned brahmins may be seen regularly consuming the concoction to facilitate access to meditative states that transcend the cogitative mind.[2]

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[2]Though my Kashmir Shaiva guru in Vārāṇasī comes immediately to mind, such (not necessarily *bhang*-induced) aesthetic state (*banarasi-pan*) of gentle intoxication (*masti*) is said to embrace the

Among the Holi poets, some of whom aspire for wider, even national, renown as accomplished jokers, is a liberal sprinkling of Muslims. The contagiousness of Holi and its underlying semiotics of transgression were especially evident in the carnivalization of Muharram, the Shia commemoration of the martyrdom of Hasan and Husain at Karbala that was observed outside the Indian subcontinent through ceremonial mourning.[3] Before its gradual reform, the Muharram, in which the Hindus participated massively, used to be celebrated as a great carnival where social and religious norms were parodied amidst shared laughter even by the Sunnis. The 'pilgrim fool' and the 'pilgrim idiot' would parody the solemn ritual of the Hajj while the devil's chaplains, namely 'cursed priest' and 'irreligious priest', would go around proffering sermons on the virtues of drunkenness, gambling, adultery, and usury. In a typical Konkan village, Hindus and Sunnis would join each other in celebrating Muharram with alcohol supplied even by the women. This license was provided by the stock character of the Drunkard who would repeat verses from the Koran in praise of wine while several Muharram fakirs would sit around for days trying to refute him. The village idiot was dressed up as a long-tailed monkey (*laṅgūr*) to take the prime initiative in violating norms of sexual segregation and creating an atmosphere of general promiscuity. The Drunkard was even depicted wearing a brahmanical 'sacred' thread of leather. Mourned only by "heretical" Shias in Arab lands, Muharram was the pretext for violent conflict with Sunnis, a fundamental schism that now manifests as international warfare with wider geostrategic implications. Its carnivalization in precolonial India could translate instead into the inclusive participation of Hindus and even Sunnis. Where there were no Shias, ludic ritualization of the Karbala battle could be enacted by two ad hoc groups of Sunnis.

Even the absolute opposition between Hindu polytheism and Islamic iconoclasm could be mediated, partly and temporarily dissolved, through carnivalization. The syncretic cult of Ghāzī Miyan derives from the martyrdom (1033 CE) of the crusading nephew of the Afghan invader Mahmud of Ghazni, while attempting to extirpate the sun worship centered on the town of Bahraich. His cosmogonic marriage with pronounced phallic connotations, eventually celebrated by both Muslims and Hindus, culminated in the breaking of not only caste and sexual but also religious barriers amidst generalized promiscuity and drunken revelry as a festival of regeneration and fertility. Other syncretic myths Indianize the Muharram cycle of martyrdom by replacing Ghāzī Miyan with Hasan and Husain at Bahraich. The carnivalesque transgressions, no doubt derived from a preexisting, but now Islamized, Bhairava cult, concretize an eschatological dimension already inherent in the pre-Indian Muharram. For the Shia, Ashura is a day of darkness, disorder, and

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denizens of the sacred city of all creeds, stations, and walks of life (Visuvalingam, Abhinava's Aesthetics 45). This may be contrasted to the legal prohibition of marijuana, public nudity, etc., in the "land of the free" (America).

[3]The carnivalesque aspects of the Indian Muharram and Ghāzi Miyañ cult have been elaborated more fully (1994) in the context of transgressive sacrality in Islam and the Abrahamic tradition (Visuvalingam, Mecca and Banaras), which also provides relevant bibliographic sources.

evil in the universe. The return of the Mahdi, accompanied by resurrection of Husain and Jesus, will be heralded by outward manifestations of extreme promiscuity and transgressions of sacred norms, for the Mahdi will demolish whatever precedes him just as the Prophet demolished the structure of the (pre-Islamic) 'Time of Ignorance'.

At the core of Holi and constituting its essence, ritual inversion insinuates itself into other Hindu festivals in which collective piety and sociopolitical order would seem to be the central concern. The annual "chariot festival" (*ratha-yātrā*) of Jagannath at Puri is a nationwide pilgrimage to celebrate the "Lord of the Universe" and the regional renewal of the perennial *dharma* earlier embodied and enforced by the Hindu king. From the inaccessible sanctum sanctorum of their temple, the images of Krishna, his brother Balarama, and his sister Subhadra are taken in procession in their individual chariots to another temple. While returning seven days later they pause at yet another temple, where they are offered a kind of baked cake, which is generally consumed only by the poorest sections of the population. The most significant ritual (*chera pahara*) is performed on the first and last days, when the powerful kings of the Gajapati dynasty assumed the appearance and role of a lowly sweeper to cleanse the surroundings and path ahead of the chariots with a gold-handled broom. The exalted 'autocrat' is thereby transformed into not only the most menial servant but also an impure "untouchable" sweeper (*bhaṅgi*). This lowly status is not simply a periodic humbling of the royal deity, but intrinsic to the Jagannātha cult in this once predominantly tribal eastern region. The founding myth openly proclaims that the deity was originally worshipped by "savages" (Śabara, Saora) before being adopted by intruding "Aryan" settlers, whose prince married the local chieftain's daughter. This explains their "crude" unhewn wooden images so unlike the elaborately carved stone statues that conform to classical aesthetic norms in other nuclear temples. The Jagannātha triad is officiated not only by orthodox Brahmins, but also by priests of ambiguous ritual status and supposedly of tribal descent (*daita*). It is the latter who are primarily responsible for operating the Navakalevara, the unique death and rebirth undergone by these (wooden images of the) deities. During one Ratha Yātrā scenario, disgruntled devotees kick, slap, and verbally abuse the images with impunity. When such scenes of Jagannātha being treated worse than a commoner are juxtaposed with the ritual inversions of Holi and the manhandling of the royal brahmin clown of the classical theater, the much-maligned socio-ritual hierarchy of Hindu *dharma* reveals itself to be far more complex and self-subverting than generally understood.

Bisociative Laughter: Bridging the Esoteric and the Exoteric

The public display of undisguised transgressive sacrality lends the performance a comic aura and tends to transform the transgressor into a ritual clown. The normal reaction to such antinomian behavior generally takes the form of distressing

negative emotions like disgust, shame, indignation, fear, etc., precisely the kind of emotions that the adept himself seeks to overcome and surpass while violating taboos privately in closed esoteric circles. But when such public transgression is socially sanctioned, often through direct or indirect valorization of the person of the transgressor, the negative affect and reactions of the spectators are simultaneously neutralized by positive participatory affects, and the combined energies of the mutually opposing emotions are discharged in the form of pleasurable laughter. "Bisociation-theory" discovers the universal cause of laughter precisely in the mutual neutralization of two simultaneous, but sharply contrasted, opposing reactions (emotional, cognitive, motor, etc.,) to one and the same stimulus. And such is the exoteric perception of the ritual transgressor that obliges him to assume a comic character. The inherent ambiguity/ambivalence of our laughter at a forbidden theme leaves it wholly unclear whether the driving force behind the laughter is the result of one's participation in the transgression or of one's resistance to it or, rather, due to both. The intimate association of transgression and the comic reacts in turn upon the transgressor encouraging him to amplify and diversify his comic effects even independently of his primary function of transgression. The clown-transgressor through his comic behavior mediates—even while embodying the conflict—between the two opposing poles of archaic sacrality: the transgressive pole that he enacts both materially and symbolically permitting the exoteric public to participate in it, if only indirectly, partially and unconsciously, and the interdictory pole that contributes towards rendering these transgressions ridiculous and fit only to be shunned by the same public. However paradoxical and teeming with contradictions, a vital mode of communication between the two conflicting dimensions is in this way maintained. This is also the logic of generalized carnivalesque laughter.

When this clown-transgressor (*vidūṣaka*) steps out of his ritual context onto the secularized stage of the classical drama, governed by its own aesthetic and "ethical" norms, his performance has already evolved in two complementary directions. Firstly, the material transgressions have been underplayed, disguised, even largely eliminated, and displaced into symbolic substitutes in the form of various stereotyped comic traits pertaining to the Vidūṣaka's appearance, gestures, utterances and interventions. His deformity, gluttony, contrary speech, obscenity, crooked stick, etc., are all synonyms insofar as they all comically signify transgression through parallel codes like the visual, alimentary, linguistic, sexual and geometric. Secondly, the comic aspect, originally the fallout of his transgressive role, now acquires an independent status and undergoes secondary elaboration to serve the purposes of plot development, dramatic humor, characterization and so forth, while its social-censure function is more systematically exploited. Abhinavagupta cryptically observes that the Vidūṣaka manifests the "semblance of humor" which can only hint at the vital function of sacred transgression that his profane comicality vehicles and simultaneously disguises. For the ramification of the transgressive notations invested in the diverse figures of his background form a veritable symbolic system that would seem to embrace the entire socio-religious life of the community in a web of significations held together, at its secret center, by a transgressive conception and experience of the Sacred.

From Vedic Sacrificer to Great Brahmin Clown

A key initiator and symbolic focus of the Indian carnival was the mock-brahmin—often coupled with the long-tailed monkey or irreligious Muslim chaplain—who parodied and transgressed all the obligatory values invested in the sacred thread he continued to wear. This vernacular-speaking 'great brahmin' (*mahā-brāhmaṇa*) was, however, a permanent and central fixture of the classical theater, where he stood as jester beside and in dialectical opposition to the king as prime mover, and was subtly identified with this pivot of the socio-cosmic order. His name alternates between those of highest Vedic pedigree and of a fertile 'man of spring' (Vasantaka), with numerous associations to this aphrodisiac season of Nature's self-renewal. Brandishing a crooked phallic staff in often suggestive gestures, this obscene glutton was invariably depicted dancing in gay abandon with the teasing (palace) maids. Whereas laughter is frowned upon by the classical aesthetic (*rasa*) canon, this abusive (*vidūṣaka*) buffoon had to guffaw even during the most inappropriate turns of the narrative plot and his profanities were greeted in kind by the spectators. The literate, refined, and spiritual ethos of India's traditional elite remained continuous with, grounded in, and nourished by 'Rabelaisian' popular culture.

The Mahābrāhmaṇa's carnivalesque role found sanction both in the 'obsolete' Vedic corpus—with virile brown monkey, Śūdra reviler, thrashed Soma-seller, deformed scapegoat, brahmin student (*brahmacārin*), etc., as models—and in contemporary Tantric ideology. The stubborn conservation of the incongruous brahmin clown with such archaic traits and resonances within classical theater was because he represented the consecrated (*dīkṣita*) sacrificer.[4] When the royal couple witnesses Cārāyaṇa exultantly raising his staff as the maid grovels between his knees, playwright Rājaśekhara (nineth century) is thereby re-contextualizing the obligatory fellatio of the ancient Mahāvrata ritual within the orgiastic Kaula practices that dissolved all barriers of caste and class. Abhinavagupta, who recommends decorum in the presence of the king, is himself the supreme theoretician and apologist of such transgressive sacrality incarnated elsewhere by Rājaśekhara's tantric adept Bhairavānanda. The hidden ritual role of this 'secularized' clown becomes evident when juxtaposed to the 'anti-social' laughter (*aṭṭahāsa*) enjoined upon the naked Pāśupata ascetic and the ludicrous iconography of the pot-bellied mouse-riding elephant-headed sweetmeat-demanding Gaṇeśa, the most popular and endearing god of the Hindu pantheon. The humorous riddle of these three symbolic cousins is presided over by the most sacred yet 'unstructured' (*anirukta*)

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[4]The Sanskrit drama was in principle modeled on the Vedic sacrifice with the (royal) hero cast in the role of sacrificer and his 'evil' initiated state split off into his deformed alter ego (*vidūṣaka*), who assumes many transgressive notations also from contemporary tantric praxis. I have demonstrated this even for that otherwise most profane play that reflects popular culture and rogue characters, namely *The Little Clay Cart* (Visuvalingam, Mṛcchakaṭikā). Holi as the quintessential Hindu carnival is also (re-) inscribed via Holikā, etc., into the sacrifice.

sound-syllable AUM. The carnival is the temporal projection of a more fundamental, all-pervasive, and ever-present dialectic of order (*sát*) and chaos (*ásat*), interdiction and violation, that governs and regulates the entire life of archaic societies.[5]

Holi in Diaspora: Aesthetics, Commerce, 'Freedom'

The celebration of Holi in North America, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, and elsewhere among the Hindu diaspora has grown rapidly over the last several decades but at the price of aestheticization and more recently of commercialization. Holi as a collective mood was already generalized within the tradition beyond a specific season and ritual context through the romantic, if still adulterous, motif of the prankster Krishna dallying with the cowherdesses. Specific genres of song, music, poetry, theater, devotion, etc., that came to be associated with the festival took on a semi-independent life of their own both at the classical and folk levels. The transgressive sacrality underlying the carnival's raucous laughter was likewise disguised by exaggerating its comic possibilities and elaborating its purely symbolic notations within the Sanskrit theater. Drama's modern successor as an entertaining reflection of Indian life in cross-section is the unifying Bollywood screen, with its echoes across regional languages, which appeals alike to the Westernized urban middle classes and rural folk steeped in the vernaculars. The riotous spring element persists in India where the hoary festival still occupies the entire public and even private space during its allotted season. For all its transgressive underpinnings, the principal impulse behind the obligatory celebration of this riotous festival is as much the conservative attachment to tradition, one that however consecrates the prerogatives of chaos at its very heart.

Holi's prime locus and institutional sponsor for the North American diaspora has hence remained the Hindu temple and religio-cultural associations dedicated to the propagation of the Indian heritage.[6] While illegal marijuana is not consumed in any form and the focus is on (children having) fun rather than the excesses, the annual festival attracts participation from increasing numbers of families from the host white community intrigued by the colorful images posted on social media. Religio-cultural associations celebrate color-throwing with open public fairs

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[5]The original meaning of *bráhman* was sacred enigma constituted by semiotic links (*bandhu*) that anchored *sát* in *ásat*, which is why the 'nonsensical' joker is ridiculed as *brahma-bandhu* (also "would-be brahmin").

[6]Holi participation has been growing by leaps and bounds each year at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, such that devotees must be bused to multiple parking lots around the township of Lemont. Having chanced upon photos from previous years on Facebook and other social media, increasing numbers of white Americans bring their children to watch the programs and enjoy the fun. The festival is celebrated on other convenient dates by several other temples, especially those catering to North Indian immigrants.

offering food, shows, and general merriment in parks. This dynamic of nostalgia for home and tradition on the one hand, novelty and spontaneity on the other also governs the interaction between foreign and 'native' students in a growing number of American campuses that host Indians.[7] Ethnic associations of Gujaratis, Rajasthanis, etc., also celebrate their ties to their specific regions in rented halls but more as cultural entertainment with Holi-themed Bollywood hits spurring the audience to dance. Indian entrepreneurs, not just Hindus, have been cashing in on its 'secular' dimension and possibilities by hosting ticketed musical bashes at nightclubs. In the United Kingdom, entrepreneurs inspired by its open inclusive feeling of equality have capitalized on various aspects of the festival, especially the throwing of colors, through a commercial enterprise called "Holi One Productions" that stages such celebrations, minus the Hindu trappings, on a grand scale in cultural capitals across the globe. Wedded to other Western or world musical, artistic, dance and performative events to enhance social bonding across a multi-cultural society, this festive arsenal has become a lucrative (cross-) cultural enterprise that draws mixed appreciations from bemused Hindus. On the classical plane, the late Chicago-based filmmaker Prashant Bhargava and composer Vijay Iyer teamed up to produce "Radhe Radhe: Rites of Holi" that sets Igor Stravinsky's pagan "Rites of Spring" to footage from the week-long scenes of the Indian carnival from its epicenter at Mathura. Holi is insinuating itself into the aesthetic pulse and capturing the imagination of the globalizing "freedom-loving" West.

The singularity of such a joyous celebration of chaos, however mitigated in practice, has become the object of academic panels devoted to the evolution of the diaspora at major religious studies conferences.[8] A seminal paper describing and analyzing Holi as a philosophical enigma in observer-participant mode in its Hindi heartland was already written by the young Marriott (1966), who went on to become the key figure of the "Chicago School" that had attempted to make sense of Hinduism on its own terms. Debased into a witless clown for his over-inquisitiveness, the American anthropologist concludes by comparing and contrasting its present inversions, here and now, of the established caste-order to the postponed egalitarian promise of the Sermon on the Mount.[9] Muharram that

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[7]Holi was celebrated in 2014 for the third year running in collaboration with the Indian Students Association at the universities of North Carolina (March 18) and Nebraska (April 16); also Oregon at Eugene (June 3). I have been reporting on the celebration of Holi across the American Midwest, especially Chicago, including a feature story for a special issue on the 2014 festival (Visuvalingam, Holi).

[8]A panel was proposed by an American scholar of Hinduism on Holi in the diaspora for the annual American Academy of Religion meeting in San Diego in November 2014. Though solicited, Marriott and I could not participate from Chicago: the panel seems yet to be realized.

[9]"Boundless, unilateral love of every kind flooded over the usual compartmentalization and indifference among separated castes and families. Insubordinate libido inundated all established hierarchies of age, sex, caste, wealth, and power.

The social meaning of Krishna's doctrine in its rural North Indian recension is not unlike one conservative social implication of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon admonishes severely, but at the same time postpones the destruction of the secular social order until a distant future.

foreshadowed the return of the (martyred) Mahdi and Second Coming of Jesus was long celebrated by Indians on the Holi-paradigm of carnivalesque chaos to usher in a "Kingdom of Heaven on Earth." On this reckoning, the long-awaited 'Global Spring' would be 'Christian' yet fundamentally non-denominational.

Christianity is unique among the world religions in that it is founded on the universal abrogation of the (Mosaic) Law, whereas even "primitive" societies allow such suspension only during collective saturnalia, carefully circumscribed in space and time, and in secret rituals reserved for the initiated. Relations between Christians henceforth were, in principle, to be governed instead by shared ethical sensibility and inwardly-derived feelings of love. In practice, however, the Church hierarchy that was to spearhead this universal salvation had to fall back, upon assuming political power, on secularized Roman and common law to preserve the European social order. Moreover, its otherworldly orientation imposed an ascetic spirituality, befitting the celibate clergy, upon an illiterate earthy population barely weaned from its pagan and often licentious customs, such as the spring festivals. Despite its public transgressions and raucous laughter, the 'Christian' carnival—by reducing the de-individualized collectivity to its "lower bodily stratum"—served to further devalorize the ephemeral vanity of this world. Spiritual freedom was not only from externally imposed strictures upon the subjectivity but more so from the demands of the flesh, which were seen paradoxically as aligned with the Law.[10]

Krishna does not postpone the reckoning of the mighty until an ultimate Judgment Day but schedules it regularly as a masque at the full moon of every March. And the Holi of Krishna is no mere doctrine of love: rather it is the script for a drama that must be acted out by each devotee passionately, joyfully.

The dramatic balancing of Holi—the world destruction and world renewal, the world pollution followed by world purification—occurs not only on the abstract level of structural principles, but also in the person of each participant. Under the tutelage of Krishna, each person plays and for the moment may experience the role of his opposite: the servile wife acts the domineering husband, and vice versa; the ravisher acts the ravished; the menial acts the master; the enemy acts the friend; the strictured youths act the rulers of the republic. The observing anthropologist, inquiring and reflecting on the forces that move men in their orbit, finds himself pressed to act the witless bumpkin. Each actor playfully takes the role of others in relation to his own usual self. Each may thereby learn to play his own routine roles afresh, surely with renewed understanding, possibly with greater grace, perhaps with a reciprocating love" (Marriott 1966: 212). I first discovered 'transgressive sacrality' around 1980 through exposure to—then continuing collaboration in—my French wife Elizabeth's research on the brahmanicide Bhairava, Abhinavagupta's supreme divinity. Marriott's much earlier fieldwork on Holi that I discovered only at our first meeting in Chicago on my birthday in June 2009 confirmed my insights into the (Indian) carnival, for the secular American anthropologist had arrived at the same TS dialectic without coining the term. This essay is therefore appropriately dedicated to these two precious souls.

[10]All religious traditions, including those that insist on ethical responsibility, deny ultimate agency to the (would-be 'self-sufficient') 'human' being, by attributing it to (an external) God (Islam, Judaism) or by thoroughly deconstructing the very notion of a separate self (Buddhism). Even Christianity, which has made possible the modern 'individual', made the latter contingent on "dying and being reborn" (with the Savior) on the Cross. The problematic nature of the modern Western individual's belief in its own agency becomes quickly apparent even to secular anthropologists immersed in village India (Marriott, Dumont).

Cultural receptivity to carnivalesque transgression is anchored in the contemporary Western, Anglo-Saxon, and especially American value, notion, and aesthetic of "freedom."

Bakhtin in India: Towards a Global Spring?

All hail to thee, thou Lord of Light!
A welcome new to thee, today,
O sun! today thou sheddest LIBERTY!
Bethink thee how the world did wait,
And search for thee, through time and clime. […]
Move on, O Lord, on thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world.
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed!

Swami Vivekananda, "To the Fourth of July" (1898)

The Christian dispensation, now dethroned, had thus cleared the space for the secular European Enlightenment that could experiment with new civic arrangements that presupposed a ubiquitous modicum of that independence, liberty, and creativity that had earlier been the preserve of the sages. Cut off from and even explicitly rejecting transcendence, the increasingly materialist Western worldview, with its unswerving faith in the miracles of modern science, reduced collective existence to its economic dimension. As global masses were gradually "freed" from traditional restraints, the spreading expectation was that the nobler aspects of human nature would prevail as the world progressed towards a utopia of universal happiness. Nowhere has this futuristic credo found more appealing declaration than in the prophetic vision of the Founding Fathers of self-evident liberty shining forth as from a city on a hill. The sordid reality beneath (capitalist) "free enterprise" has, however, been the progressive unleashing of greed leading to increasingly devastating wars between colonial powers and intensified class competition for the goods of life.[11] Western 'humanism' has henceforth served to justify 'humanitarian' wars to redeem (implicitly) subhuman others recalcitrant to a 'civilizing' mission that

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[11]Psychosocially, the 'West' represents increasing release of the economic motive (*artha*) and now (hedonistic) consumerism (*kāma*) from traditional (religious) constraints (*dharma*). Along with all the benefits brought by the entrepreneurial (i.e., capitalist) spirit, this inversion of values, the 'liberation' of human greed, has resulted in aggravated conflict among (especially colonizer) nations and exploitation of the many by the few (even within the same nation). U.S. foreign policy, globally driven in recent decades by this overriding predatory impulse, is now coming back to devour its own dwindling middle class (Visuvalingam, Violence & Other 92–94).

ironically prolongs, even amplifies, the earlier waves of worldwide proselytism intent on burning bodies to save the trapped souls and be amply rewarded with God-given (neo-) colonial booty for all the good work. Despite all the bloody excesses of the totalitarian regimes that it subsequently engendered, revolutionary Marxism was as much propelled 'morally' by that belied collective utopia promised by the Enlightenment. Though the communist reaction encompassed large swathes of the non-Western world, such as China, it remained ideologically rooted in that same civilizational matrix. When Pax Sovietica eventually collapsed, Eastern Europeans including the Russian elite assumed that it was only communism that was bankrupt, not recognizing that it was homo oeconomicus who has begun imploding under the weight of his own contradictions.[12]

Bakhtin's primary contribution to our understanding of the carnivalesque is its revolutionary potential in liberating society and the subjective consciousness from authoritarian political institutions and sclerosed worldviews through the temporally circumscribed unleashing of the repressed instincts that break down barriers to free intercourse among humans as equals (Rabelais). Though the persecuted Russian's celebration of medieval carnival was a veiled and oblique critique of the Stalinist dispensation of his own times, the same dynamic between oppression and freedom is now applicable to other contemporary polities groaning collectively under stifling laws, strictures and social arrangements, whether sanctioned by religious orthodoxy or in the name of a deceptive secular ideology. Directed primarily against economic injustice and for greater political participation, the various "color revolutions" that have erupted in recent decades across public squares in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North Africa and Middle East originate within civil society, often assuming a festive atmosphere.[13] Whereas the traditional carnival kept violence under control by permitting its ludic or ritualized expression, these collective confrontations are susceptible to deadly and contagious (counter-) violence due to resistance and repression by the existing hierarchies. Often driven by incompatible ideologies and conflicting priorities, what keeps the protestors together, ensuring the minimum

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[12]Instead of radicalizing the Marxist critique of capitalism into a full-fledged 'Eurasian' critique of (the one-sided evolution of) 'Western' civilization, the Eastern European elites, now under the sway of 'communists' turned oligarchs, fell back into a "if we can't beat them, let's join them" syndrome. Vladimir Putin perhaps best exemplifies this dilemma of the Russian soul torn between the Europeanizing vocation of its elites and the resolute defense of Orthodox civilizational values and more generally of all forms of religious traditionalism. Forced by unilateral sanctions strategically towards China, Iran, and the East and economically towards self-sufficiency, 'Mother Russia' has yet to understand and renounce the 'Faustian' (Spengler) wager that is Western modernity and thereby discover her own true global vocation. For Bakhtin, the carnival was not so much a repudiation of an ossified, bureaucratized, and admittedly repressive communist dispensation as a restoration and revitalization of its original revolutionary fervor.

[13]The carnivalesque mood of such confrontational popular movements is captured by their nomenclature, after a color or flower: yellow (Philippines 1986), velvet (Czechoslovakia 1989), rose (Georgia 2003), orange (Ukraine 2004), purple (Iraq 2005), tulip (Kyrgyzstan 2005), cedar (Lebanon 2005), blue (Kuwait 2005), saffron (Myanmar 2007), grape (Moldova 2007), green (Iran 2009), jasmine (Tunisia 2010, China 2011), lotus (Egypt 2011). The revolutionary wave that recently swept across North Africa and the Middle East has been labeled the "Arab Spring."

cohesion to achieve limited and often short-lived practical ends and reversals, is this affective carnivalesque glue that binds the motley crowd across the isolating routines and class divisions of ordinary life.

Though these color revolutions may be viewed as tending to restore the precarious but natural balance between order imposed from above and disorder erupting from below, whatever grassroots spontaneity they manifest at inception is being swiftly coopted by external powers to further an alien agenda. "Creative chaos" has long since been adopted and refined by American empire as a geostrategic tool for overturning conservative regimes that dare resist its globalizing neoliberal project or that simply position themselves as independent centers of regional order. Remotely funded and controlled but locally implanted through non-governmental organizations and popular militias, promoted by the mainstream Western media as highly selective "democracy" promotion, the primary aim is resource extraction or, where this is no longer feasible, instigating unending strife, thereby denying the coveted prize to rival powers. It is only very recently, with the shrinking of economic opportunity for the masses and the curtailment of constitutional rights across the West, starting with the United States, that the underlying contradictions have become so blatant in the alternative global media.[14] So much so that there are orchestrated, but increasingly discredited and even ludicrous, attempts spreading from the Washington Beltway across the European Union to uncover and denounce a destabilizing Russian hand in the self-disintegration of Western polities and their underlying cultural cohesion. Fomented as confrontational street festivals, with sophisticated deployment of social media, and often punctuated by deadly violence, such "democracy-promotion" is invariably reserved for the rest of the world, whereas the 'capitalist' West itself—rather the "one percent" that constitutes its financial elite—has been imposing "austerity" measures with decreasing political accountability. In other words, instigating and coopting disorder elsewhere is now the privileged instrument for extending and consolidating hidden control emanating from distant centers of imperial power. But with the election of (clueless and increasingly turncoat yet 'impeachable') Donald Trump to the White House, largely unexpected even by his most ardent supporters, the technology of the 'color revolution' funded by the 'liberal' likes of 'philosopher-philanthropist' George Soros

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[14]In the Middle East, the American-led West in collusion with autocratic Gulf states has been funding, supplying, and coopting "Al-Qaeda" related Sunni sectarian militias to topple a precarious if authoritarian secular dispensation in multi-confessional Syria, only to be confronted by kindred but even more extreme elements that have proclaimed the cross-border Islamic State and its would-be universal Caliphate in dismembered Iraq. "Democracy promotion" in the Ukraine, following on the earlier but since failed Orange Revolution, depends on neo-Nazi paramilitaries allied with and led by corrupt oligarchs, who take marching orders straight from Washington in denouncing and brutally suppressing "Russian-instigated" self-determination by civilian populations in the east and southeast. The 'carnival' on the Kiev maidan (square) degenerated when paramilitary snipers fired on both sides to inflame the conflict. It is only resolute Russian resistance and intervention that has been exposing the true nature of these self-serving designs and their deceptive modus operandi, for which an apparently omnipotent and unfazed Putin is being demonized by the shrill mainstream corporate media that reeks of collective hysteria.

is being attempted on a politico-culturally self-divided 'homeland' tottering on the brink of civil war.[15]

For what America has perhaps inexorably descended into today is the 'freedom' of the predator that was already inscribed in its formative genocide of the native populations and enslavement of lesser humans by (earlier white) immigrants that is now being extended, often via proxy, to 'others' through diabolically more sophisticated, rationalized, and self-deceptive forms across the globe. Despite backlash from the conservative Christian Right, the suspension and reversal of traditional norms and hierarchies has progressed relentlessly with women's emancipation, same sex marriages, transgender rights, all in the context of multi-cultural identity politics that serves to distract domestic public attention from growing economic inequality that is among the highest in the world. Such "permissiveness" has even become the "civilizational" pretext for justifying subversive foreign interventions against other conservative societies and demonizing their leaders on "moral" grounds.[16] Despite mutual hatred, (Republican) Right and (Democratic) Left are mostly united in pursuing the "manifest destiny" of American exceptionalism when it comes to foreign policy towards even an otherwise westernizing Russia.

The world is largely defenseless against these onslaughts and their overall momentum mostly because elites everywhere have bought into thisseductive notion of "freedom" and still identify its promise with a globalizing Pax Americana.[17] Despite pious rhetoric and faltering moves towards a multilateral world that would be respectful of religious traditions and preserve distinct civilizational values, the other alternative orders remain mutually exclusive and risk becoming 'reactionary'

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[15]The troubling question of (ritualized) carnivalesque violence especially in relation to modern 'humanism' that was left unaddressed by Bakhtin (Rabelais) notwithstanding his attempt to rehabilitate the "lower bodily stratum" (sexuality and scatology), is tackled head-on from a sacrificial perspective in my essay on Hindu-Muslim conflict (Visuvalingam, Violence and Other). Theologian-in-disguise, Rabelais derives Gargantua's gigantism, however comic and endearing, to the Biblical blood spilled by Cain's murder of Abel (Chalier-Visuvalingam, in this volume).

[16]A telling example is the hullabaloo in the Western media over Putin's incarceration of the Pussy Riot women for wilfully profaning an Orthodox church and thereby Russian sentiments. At the same time, they are willfully complicit in covering up serial sexual predations over decades by Hollywood celebrities, who have contributed so generously to the coffers of the Democratic Party. Harvey Weinstein, who offered to fund President Bill Clinton's defense from such accusations by his women victims, is perhaps emblematic of 'macho' America's ongoing rape of mother earth.

[17]This also explains why there has been so little protest, much less (concerted) action, against the American global surveillance regime by victimized nations. Even as revelations were emerging in real time as to the BJP being specifically targeted by the National Security Agency, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was courting Facebook and vaunting his ratings as the second most popular figure on Twitter. The same Modi was previously persona non grata across the West—demonized in the way President Bashar Al-Asad of Syria is scapegoated now through false-flag chemical attacks on his own helpless people—for his alleged enabling role in the Godhra-related massacres, and had to look up towards China and Russia as levers for his state's economic development. Is freedom, which presupposes the privacy of thought, still conceivable without laying down an independent national backbone of core Internet servers?

for they are no longer able to tap as effectively into the creative impulses that had long animated them. If and when it eventually manifests, the 'Global Spring' will be the cumulative result of the international networking of people collaboratively focused on piecing together a new, internally diversified, world order by drawing upon hitherto hidden or unnoticed resources of their respective traditions. Because the carnivalesque has been so interwoven into the Hindu mainstream through the semiotics of transgression, its 'Bakhtinian' transformation into a 'political' project could bring the entire resources of the tradition into the global arsenal.

Swami Vivekananda, who stands at the fountainhead of Indian nationalism, interreligious dialogue and Hindu revivalism, burst upon the world's attention on Sep. 11, 1893 here in Chicago. He endorsed the prophetic vision of the Founding Fathers, but grounded its contingent and evolvingpolitical arrangements on the (nondual) spiritual realization of the identity of (supreme) Self and Other. That is why he deliberately chose—upon washing, Christlike, the feet of his immediate disciples—to shed his mortal coils on the Fourth of July that he had humbly celebrated with a makeshift Star-Spangled Banner in his Indian monastery, by composing an ode invoking Independence Day for all humanity. His definition of 'Hinduism' as a benevolent "tyranny of the sages" is just as applicable to the (outer forms of the) other religious traditions, which are all based on the unique realizations and revelations of the few precocious souls, who laid down the stringent law for us lesser mortals in conformity with the requirements of time, place, and other limiting factors.[18] The Swami was dazzled by the progress of science, the innovative spirit of enterprise, and the emancipation of women, during that narrow time-bound window of opportunity when restless Americans had begun stirring to what more might lie beyond their newfound prosperity and what the rest of the world had on offer. But the nondualism (advaita) he preached in return for their childlike inquisitiveness and unstinting generosity was not so much an exotic spiritual icing on the American Pie but the missing foundation that he felt hoary Indian wisdom could provide.

Barely a century later (post-1965), skilled hardworking Indian immigrants began arriving en masse, often with just a few dollars in their pockets, and have managed to prosper surprisingly well in the most varied professions, precisely because of abundant economic opportunities relatively free of stifling bureaucracy, rampant corruption, (reverse-) discrimination, and rich material rewards for individual talent. Over the last decade, their offspring are achieving high positions in education, arts, science, medicine, technology, business, and now government. Youngsters of

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[18]For discussions respectively of Swami Vivekananda, 'tyranny of the sages', and religious traditions as tentacular collective projects, see Visuvalingam (Violence & the Other 121 & n.44; 96-97 & n.23; 91 & n.10). This coincidence, date-wise, of the ochre-robed mendicant's global declaration of faith and the implosion of the World Trade Towers that has served to justify an unending, increasingly genocidal, and patently bogus 'War on Terror' has not escaped attention as evidenced by Indian artist Jitish Kallat's "Public Notice 3" exhibition (11 Sep. 2010 to 12 Sep. 2011) at Art Institute of Chicago (http://www.artic.edu/exhibition/jitish-kallat-public-notice-3).

Indian-origin are regularly topping the annual Spelling Bees, Depts. of English across the Anglosphere are being usurped, and the national link-language imposed by the British Crown has become the articulate and seductive weapon of choice for the once colonized. The previous U.S. ambassador at Delhi was an American-born Punjabi. Hindu, Jain, Sikh, etc., temples of diverse denominations have become centers of philanthropic outreach not only to their respective immediate communities but to the wider host society and to the nostalgia-laden motherland. Vivekananda's prophetic vision has since assumed a renewed life among the Hindu diaspora here, coming again to the fore in 2013 during his 150th anniversary celebrations. Visiting (BJP) Chief Ministers and dignitaries even make a beeline from O'Hare airport to his commemorative plaque at the Art Institute as if they were on an American pilgrimage. This spiritualizing recapitulation has been capped by his enthusiastic modern disciple Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the world's most populous democracy, who has succeeded in having the United Nations declare June 21 as the annual International Yoga Day. The choice of the summer solstice seems a deliberate echo of Vivekananda's fervent ode invoking the ascending Sun to shed its light of liberty impartially across the diverse peoples of the world. His universalizing all-inclusive ideal is drawing non-Indian American adherents, such as our first Hindu Congresswoman, the patriotic Tulsi Gabbard from Hawaii, who took her oath of office on the Bhagavad Gītā. The growing people-to-people synergy between the two nations has resulted in such exponential rise in mutual goodwill that the 'Hindu' nation, spurred on by its own (subordinate) 'superpower' ambitions has practically abandoned its longstanding role as founding leader of the Nonaligned Movement, willingly coopted into US geostrategic designs to the point of exacerbating Sino-Indian rivalries, alienating longstanding tried-and-tested ally Russia and its own Shia population by acquiescing to Washington's arm-twisting bullying tactics vis-à-vis an otherwise friendly Iran.

The pressing collective question now is what does India—much earlier and long revered as the (birthplace of the) 'Light of Asia' extending its politico-cultural radiance across Central and Southeast Asia—represent for the rest of the world today, beyond being an eager American clone? Where does contemporary 'Hinduism' stand in the increasingly acute conflict between the privileged 1% and the abandoned 99% not only globally but within her own restive borders? Is the once expansive, cosmopolitan and dialogic Sanskritic tradition still capable of digesting and responding to sociohistorical challenges from within and without, or has this 'language of the gods' become moribund, a cultural fetish to be wielded against inassimilable Others? These are questions that an 'American-Hindu' Bakhtin—presumably no longer subject to totalitarian censorship and state persecution in our 'lands of the free'—might be asking of us today!

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Chapter 4
The Rule of Freedom: Rabelais, Bakhtin, Abhinavagupta

Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam

> This essay is dedicated to Lakshmi Bandlamudi, whose invitation to present a plenary paper to our "Bakhtin in India" conference (Gandhinagar, 19–21 August 2013) has renewed my personal ties with India after a very long absence

Transgressive Laughter in Medieval Europe and India

The best vantage point for understanding transgressive laughter is the principle of 'freedom' (*svātantrya*), the central concern of Rabelais (1494–1563), Bakhtin (1895–1975), and Abhinavagupta (c. 950–1020).[1] The medieval Christian dispensation revolved around the opposition, alternation, and complementarity between the stern, ascetic, otherworldly spiritual ideal of the Church and the periodic extended license of the popular carnival that rejuvenated this world of piety by rendering it topsy-turvy. Through Rabelais—the erudite monk and priest who embodied the transition to the 'humanist' era—the unschooled obscene clamor of the primordial folk found unvarnished exaggerated expression in early Renaissance literature. No longer capable of appreciating, much less endorsing such celebration of the beast in Man, post-Enlightenment critics had sought to minimize the 'Rabelaisian' by reducing its thrust to negative anti-clerical satire or rebuked its capricious author wherever his excesses seemed too gratuitous. By rehabilitating carnivalesque laughter as intrinsic, fundamental and universal, Bakhtin provides precious keys for interpreting and generalizing its antinomian dimension sanctioned

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by both popular culture and elite esotericism in India (see Visuvalingam in this volume).

However, Rabelais' own spiritual ideal finds explicit, if somewhat enigmatic, formulation towards the conclusion of *Gargantua* (1534) in the 'utopian' Abbey of Theleme (chapters 52–57), the content and language of which breathes nothing of the carnivalesque and that Bakhtin simply dismisses as irrelevant or attempts to force-fit into his anti-clerical schema. The 'material lower body stratum' (defecation, fornication, gluttony, etc.) celebrated throughout the earlier *Pantagruel* (1532) was gradually excluded from *Gargantua*, if not repressed, and scatology becomes minimal by the Fourth Book. Such 'self-censorship' in deference to the 'humanizing' Renaissance ethos of moderation is paralleled by the self-distancing, even disdain, of his readers, the new elites, from the surviving oral mass culture. Even while cultivating a superior and exclusive literate world, their medieval counterparts had, on the contrary, fully participated in carnivalesque laughter (Berrong). Age-old festivals parodying and profaning ecclesiastical rites were not only held in the vicinity of, and with the sanction of, the Church, but were also officiated by the lower clergy. Condemnation of Rabelais by the faculties of theology was perhaps directed less at these 'happy fooleries' per se than at their 'normalization' through literary consecration.

Such complicity between literate elites—inheritors of Vedic orthodoxy now inspired by Tantric antinomianism—and the carnivalesque transgressions of popular festivals[2] is more comprehensible through Indian esotericism as embodied by the Great Brahmin. Mystic, theologian, philosopher, and literary theorist par excellence, the publicly 'conservative' Abhinavagupta worshipped the ultimate metaphysical principle as the terrifying Bhairava, all-devouring god of brahmanicide, for whom nothing was too disgusting. The explicit aim of such secret but systemic violations, though mirrored in the generalized excesses of the obligatory folk carnival, was not a social revolt against the existing brahmanical order but the liberation of consciousness from both external constraints and inner compulsions. The austere interdictory dimension (*saṅkoca*) of spiritual discipline was deemed but the prerequisite for such expansive (*vikāsa*) creativity that continued to publicly espouse established norms.[3] Whereas carnivalesque mirth is an earthy reflex triggered by collective suspension of normal inhibitions, the explosive 'anti-social' laughter necessarily cultivated by the lewd non-conformist brahmin (Pāśupata)

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[2]Whereas Demerson claims that Rabelais' work belongs to the folktale (Esthétique 125), Dumel rightly points out that Bakhtin assigns too great a role to "popular culture" understood wholly in opposition to the exclusive values of the elite, without delving deeply enough into what the term meant in and for his times (Images rabelaisiennes 48ff). The latter issue is dedicated to the "images and imaginaries of the body." The continuity and complicity between popular and elite is more evident in Indian (religious) culture, even and especially in the carnival, such as in the celebration of Holi and Muharram.

[3]In a popular hymn of praise (*stotra*), the explosive laughter (*aṭṭahāsa*) of this terrifying 'law-enforcer' (*kotwal* meaning 'policeman-magistrate') presiding over the Hindu sacred city of Vārāṇasī is said to dissolve the (categories of thought that prop up the) chain of finite being. This paradox reveals the hidden soteriological complicity between the system of ritual prohibitions and their willful transgression.

ascetic aimed to transcend the human condition. Unlike the 'partial' satire of theater or ordinary life that is targeted at privileged butts, for Abhinava, 'indiscriminate' laughter at the perceived 'incongruity' (*vikṛti*) of all things as grotesque is liberating, as is the Pāśupata's transgressive (sacred) laughter.[4] In his public philosophical and aesthetic writings, Abhinava is instead a champion of the existing 'moral' order and the proper pursuit of the recognized life aims.

Theleme, as its name suggests, is founded on liberty: "Do what thou wilt!" The utopian Abbey described at the close of *Gargantua* is shared by moderate educated men and women of 'aristocratic' nature who follow only their inner inclinations and sensibilities, rather than striving to conform to externally imposed socio-religious strictures, but nevertheless do not descend to the willful excesses so celebrated in *Pantagruel*. For Rabelais, such 'Christian' spontaneity now presupposes taming and redeeming the beast within through interiorizing the spirit rather than the letter of the Law. Whereas *Pantagruel* had conserved, reflected and even exaggerated the carnivalesque license of medieval popular culture—now seen as unrestrained vulgarity rather than 'freedom' (from below)—that was rapidly losing its appeal to the new elites, Theleme offers a 'resolution' of the previous tension between law and transgression, asceticism and hedonism, that is more in conformity with the emerging 'humanism' of the Renaissance.[5]

Rabelais Versus Bakhtin: Theleme as 'Christian' Prophecy

François Rabelais was a Franciscan, later a Benedictine, monk of the sixteenth century. Eventually he left the monastery to study medicine and moved to the French city of Lyon in 1532. There he wrote "Pantagruel and Gargantua," a connected series of books narrating the adventures of two giants—a father (Gargantua)

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[4]Bakhtin does recognize that originally "the serious and the comic aspects of the world and of the deity were equally sacred, equally 'official'" (Bakhtin, Rabelais 6) but insists that in medieval Europe, the "people" now had laughter as their exclusive property, developing their lives around it until it became the essence of their culture (Berrong 10). "The official feast asserted all that was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions… The tone of the official feast was monolithically serious and… the element of laughter was alien to it" (Bakhtin, Rabelais 9). Lévi-Strauss' study of the mythical cycle of 'repressed laughter' in native South America is forced to conclude that explosive laughter was not only permitted but valorized in unusual contexts precisely because its ubiquitous cultural suppression had rendered it "sacred."

[5]Berrong demonstrates how *Gargantua*, through its themes, structure, and progression, is not only modeled on *Pantagruel* but is a 'rewriting' of the earlier book that better conforms to the evolution of Rabelais' worldview and value-system as he is increasingly inducted into responsible functions among his elite patrons and admirers, both from the aristocracy and the clergy. This would make the divergences that much more significant to his contemporaries, whose attention is explicitly directed to the model (and hence counterpoint) by the learned author. Theleme would thus best epitomize this shift in perspective.

and his son (Pantagruel)—in an amusing, extravagant and satirical vein. *Pantagruel* (1532) was published before *Gargantua* (1534).

Gargantua is the giant son of Grandgousier, king of Utopia, and is father to Pantagruel. Gargantua's story begins with his extraordinary birth, after 11 months of gestation, from the left ear[6] of his mother Gargamelle, and his craving for wine as soon as he comes into this world. His first education provided through the methods typical of the Middle Ages having proved a disaster, the giant is taught instead by Ponocrates through the pedagogy of the humanist Renaissance. A conflict erupts when the aggressive and ambitious neighbor Picrochole begins to invade Grandgousier's territory. Brother John, furious to see the vineyards of his abbey trampled, joins Gargantua's forces and fights back with extraordinary energy. After the defeat of Picrochole, the generous Gargantua rewards his ally, the monk, with extensive land to build a new and atypical abbey, Theleme. The novel ends with "obscure words" (chapter 58) wishing for the end of persecutions and the advent of the true faith.

Rabelais, who refers extensively to ancient Greek and Roman texts, must be understood in the context of the humanist movement that developed in Europe in the late fifteenth century. Though exposed to and familiar with such 'secularizing' tendencies and with the challenge of the Protestant Reformation, the former monk remained an evangelist within the Catholic Church, while criticizing its excesses. Author of *Pantagruel, Gargantua*, *The Third Book*, *The Fourth Book* and *The Fifth Book*, Rabelais has been portrayed as the writer of excess and obscenity, who harbors elusive intentions (Poutignon). His "aesthetics of the grotesque" has been attributed esoteric meanings concealed within the richness and complexity of his linguistic registers.

Most critics today agree that Rabelais wrote from a Christian 'humanist' perspective. In *Gargantua* (ch. 52–57), he describes this Abbey of Theleme, built by the giant Gargantua. It is a classical utopia presented in order to critique and assess the state of the society of his day, as opposed to a modern utopian text that seeks to create the scenario literally in practice. It is an idealized community where people's desires are more fulfilled, in harmony with their inner selves and with each other. The inhabitants of the abbey were governed only by their own free will and pleasure, the only rule being "Do What Thou Wilt." For souls who are free, well-born and bred have an innate sense of "honor" that impels them intrinsically to virtuous actions. When constrained from without, their noble nature instead impels such men and women to shake off their servitude by abasing themselves, because their soul desires what it is denied.

This Abbey does not fit easily into the interpretative schemas derived from the preceding carnivalesque inspiration of *Pantagruel*, which is why Bakhtin tends to dismiss or belittle the significance of this concluding episode of *Gargantua*: "Theleme is not in line with Rabelais' imagery and style" (*Rabelais* 139). Bakhtin

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[6]For symbolism of left ear, see Gaignebet's chapter on the strange birth (A plus hault sens 63). In popular Hindu myth and ritual, going back to Vedic religion, the ear is a symbol of the womb and the (impure) left (hand, etc.) has transgressive connotations.

is obliged to concede that despite the continuing valorization of the body, Gargantua now is more concerned with its disciplined cultivation that would amount to deliberate negation of the 'freedom' of the medieval carnival. "Alongside this grotesque anatomical-physiological use of corporeality for 'embodying' the whole world, Rabelais—a humanist physician and pedagogue—was concerned with direct propaganda on behalf of the culture of the body and its harmonious development. Thus, Rabelais opposes to the original scholastic upbringing of Gargantua—one that ignored the body—the subsequent humanist upbringing under Ponocrates, where enormous attention is paid to anatomical and physiological studies, hygiene and various types of sports. To the medieval body—coarse, hawking, farting, yawning, spitting, hiccupping, noisily nose-blowing, endlessly chewing and drinking—there is contrasted the elegant, cultured body of the humanist, harmoniously developed through sports (Book 1, chs. 21, 23 and 24)." (Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination 177).

Scholarly focus on the mirthful inversion of established norms seems to have largely overlooked carnivalesque violence that is willful, indiscriminate and unpredictable. This might perhaps pose less of a problem for Bakhtin, for whom the creative chaos of the carnival is the (pre-)revolutionary antidote to the oppressive power-structures of medieval hierarchy.[7] But Rabelais seems to deliberately inscribe Theleme into a narrative logic that culminates in the yearning for peace and harmony that has been weaned from such pent-up aggressivity. Gargantua's lineage is ultimately derived from the Biblical crime perpetrated by Cain against his brother Abel, whose spilled blood sipped by mother earth produces strange fruit, the eating of which results in gigantism (Pech 27).[8] This would suggest that Gargantua exteriorizes the 'monstrosity' lurking beneath human nature that also finds circumscribed collective expression through the ludic violence of the carnival of which he would be the embodiment. Established immediately after the Picrochole war, in which even Brother John participates with gusto, the latter's reward, Theleme, is no doubt also offered as Rabelais' 'Christian' antidote to violence.

Elsewhere, Bakhtin suggests that Theleme represents rather an attempt to synthesize the tension between the two poles of the medieval ethos. "The Abbey of Theleme also devotes enormous attention to body culture. We will have reason to return to this harmonious, affirmative pole of Rabelais' worldview, to this harmonious world with its harmonious human being. […] in Rabelais there is a heroization of all the functions of the life of the body, of eating, drinking, defecating and sexual activity. The very hyperbolization of these acts contributes to their heroization; they lose their commonplace quality, their everyday and naturalistic coloration. […] Rabelais' 'naturalism'. The sexual series also has its positive

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[7]This is also why the Renaissance elite of the sixteenth century began distancing themselves from the common folk and their carnival that they viewed with increasing suspicion (Berrong 46, 53–54). We have shown how ritualized collective violence in the Indian subcontinent often assumed ludic proportions and carnivalesque aspects and how the popular carnival itself had a violent dimension (Violence and the Other).

[8]Baraz also links this connotation with the Dionysus myths (Rabelais et la joie de la liberté 26).

pole. The coarse debauchery of medieval man was but the reverse side of the ascetic ideal that had denigrated sexuality. Its harmonious integration is illustrated in Rabelais by the Abbey of Theleme" (*Dialogic Imagination* 192). Theleme thus dialectically reformulates, for the chosen few, the promise of freedom hidden within the alternation between the two extreme poles of the medieval carnival.

Gargantua: Carnival as Dionysian Excess

The Carnival of Fools is a medieval institution that, on the day of Mardi Gras, let the masses invert the rules and conventions of society. They elected a king, the king of fools, and even of priests, who was joyously manhandled and abused by the crowd. This truly cathartic inversion of the established hierarchy alleviated the burden of an external authority that was sometimes challenged. Rabelais' popular verve, his coarse jokes, the exaggerated consumption of food and drink, his satire of King Picrochole and of the theologians of the Sorbonne, strongly evokes this carnival of fools and its irreverent excess. For Bakhtin, this medieval carnival and its ambient popular culture is the foundation of the entire work of Rabelais. But Gaignebet goes further: "The important work of Bakhtin has recently shown how much Rabelais borrowed from popular and especially carnival culture. Can we through other ways establish that, more than carnivalesque disguise, Gargantua is the very personification of Carnival and, with scare quotes that we should attempt to remove one day, the 'divinity' of this period of the year" (84).

This would explain why the giant so craves the Dionysian liquor as soon as he is born. Rabelais' work overflows with "Dionysian excess" (Poutingon 13) under the sign of laughter. The Prologue to Gargantua underlines that the divine drink is essential and is part of the traditions of Bacchus or Dionysus.[9] It is quite possible that for Rabelais, wine has a liberating function, as much as the laughter of which he sings the constant praise.

The Prologue therefore underlines the very important place occupied by wine and, if we discount the opening dizaine, the first words of the novel are "very illustrious drinkers." The Prologue then is built on a reference to Plato's Symposium, the Sileni, to Silenus, master of "good Bacchus" and Socrates. Wine is as it were a universal principle in the novel. The pleasure of drinking and feasting is common to all the characters, even to the most unsympathetic such as Picrochole. When the narrator evokes the harmony among the Thelemites, the first example he cites is associated with wine: "If any one of them said 'drink' all drank" (Chapter 57). For Rabelais, it is clear that sensual pleasure is inseparable from that of words, the cumulation of the two contributes to the "joie de vivre" (joy of living) of the

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[9]On this point, see, « vin à une oreille » (Gaignebet 406) and "the expression 'drinking of eternity' (beuverye de éternité), appears as if by accident in the middle of an avalanche of 'musings on drunkenness' (propos des biens yvres), is it simply a joke, or does it represent the Rabelaisian version of contemplations of eternity?" (Baraz, Rabelais et l'utopie 9).

characters. The title of chapter 5 "About the well-drunk" (bienyvres) is significant: it is good to drink and also to talk about it. The spiritual life of Theleme occupies a sensual mean between medieval asceticism and debauchery.

"The Dionysian symbolism seems to me one of the most important keys to understand the work of Rabelais. Indeed, two leitmotifs that inform this work can be traced essentially to this symbolism: that of the unity of what is below and what is above and that of ambivalent drunkenness. Or it would be more accurate to say that these are two variants of the same motif" (Baraz, Sentiment de l'unité 20). This intoxication is that of knowledge, "an intoxication of universality that entirely possesses the man and pushes him to extend the limits of his self indefinitely to arrive at identification with the cosmos."[10]

Rabelais scholars have made much of the opposition between popular and high culture. This confrontation is also represented through Gargantua's education, where elite culture represented by Ponocrates allows the pupil to achieve the sort of 'freedom' that culminates in the founding of Theleme.

While the erudite Rabelais was certainly also steeped in 'popular' culture, this category did not make much sense in his time, because it was also everyone's culture. Gargantua, the giant of folklore, thus has a son Pantagruel, whose name comes from a little devil of the Mysteries who pours salt into the mouth of drunkards. He exploits the comicality of the monstrous body, by amplifying it, especially on the alimentary register (food, feces, etc.). By exaggerating the natural body, where the giant's body is a figure of Carnival, what is normally abased becomes the essential. Rabelais deepens this process of revalorization by eventually making the giant a figure of the new man, in whom soul and body no longer ignore each other. To the traditional pattern of the adventures of giants, Rabelais adds satirical motifs that direct laughter against representatives of medieval "barbarism"—pupils and teachers, lawyers and theologians. Here again, satire still uses the procedures of the carnival: the high is brought low, the upholders of the old order are debased, reduced to the status of obscene nobodies, whose bodies and language are also grotesque. This ambiguity is the basis of Rabelais' aesthetics that disrupts our logic by wanting to combine the two, forcing the reader to think about freedom.

For Bakhtin, "carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world—the new year, the new spring, the new kingdom. The old world that has been destroyed is offered together with the new world and is represented with it as the dying part of the dual body. This is why in carnivalesque images there is so much turn-about, so many opposite faces and intentionally upset proportions" (*Rabelais* 411).

Rabelais explains the need to know how to break the "bones" of his text to find a deeper meaning within. The moment when Gargantua and Friar John establish the rules of Theleme Abbey is a good example of encrypted writing. Because the religious of this world are ugly and bad, the Thelemites will be beautiful and good. This passage is based on the logic of contraries: good and evil, beauty and ugliness.

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[10]Baraz (Sentiment de l'unité 22), see also p. 8, on Silenus as master of Dionysos.

This opposition is an echo of Chapter 10, where such contraries are expounded according to Aristotle, especially "good and evil."

Rule of Freedom: 'Do What Thou Wilt'

Bakhtin spoke of Theleme as a "carnivalesque game of negation": "Side by side with the time-space form of negation we see a related form constructing the positive image by means of the negation of certain manifestations. This is a process similar to the opposite, inside-out logic but in more abstract form, without the clear time-space exchange. This form was widely utilized in grotesque realism. Its most common aspect is the simple act of replacing a negation by affirmation. This is the method used to a certain extent by Rabelais in his construction of the image of the Abbey of Theleme. Theleme is the opposite of a monastery; that which is forbidden in the monastery is permitted and even prescribed in Theleme" (*Rabelais* 409).

As Screech explains, "Theleme is a complex episode that has several levels of meaning […] Comprising six chapters, five in prose and one entirely in complicated verses that are obsolete and remarkable for the cleverness of their rhymes. This genre of verses nowadays called 'poetry of the great rhetoricians' was then already in the process of disappearing in favor of the more flexible and elegant verses of Marot. These 'rhetorician' verses form an inscription placed above the portal of the abbey. The poetry of the puzzle is much less complicated. The general atmosphere of the abbey is that of a platonizing Christianity" (249).

Theleme Abbey is located in *Gargantua* in chapters 52–57, which is the ending of this book, also marked by chapter 58, the last chapter, titled "Enigma in Prophecy." We are at the end of the Picrochole war. Gargantua rewards Brother John with the Abbey for his fight against Picrochole. But the giant remains its founder and Brother John only asks "that Gargantua found his religion as contrary to all others." From there on, the giant makes all the decisions. Gargantua alone is responsible for the essential decision to let the ladies and gentlemen of the Abbey live not by laws, statutes or rules but in harmony with both their "wants" and "free will."

The Abbey is thus composed of men and women; they may form couples when leaving the place. The whole beginning of the novel, before Gargantua is educated, is in the image of the eponymous hero himself. The son is worthy of his gigantic parents, characters from medieval popular farce. Mother Gargamelle corresponds perfectly to this type of character, concerned only with the lower part of the body. The construction of Theleme reverses this apparent contempt for women. Indeed, on the door of the abbey may be read an address of welcome to women. These men and women are of noble birth and have an excellent education; their mutual relations are governed by consideration, honor and responsibility.

Theleme in Greek means "will." Life here fits into this motto of "Do what thou wilt," highlighting a total freedom not confined to a specific period, unlimited in

time. This freedom is expressed in everyday life and is illustrated by a great harmony. Here no disorder reigns.

The lifestyle of the Thelemites is based on the total freedom of the deeds and actions of each of them; if one of them behaves to the contrary then the system would collapse. This is why Rabelais recalls the importance of education for this fragile system. Screech clarifies that "the word Theleme means 'will' but does not belong to classical Greek, because it belongs essentially to the New Testament. One of its many uses is well known, it is in the Our Father: 'May Thy will [thélema] be done.' This Abbey is the Abbey of 'will'; it is also a monastery in inverse for it is dedicated to the proper use of freedom […] In the abbey properly speaking, we are interested in the freedom of the Christian who has been released from the bondage of Mosaic law and from all these mutilating religious duties that the evangelicals felt were stripping them of their privilege granted by God: freedom" (250).

Bakhtin accords little importance to Theleme, which is indeed difficult to understand from within his perspective, for he reads into Rabelais a totalitarianism as it were of popular culture: "But Rabelais' work expressed basically the most radical interests, hopes and thoughts of the people, which had nothing to do with these relatively progressive movements of the aristocratic and bourgeois Renaissance. In accordance with European nineteenth-century Rabelaisiana, Veselovsky brings out first of all the Theleme episode which he offers as a key to Rabelais' philosophy and to his entire novel. In reality, Theleme is characteristic neither of Rabelais' philosophy nor of his system of images, nor of his style. Though this episode does present a popular utopian element, it is fundamentally linked with the aristocratic movements of the Renaissance. This is not a popular festive mood but a court and humanist utopia, which has rather the flavor of Princess Marguerite's circle than that of the market place. In this respect, Theleme is not in line with Rabelais's imagery and style" (*Rabelais* 138–139).

"Bakhtin has shown convincingly for the most part that the popular literature from which Rabelais drew inspiration challenged the rigidly hierarchical vision of the world corresponding to the interests of the dominant classes of that epoch. But this critique, though very talented no doubt, has not resisted the temptation of system. I will point out here only that, wanting to explain everything in Rabelais by popular culture, he was led to underestimate the importance of the episode of Theleme Abbey […] Bakhtin simplifies unduly when he argues there exist only two cultures: that of the people and that of the ruling classes" (Baraz, *Rabelais et l'utopie* 9).

Thus, Bakhtin writes that "the praise-abuse in Rabelais becomes rhetorical whenever he turns away from the popular marketplace forms and approaches official speech and official style. This was, in part, the case of the Theleme episode. True, we have here an element of opposites, of an interplay of negations and certain other popular-festive traits, but Theleme is essentially a humanist utopia reflecting the influence of literary (mostly Italian) sources." On the same page is further revealed his difficulty in understanding Theleme, "Let us look at yet another manifestation of praise-abuse in Rabelais' novel, the famous inscription on the gates of Theleme, in which some are expelled from the abbey while others are

invited. This inscription in verse can be considered as belonging to the genre of the *cri*, that is to say, of those 'cries' which opened the performances of mysteries and *soties* and were addressed to the representatives of various social groups and corporations, or to fools (in the *soties*). This is the loud cry of the market place. The inscription on the Theleme gates belong to this genre but, of course, not in its construction and versification" (*Rabelais* 431).

Bakhtin may be interrogating Theleme deeper than it appears when he noted the importance of food in Rabelais' work. "Banquet images play an important role in Rabelais' novel. There is scarcely a single page in his book where food and drink do not figure, if only as metaphors and epithets" (*Rabelais* 279). And further on Bakhtin mentions in a footnote, "Our attention is drawn to the fact that banquet is almost entirely absent from the Abbey of Theleme episode. All the abbey's rooms are enumerated in great detail and described, curiously enough no kitchen is mentioned; there would be no space for it available in this building" (280).

François Rigolot explains that "Theleme is inscribed within a contrast: after the chaos of the war, the sweetness of a noble and calm life. The 'Do what thou wilt' could explain the impossibility of codifying an institution that wants to do without code" (80–81), and that the truth of Theleme, "is that it can only be *thélema*, desire, inclination, project" (81).

But "Do what thou wilt" is inscribed within an enigma, as we learn from the end of chapter 57. It therefore also amounts to saying that in this abbey lies a fundamental ambiguity. In the closing chapter 58 of *Gargantua*, Rabelais offers two examples of decipherment, one by Brother John and the other by Gargantua, also illustrating the difficulty of interpretation, allowing the reader the freedom to understand the joy of freedom.[11] Demerson very correctly inscribes Rabelais' work within an aesthetic of the playful and the sacred (161).

Both interpretations have again stressed the carnivalesque dimension and also its negation. These interpretations are inscribed within the interplay of the sense above and the sense below. "Gargantua interprets the riddle as a call to resist persecution till the end, for the love of the Gospel; a call to be ready to suffer and, if necessary, to die for it. Brother John is not of this opinion, and in two short sentences he gives his own interpretation of the riddle; it concerns a portion of a psalm. The book ends with its sportive and extremely succinct explanation of the riddle and a desire for the 'grande chiere'" (Screech 261–262). "Rabelais' enigma has a double meaning: for Brother John, it is a masked description of a part of a psalm; for Gargantua, it is something much more tragic, a call, based on the authority of Scripture, to resist persecution till the end. One of the biggest surprises reserved for us by *Gargantua*, a book so complex, is that after so much cheerfulness, optimism and laughter, we find ourselves in the last chapter faced with the martyrdom suffered by Christians through the love of the Gospel" (Screech 260).

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[11]"The motto of the Thelemites, 'Do what thou wilst' (*Gargantua* 57) is evidently translated from Saint Augustin but it is only a part of the celebrated maxim, *Ama et quod vis fac*: it is up to the diligent reader to seek out the other part" (Demerson 54).

For Screech, what characterizes Theleme is "the overthrow of obedience… the power to live as one wants […] 'Do what thou wilt' is not a law that could apply to one and all. It could apply only to carefully selected participants. These young Thelemites are 'freed people', born for liberty; they are 'well-born' in both senses of the word: of noble birth and intellectually gifted […] Moreover, they are 'well schooled'" (253).

The Abbey of Theleme clearly adds another, hidden but very present, dimension to Rabelais. Florence Weinberg thus notes pertinently: "Yes Rabelais 'carnivalized' the world, but he also spiritualized it. Explicitly, sometimes as in Theleme, and in a constant manner, implicitly" (225). "What we see in Theleme are the conditions that would prevail according to Rabelais when God and man attain perfect harmony" (79), for "this unanimity results naturally from the free adherence of each to the divine will. In this way, the 'monks and nuns' in this utopian monastery are in perfect harmony because they are in harmony with God" (226). And, as Screech explains, "Theleme is an ideal to which Rabelais attached great importance; this is one of the rare episodes in the first books of which he keeps reminding the readers of his following books by making allusions to it" (266).

For Baraz, "those capable of contemplating (or, if you prefer, of 'drinking') eternity to an eminent degree are, according to a very old tradition cultivated during the Renaissance especially by the Neoplatonists, the true aristocracy (in the etymological sense of the word). It goes without saying that the Thelemites constitute a similar aristocracy. […] The aristocracy of the spirit cannot be opposed to the people, because its mission is to cultivate the experience from which arises the supreme joy that all men seek (that Ficino and Pico della Mirandola consider the *voluptas* par excellence)" (*Rabelais et l'utopie* 10). Baraz concludes that "Rabelais' utopian thought is therefore coherent: the intuition of the One, the idea of the philosopher-king that characterizes Theleme are certainly not aspects of a system, but a unique intellectual vision. Thereby Rabelais' nonconformity in matters of religion becomes also evident. To prove that his evangelism is bolder than that of very many of his contemporaries, I would point out first that Theleme has no church. It may be assumed that the spiritual life of the Thelemites is principally the contemplation of the eternal One, without images and no other anthropomorphic element. Rabelais considered public worship unnecessary for the spiritual elite. There are 9332 chapels in the Abbey, which means that each 'religious' resident had his or her own chapel" *(Rabelais et l'utopie* 13). Thus "unlike the giants… the Thelemites are sensually sensible to the beauty and infinite variety of the real world and they cultivate this sensibility… The Rabelaisian elite wants to reconcile the love of God with love of the world, the contemplation of the One with the attention to concrete diversity, piety with the life of the senses" (14).

Rabelais, Bakhtin, Abhinavagupta

Gargantua manifests a great freedom of language, expressed through polyphony and dialogism but also through several enigmas and a pervasive 'encryption' that is reminiscent of the 'twilight language' (*sandhyā-bhāṣā*) of Indian esotericism. This finally leads us to question Rabelais' underlying notion of the sacred and, more specifically, to the problematic of transgressive sacrality (Visuvalingam, Transgressive Sacrality): to question the meaning of our liberty and make us think through ethics and utopia differently. Would not an Indian reading of the Abbey of Theleme translate into the dialogism propounded by Bakhtin?

The carnivalesque dimension and its negation, Gargantua and Brother John, *Gargantua* and Theleme, is inscribed, it seems, within a "transgressive sacrality" rooted in the concept of freedom (*svātantrya*) which brings together Rabelais, Bakhtin and Abhinavagupta. Invoking the deity Bhairava, our work in Indian philosophy (Chalier-Visuvalingam) helps propose an alternative reading of Theleme. This Hindu Dionysus, god of transgression, represents the all-devouring "liberated consciousness" that Abhinava calls 'the unsurpassable' (*anuttara*). The two faces of Gargantua may also be associated with Dionysus and Apollo. It is the "plus hault sens" (Gaignebet) that reconciles and unites the spiritual and carnal esotericism of Rabelais. "The joyous follies" deemed hedonistic and shocking that are in quest of a "higher meaning" would correspond not only to two more general categories, coarse (*sthūla*) and subtle (*sūkṣma*), of Indian thought, but also to two aspects of liberated consciousness, exteriorization/expansion (*vikāsa*) and interiorization/retraction (*saṅkoca*) in 'Kashmir Shaivism' (Trika).

Gaignebet explains, through his cosmo-poetic imagery, the ultimate metaphysical principle that would be symbolized by the puzzling Abbey: "Theleme is thus both source and death of the world. A fountain of life-giving water marks its center, death's initials hem its extent. A rooster renews its orient of pearls. Similarly, the Temple of the Holy Bottle is both the fountain and privileged site for the evocation of lightning. 'There where the sky is pierced', in these two gates where men and gods circulate, fire and water generate and annul each other. These two poles of time plunge their roots and their extremities beyond the elements. When in the chaos, the elements are confounded, water burning and fire nourishing, artist, creator, the universe has reached its end assigned by Rabelais' Gallic mystical mythology: the Galaxy, cradle and tomb of the world, with ash and milk mixing, soul and governor of the universe" (473).

In Kashmir Saivism, the two dimensions or movements, *saṅkoca* and *vikāsa*, are complementary and constitute a polarity necessary for full self-realization. *Saṅkoca*, which is the retraction of consciousness from its bodily and hence worldly immersion, corresponds to the ascetic discipline undergone by the monk and translates more generally into the system of interdictions that governs the socio-religious life of a society. The expansion or universalization of the (contracted) consciousness to reinvigorate the (now-purified) senses and celebrate the world, even in all its apparent ugliness, constitutes *vikāsa*. The Rabelaisian paradox

of a still avowedly Christian monk 'carnivalizing' the medieval world through his transgressive fiction would make perfect sense for Abhinava-Bhairava, for whom *vikāsa* (as opposed to mere worldly hedonism and excess) presupposes *saṅkoca*, even where the latter remains carefully hidden. Contradictory and opposed in their outer aspect, the *saṅkoca-vikāsa* polarity is not an end in itself but the means to achieve true 'freedom' (*svātantrya*) beyond interdiction and transgression.

The 'gross' (*sthūla*) carnivalesque excesses that remain opaque to the uniniti-ated, to so many of Rabelais' learned Western critics to this day, lend themselves to illuminating sparks of "le plus hault sens" only when imbued with the 'subtle' (*sūkṣma*) vision of an interiorized consciousness that has penetrated its own heart. Is it not precisely this inverted existence, perceptible in the *negative*, in the *shadow of the body substituted for the highest abstract meanings* that lends Rabelais' images their uncanniness and aura of mystery? Rabelais precisely seems to suggest, on two different occasions, the idea that "descending" could, *in the exact same proportion*, allow one to "ascend."[12] The secret hedonistic practices of Indian tantricism, for which the mystic Abhinava is the supreme apologist, presuppose this constant alternation between an 'ascending' (*saṅkoca*) and a 'descending' (*vikāsa*) realiza-tion that find its formulation in a theology of 'Self-recognition' (Visuvalingam, Transgressive Sacrality).

As 'god of Carnival' (Gaignebet 84), Gargantua, 'monstrosity' born of the spilt blood of the 'sacrificed' Abel, seems, like the brahmanicide Bhairava, to be the allegory of transgression in all these aspects. After all those ridiculous exploits pertaining to gluttony, obscenity and incomprehensible speech, Gargantua, the Bacchus/Dionysus of French literature, alias Friar John, becomes Apollo upon his arrival at Theleme. A similar though mythical schema of 'reversal' is found in the criminal Bhairava being elevated, upon completing his transgressive trajectory, the magistrate-protector of Hinduism's holiest city (Varanasi) and the (secret) deity of (tantric) Brahmins, public custodians of the socio-religious law (see footnote 3 above).

Bakhtin emphasized the antinomian aspect of Gargantua by replacing him in the context of carnival, but within a Marxist reading conditioned by a 'historical materialism' that accords a great importance to the common masses and their emancipatory struggle understood in its narrower socio-political dimension. As such, he did not attempt to analyze more deeply the carnival as sign-post to the notion of transgressive sacrality.[13]

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[12]See Dumel (Images rabelaisiennes) for the relevant episodes and his philological analyses of the obscure old French that would be of greater interest to scholars specializing in Rabelais' text.

[13]The atheist Laura Makarius (Le sacré et la violation des interdits), in her even more radical approach of dialectical materialism, interprets the universal ethnography of carnival, clown, trickster and laughter in terms of a logic of interdiction and transgression (but reduced to the violation of the blood-taboo), that is just as applicable in its dynamic polarity to comparable figures and phenomena in traditional India that were beyond her ken. Very receptive to our own parallel work on Indian traditions, generalized using her findings, she demonstrates thereby that one need not subscribe to a spiritual or metaphysical perspective to discover and reconstitute transgressive sacrality as a universal principle.

Baraz emphasizes many elements in his excellent study that head in this direction (Rabelais et la joie de la liberté). In his chapter significantly titled, "The popular mentality and 'esoteric' intentions," Baraz concedes that "Bakhtin has written a remarkable book, taking for its starting point the idea that the popular mind is the essence of Rabelais' creation," but demurs in the same breath that, even if the work of Bakhtin on Rabelais is indispensable, it is nonetheless the case that "a book proving the contrary, namely that this writer is addressing a limited number of subtle intellectuals, would be no less convincing. We cannot do without the latter hypothesis, if we want to explain in his work the very many allusions that are difficult to understand even for a specialist, the profusion of Latin and Greek quotations, erudite references, etc." (104). "Theleme is a haven for those whose freedom, and perhaps even their life, are in danger because of the boldness of their thinking. Bakhtin simplifies unduly when he maintains that there are only two cultures: that of the people and that of the dominant classes (that which uses the language and style that Bakhtin deems 'official'). Apart from the class cultures that reflect certain aspects of our relative existence, there is a culture that expresses our nostalgia for the absolute and what Proust called contemplations of eternity" (250).

Baraz insists elsewhere too that "indeed, in Rabelais, the idea of an elite is consubstantial with an extraordinary deep rootedness in folk tradition just as, for example, his realism is consubstantial with the taste for the fantastic. That is why I cannot agree with Bakhtin, author of an otherwise remarkable book on Rabelais, when he wants to bracket aside the episode of Theleme abbey as incompatible with the popular spirit that animates the work of this writer. I must remind once again that the Theleme was founded by a commoner. And it is destined for a spiritual rather than a social elite" (Sentiment de l'unité 35). Baraz adds that "for centuries, it was taught that one reaches the One by freeing oneself from corporeal hindrances. Rabelais, on the contrary, suggests that we can rediscover unity at the level of the moving and changing concrete, of economic activity, of physiological life and notably at the level of sexuality" (32).

Baraz then raises the fundamental question: "Who is the public that Rabelais addresses? It is extremely unlikely to be that of the fairs, who obviously could not understand such subtleties; ultimately he is addressing potential Thelemites" (Rabelais et la joie de la liberté 106). Theleme reveals the meaning not only of *Gargantua* but no doubt also the trajectory of Rabelais' entire work, starting with the unredeemed *Pantagruel*. Bakhtin has not sufficiently highlighted that "the carnival spirit is above all a certain vision of the cosmos: as continual renewal, wherein each body exceeds its limits and tends to dissolve into the whole" (171). "On the contrary, the colossal size of Gargantua and Pantagruel is the visible sign of an inner gigantism: these characters embody the immense force of the new wisdom and dominate the dismal representatives of the Middle Ages who are in decline and are dwarfs in their interior" (52), which is not incompatible with gigantism resulting from the criminal blood spilt by Cain. "The Abbey of Theleme, text close to the sublime because it expounds an ideal in all its purity and also because it expresses religious ideas" (74).

Weinberg likewise observes that "to ignore Rabelais' spiritual dimension is to impoverish him to the extreme. […] In truth, he falls into an anachronism when he maintains that Rabelais was addressing the vulgar folk or that he glorified them. Rather Rabelais spoke to those who could read—educated elite—and, among them, only to those who felt a sympathy for humanism and the spirit of reform. Only such a group could understand the depths of his enormous erudition, his constant humanist allusions, to say nothing of his biblical references. […] If Rabelais had wanted to remain at the level of the proletariat, he would have been content to remain the Franciscan friar that he had been, barefoot, begging for tidbits of enticing cuisines and preaching at church sermons conceived in a coarse language accessible to the crowd. His life and destiny contradict the downward focus of the Bakhtinian gaze" (25).

Theleme: Carnival and the Aesthetics of Freedom

The title that Alcofribas (the pen-name that Rabelais assumes as narrator) accords himself in *Gargantua* is not that of "doctor" (physician), as in the following novels, but "abstractor of quintessence." However, the "quint essence" (or fifth essence) being the most concentrated, the most subtle, of a material heated in an alembic, we cannot go further in extracting, distilling or refining. It is this material of the highest concentration that Alcofribas has hidden within *Gargantua*. This metaphor of quintessence will be developed in the Prologue with the quest for the "highest sense" (*le plus haut sens*) to be undertaken by the reader. Rabelais goes back to the roots of the Gospel to extract a non-denominational 'Christianity' beyond his contested present and for our shared global future. 'Religious' life at Theleme, which has no church but only individualized chapels, largely amounts to 'secular' pursuits but in harmony with divine will.

Rabelais corresponds to the enigmatic figure of the "great Brahmin" Vidūṣaka, the clown in Indian ritual, classical theater and popular culture, in the sense that he invites the reader to a fundamental calling into question even while asking him to laugh at his own resulting discomfiture. The brahmin Vidūṣaka speaks in riddles both in Sanskrit during the ritual preliminaries and through the vernacular within the subsequent drama proper, thereby conserving and re-deploying the (Vedic) '*brahman*' that originally meant sacred 'enigma' that served to articulate order and disorder, interdiction and transgression, through concealed speech. Standing inseparably beside the king, the transgressive buffoon served as the privileged locus for exteriorizing the esoteric wisdom of the traditional playwrights, without exposing them to censure and public persecution for subverting the exoteric socio-religious order.

Through his constant play with words, the world and the law, Rabelais partakes in this fundamental Hindu theological concept, also shared by and expressed beneath the mask of popular wisdom, of cosmic 'sport' (*līlā*). He thus inscribes himself into a great creative freedom. "The Self, without really obscuring itself,

plays at really veiling itself; it is in this notion of real faking that the notion of play, even as it takes on its theatrical connotation, acquires its most fecund meaning: Shiva is the actor par excellence" (Ratié 562). Understood as direct (playful) expressions of the divine Will from a non-dualistic perspective, the spontaneous deeds of the "freed" soul may just as well be interpreted as being "in harmony with" (the design of an external) God from a dualistic perspective, whether Hindu or Christian: "Let thy will be done!"

More than the supreme exponent and practitioner of transgressive sacrality, Abhinavagupta was India's most comprehensive commentator on the principles and application of dramaturgy and the most authoritative exponent of its aesthetic thought and sensibility. Rabelais' French trajectory helps us better understand why and how earthly enjoyments and the theology of transcendence, whether Christian or Hindu, could converge within an aesthetics of 'freedom' that overflows the confines of theater and artistic fiction. The ultimate goal, through and beyond the outward oscillation of *saṅkoca* and *vikāsa*, is freedom (*svātantrya*)—at the 'heart' (*hṛdaya*) of Abhinava's aesthetics of Indian culture—not only from the inner tyranny of our animal nature but also from external constraints of law and convention. The 'great brahmin' spontaneously transgresses the very norms he embodies only because, like the supremely creative artist, he has thoroughly internalized them. This is the 'humanist' principle that Rabelais extracts from the medieval 'Christian' carnival for our own Renaissance: "do what thou wilt!"

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Chapter 5
Dancing in the *Sky of Consciousness:* Architectonics and Answerability in the Aesthetic Vision of *Malavika Sarukkai*

Lakshmi Bandlamudi

Drsyam Sariram – All objective phenomena outer or inner are like his own body. *Siva Sutras # 1:14*

Nartaka Atma – The Self is the Dancer. *Siva Sutras # 3:9*

Rango Antaratma – The Inner Self is the Stage. *Siva Sutras # 3:10*

Preksakani Indriyani – The Senses are the Spectators. *Siva Sutras # 3:11*

In dancing, my exterior, visible only to others and existing only for others, coalesces with my inner, self-feeling, organic activity. In dancing, everything inward in me strives to come to the outside, strives to coincide with my exterior. In dancing, I become "bodied" in being to the highest degree; I come to participate in the being of others. What dances in me is my *present-on-hand* being (that has been affirmed from outside)—my *sophianic* being dances in me, the *other* dances in me. The moment of being-swayed, of being-possessed by being is manifestly experienced in dancing. Whence the cultic significance of dancing in the "religions of being."

Mikhail Bakhtin. *Art & Answerability.* p. 137

In a moment, we actually want to suggest the Infinite. *Malavika Sarukkai*

How does the body—the outer body—with its clear-cut contours and limited dimensions manage to suggest the Infinite? What kind of activity must go on in the inner body—the limitless inner landscape—for the outer body to be emblematic of the Infinite Space and Great Time? Messages transmitted by the body's exteriority are in a fundamental sense unavailable to the perceptual field of the dancer. Unlike the musician who can hear his music and the painter who can see his artwork, the grimaces and gestures or in the vocabulary of classical Indian dance—*Abhinaya*— that the dancer produces can be fully witnessed only by the perceiver. How does the dancer exert command over what the exterior body communicates? Perhaps the secret is in her journey in the inner landscape.

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Dance is a complete art form: it engages the entire body and incorporates all other forms of performing arts, from music and drama to sculpture. Every part of the body communicates and metamorphosis must be achieved between all modes of communication. Melody, rhythm, stage ambience, and body movements must be presented as a consummated whole. If, as Malavika says, "in a moment you want to suggest the Infinite" then the individual mind—*Citta*—must commune with the *Cit* —the Universal Consciousness. How is this alignment achieved?

Artistic activity entails creating a close approximation of Reality/Truth set to imagination from received knowledge, be it scriptures, sculptures, music, or other forms of signification—and yet the created form neither merges with the signified, nor does it stand completely separated. Merger between art and reality would be a false assumption and realistically impossible and a total separation would be a failure of art. The disjunction calls for alignment and alignment calls for dialogic interrelationships and this process perhaps offers some plausible insight into aesthetics.

I want to seek insights from Indian philosophies on Cosmic Dance/Cosmic Dancer and performing arts to understand the inherent dialogic relations between entities in aesthetic activity and complement them with principles of dialogue, architectonics, and answerability in aesthetic activity as expounded by Mikhail Bakhtin before finally weaving them with reflections on artistic activity offered by the renowned practitioner of art, the Bharata Natyam dancer, Malavika Sarukkai.

Dance as Language: Structure and Freedom

When a myth or reality is reconstructed in an art form, it is characterized by adherence to the structure of language and, at the same time, play with the open-ended nature of language that gives the artist unfettered freedom to compose a new text—a daring breakthrough into a new sphere of artistic language—a new text in a new language. If we see art as a language, then it certainly is one of the modes of communication and it unarguably creates a bond between the artist, the art, and the audience, and all three of them are subjected to spatio-temporal laws and upheavals. In comparison to the artist and the audience, the art form, Bharata Natyam in particular, has a very long, almost immeasurable history and hence is incredibly capacious and has inexhaustible semantic mobility. Malavika Sarukkai states emphatically that she sees Bharata Natyam as a language, with its structure, grammar, and punctuation, and still affords the freedom to use the units of language to compose a novel text and create new possibilities for visioning aesthetics. When dance is viewed as language, it allows us to identify features that art holds in common with every other language and at the same time treats art as a special language that heightens our view of reality and adds depth and dimension to our emotional response. Furthermore, it shows how the artist deftly orchestrates the "truthfulness of a language" and the "truthfulness of a message," and these, according to Lotman (1977), are "fundamentally different concepts" (p. 15)—yet

the artist needs to be faithful to both. Malavika uses the general artistic language of Bharata Natyam, along with other extra-linguistic elements (lighting, sound, stage ambience, etc.), to communicate a particular message in that language.

The formal language of Bharata Natyam has *Mudras* (gestures) to depict, say, a tree or a bird and they constitute the "truthfulness of a language," but what Malavika works on is not on the physical tree or bird. She goes beyond the exterior to probe into the multidimensionality of these units of language; therefore she thinks conceptually—about 'birdness' and 'treeness' and thus, is not contained by the bird or a tree. She moves forward, as she said in my interview with her to "get to the essence of it… to the essence of that feeling…" and doing so allows her to add layers of meaning to her creation (Bandlamudi 2010).

One of Malavika's well-known productions is *Timmakka*—the story of a woman who could not conceive and who, to cope with her sorrow, plants hundreds of trees along the road in Karnataka, an event which, in Malavika's hands, takes on multiple dimensions. This is where the concept of "treeness" enables her to cast the *Mudra* for tree in myriad forms. She is faithful to both the "truthfulness of language" and the "truthfulness of message," and the message is not a simple description of tree planting activity, as Malavika explains:

> Yes… *Timmakka*… it is the essence of when she finds this sense of direction in her life… it is a sense of awakening… it is an awakening… she plants trees and seedlings… yes… the action of it… but when you see… think of that piece… it is celebrating awakening… it is celebrating affirmation… (Bandlamudi 2010)

Malavika's rendition shows how *Timmakka* is able to feel and recognize the fertility of Mother Earth's womb and is able to overlook the barrenness of her body. The Sanskrit Grammarian and Philologist Bhartrhari likens the structure of language—the truthfulness of language—to the "egg of a peahen" (*Vakyapadiya* I #51) and when the egg hatches in the act of languageing—constructing a message —it shows its variegated colors. Therefore, when Malavika creatively moves from tree to 'treeness,' she is able to demonstrate the versatility of the language of Bharata Natyam. The language is at once faithful to tradition and structure and yet open to expansion and transformation.

Language is an open-ended system; it moves from the literal and fixed meanings to something heteroglossic and an imaginative artist like Malavika is able to "find and grasp the unity of an anecdotal event of life" and go beyond a predetermined template to communicate "an anecdotal aspect to life" (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 134). Therefore, for Malavika, *Timmakka's* action itself is incidental, but it is the awakening *in* life and affirmation *of* life that constitute the truthfulness of message. Malavika gives incredible plasticity to the language of dance, so much so that her art form gives "width and depth to the visual realm and teach our eye to see" by providing "new devices" for our awareness and "conceptualization of reality" (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 134).

Language must never be a mechanical signifier to describe reality; instead, it must not only constitute reality, but also extend it to the imaginative horizon to consider innumerable possibilities. More importantly, language must be evocative.

Bakhtin (1986) discusses at great length about Goethe's "seeing eye" contributing immensely to his creativity and asserts that "Goethe was averse to words that were not backed by an actual *visible* experience" (p. 27). It is this *visibility* Bakhtin explains that kept Goethe far away from "primitive sensualism" and "narrow aestheticism" (p. 27). Malavika also insists on this visibility of language. In a film on the artistic life of Malavika, *The Unseen Sequence* (2013) made by Sumantra Ghosal, there is a segment where she is training a junior dancer, who was performing a dance item of *Nagendra Haraya…* a hymn on Lord Shiva. Malavika interrupts in a disapproving tone and instructs the junior dancer not to just describe, but to become the *Nagendra Haraya*—make visible the wide chest and strong neck of Lord Shiva that adorns a long serpent as a necklace. The body language must be such that the viewers are able to stretch their imagination and visualize an immeasurable body that comfortably wears a venomous serpent as an ornament around his neck. Malavika shows aversion to "ready-made" and "immobile" images; instead, in "each static multiformity"—the long serpent and the majestic neck that wears it and the garland of skulls that drop from Shiva's shoulders—all of them deserving of veneration, and in these collective images Malavika sees "multi-temporality" (Bakhtin 1986: 28). Temporality charges the stage and dance moves from an artistic activity to an aesthetic experience.

Why would Malavika be so acutely mindful of temporality and insist that the movements of the body be tuned into rhythms of time? Aesthetic experience is neither instantaneous nor magical; rather, it is a dynamic process and none other than the great Aesthetician and commentator on *Natya Sastra*, Abhinavagupta gives a succinct explanation. He says that it begins at the sensory level; but that does not mean that the senses are automatically aestheticized; rather, the sensory experience stimulates the mind and hence moves to the next imaginative level. The subjective imagination is yet to identify with the character portrayed and that occurs in the next emotive level. When emotion reaches its high pitch, it gets de-individualized and the aesthetic process moves to the next cathartic level. Abhinavagupta explains the cathartic level "as an experience of universalized emotion," because of the "harmonious unification of *Vibhava, Anubhava* and *Sahacaribhava*" with the pure emotion and such a state is the "heart and mind of the deindividualized aesthete" (Deshpande 2009: 84). Aesthetic experience, in its true sense begins only when we move to the transcendental level—where in the first phase the universalized phenomenon is realized by the universalized subject and in the final phase the mental activity goes deeper into the subconscious to experience *Ananda* (bliss). A simple description of *Nagendra Haraya…* by the junior dancer was unacceptable to the seasoned dancer like Malavika, because such a description generates only the basic emotion (*sthayin*), but fails to show the *"rasa-ness"* of the mundane emotions. Visuvalingam (2006) explains that the basic emotion is directed towards "particular objects as opposed to others;" whereas when universalized, the emotion "liberates" rather than enslaving us to the "object of attachment" (p. 29).

What, then, is the significance of liberating potential of emotion, particularly when we extract the "*rasa-ness*" of that emotion? How is it that the ordinary emotion is binding, while the heightened emotion can be liberating? When we

watch a description of *Nagendra Haraya…* we can only visualize Lord Shiva's form with all the costumes, *Tilak*, and unusual ornaments. But to feel and realize the essence of Cosmic Dance requires a challenging ascent of consciousness and the artist must prepare the groundwork for that possibility. The Cosmic Dancer himself has emphatically proclaimed—*Nartaka Atma*—"The Self is the Dancer" (Shiv Sutras 3:9), therefore witnessing a rendition of Lord Shiva's dance has a dual purpose—to feel the grandeur and splendor of the Cosmic Dance/Dancer and also to feel the unfettered state to witness the dance of your soul. Most spectators of a dance performance may be unable to make even few graceful movements with their bodies, but when they relish the "*rasa-ness*" of the *rasa* in the theater, the soul joins in the dance and the transcendental God is personalized and making this possible is the creative genius of Malavika Sarukkai.

In his long essay on Author/Hero relationship in aesthetic activity, Bakhtin (1990) argues that aesthetic consciousness is "a consciousness of a consciousness" (p. 89)—a meta-awareness of convergence of multiple consciousnesses—the artist/author (dancer), the hero (The Cosmic Dancer) and the spectators—and these multiple consciousnesses that are "in principle distinct from each other" and yet when they are aligned to enter into a dialogue in the aesthetic activity, a "*lived* unity" is achieved and the hero's consciousness (The Cosmic Dance) is "concretely localized and *embodied*" and eventually "lovingly *consummated*" (p. 89). When the all-pervasive Universal God becomes the personal God and when that realization occurs, it is *Ananda* (bliss) for Abhinavagupta and a moment of loving consummation for Bakhtin.

If aestheticized emotions have the liberating potential, artistic language also has the same liberating potential and the artist can use the units of language in a skillful manner to liberate meanings from their assigned meanings and momentarily allow them to take refuge in the opposite camp. In short, words can mean the opposite of their conventional meanings. In the film *The Unseen Sequence* (2013), we see Malavika experiment with this possibility as she boldly gives a novel interpretation of a well-known *Javali—Nee Matale Mayanu Ra*, composed by Pattabhiramiah. It is a song about a *Nayika* (heroine) complaining that the words of her lover are deceptive because he never delivered the promised gifts—*Rava Mukkara* (diamond nose ring) and *Rathnala Jhumikila Jatha* (a pair of diamond *Jhumkis*)—and hence proclaims that she will never believe his sweet words. If these lyrics were taken all too literally, one would present the *Nayika* as a disappointed woman sulking about broken promises. Malavika skillfully plays with *Sabdopacara* (worship of sounds) with shifts in tone, sequence, and choreography to add new dimensions and connotations to *Arthopacara* (worship of meanings) and presents a confident *Nayika* who has already acquired the promised jewelry by her own efforts and decks herself up and brings sharp sarcasm to her tone to tease and torment her lover.

The Sanskrit Grammarian, Bhartrhari states:

> The meanings of words are determined according to the sentence, situation, meaning, propriety, place and time and not according to mere external form.

> (*Vakyapadiya*, Chapter II, # 314)

Malavika deftly weaves the language of dance with verbal language to preface the actual lyrics with a different image of the *Nayika*. She shows the *Nayika* putting on the jewelry with a great deal of confidence in her ability and pride in her beauty. In doing so, Malavika demonstrates the open-ended nature of language—both verbal and dance—and asserts that the artist has enormous freedom to play with the language without disrupting the structure, the rules of grammar, and the codes of convention. And yet she succeeds in liberating the words from their assigned meanings and also empowers and liberates the *Nayika* from conventional gendered meanings ascribed by the society.

The Outer Body and Inner Landscape: Finite Entities Suggesting the Infinite

Words are finite entities and yet they are among the few signifiers we have to signify the Infinite. Words (for poetry, narrative etc.,) or stone (for sculpture) and human body (for dance) are all finite entities and yet we have no other way to constitute the infinite except with them or through them, and it is done with full knowledge of inadequacy of these signifiers. Even the limitations of the language to signify the infinite can be expressed only with language. How, then, do we reconcile with the disjunction between the signifier and the signified? Thankfully, language is an open-ended, unfinalized system and thus is capable of suggesting something beyond its capacity and leave the rest to human imagination. Similarly, body is a finite entity with its clear-cut contours, but the language of the body (dance) is open-ended. Any open-ended system is capable of inviting other parties or entities into the meaning-making sphere. Thus, the outer body that sees and the inner body that is seen enters into a dialogue. When one realizes that the human body is a microcosm of the universe, then particulars begin to co-experience with the universal.

The concept of co-experience is at the very core of aesthetics. About dancing in the *Chidambaram* shrine to mark her forty years as a performing artist, Malavika reflects, "… and it is a very deep dialogue actually one has when you dance in front of the Sanctum Sanctorum" (*The Unseen Sequence* 2013). The "deep dialogue" that Malavika refers to is what Bakhtin calls as co-experiencing between the actor and the character represented. Bakhtin (1990) is quite forceful in arguing that, "the actor is not creative when he has *"reincarnated"* himself, and now in imagination experiences the hero's life as his *own* life" (p. 76) because entering the hero's persona is only the initial step, because the artistic activity begins only after the actor has returned from his character's persona. In short, it would be a failure of art if the consciousnesses of the actor and character merged. Bakhtin's detailed discussion is illuminating:

> The actor is aesthetically creative only when he produces and shapes *from outside* the image of the hero into whom he will later "*reincarnate*" himself, that is, when he creates the

hero as a distinct whole and creates this whole not in isolation, but as a constituent in the whole of a drama. In other words, the actor is aesthetically creative only when he is an author—or to be exact: a co-author, a stage director, and an active spectator of the portrayed hero and of the whole play… (p. 76)

Malavika's expression that she wants to "suggest the Infinite" is incredibly telling. It is not a casual choice of a word, rather it expresses her aesthetic vision and the keyword is "suggest"—she doesn't say represent or depict the infinite— perhaps knowing fully well that it would be impossible, and to make such an assumption would be an assault on art. For art to thrive, she can only engage in deep dialogue. When we watch Malavika's grand production *Ganga: Nitya Vahini* (Ganga: The Eternal River), we see the majesty of the great river, Malavika—the person, the dancer and the thinker, and Malavika's relationship to Ganga in a deep dialogue. This dialogue develops over an extended period of time as Malavika (Bandlamudi 2010) described about the emergence of this production:

> … Going to Varanasi… which I have visited often and I have stood there at the Ghats… simply… I can't say just as a pilgrim… but go there, stand and look at Ganga… it sort of impacts you… I think as an artist… you know… you are sensing the place… you are letting a certain philosophy which you might have read… because art and philosophy are so interlinked… all these things happen rather not consciously… like OK I must make some links… no… you go there and stand… you look at people… you look at prayer… you look at the river… you look at Ganga, you sense history… Kala… you sense time in Varanasi. I came back after many many such trips… and then it became my choreography… when Ganga stood for *Mahakal*… that grew from my interaction with life…

How does *Mahakal* (The Great Time, the Infinite) connect with *Kala* (The real time or historical time) in Malavika's inner landscape? Bakhtin (1990) states that the artist produces "the other's outer body as a value"—the flow of Ganga—"by the virtue of assuming a determinate emotional-volitional attitude toward him, i.e., toward him as the *other*." (p. 60) Malavika's emotional-volitional attitude towards Ganga is evident in a segment—*Astham Gatho Ravihi* ("The Sun has set")—in her production and she sees Ganga as witness to multiple *Kalas*—temporalities—each with a different meaning. She begins the segment with a young woman eagerly looking forward to the hour of sunset because that would set the stage for her to reunite with her lover. It is a much-awaited moment to mark the exuberance and vitality of youthful life. *Astham Gatho Ravihi*—the sunset has a tragic meaning in every sense for an elderly woman weeping over the corpse of her young son. *Kala* —time has reached its terminal point and a mother wailing over her son's dead body is untimely—the death of a young man is untimely and the sequence (son dying before the mother) is also untimely. Whatever are the events in real time— *Kala*—the priests in Varanasi have been conducting the ritual of *Aarti* on the banks of Ganges when the sun sets. This ritual marks the homage to *Mahakal*—The Great Time—that bears witness to all life events, be it auspicious or inauspicious. Taking the expression *Astham Gatho Ravihi*, Malavika's outer body conveys her inner emotional-volitional attitude towards The Great Time and the historical time. Bakhtin (1990) puts it nicely, "an object of aesthetic activity (works of art,

phenomena of nature and of life) expresses a certain inner state, and aesthetic cognition of such an object is the act of co-experiencing that inner state" (p. 61).

How does the artist manage to give form to the Infinite with finite entities? Bakhtin (1990) tells us that, "*Form is a boundary* that has been wrought aesthetically…" (p. 90). The final consummated form that is achieved, according to him is the result of breaking free from multiple boundaries—"boundary of the body as well as a boundary of the soul and a boundary of the spirit (one's directedness to meaning)" (pp. 90–91). It almost entails taking a flight away from the body and seeing the body from the perspective of the other and then discovering what the body is capable of doing. Malavika explains the meeting point of multiple boundaries in the creative process as she reflected on giving form to her production on *Shakti:*

> When you say where does the mundane and the sublime… where do you find the inter-spacing of it… overlapping of it… I would say it is through these moments in art…I want to do *Shakti*…do the choreography… it is really… it pushed the boundaries for me… it is like I had to find a new language because it could not narrate a story of *Mahishasura Mardhini* in the language I knew and I had never attempted *Devi*… perhaps because I didn't have the language to attempt her epic of *Mahishasura*. I did it last year and it really pushed boundaries… pushed the way I look at my body… it pushed the way I used it… (Bandlamudi 2010)

In order to give form to *Shakti*, Malavika had to give equal emphasis to stillness and movement. The form of *Devi* cannot be presented in isolation for other Gods and demi-gods must surround her as they worship her. Malavika talks about this challenge:

> Do I have the technique? I don't know. But I wanted to give the masculine circle of the Gods. I wanted to give patriarch. I wanted to give stasis. I wanted to give rooting. I wanted to give almost immobility… that they are all fixed in their places. The other big question is *Mahishasura Mardhini*… so many arms… what do I do? I had no idea. I wanted to give just multiplicity. I wanted to give movement. I wanted to give energy. I wanted to give circularity. I wanted to give dynamism. (*The Unseen Sequence* 2013)

Malavika finally discovered the body language to suggest both stillness and movement in the rock sculptures in *Mamallapuram*, and they taught her ways of accenting the body to suggest that cosmic battle. Of course, the God she worships—Lord Shiva—is a master par excellence in integrating stillness and movement; he can twist and twirl in vigorous movement and is equally capable of sitting in absolute stillness in Yogic meditation.

When the artist is living within the confines of her body, Bakhtin (1990) explains, she is bound to see her "own boundaries as an impediment," but when the boundary is made porous to allow the entry of the other (in our present discussion, entry of *Devi*), then "aesthetically experienced boundary of the other" consummates the artist and at that intersecting point, form is achieved. Bakhtin (1990) explains the process, "The object-directedness of the hero living his life is fitted in and enclosed in its entirety within his body *qua* aesthetically valid boundary or in other words, it is *embodied*" (p. 91).

Giving form to a character or an idea is not a mechanical act packed with techniques; but the activity must go beyond to achieve consummation and that requires an enormous amount of *Sadhana*, contemplation, and experimentation. Malavika talks about her struggle to achieve an ideal characterization of *Hanuman*:

> I want to become a monkey. I want to become *Hanuman*. I want to leap. I want to grow.
> I want to be curious. I want to be wonderstruck. I want to do all that. I want to transform.
> I want to enter the character. (*The Unseen Sequence* 2013)

Now, leaping and growing and being curious and wonderstruck are only materials for constructing the profile. In her artistic kit, she has the techniques and gestures and grimaces to depict them. And yet she was struggling to get the character. Almost as an epiphany, she felt a tail growing from her behind and once she loosely wrapped the tail around her arms, everything fell in place and *Hanuman* was ready for presentation. Malavika was now confidently co-experiencing *Hanuman's* character as Bakhtin (1990) asserts, "And it is this meeting of *two* movements on the surface of a human being that consolidates or gives body to his axiological boundaries—produces the fire of aesthetic value (much as a fire is struck from a flint)" (p. 91).

Between the Artist, the Art and the Audience: Architectonics and Creativity

According to the *Saiva Agama* philosophy, Lord Shiva is characterized by two aspects—the transcendental and the immanent or creative and this creative energy of Shiva is Shakti—that he pours into his chosen creation, as Singh (2000) explains:

> Just as an artist cannot contain his delight within himself, but pours it out into a song or a poem, even so Parama Siva pours out the delightful wonder of His splendor into manifestation. (p. xxii)

This does not mean that the Cosmic Dancer positions himself as a puppeteer to orchestrate the movements of his puppets; instead, the Author sanctions agency and freedom and expects his creation to dance with him. About the ideal nature of relationship between the creator and the created, Nietzsche's Zarathustra asserts, "The creator seeks companions, not corpses or herds or believers. The creator seeks fellow creators, those who inscribe new values on new tables" (1961, Zarathustra's Prologue. No. 9).

The created is not a voiceless mechanical mouthpiece for the creator; instead, the created must be endowed with voice, freedom, and identity. Zarathustra's proclamation seems so apt, "I should believe only in a God who understood how to dance" (1961, Of Reading and Writing). The Cosmic Dancer not only dances, but also pours his art form into his chosen candidates and dances along with them. Occasionally, he might even yield to his creation, as is evident in the well-known tale about his precocious son *Skanda*, who stated confidently that he could offer a

better explanation of *Pranava* and Shiva humbly knelt before him to receive the lesson. The crux of aesthetics lies in the creator relinquishing his authority over his creation, so that the created may establish its unique identity. Bakhtin (1990) also insists that in aesthetic activity, the author must not possess the hero, nor can the hero possess the author; instead, both have to retain their uniqueness.

On March 6, 2012 Malavika marked a momentous occasion—40 years as a performing artist—with a dance item on Lord Shiva in front of the Sanctum Sanctorum of the famous *Chidambaram* shrine, and the film *The Unseen Sequence* begins with this performance. This event not only speaks volumes about the relationship between the Author (The Cosmic Dancer) and the Hero (Malavika), but also about the very essence of Malavika's ever-evolving consciousness as an artist and as an individual. I shall argue that this is not just a one-time event—Dancing in *Chidambaram*—but the very space—*Sky of Consciousness*—where her dance takes place.

What does it take for the artist's consciousness to evolve towards aesthetic vision? What kind of steady discipline—*Sadhana*—is needed to reach that state? How must she select from innumerable and disparate entities and group them to construct the art form? In weaving the entities together, does the artist achieve wholesomeness or consummation? Furthermore, does the artist relinquish the semantic authority over her creation? Probing into these questions is central to our understanding of aesthetics.

First, about the Author/Hero relationship: as an ardent devotee of Lord Nataraja, Malavika is bound to see her artistic talent as a gift—*Prasad*—from the Cosmic Dancer. Therefore, it would not be a fanciful stretch to say that the Cosmic Dancer poured aspects of his art form into her. This could very well be her psychological truth.

What is the nature of the relationship between the artist and the art in the nascent stage, when the head must create what the heart has conceived? At this point, we are dealing with a nebulous idea, and even after achieving some clarity the craftsman must search for suitable materials for the craft. The study of how the artist gathers multitude of materials and selects from them and establishes relationship between them, according to Bakhtin (1990) is 'architectonics'—a subfield of aesthetics. In this early stage, the activity is purely artistic—choosing the materials, perfecting the techniques, etc., as Malavika describes her early years of training:

> Initially, when I look at it, it looks very complex because you are thinking… how do I put in the ingredients… I know I have struggled with the art form initially… I know what it has been to get the *Abhyasa*… my *Shraddha*… and initially you just deal with the body… ten years you work your body… body… body… because you just want to get it right and all the coordination that your body has to go through… *Yatho Hasto… Thatho Dhristhi…* ten years later, my mind… what do I do with my mind and then slowly you start applying the mind to the body… you start applying the harmony of the mind… you are actually filtering out thoughts…filtering out a lot of things to harmonize with the body… (Bandlamudi 2010)

When Malavika confesses that in the early years, she "struggled with the art form," she is basically echoing what Bakhtin (1990) states as a feature of early architectonic stage, "The artist's struggle to achieve a determinate and stable image

of the hero is to a considerable extent a struggle with himself" (p. 6). In this early stage, we are dealing with only one consciousness—that of the author—because the art is yet to achieve its form and the hero is yet to be born. The author at this stage enjoys the benefit of "essential 'surplus' of *meaning*" (Bakhtin 1984: 73) and is therefore at liberty to experiment with "grimaces, random masks, wrong gestures and unexpected actions" (Bakhtin 1990: 6) in order to eventually arrive at a desired form of art and authentic countenance of the hero. But before arriving at the desired form, as Malavika says, there is a whole process of "filtering" that takes place so that the art form is neither over-crowded nor inadequate—just enough to fill it to the brim—and Bakhtin (1984) writes that Dostoevsky also engages in a similar filtering process and from the surplus he only retains "that indispensable minimum of pragmatic, purely *information-bearing* "surplus" necessary to carry forward the story" (p. 73).

Thus, in the early phase of 'architectonics' the author exerts considerable semantic authority over the created and hence the author's consciousness dominates. However, as the artistic activity progresses and the art is achieving its form and the hero is acquiring his image, the author's dominance diminishes, or rather as Bakhtin would insist, it must diminish in order to reach the aesthetic level. In Bakhtin's (1990) view, "If there is only one unitary and unique participant, there can be no *aesthetic* event." (p. 22) Aesthetics, according to Bakhtin requires "two no coinciding consciousnesses" (p. 22) —that of the author/artist and hero/art. It is precisely this aesthetic event that I sense when I see Malavika's dance in front of the Sanctum Sanctorum in the *Chidambaram* shrine.

When Malavika danced in front of the idol of Lord Nataraja, she is basically engaging in an act of *Samarpan*—rededicating the art form given to her by the original Author—The Cosmic Dancer. But the movement from the Author (Nataraja) to the hero (Malavika) and back to the Author is not a simple circuit; it entails complex transitions and transformations. True to His Nature—the Author of all things—gifts his art form and relinquishes authority and control to see what the recipients make of the gift. The Author needs to see the hero grow amidst the changing and complex world and establish his voice and identity. The recipient, Malavika, is not a passive inheritor of dance form; she also gradually through enormous amount of disciplined practice becomes a co-author and creator and it is with her signature affixed she dedicates her created work. But something more happens in the *Chidambaram* temple to make the event aesthetic. It is not just the Author (Lord Nataraja) who has relinquished his excess vision and authority to give voice to his creation, but Malavika also gives up her authority to let the Divine Dance display its splendor. About her inner feelings about the dance in *Chidambaram*, Malavika reflects:

> I felt I was in this sort of womb… it was like I was inside something and nothing mattered… that requires a little bit of giving up… letting go… letting go of your image… letting go of how you should be perceived… how your dance should be perceived… it is a constant sort of offering… (*The Unseen Sequence* 2013)

This "letting go" and "offering the self" has enormous significance in aesthetic activity. In the spiritual language, it is *Sattva Guna* and an act of humility and these qualities are at the very heart of aesthetics, because if the creator exerts control and semantic authority over his creation, the created become voiceless and insignificant. To keep the created alive, the author must let go of his control and allow the created to find its voice, identity, and freedom. Furthermore, when an artist demands how she and her art must be perceived by the other, it constitutes trespassing into the consciousness of the other and placing demands, thereby silencing the voice of the spectators. By letting go, Malavika allows the dance to grow and lets the dance grow on her audience and it is this living art that is capable of nourishing the souls of innumerable individuals. The author must enter into a dialogue with the hero, not as an object he has created but as a subject in his own right and see the world once in a while through the eyes of the hero.

During the process of creation, the author does enjoy the "surplus" of meanings and entities and also "excess of seeing"—he sees and is yet to be seen by his creation and the evaluating audience—but it is the surplus vision that serves as a fertile ground for a new form to emerge as Bakhtin (1990) writes, "The excess of my seeing is the bud in which slumbers form, and whence form unfolds like a blossom" (p. 24). The expanded vision is now able to make room for the birth of something new as Bakhtin (1990) explains:

> But in order that this bud should really unfold into the blossom of consummating form, the excess of my seeing must "fill in" the horizon of the other human being who is being contemplated, must render his horizon complete, without at the same time forfeiting his distinctiveness. (pp. 24–25)

When Malavika dances in *Chidambaram*—Sky of Consciousness—she lets go of her excess vision in the vast space to invite the Cosmic Dancer for a dance with the earthly dancer. Thus, the event becomes *a* dance *about* dance addressed to *The Dance* itself.

Chronotopicity, Addressivity, and Answerability

Time and space are fundamental categories of sense making and the manner in which spatial and temporal indicators are fused determines the depth and force of artistic expression. When spatial categories with weak temporalities dominate, the works are static in nature, whereas when space is charged with time dynamism sets in. Bhartrhari likens Time to the "wire-puller of world Machine" (*Vakyapadiya* III 9.4) or as "the current of a river" (*Vakyapadiya* III 9.41) that leaves some objects from its deep waters at the shore and absorbs some objects from the shore into its flowing waters, thus bringing about change. Bakhtin (1981) labels the time-space construct as *chronotope* and discusses in great detail the nature of artistic chronotopes in literary works that may very well be extended to other forms of art. At the outset, he declares that the "image of a man is always intrinsically

chronotopic" (p. 81) and that "every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of chronotope" (p. 258). What, then, is the uniqueness of a highly artistic chronotope? Bakhtin (1981) explains that it is the "density and concreteness of time-markers—the time of human life, of historical time—that occurs within well-delineated spatial areas" (p. 250) that makes the artistic event come to life. Here is Malavika's account of how space is energized:

> With dance you experience and feel everything in the moment. How does one make something move? How does one bring life into movement? How do you take a gesture, which is just a gesture of your hand, and make it alive, with meaning? You cannot just think it… you have to do something. Like putting breath into every moment. Movement is only external. But what defines it is the thought that moves it. Let us say I do a water movement. I then think of a very quiet flow, of images of water, of a journey, and then I try to sense that image through my whole being, to spread it from head to toe. It's mindfulness. All of this generates a different energy in space. That I ensure. It is not about taking the arm through space only. It is doing something to space. Every movement is an interaction through the silence of space. (*Indian Express*, April 3 2010)

For Malavika, space is not a static backdrop or a platform, but an active entity to interact with and like a sculptor who brings out forms from rocks, she carves forms in the space with her gestures. The energy is not contained within the contours of her body; it spreads into the wide space.

In Malavika's choreography we witness incredible representational significance of artistic chronotopes. First and foremost, time stretches in multiple directions making her narrative distinctly heterochronous, thus validating what has been said about ancient texts and art forms—they are as ancient as modern—and these multiple temporalities co-exist and engage in an ongoing dialogue. For instance, her production *Ganga: Nitya Vahini* (Ganga: The Eternal River) begins with her descent from heavens in response to *Raja Bhagirath*'s invitation and concludes with her merger into the ocean. As a long and eternal river that branches out, her mood and temperament changes and in Malavika's creation Ganga stands as an emblem of *Mahakal* (Great Time) that actively engages with and bears witness to events in historical time and this exchange, in Bakhtin's (1981) words is made "palpable and visible" and the artist's chronotopic weave "makes narrative events concrete" and "makes them take on flesh" causing "blood to flow in their veins" (p. 250). The stately and majestic *Bhagirathi*'s merger with playful *Alaknanda* in *Rudraprayag* is brought to life. The wonder of that storied geographical space—*Rudraprayag*—is aestheticized and the various dimensions of Ganga, as she flows through varying geographical spaces with their unique landscapes are brought to life. Thus, the artist captures the Great Time intersecting with particular historical time.

There is an item in this grand production that captures the *Mahakal*—The Great Time questioning *Kala*—the historical time and that is *Ganga's Vilaap*—Ganga's lament. The reckless and alarming pollution of Ganga is a social-historical fact and Malavika brilliantly and skillfully poses this important question through Ganga's lament. The eternal river is being polluted by the very beings whose souls are to be cleansed and purified by her and Malavika performs this piece within a well-delineated space in the corner of the stage, covering her face with a transparent

veil. She does this maintaining two seemingly contradictory truths—one that Ganga has been and is and will continue to be an emblem of purity—and the other, Ganga's *Deham*—body is being polluted by her irresponsible devotees. By doing so, Malavika affirms both the mythical truth and social reality—the Great Time questions historical time. In Malavika's artistic creation, Ganga does not engage in a loud diatribe against her subjects, scolding them for their irresponsible conduct, instead she pricks the conscience of her subjects with her lament.

When Malavika raises her concerns about social realities, she does so not in loud political proclamations, but rather in a muted and yet effective tone, be it on planting trees (*Timmakka*), or polluting rivers (*Ganga*), or bloody wars (*Gandhari's lament*). She aestheticizes the emotion and the message; in other words, she does not subordinate aesthetics to political statements. For that matter, her message never comes across as declarative statements; rather, they come as suggestive expressions. Visuvalingam (2006) explains that, according to Abhinavagupta, "direct expression of feelings is in bad poetic taste because it fails to evoke the corresponding emotion in the connoisseur" (p. 16). Therefore, "*Rasa* can only be "suggested" (*Vyangya*) through the presentation of determinants, consequents and concomitants that may themselves be merely suggested," and these are the hallmarks of good theatrical work. Malavika pulls various abstract elements of art—"philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect" and makes them "gravitate toward the chronotope," thus, "permitting the imaging power of art to do its work" (Bakhtin 1981: 250). Bakhtin/Madvedev (1978) assert that the "ideological environment is the environment of consciousness" (p. 14) and what they mean by ideology is not in our contemporary sense as political leanings. Instead, it is about social evaluations that are so intrinsic to consciousness and that is why "works of art, scientific works, religious symbols and rites" are "products of ideological creation" (p. 7). Therefore, when Malavika picks up a myth or a religious symbol, she is keen on connecting them to human consciousness and the most durable and effective ways of reaching consciousness is through aestheticized *Rasa*—emotions. Therefore, Malavika deftly weaves social evaluations in her works of art within the overarching framework of aesthetic vision.

No communication occurs without an addressee and hence addressivity is an integral part of every utterance. How the artist communicates with her addressees is a significant part of aesthetic vision. While ordinary artists are tuned into the mechanics of the stage and demands of the audience to keep the event entertaining, a talented artist like Malavika operates on a much higher plane. She expects her addressees to respond to her call to let art perform its function—that is, heighten sensibilities and sensitivities—thus making her performances more illuminating and elevating.

When the artist's goal is to educate and elevate, it poses unique challenges to the relationship between the artist and the audience, for the latter may not be receptive and Malavika is acutely aware of this problem and paradox:

> I don't want my audience out… I want to pull them into the vision I see… C'mon look at this… this is what I am seeing today… stems from a passionate vision of dance… that is the

core… and I am enthralled… I am humbled by it… then I get on that stage… I say… you guys may not have thought about all this… but I want to show you… I think what I have worked on for years is refine the technique… to actually communicate, because without the technique, you might have the most fabulous thoughts, great concepts… really outstanding… but if you don't have the technique to transform a concept into ideas…into dance language… into expressions… you might have great ideas and say how do I express it and there you come up against obstacles… my body will not express it…so you need a kind of fluidity… at every stage… OK at all these stages I will distill it, I will highlight it and expand upon it… and I think the basic… and I have worked like this in several of my productions, but some of them have gone way over the audience because they were just not ready for it… my mind is thinking ahead… my creative juices are flowing… (Bandlamudi 2010)

For Malavika, dance is more than a performance; it is an extraordinary experience and therefore one must enter her world—the limitless *Sky of Consciousness*—where the dance takes place to fully receive the wonder of her art form. It is not the abstract analytical categories that are needed; instead, it is the willingness to enter that exalted world and let art do its work. Malavika asserts, "Dancing can be complete in itself, without anyone around. I could dance alone in my studio and feel completely complete. If an audience is there, they bring in their own energy. So, it is indeed a different alchemy" (*Indian Express*, April 3 2010).

The most productive energy and significant addressee that Malavika pays close attention to is the *Superaddressee* in the pavilion of dance. Bakhtin (1986) insists that in any communication there is an addressee, who is the second party and the *superaddressee*, who is the third party, as he writes:

But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *superaddressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee). In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and his ideally true responsive understanding assume various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth). (p. 126)

For Malavika, the *superaddressee* could include *Lord Nataraja, Bharata Muni, Bharata Natyam and Natyam* and so on and the pertinent question is how does the *superaddressee* let its presence be known in her dance? Malavika conveyed this esoteric experience in my interview with her:

I finished with *Ya Devi Sarva Bhooteshu… Devi Mahatyam…* I finished the practice and I stopped… closing… and suddenly… not suddenly… we felt at that moment a silent descent on the floor… there was silence… my musicians who normally chatter and talk and all that… they finished and closed… quietly they took their seats and left and no one said much… I don't think they know… I sat next to my mother and said… Amma do you sense it… she said yeah… there was a presence of Silence… in that it was a very… it wasn't a dead silence… it was a living Silence and you felt there was another energy which was there in the dance room… it was so unique… then you think what happens to create that energy… then I think is it dance… alignment… harmony… invoking the divine… with everything the body… those moments create… you are almost at a higher level of existence… I mean I don't think we go there and create Silence… I think Silence is there and we activate it… we activate that divine energy which is in us… which is around us…which is in *Prakriti*… Cosmos… (Bandlamudi 2010)

The *Superaddressee* can be invited, addressed and invoked, but one cannot demand its presence and, as Malavika says, when the mind, body, space, time and music and rhythm achieve harmony and are properly aligned, the presence of the *Superaddressee* is felt. Bakhtin (1986) explains that the *superaddressee* need not necessarily be "any mystical or metaphysical being"—although, given our conventional ways of perceiving the world "he can be expressed as such"—but, more importantly, "he is a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance, who under deeper analysis, can be revealed in it" (pp. 126–127). When Malavika speaks about the activation of Silence, she is basically talking about how Silence reveals itself when the conditions are right—the Mantra *Ya Devi Sarva Bhooteshu*—the music, the rhythm, and the dance were well consummated and the surrounding space stretched itself into the timeless horizon. She wants to be seen, heard, and evaluated by *Shastra* and *Kala*, for they are the most exacting judges.

When an artist addresses the audience and the *Superaddressee*, she is basically engaging in an act of *answerability*—life's questions to art and art's impact on life. Bakhtin (1990) tell us that answerability is at the very foundation of aesthetics because it establishes the necessary relationship between art and life. The genesis of art is certainly life, but art and life are not the same. Bakhtin (1990) states, "Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself—in the unity of my answerability" (p. 2). Bakhtin objects to treating art as an escape—where the individual leaves the "fretful cares of everyday life" to enter the world of art for "inspiration, sweet sounds and prayers," nor can the relationship be a "mechanical connection" between art and life, because in both the cases art bears no responsibility toward life and life remains prosaic, untouched by the vitality of art. About the convergence of art and life in her life, Malavika communicates:

> It is an interpretation of my connection with the world… art has this… art is not something I just do in my studio… dance is not something which happens there exclusively… what I want my dance to convey is really responses to world… I think over the years I would say… what happens with art and life is… it sensitizes you… and refine your mind and it is just so much more vivid… so life experiences are just vivid and it sort of somewhere translates into work too… what I see in the newspaper… terrible disaster… it is not something you could just pass over… it is not information… I think that way as an artist… it sensitized me… it is not just aesthetics… it is about life, it is about living, it is about experiencing… (Bandlamudi 2010)

In Freud's unconscious-driven view, art is seen as a cover for infantile fantasies, aggression and desires—some of them forbidden—whereas, in the dialogic-driven theory art cannot assume an exalted position and disregard the humble prose of living, and life must not remain untouched by what has been learnt and experienced through art. But the meeting point between art and life through answerability transforms both art and life. Malavika acknowledges that the mundane and the difficulties of life can never match the exalted art, but art alone can make life worthwhile as she reflects on suffering:

> Those are disjuncts and fractures that create the anguish one feels. Because life is also very much about that other side. We create this side of beauty to offset that side of terror, and violence. You need a sense of beauty in your life to validate your life and feel that it is

worth living. When you see so much violence, as an artist you respond to it. You create an experience where one can reflect on it. The classical arts are all stylized but still if you create that intensity, the audience and you can reflect on it. Death, violence and terror are so much part of one's life. Creating beauty is not an escape, but a validation that it is also worth being here. (*Indian Express*, April 3 2010)

Human consciousness, as Tagore (2002) tells us, is basically "consciousness of unity in ourselves" (p. 33) and therefore life events and artistic engagement and creation converge within the individual and they cannot and must not exist as compartmentalized entities. Bakhtin (1990) acknowledges that perhaps it is "easier to create without answering for life, and easier to live without any consideration for art" (p. 2), but, without the unity of answerability it might be difficult as Malavika says to experience the wonder of a seed becoming a plant, the grandeur of forests in Brazil, or the sacredness of a simple leaf falling or significance of the meeting point between two rivers. Answerability infuses LIFE into life events, so much so that dance moves from performance to experience and life experiences are understood and composed to make living itself into art form.

Living on an Uneven Earth and Dancing in the Sky of Consciousness

At the very heart of Abhinavagupta's aesthetics (Visuvalingam 2006; Deshpande 2009) is *Prakasa*—light—that is, aesthetic vision sheds light on the murkiness of everyday life in order to understand and change and more importantly the motto is *Swatantrya*—freedom, internal freedom and liberation—a genuine feeling of dancing under the open sky even while functioning on an uneven earth. On numerous occasions, Malavika has emphatically stated that dance was her sanctuary that she could go to, to address, cope with, and find a healing remedy to her otherwise more than difficult life on the uneven earth. In an interview to The *Indian Express* April 3 (2010) she said, "I was going through an extremely difficult and disturbing personal time, psychologically. And I found in dance a great sanctuary where I could heal, a sanctuary that was keeping me embraced, like a womb of space, a sanctuary that no one could take away from me." What happens to dance when dance becomes a sanctuary for the dancer? Is it a designated sacred space—a corner *Puja room* where ones goes to conduct their daily rituals? I think it is way beyond a ritual—both for the dancer and the spectators—as the power of rhythm and movement and language awakens something, which is ordinarily inaccessible or dormant. On a personal note, I can say with confidence that Malavika's dance took me to regions in my inner landscape that I never thought existed. If one enters this sanctuary only with some dry categories of the mind, then one might experience a wondering admiration for the skill and beauty of movement and sound or feel the power with which the feeling or idea is expressed. For Malavika, however, dance must surpass ordinary levels of inspiration because the call she hears is lot deeper, more profound and from a much higher voice. Perhaps, Sri Aurobindo's

([1954](#)) reflections on the aesthetics of his *Magnum Opus*—Savitri—capture this "dance-sanctuary" phenomenon better:

> We can feel perhaps the Spirit of the universe lending its own depth to our mortal speech or listening from behind to some expression of itself, listening perhaps to its memories of
>
> Old, unhappy, far-off things
>
> And battles long ago
>
> …
>
> or remember its call to the soul of man,
>
> *Anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam*
>
> "Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and worship Me."
>
> (Letters on "Savitri" p. 938)

In this "dance-sanctuary" space Malavika hears intuitive inspiration and sees the illumination of higher thinking and feeling.

What was it about Malavika's actually lived life that pushed her towards the sanctuary? We find more than few hints in a brief autobiographical essay by her mother Kamakshi ([1999](#)), who documents her two failed marriages—the first one to the father of Malavika and her older sister Priya and the second to another gentleman from Kerala. The first marriage seems to be that of a philandering husband and an indifferent father, who caused a deep sense of betrayal and pain in her daughters' lives and the second marriage, despite a reasonably good start based on mutual dependency, eventually turned abusive. Her first husband, having joined the Merchant Navy, moved the family around and left the responsibility of raising their two daughters to Mrs. Saroja Kamakshi. Their peripatetic lifestyle, coupled with lack of structure in family life, created a tremendous sense of isolation and uncertainties. Furthermore, her divorce from her first husband (Malavika's father), and subsequently her failed second marriage, contributed to enormous financial difficulties. In spite of all these challenges, while raising her two daughters on her own in Mumbai, Mrs. Saroja Kamakshi managed to enroll Malavika in dance classes. Interestingly, amidst all the chaos, the enduring feature of their lives appear to be a strong bond between three women—Malavika, her older sister Priya and her mother Saroja Kamakshi—all of them equally talented in their own right. Mrs. Kamakshi turned towards spirituality and Yoga and that contributed immensely to Malavika's dance. Her sister Priya is a published poet and novelist and many of her translated poems became part and parcel of Malavika's repertoire. Even as they were coping with their shared and specific adversities in their lives, these women managed to feed each other's creative impulses. Given these real life challenges and pain, it is no wonder Malavika consistently rushed towards the dance-sanctuary. She needed this to keep her afloat.

The profile that emerges from this tale is an account of a proud and private Malavika to whom so much has been gifted and from whom so many normative

aspects of life have been withheld and she must be acutely mindful of this paradox, meaning that her life and her art converge continually in an act of answerability.

Her dance evinces convergence or rather continuity on a different plane—emblematic of the *Siva Sutras* (# 1:14)—*Drsyam Sariram*: "All objective phenomena outer or inner are like his own body." Therefore, she viscerally feels the phenomena she seeks to depict, from head to toe or perhaps even at a cellular level—be it the flow of a river or growth of a tree or flight of birds or *Devi's* epic battle with *Mahishasura*—allowing her senses to become spectators—*Preksakani Indriyani* (*Siva Sutras* # 3:11), and when the body becomes an instrument to suggest the Infinite, dancing takes place in *Chidambaram*—the limitless and open-ended *Sky of Consciousness.*

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Chapter 6
The Dialogicity of Travel: Nanak's *Udasis*

Jasbir Jain

The present chapter proposes to examine the dialogicity of travel which, in itself, is necessarily a two-way encounter between the worlds of exteriority and interiority, an encounter which allows for a multiplicity of reactions, emotions, ideas and reflections. Semi-removed from the normal existence of daily life, it is a condition neither of exile, nor of an ascetic withdrawal. Further, the chapter sets itself the task of asking whether all dialogicity has a shared ground or whether the nature of travel offers more freedom, both of self and space. Are there any distinctive features which mark dialogicity to differentiate it from ordinary debate, or is the dialogic form applicable to any debate which generates fresh thought?

The term finds its roots in our philosophical pasts as well as in our democratic present. The totalitarian mindset does not allow any space for a dialogue to take place as totalitarian states throughout history have demonstrated clearly. Totalitarianism is a consolidation of power and seeks to maintain distance, hegemony, and control. Unequal relationships, similarly, do not permit any genuine questionings. Edward Said's work *Orientalism* (1978) is a study of the cultural dialogues that failed to become dialogic, primarily because the imperial power had fixed opinions, preconceived normative judgments, and definitions of civilization, which allowed no space for genuine exchange. It is equally evident, however, that cultural dialogues are not necessarily always dialogic. When we go back to Plato's *Socratic Dialogues,* it appears that the multiplicity of voices and viewpoints make them truly dialogic. At heart under the garb of simultaneity, however, they are philosophical debates turning the arguments around for a comprehensive view to emerge. To go beyond the mere polarization of the self, the mind should engage with the dialogic imagination and get into the nooks and corners of opinion. Similarly, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909) is, to all appearances, dialogic in nature with the Editor and the Reader examining the truth of the argument. But one wonders whether it can truly be termed dialogic. Perhaps not, because the Reader is a self-projection and expresses likely opposition, contrary positions, or self-doubt.

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It expresses a political position and the internal debate fails to fulfil the requirements of the dialogic.

Contrasted with this is the Bakhtinian use of the word 'dialogic'. He expands it to include language, multiplicity, and experience. In his essay "Discourse in the Novel," he observes that the dialogic frees language from an enclosed world of the narrative and brings it out into the open spaces of "public squares, streets, cities and villages" (Bakhtin 1981: 259). Layered with its own philosophical underpinnings, the dialogic is intersubjective and moves freely into various directions (Bakhtin 1981: 267). As it delves into memories and knowledge(s), it works constantly with the unconscious; no individual has an absolutely new unborn mind. If the dialogic involves a looking for the opinion of the other, it needs to be in constant flow, even as it gradually formulates itself. Apparently, the freedom from narrative frames and their confines makes possible a wandering into the hidden and veiled spaces of life and experience. Bakhtin points out that no "living word relates to its object in a *singular* way, instead it enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents… [and] intersects with a third group" (Bakhtin 1981: 276). The moment the dialogic spills out of a text into life, an endless journey begins. The spirit of this journey is further emphasized when the dialogic is also located in the act of travel itself. When the speaker/listener enters into other parallel and multidirectional shifts in location, landscape and ideology, his/her personal journey in time inevitably becomes dialogic, requiring a constant movement between his/her different experiences. Another point which Bakhtin emphasises is the significance of a responsive understanding, which is a 'fundamental force' (Bakhtin 1981: 280) in this process, outlining the reader/listener's role. Thus, dialogicity has the possibility of breaking bounds and extending to other cultures (Bakhtin 1981: 282), a move which carries the implication of moving beyond the metaphysical truth or philosophy to step into other cultural and political realities. Bakhtin expands upon the richness of the dialogic process at great length. In this, he moves outside the novel to consider the richness of language and the applicability of the dialogic to a living situation. The spoken word with its orality carries sound and nuance and has an innate demand for/orientation towards response. It presumes a responsive listener. The linguistic depth is multilayered in its meaning; the dialects and polyphony hold within them a "dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex relationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse…" (Bakhtin 1981: 276). For Nanak, travelling to many different lands each suffused in its own culture, listening to many languages, catching on to other idioms, and learning other languages added up to a fusion of several dialogicities.

Travel, even in the absence of speech, is dialogic in itself as it needs to be in constant movement encompassing, as I have pointed out earlier, both interiority and exteriority. One may ask that if it is an engagement only with the self, how is it different from Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy* or Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*? While Boethius' *Consolations* is a dialogue with Lady Philosophy, focused on his own queries regarding the nature of religion, of ideas and the human existence,

its dialogicity is confined within the sphere of its own concern. In itself, it is a conscious effort to arrive at a logical analysis of abstract concepts. Written in a prison, like Bonhoeffer's incomplete play and novel, *Consolations* is a negotiation with the world of suffering, religion, and morality. The text reflects the writer's attempt to resolve his inner conflicts, doubts, and despondency. Boethius concentrates on the issues of faith and truth. At heart, both—Boethius and Bonhoeffer—are creating religious, philosophical, and moral discourses. Their move into politics— the Rome of the 5th century and the Germany of the mid-20th century form the background and occasion the confinement. True, Bonhoeffer was actively involved in subversive activities, but these are not directly confronted in the creative works.[1] Similarly, Gandhi's work was written onboard ship while travelling from England to South Africa, circumscribing both his mobility and his interaction, though the immediate cause was his recent visit to England and the bomb thrown by the Indian revolutionaries leading him to comment on nonviolence, culture, modernity, and the colonial situation. He seeks to adopt a political position to formulate a line of action. But these texts even as they take the outside world in, do not acquire the full dialogic richness, perhaps because they do not allow intervention from 'difference;' instead they meet it halfway on the basis of rational argument. They work with ideas that are formulated through inner debates. The traveller, however, is placed in an entirely different position, faced as he is by unfamiliar circumstances which are constantly changing and subject to new locations and environments. He finds himself located amongst different people, different practices, which he should relate to afresh. Yet he is free from a social identity and the categorizations prevalent in a stable society. Such a scenario prevents easy recognition. He finds himself literally dislocated from culture and environment. These conditions lead to an openness as well as the possibility of observation and reflection in an environment of newness. The element of uncertainty of what is likely to follow is permanently present. In some ways, travel is different from the wanderings of ascetics and sages: wanderings which are involved in negotiations with the self and/or with God and need no worldly distraction.

When, at the age of thirty, Nanak embarked on the first of his four major *udasis*, he was just such a traveller; one who travelled because he wanted to know, to learn, to debate, to question, and to evolve.[2] Though there is no eyewitness account of his travels, except for stretches of his own poetry, which also come to us as well-formulated responses, there are several retrospective accounts, one by his co-traveller Bhai Bala, who wrote an account of it in the form of a *Janamsakhi* (birth story or life story). Others followed, including both *Bhai Gurdas diyan Varan*

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[1]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Protestant priest of the Confessing Church, was arrested in April 1943 and executed in April 1945. During the two years he stayed in the prison he wrote an incomplete play and a fragment of a novel. For further details, see my paper "Fragments of a Life: Conflict and Creativity in the Face of Death," presented at a Conference on Prison in Poland in 2010.

[2]Nanak had led the life of a householder before he proceeded on his travels. He was not very practical in worldly matters. Refer to my paper, "Nanak's Travels: Journeys of a Seeker," in *Indian Travel Writings*. Ed. Somdatta Mandal. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2013, pp. 72–85.

and *Puratan Janamsakhi*. *Puratan Janamsakhi* is edited by the Sikh scholar Bhai Vir Singh and is based on a manuscript which had been taken away to London and came to be known as *Vilayatvali Janamsakhi*. Other versions referred to by many scholars are *Meherbanwali Janamsakhi* and *Bhai Man Singhwali Janamsakhi*. Most of my references in this chapter are to *Bhai Balewali Janamsakhi*, which is in the oral tradition. If one keeps on sifting out the hagiographic material, this is a very interesting narrative. Every now and then the narrator comments *'te sakhi hor chali'* (thus the story progressed), but by giving it the power to grow and move forward, he bestows on it an independent agency. Furthermore, it refers to numerous passages from Nanak's poetry and captures the excitement and novelty of the travel. Contemporary scholars, both in India and abroad, have worked on the *Janamsakhis* and by identifying commonalities and differences, tracing monuments, deciphering the inscriptions, and working through the evidence of some of the journeys by consulting historical sources such as the District Gazetteers, have produced many monumental works. Of these, Kirpal Singh's *Janamsakhi Parampara: From an Historical Perspective* has been worked out very logically, substantiating the evidence of the journeys through a study of the riverways and pilgrim routes and also the gurudwaras, the Sikh temples, that came to be built along the route.

Why did Nanak travel? By all accounts, he was a traveller motivated by several reasons. And one major one was the dissatisfaction with the state of society and the dissensions and factions in the name of religion; unlike most religious reformers, however, he was not inclined to move back into cultural pasts. He was apparently in search of a different, more human and open route which offered more space for self-realization in relation to God, free of ritualistic fixities. He perhaps wondered that crowded with rituals as religion was, where was the spontaneity and naturalness in man's relationship with God? In his own right, Nanak was not a victim of social oppression nor of any such discrimination; yet there was a rising discontentment in him at the meaningless divisions in society. Punjab was especially prone to quick cultural and social shifts being an entry point for invaders and a consequent battleground. It was a land of mixed blood, mixed cultures, and multiple faiths. In his *History of the Sikhs*, Khushwant Singh observes that the fifteenth century was a time of multiplicity, war, strife and instability, religious enmity, exploitation of the weaker sections, and insecurity of life, all of which prepared the ground for a mid-road faith. In *Majh di Var* Nanak described his times as an age which is 'like a knife.' Sikhism "was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam after they had known each other for nine hundred years, and yet had features which bore no resemblance to either" (Singh 1963: 17). It was at such a time of conflict and strife that Nanak undertook the first of his four major journeys, known as *'udasis.'* This term itself carries multiple meanings. In everyday life, it could refer to sadness. In Nanak's context, it has been interpreted as meaning detachment, to which I would like to add a certain restlessness, a discontentment, and also a concern, an inner agitation of creative energy. In Nanak's case, it can also be interpreted as a search for truth and knowledge, for a religion which does not stop at the threshold of ritual. There is evidence that he had an inquiring nature and at the age of nine, when he was to be invested with a *janau* (the sacred thread), he questioned its sanctity.

Another incident supported by several accounts is that of his disappearance for three days in the river Veyi. Believed to have drowned, he resurfaced on the third day. Most Sikh historians are dismissive of miracles and Kirpal Singh explains it as Nanak's search for solitude. Apparently, he swam over to the other side and spent that period in meditation. This experience has also been hailed as a transformative one.

All these experiences had already taken place prior to his journeys, which were much more than a feel for the territory. They gave him the opportunity to study, interrogate, and think about the major religions prevalent in India at that time. When he travelled toward the North-East, Gaya and Benaras, he studied Buddhism, down South, it was Jainism, Benaras was also a major Hindu centre and the Sri Lankan scenario gave him a first-hand acquaintance with the different sects and practices of both Hinduism and Buddhism. Sri Lanka was then known as Singladip. He first travelled towards the area which now forms Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, then eastwards through Patna, Nepal, and Jagannathpuri. Later, he also travelled to Haridwar, Ayodhya, Faizabad, Allahabad and Benaras, moving toward Assam and still later to the western parts of Punjab. Was it a kind of pilgrimage or more in the nature of an intellectual endeavor which exposed him as much to interrogation as the people he met while travelling on foot?

One can identify the four journeys on the basis of the *Puratan Janamsakhi* and they have indeed been identified by Fauja Singh and Kirpal Singh.[3] While his second *udasi* took him to Sri Lanka, his fourth took him to Mecca and Medina. All these journeys were stretched over a period of sixteen years. Yet he did not simply pass through these places. Very often, he would stay on in one place for considerable periods in order to absorb the culture and give himself time to understand it. Pushed by the desire to know the true versions of practiced belief, he also learned Persian and Arabic and read the Koran. What is of even greater significance is that he carried no religious marks of identity either on his body or his dress. Difficult to locate in any specific background the question often asked was: Who was he? A Hindu or a Musalman? A believer or a non-believer? A disciple or a preacher? He refused to fit into any of these identities. The Hindus asked him where were the tilak

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[3]Based on *Puratan Janamsakhi,* Fauja Singh and Kirpal Singh have defined the routes as follows: First Udasi: Sultanpur, Tulamba (Dist. Multan) Panipet, Delhi, Banaras, Nanaknata (Dist. Nainital) Tanda Vanjara (Dist. Rampur), Kamrup (Assam) Asa Desh (Assam) Pakpatan (Montgomery now in Pakistan), Kirian Pathanana (District Gurdaspur), Saidpur (Emmabad, now in Pakistan), Pasrur and Siakot (now in Pakistan). Second Udasi: Dhanasri Valley, sea route and Singladip (Sri Lanka). Third Udasi: Kashmir, Sumer Parbat and other Parbats. Fourth Udasi: Mecca and Medina and neighbouring regions. Fifth Udasi: within Punjab. I owe this tracing to the places identified by Map 3 by them. But Medina and Turkey can be safely added to the places mentioned in their list in the Fourth Udasi. Kirpal Singh has traced these routes mainly by tracing the gurudwaras built after Nanak had visited these places (pp. xxvii–xxix) and some inscriptions. Many of these gurudwaras are located on river banks. I would like to record here, that I myself have visited a groupware in Ladakh, where the imprint of Guru Nanak's hand is traceable on a rock. He put up his hand to stop the rock from rolling down and controlled the power of its fall with it.

or the caste marks and the mullahs queried whether he was a yogi and why then did he not wear rings in his ears or carry a bag for alms? Nanak was referred to both as Baba Nanak and Nanak Fakir, depending on where he was located at the time. One needs to recall that both Sufism and the Bhakti movement were strong influences on religious inquiry and thought by this time and they marked a move away from rituals and houses of God. God was everywhere. Further, the poetry of both Baba Farid (a twelfth-century Sufi) and of Kabir (a fourteenth-century bhakta) were later to be incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy book of the Sikhs. It would be safe enough to presume that the travels were undertaken as an inquiry into both the 'self' and the 'other' and specifically outside religious frameworks. Identity was not marked merely by the fact of birth in any one religion. Early on, he had realized the importance of personal performance. When he resurfaced from the river Veyi, he pronounced '*Nan koi Hindu nan Mussalman*' (none is Hindu or Musalman). And when summoned by the king to justify his statement, he answered that it was an identity that had to be earned through one's work, attitudes, beliefs, and self-effacement and birth in a religious community was at no point a given right to an identity:

> First, he ought to deem sweet the religion of the Lord's devotees and have his pride of pelf effaced with a scraper…

> If he is merciful to all the sentient beings. O Nanak!

> Then alone he shall be called a Musalman.

<div align="center">(Majh di Var 18/141 in Hymns of Guru Nanak 146–147)</div>

This kind of travel is different not only from a sage's withdrawal to the hills or the wanderings of the ascetic, but also from the imperial traveller's journey into a new land, who, assured of his power, views the other culture as a subordinate one. It is also different from the explorations and observations of a curious foreigner. Said, commenting on the travellers who came to the Orient (in *Orientalism*), pointed out the obvious fact that travels marked by a sense of power or egoistic conceit or by mere curiosity fail to become dialogic. One of the main underlying assumptions of the dialogic is a sense of humility and the openness which comes with it. It begins with the desire to learn and is based on the acceptance of similarities between humans. Bakhtin's argument begins with subject of language and the intricacies of the novelistic discourse; the shift is from the monological discourse of poetry or the epic. In contrast, the novel inhabits a different, wider, more varied world with many voices interacting and being heard. It is in a similar respect that the act of travel such as Nanak's becomes dialogic for the interaction is at multiple levels, with a wide range of people and across different faiths as well as languages. In each case, the act of communication is significant, requiring understanding and response. The subsequent religious discourse in itself is a demonstration of a newness taking birth.

But to be content with the idea that Nanak's travels were marked only by a desire to know the 'other' would be a mistake; his journeys were evidently also directed toward an understanding of theological philosophies prevalent in different systems. As pointed out earlier, his long halts allowed him to interact and, at times, to learn

the languages of other cultures. History provides enough evidence of other parallel movements, marked by discontentment and questioning, such as Protestantism and later Methodism in the West, and Sufi and Bhakti movements in India, inquiries into the nature of religion and the role of the individual agency. The major difference in Nanak's search lies in the fact that he was opting out of the religion of his birth as well as the practice of idol worship. At the same time, he was not inspired by any other religion to adopt it in its entirety. The fact that the travels were to different lands and religious centers indicates Nanak's need to understand them. There were several occasions when he met many Siddhas and Nathas, spiritual sages who were believed to have attained inner peace through meditation. Four centers are mentioned specifically: Sumer Parbat, Gorakh Hatdi at Peshawar, Gorakh Mata in north Uttar Pradesh valley area and Batala in Punjab. The long hymn of *Siddh gosti* is a summing up of these experiences. It is in this dialogue that Nanak clearly defined *Gurmukh* (directed toward God) and *Manmukh* (self-centered), debated the various concepts of Manas (mind), Nama (The First Cause) and went on to elaborate upon the role of the mind, which is capable of both good and evil. The Yogis ask him as to how one can purify a defiled mind. They had yogic practices, but what did Nanak have to offer in their place? Nanak felt that the name of God was one route; another was that of self-effacement, the erasure of an egoistic self, in order to be involved in the welfare of others (Singh 2013: 118–119). Refusing to be impressed by occult magic or yogic powers produced by ascetic practices, he questions the pursuit for power which invariably is governed by self-interest. What purpose do acts of self-infliction serve? These are located in the individual's concern for his own self and own salvation, at best the welfare of his kith and kin. Nanak evolved his own beliefs and philosophy through these exchanges which are multidirectional, interrogative, thought-provoking and demanding viable solutions. The dialogue does move in time and space. It falls back on memory, past experiences, and on practical reason. The latter is a concept which Immanuel Kant was later to develop in his work *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), wherein he distinguished between *pure* practical reason and desire-based practical reason. The first needs to be consciously cultivated and forms the basis of ethical behavior and relationships with others. The only identifiable underlying principle of practical reason can be moral good. Nanak's approach, however, was to distinguish it from the idea of personal salvation as well as of personal desire, thus ruling out the domination of ego. This was to become one of the founding principles of Sikhism. At another level, it also distinguished itself from the dominant value of compassion which was a salient feature of Buddhism as well as withdrawal into any kind of asceticism. Life was meant to be lived in a social world and religious attitudes were to find expression in relationships and the life of a householder. The balance between detachment and relationships was an extremely difficult one to attain. The real challenge lay in this for the fullness of human life.

It is in the travels and the discourses which ensued with the learned men of these lands that many of his ideas came to be developed more fully. An immediate gain was the expansion in his knowledge and experience and a honing of his linguistic skills, especially in Persian. Dr. Mohammed Habib, in his work *Guru Nanak Devji*

ate Musalman, comments at length on the interreligious discourse and the impact these had on Nanak's philosophy. Sufism emphasized the value of congregation an idea which came to be incorporated in the concept of *satsangat,* literally the 'community of truth.' All along, he rejected rituals, including the five times conducted *namaaz, rozas* as well as pilgrimages and fasts, primarily because devotion had a practical aspect, rather than an abstract one-to-one relationship. God does not need to be remembered only at set times or in set ways, he does not only dwell in mosques and temples; God is everywhere. The concept of 'action' which he was to evolve is different from self-directed 'karma' as well as from 'penance.'

When his minstrel companion Mardana requested that they perform the *hajj*, Nanak responded, '*Mukam Mecca, mann Medina*', wherever one is located is Mecca and the heart is Medina, no one knows what happens in the grave or in the afterlife. As they proceeded, Shah Saraf and other *hajjis* interrogated him and asked him to define *fakiri*. When Nanak replied that it was not desire-directed, they were astonished. But other queries followed on the finer points involved. It was at this time that the real concept of *fakiri* evolved in Nanak's mind and he told Shah Saraf, that *fakiri* could exist alike in a householder's life and a sadhu's life; vesting its definition in goodness and in the absence of ego, which motivates action in every act of life (*Bhai Balewali Janamsakhi* 159). Nanak gives several examples from several traditions, including sufi saints, bhaktas, rulers and governors (161), thus insisting that devotion can be followed and acted upon in all spheres and becomes, in itself, a worship of God.[4]

Most of these discourses and debates were with men of faith grounded in other religious systems. But Nanak's responses represented his own thought. Individual originality, however, is not born out of nothing; it does not exist in a vacuum. To be able to think differently from the existing practices and ideas present in a social environment is an ability that asks for further exploration. Partly his inspiration must have come from his closeness to nature, partly the contemporary sufi and bhakti thought, but the analytical faculty required to take a counter-stand in religious debate is entirely his own. To be able to recognise the strangulation present in the salvation theory and the lack of personal choice in stagnant systems requires an enormous amount of faith in one's own belief. From where did this faith emanate? Bakhtin, in his work *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, comments on the 'transitiveness and open event-ness of Being' (Bakhtin 1999: 1), thus indicating the continuous impact of the moving world around one. This differs slightly from the Heideggerian stand where the be*ing* is perceived as constantly unfolding itself through experience in the world; it is in the process of becoming. But Heidegger

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[4]Nanak's travels carry a slight trace of Buddha's wanderings; but the difference surmounts the resemblance. Born nearly two thousand years later, Nanak was located very differently in the social world. He was not in search of solitude and did not observe austerities; his questioning was directed at practices that divided people. Again, the recognition of a First Cause did not in any way detract him from life in the world. Buddha's sense of compassion translated itself into understanding for Nanak. His experience at Veyi was a turning point early in his life in which there is a Kantian recognition of intuition. Both Buddha and Nanak rejected godhood.

does not relate to the continuity of this process as a constant interaction; the world is not seen as having an agency but is *there* to be experienced. Bakhtin, on the other hand, views this as an open-eventness, with a possibility of shifts, new influences, and interaction. He credits every act and thought with a consciousness of individual answerability. After all, when a nine-year-old boy questions the sanctity of a *janau* and a youth with a family to support is indifferent to material gain, then both intuitive belief and individual answerability are at work. An ordinary man is not a philosopher; but he does possess the faculty of reason and the ability to make a moral judgment between right and wrong. What was it that enabled Nanak to think counter to established systems and learned men? Was it reason, an intuitive sense of right, an ability to look beyond the self: which of these? His thought was located in the present, in this world, and in the social unrest which was in serious need of reform. The solution lay in human attitudes and consciousness, not in a blind adherence to stagnant rituals. The legends surrounding him also reveal a certain degree of logicality. They are all events loaded with an illustration of practical reason. One such is the incident of Nanak sleeping with his feet towards a Masjid. When checked, he shifted his position but then the Masjid also followed suit. This has an element of the miraculous and perhaps it is exaggerated to prove his spiritual powers while at the same time metaphorically demonstrating the truth that God dwells everywhere. How can you avoid Him? Further to this, it rejects the idea of the divine presence being limited to a monument or an idol. Given this truth, there is no basis for religious conflict; if God is located everywhere then why attack other people's houses of worship? (166–167)

Nanak was subjected to several discussions and each time disputed the fact of 'difference.' Where is it written that religions are different? (235) In Mecca, Gaissudin Imam, Kutubddin Imam, Imam Kamaluddin, Pir Bahudar and in Medina a host of others such as Kazi Rukunddin, Karimdin Sadaat and Makhdoom parried him with questions. Each time he considered his own feelings, responses, and beliefs. And each time he was convinced that the Divine being is one, indivisible and omnipresent. These debates with spiritual and temporal powers and with kings and emperors connected for him the two dominant aspects of life. In one such exchange with a powerful ruler, a person who overcome by the greed of power had accumulated a great deal of wealth. Nanak, struck by its illogicality, chose not to argue but started collecting small pieces of broken stone. This provoked the Sultan to ask him why was he collecting these stones? Nanak responded that he meant to take them to God's house (in the afterlife), which drew forth a comment from the Sultan on his foolishness. This gave Nanak the opportunity of reprimanding him. All the wealth that he had accumulated by exploiting the poor was similarly not going to go with him (229). The rightful employment of power is to strive for the good in this life.

It was on the basis of his several discussions with the Hindu sages and the Islamic priests, as well as rulers and emperors, that he defined his own positions on the nature of power, the meaning of *karma*, the meaning of a religious identity, ways of relating to God as well as to fellow human beings; it was through these that his own ideas evolved and took the form of a new religion guided by practical

considerations for others and not confined to marked places of religion. In all this, there is a reflection of his consciousness of responsibility. To try to change the course of events and social constructs requires a high degree of consciousness of the likely consequences of the action. There is in his stand an understanding of the 'ought in relation to it'[5] (Bakhtin 1993: 18). Bakhtin points out that formal ethics provides no approach to a living act performed in the real world (Bakhtin 1993: 27). Nanak's ideas, it is abundantly evident from his writings and the newness of his thought, also derived their basis from a constant exposure to a varied experience and were rooted in them.

The Sikh scholar Jodh Singh has worked on Nanak's exchanges with Hindu priests in his work *The Religio-Yogic Philosophy of Guru Nanak*. But his work represents one side of the picture. The fact that he was located in Benaras at that time perhaps was also partly responsible for the interpretation to be rooted predominantly in Hindu discourse. Similarly, Mohammed Habib's work *Guru Nanak Devji ate Musalman* examines the impact of Islam on Nanak and again remains a one-sided study of his ideas. But to understand the true direction of Nanak's development of religious thought, both these aspects have to be taken together as Nanak proceeded from one experience to the other and connected it with the situation back home as well as the dissensions amongst believers of different faiths. His responses, born directly from his own/personal experiences, critiqued hierarchies, caste discrimination, hatred for the other, and the unthinking adherence to stagnant values irrespective of the change in the external world. In fact, Nanak was amply conscious of the need to relate religious thought to the flow of life. The only way out was through an ethical system not vested in power hierarchies or material greed, delinked from personal salvation and the dominant concern in life after death. In professing such radical thoughts, his responsibility was multifold not only toward the present world in which he lived but also the future. Nanak's ethics anticipate both Kant (*Critique of Practical Reasoning*) and Bakhtin (*Toward a Philosophy of the Act*).

A couple of questions still need to be addressed and an important one is the difficulty of reconciling his unconditional faith which demanded surrender with a life of practical action as a householder. Again, was the experience at Veyi an Enlightenment? Why did he reject the *janau* and give up the notion of possession even at an early age? Were these acts, acts of faith, intuition or belief? Two things become obvious first, that belief needs to evolve: it is not a given and as such it is vested in continuous process; second, faith can be practised and should be practised within relationships, not in isolation. It comes alive only then when it is lived out in our dealings with others. The emphasis being on this connectivity where the divine was a third presence rather than the limited relationship of the believer with God, one confined to a personal sphere and excluding the presence of the other.

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[5]See Vadim Liapunov's Notes to *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* In note 12, Liapunov writes, the ought as that 'which ought to be' is contrasted to 'what *is*'. Referring to Rudolf Eisler's work he quotes him "the ought is the correlate of a will, an expression for that which is required or demanded from a will (another's or one's own)" (p. 82).

He turned the theory of predestination on its head by redefining 'karma' and imparting an active will to the human being which continuously needed support from faith. After all, the relationship of Man and God takes shape, develops, and fulfils itself in the socio-political field, which is full of uncertainty, conflicts, divisions, and unpredictably and is an eternal testing ground. The mortal life of man exists within the fold of God's will. Nanak is believed to have settled in Kartarpur after his long travels. It is also said he discarded the Fakir's garb, the long knee-length shirt he had worn during his travels. Why did he do it? Was it to emphasize that the life of a householder as the rightful place for the practice of religion? And did he wear it primarily to be accepted and interrogated by the priestly class? What did he get out of his travels as an individual? Fulfilment of wanderlust? Inspiration for his poetry? Interaction with people of different creeds who spoke different languages? Or was it a:

> Looking around in four directions, I searched my inner self. There I saw the invisible True Lord, the Creator.

> (Majh Rag, *Hymns of Guru Nanak*, 170)

It would be natural to momentarily ask why then centers of pilgrimage have come up, and why the militancy of the 1980s, why this growing fundamentalism and rejection of other faiths? Religions evolve, but they also buckle under political circumstances and the absence of human wisdom. The *Guru Granth Sahib* was only compiled later by the fifth Guru, consolidating religious beliefs which had inspired Nanak and his successors, because by this time the realisation had dawned that the average believer clamours for a centre. But the lapses at material and political level, what are they? Shifts in perspective? Defence? Political compulsion or sheer lack of will? Religion, like the dialogic process, demands response, interpretation, a search within and in memory, a constant sifting of thought to keep it alive. When this dialogicity freezes, the monologic binds them in a fixity; literally closing all routes to accommodation and reaching out.

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Chapter 7
"You Yourself Are a Mosque with Ten Doors": A Bakhtinian Reading of the Dialogic Tradition in Indian Poetry

E.V. Ramakrishnan

Dogma and Dissent in Indian Poetic Tradition

Indian poetry is written in several languages, and hence it cannot be reduced to a single tradition. In this essay, the focus is on a strand of pan-Indian tradition that is believed to constitute a literary movement centered around 'Bhakti'. This Sanskrit term means, among other things, the love and respect we feel toward a god or deity or an elder. The devotee's personal engagement with his god is what defines the experience of Bhakti. The poet-saints of Tamil, in the south of India, flourished between the sixth and the tenth centuries. The vernacular poetics of their compositions appears to have influenced the poets in the neighboring languages such as Kannada and Marathi by the twelfth century. By the sixteenth century, major poets of Bhakti tradition emerge in the dialects of Hindi and other north Indian languages such as Bengali and Assamese. A number of factors unify the large corpus of poetry that goes by the name of Bhakti poetry: the poet-saints composed and sang their compositions in local languages, which allowed them to address their devotees directly; their appeal cut across social divisions of caste and gender; the accent of their compositions was on personal experience and emotional involvement; the poetics of Bhakti distanced itself from the Vedic traditions of ritual that sanctified social divisions. Since this tradition was able to inspire the masses, it has constituted a popular domain in the regional languages of India that can only be understood against the dominant tradition of canonical poetry with its roots in Sanskrit poetics and brahmanical worldview. However, in using binaries such as the elitist/popular and central/marginal, we may be distorting the larger significance of this tradition of dissent. It is hoped that the conceptual categories developed by Mikhail Bakhtin would help us recover the underlying dialogism of this poetic tradition.

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The encounter with European knowledge and its regulative apparatus of power had a disruptive effect on the diverse 'Indian knowledge' systems. The inherent heterogeneity now became unsustainable. There were compulsions to approximate to a homogenous format in all walks of life, from politics to culture and beyond. The categories we employ in analysing social and cultural phenomena are not derived from our encounters with our ecosystem or experiential cosmology. What is lacking in the interpretative discourse practised in the humanities and social sciences is the appropriations and approximations that characterize our discourses of modernity. Words are deeply embedded in social practices through their rooted nature in the local history. This is one of the fundamental insights given by Bakhtin in his critical writings. In his words,

> the whole utterance is no longer a unit of language (and not a unit of the "speech flow" or the "speech chain"), but a unit of speech communication that has not mere formal definition, but *contextual meaning* (that is, integrated meaning that relates to value—to truth, beauty, and so forth—and requires a *responsive* understanding, one that includes evaluation). The responsive understanding of a speech whole is always dialogic by nature. (Bakhtin 1986: 125)

In theorizing, we move away from the particular, from the 'local habitations' of words and their inherited meanings, and displace them from their embedded and embodied formations. Poetry, fiction, drama and other imaginative forms return us to the incommensurable in the singular before a 'universalist' paradigm is imagined. In approximating the singular to a European episteme, which constitutes an overarching self, informing and regulating all production of 'modernity,' a certain erasure of the particular is involved. Here the word 'dissent' is used to seek out an alternative paradigm to contest the erasures involved in the construction of hegemonic 'universalist' paradigm.

Here a brief annotation of the idea of 'dialogism' is in order. Michael Bakhtin has persuasively argued, in his study on Dostoevsky, that his novels contain a 'plurality of unmerged consciousnesses' by which he means the perspectives of characters that are not subordinated to authorial intentions. Dostoevsky's great achievements were in finding an adequate form for the dialogic impulse in the social word. Bakhtin writes:

> Dostoevsky, like Goethe's Prometheus, creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus), but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him. A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. (Bakhtin 1984: 6)

Language, by its very nature, is discourse that inhabits a domain of answerability where words are filled with voices, intentions and desires. Thus, dialogism is inherent in the very act of communication where the social constitutes the verbal sphere. 'Monologism' implies a social world where its diversity of thought and action are curbed by a hegemonic unified consciousness that controls all values and meanings. In an appendix to the book on Dostoevsky, in its 1963 edition Bakhtin explained:

> Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore

to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented persons. (1984: 293)

In Indian traditions, the monologic nature of the Vedic tradition was challenged by the dialogic organization of poetic language in Bhakti poetry. The poets of the Bhakti tradition spoke from within the domain of lived experience. They spoke in the languages of the masses and not Sanskrit. This 'oral poetic' enabled them to reach out to the people who shared the idiom and also the material practices that informed the texts with their performative dimension. Culture is a contested field where the monologic forces of authoritarian regimes, religious orthodoxies and feudal social organization try to curb the inherent dialogic nature of the word. Hence, what is dialogic also questions the prevailing ideologies of power. It is in this sense that we will look at the nature of dialogism in the Bhakti literature and some of its recent continuities.

In the early works of Bakhtin, which became available in English only in the 1970s and 1980s, there is an attempt to explain the complex relation between experience and expression, and its bearing on the study of alternative traditions in literature. Bakhtin identifies 'theoreticism' as a major limitation of modern thought. The content of an act does not exhaust its meaning because it is an abstraction and cannot correspond to what Bakhtin calls 'the actual once-occurent world' in which acts are performed by living beings. Bakhtin contrasts 'theoreticism' with the 'eventness' of an act/phenomenon which can only be explained in terms of the locatedness of a subject. The subject acts because s/he accepts responsibility for his or her act. Meaning follows from the participation in the act. When the humanities and social sciences fail to take account of the 'the once-occurent eventness' of the acts by 'embodied subjects' they 'objectify' experience and deny its essential humanness. Bakhtin poses 'aesthetic seeing' as a possible way out, but it is liable to get lost in its own object and transforms the object into an imagined version of it. Thus, 'theoreticism' and 'aesthetic seeing' are diametrically opposite in nature. Bakhtin's 'subject' is a concrete being who is caught in the flux of life, its flow of 'once-occurent-events'. The event is unique in its once-occurent-actuality that results in the creation of meaning and value by the participant. In participating in the 'event' the subject invests the act with meaning and value. Real life demands active commitment from the subject. The creation of value and meaning is made possible through the 'answerable consciousness' of the subject. One has to accept the inevitability of interaction in being a social being. This is what constitutes 'answerability,' and helps to bring together experience, history and meaning in the 'being-as-event'. This is what Bakhtin describes as "an act-performing thinking, a thinking that is referred to itself as to the only one performing answerable deeds" (Bakhtin 1993: 44–45).

The question of lived experience is central to the question of dissent as we examine the poetry of the various traditions of Bhakti and its later manifestations from Indian languages. In *Cracked Mirror*, by Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, which has the subtitle *An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory* the echoes of some of the ideas outlined above on the 'eventness' of experience can be discerned.

As Sundar Sarukkai points out, "lived experience should be seen as the experience of being a subject and not an experience by a subject about a subject" (2012: 37). If theory remains purely empirical, it cannot incorporate lived experience, and if experience remains a universal category without a localized subject, its truth value becomes suspect. The only way to break out of this impasse is to "demand that ethics be integrated to the act of theorizing. If this is allowed, then lived experience becomes the ground for such ethical intertwinement with theory" (37).

Dissenting voices restore the communicative thrust to that part of society which is excluded from dialogue. Their experiences, thus, find a way back into the mainstream of voices in the society. Dissent in the present discussion is integral to the project of locating and recovering the lived experience. The literary texts of some of the Bhakti poets and Dalit poets I discuss briefly have to be seen against hegemonic narratives in circulation in their cultures. The self/other dichotomy we noticed in the context of the European episteme has been endemic to Indian cultural production from the pre-Christian era when a well-entrenched Brahminic discourse had a hegemonic hold on the interpretative apparatus of the worldly phenomena. Here we need to underline the dialogic nature of the production of a social consciousness that is a prerequisite in contesting hegemonies. Dr Ambedkar elucidates this point in his seminal essay, "Annihilation of Caste," with profound clarity:

> And the only way by which men can come to possess things in common with one another is by being in communication with one another. This is merely another way of saying that society continues to exist by communication, indeed in communication. To make it concrete, it is not enough if men act in a way which agrees with the acts of others. Parallel activity is not sufficient to bind men into a society… The caste system prevents common activity and by preventing common activity it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with a unified life and a consciousness of its own being. (2002: 268)

Meanings are always socially constructed by members of a society. Words are accented with the desires, intentions, attitudes, assumptions, preferences and prejudices inherent in speech communities. Consciousness can transform itself into self-consciousness only in the context of the other by confronting it. In the process of becoming a society it will confront the other and will also move beyond the self. In the act of dissent it is the self-conscious who is in communication with the other in society, creating a frame of reference that is beyond the self. This is why dissenting speech remains singular and refuses to be assimilated into the hegemonic discourses. This act of disavowal may gesture toward the horizon of the universal in an attempt to situate the local and the vernacular in a communicative, dialogic context, but the universal has no legitimating authority here. It has to be granted that a text that constitutes an act of dissent has a critical relation with the very language it speaks in. It uses a mode that both interrogates and exceeds its immediate purpose.

In every act of dissent, the mode of utterance has a subversive, self-reflexive dimension. It deconstructs the speaker as much as its listener by drawing attention to the manner in which they are constituted in the first place as social beings. This self-reflexive element in the Bhakti tradition of Indian literature has been insufficiently understood in the context of the epistemological crisis we mentioned at the

beginning. The moulds of shaping experiences given by a discourse also plot the self and its utterance in a certain way. To break the mould is to disrupt the cultural lexicon of experience. Dissent tests the linguistic resources of a culture as it has to find a new lexicon of experience to convey a radical view of the world. Both the hegemonic and its resistance may appear monologic but we need to distinguish between them. Hegemonic discourses lack the element of 'answerability' that Bakhtin mentions. They do not recognize the other. An answerable consciousness, on the other hand, confronts the other in its attempt to participate in the eventness of the world as an embodied subject. Dissent is an ethical act by an answerable consciousness to create value and meaning as it negotiates the other.

Dialogic Discourse in *Therigatha*

I would examine the tradition of 'inspired utterance' one comes across in Bhakti poetry to demonstrate how telling of experience shapes an ethics by addressing and confronting the other. This tradition goes back to *Therigatha,* whose songs of experience were considered 'udana' or 'spoken in the moment of insight'. Theris were Buddhist nuns, enlightened by their conversion into Buddhist faith and led an ascetic life. In many of their poems, they look back on their former selves in the light of the self-knowledge they have gained. Their poems are rooted in the personal and address the existential and the everyday, without mystifying the world and its ways. In one of the poems Uttama speaks of how she was taught by a nun how to tame her heart. She says:

> I listened to what she taught,
>
> did exactly as she said,
>
> for seven days I sat in one position, legs crossed,
>
> given over to joy and happiness.
>
> On the eighth day I stretched out my feet,
>
> after splitting open the mass of mental darkness. (Hallisey 2015: 33)

In one of the poems by the nun called Punnika, we come across a dialogue between her and a Brahmin who is going into the river, shivering in the cold, to take a bath. He tells Punnika:

> Anyone who does an evil act
>
> whether old or young,
>
> is freed from the fruits of the evil act
>
> by washing off in water.

> And she replies:

> Who told you that,

like a know-nothing speaking to a know-nothing,

that one is freed from the fruits of an evil act

by washing off in water?

Is it that frogs and turtles

will all go to heaven,

and so will water monitors and crocodiles,

and anything that lives in water,

As will killers of sheep and killers of pigs,

fishermen and animal trappers, thieves and executioners,

everyone who habitually does evil?

But these rivers might carry away all the good done too,

you'll be besides yourself about that

Aren't afraid of that Brahman, each time you go into the water?

(Hallisey 2015: 125)

Subsequently, Punnika reminds him that if he has done evil there is no escape from suffering. And at the end of the poem, we see Brahman moving away from his initial position, ready to accept the Buddhist dhamma.

Therigatha poems stand witness to lived reality and in telling them they constitute their own selves. This self-fashioning gives the poems a dynamics of movement in time. Their openness to experience of suffering and revelations about their own imperfect selves, plagued by erotic and evil thoughts, create an ecosystem of a shared world. They describe the transformation in terms of everyday experiences which are within the grasp of their illiterate listeners. Addressing her son, Sumangala's mother says that she was reminded of "the sound of bamboo being split" (21) when she destroyed anger and the passion for sex within her. Ubbiri speaks of her transformation in terms of an arrow stuck in her body being pulled out: "He pulled out the arrow that was hard for me to see,/the one that I nourished in my heart" (39). Siha speaks of an experience that sounds almost like a confessional poem by a modern woman poet. She says that she was "pained by distracted attention and by desire for sex/I was always disturbed, without any control over my thoughts" (53). She wanders for seven years, but this also fails to give her any peace of mind. Then she decides to commit suicide and goes to the forest:

Taking a rope, I went to the forest, thinking

"It is better to hang than to live this low life.

I made the noose strong and tied it to a branch

but just as I looped it around my neck, my mind was set free. (53)

Dissent is about setting oneself free, seeing the world afresh through a different discursive frame, when the hegemonic power formation can no longer disable or constrain you. *Therigatha* poems are about the moment when there is a paradigm shift enabling you to become a new self. These poems stage the transformative moment of

epiphany when the waking subject asserts one's right to reject a master narrative that both structurally and ideologically overdetermine one's location and identity. It opens up an alternative value system that is not based on exclusion and hierarchy. What the nun-poets of *Therigatha* does is what Bhakti poetry attempted subsequently, to question the authority of the sacred texts that legislated the caste system.

'Bhakti' as a Self-reflexive Mode

There have been many exchanges between the Bhakti and Sufi traditions in the northern parts of India. This may be illustrated with reference to Bulleh Shah who lived in the eighteenth century and wrote in Punjabi. Like the great Sufi saint Mansur al-Halaj, whose proclamation, "Anal Haq" resulted in his martyrdom, Bulleh Shah repeatedly proclaims his direct apprehension of the world without the burden of the mediating structures of religious thought. He repeatedly emphasizes his ignorance and simplicity, as seen in these lines: "Reading and reading, you become/a mullah, then a quazi, but God/is content without all this learning" (Shackle 2015: 39). He continues to add:

> Bullha is neither a shiah nor a sunni,
>
> neither a learned scholar nor a magician or philosopher.
>
> He has studied only that inspirational knowledge
>
> in which *alif* and *mim* alone are needed. (Shackle 2015: 69)

The addressivity of this kind of utterance crosses beyond the sectarian divisions of society. That is how it creates a dialogic domain of critical consciousness that enables the community to view its own nature and function from an alternative perspective. Bakhtin's idea of a 'superaddressee' may also be relevant here. In his concept of dialogue, Bakhtin envisages the possibility of an abstract or actual 'superaddressee', in addition to one or more listeners. Bakhtin has suggested that superaddressee may include God, absolute truth, the human conscience, the people, the court of history, etc. Man can be heard and all utterances can move towards a higher level of understanding only if there is a superaddressee who can transcend human limitations. It implies that human utterances fulfil their communicative function only when it is heard beyond the immediate context. In both Bhakti and Sufi texts, the presence of a larger entity is constantly invoked though it is not named. All utterances demand understanding and responsiveness from the world. As Bakhtin observes:

> Being heard as such is already a dialogic relation. The word always wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond the response, and so forth ad infinitum. It enters into a dialogue that does not have a *semantic* end (but for one participant or another it can be physically broken off). (Bakhtin 1986: 127)

This tradition of subversive speech derives part of its intellectual robustness from the philosophy of Lokayata which proclaimed a materialistic vision of the world rooted in the reality of physical perceptions. They were the first to challenge

the Brahminic knowledge systems in the subcontinent and most of their writings mentioned by Patanjali and several Buddhist scholars have disappeared without a trace. Lokayatas rejected ideas of the other world, the concepts of *atma* (soul), *narak* (hell), *swarg* (heaven), *moksha* (salvation) etc. and all rituals connected with Hinduism. They strongly argued in favour of a secular worldview centered around justice and physical reality. By reconstituting the world after their own ideology, Lokayatas spoke from the centre of their discursive terrain which was not reactive or the other of a dominant discourse. This is the reason why the Lokayat tradition became the everyday consciousness of the common people, particularly from the lower castes.

The context of Kabir, who lived in the latter half of the fifteenth century, may be briefly discussed here. Along with Surdas and Tulsidas, he has been described as one of the greatest poets of bhakti in Hindi literature. However, his position has been regarded as ambiguous for more than one reason. He was a poet of *nirgun* bhakti, meaning that he worshiped God as a formless one, without any identifiable attributes. While Surdas wrote about Krishna, Tulsidas' great work, *Ramcharitmanas* was an epic on Rama, the other great Hindu God. Kabir was a weaver by profession and belonged to the Julaha caste, which also meant that he was a convert to Islam. This makes his relationship with the canon ambiguous. His followers were mostly peasants and artisans from the lower caste, which makes his position even more problematic (Dharwadker 2003: 8). In twentieth-century Hindi criticism critical works by Hazari Prasad Dwivedi and Namwar Singh placed the figure of Kabir in the mainstream, by reaffirming the centrality of subaltern traditions of dissent and resistance embodied in his poetry.

Kabir's radical sensibility is seen in the following poem where he questions the divisions of society based on purity and pollution:

Tell me, O pundit,

What place is pure—

Where can I sit

And eat my meal? (Dharwadker 2003: 124)

The whole world consisting of mother, father, tongue, fire, kitchen, vessels, cowdung, appears impure to the Brahmin. The concluding stanza says:

Kabir says,

Only they are pure

Who've completely cleansed

Their thinking. (125)

As Dharwadker comments, "the poem rejects all conventional Hindu arguments about physical, material or ritual purity and impurity; in opposition, it proposes the mind of 'thought' as the only true locus of purity, so that all exterior sites are necessarily impure and true purity is only 'interior'" (2003: 218). In an equally forceful poem, using the image of a 'mosque' with ten doors, he rejects the

conventions of Islam. He addresses the Mullah and tells him, "You yourself are a mosque with ten doors" (Dharwadker 2003: 121). The mind is the Mecca, the body the Ka'aba, the Self the Supreme Master. One becomes a patient man by "chewing up the senses" (Dharwadker 2003: 121). Kabir goes on to assert that the God of the Hindus and the Turks is one and the same, and asks: "why become a mullah, why become a sheikh?" (121). Kabir also implies that conversion into another religion makes no sense since all faiths lead to the same God. Kabir comes very close to Bakhtin's idea of answerabilty when he emphasizes the process of interiorization as a way of knowing. Experience reconstitutes oneself. In yet another poem, Kabir addresses a series of questions to God:

> If you love your followers, Rama,
>
> Settle this quarrel, once for all.
>
> Is Brahma greater, or where He came from?
>
> Is the Veda greater, or its origin?
>
> Is this mind greater, or what it believes in?
>
> Is Rama greater, or the one who knows Him?
>
> Kabir says, I'm in despair. Which is greater?
>
> The pilgrim station, or Hari's devoted slave? (137)

The questions concern the very nature of experience and knowledge. God as the superaddressee is invoked mainly to place the questions outside the frame of human experience. Can the knowing subject be greater than the object of knowledge? Can the experience of God be greater than the very idea of God? Can the mind be greater than the faith it holds? Kabir's attempt is to provoke his audience and leave them in a state of heightened consciousness when the answer will suggest itself from within. The dialogism of dissent in his poems is located in the process of questioning and the emphatic rejection of jargons of theology. It is the everyday world with its sensual experiences that enables the mind to quest for a moment of transcendence when binaries of the kind invoked in the above poem become redundant.

The Bhakti tradition in Indian poetry has evolved an alternative vocabulary of experience concerning questions of consciousness, experience and language. In an article titled "Who are the Enemies of the Bhaktas? Testimony about 'Saktas' and 'Others' from Kabir, the Ramanandis, Tulsidas, and Hariram Vyas," Heidi Pauwels has argued that Bhakti poetry is not opposed to Hinduism or Islam as religious beliefs, but to their hegemonic, ritualistic versions. He comments:

> Literature in these genres denounces ritualistic, orthodox representatives of both groups, "Hindu", "Turk" or "Musalman". Bhakti sees itself as neither, but as an alternative way. Hindu and Muslim orthodoxies were only two out of a number of "enemies" of the bhakta. (Pauwels 2010: 534).

It is important to remember that Bhakti is not a set of codified beliefs, but a way of enquiry, a mode of self-questioning and an unchartered path of adventurous journey to discover the nature and limits of oneself. Its ability to doubt and reject

each level of experience in favor of a greater attempt to outreach oneself transforms it into a continuous process of making and unmaking oneself.

Bhakti movement was a pan-Indian movement with many regional voices, each with its own culture-specific attributes. As H.S. Shivaprakash observes, not all Bhakti movements were anti-establishment to the same degree:

> On the whole, Kannada Shaiva Bhakti movement was more rebellious than Tamil Shaiava Bhakti movement. The Nirguna Bhakti of Kabir was and the Varkhari sect of Maharashtra, both Vaishnava movements, were much more radical than Vaishnava Bhakti movements of Karnataka or Tamil Nadu. (1994: 6)

The vachanas of Kannada saint poets such Basavanna, Mahadeviyakka and Allama challenged "the literary canon as much as the scriptural canon" (7). The word 'vachana' comes close to Bhaktin's idea of 'utterance'. As A.K. Ramanujan puts it, vachana means literally 'saying, things said' (Ramanujan 1973: 12). H.S. Shivaprakash, however, thinks it means, "utterance based on direct personal experience" (1994: 7). Adiah, a poet of Kannada tradition, says in a poem that all the four Vedas, sixteen *shastras,* eighteen puranas, twenty-eight agamas, thirty-two *Upanishads* and seven million great *mantras* all are "Similes, just similes, the whole lot" (8). Here 'similes' means 'mere rhetoric' without any element of truth. Obviously, they are not informed by the power of personal involvement. Nobody has put Bakhtin's idea of embodiment and answerability with greater force in a poetic composition. Only that which is backed by the truth of personal experience becomes sacred. The Vedic and non-Vedic texts as well as the magical powers of yogis are rejected by the poet in relation to the truth of embodied subject's participatory experience of the everyday world. Allama comments that "If you know yourself/all speech becomes knowledge of the ultimate" (9). Many of the vachanas talk about the inability of words to embody experience and the disconnect between words and deeds. Bhakti poets despair about the inability of the self to achieve the highest level of integrity when every word spoken becomes the testimony of an inner truth rooted in a deeply felt experience. The poem by Kabir cited above where he talks of the body as a mosque with ten doors has a parallel in Basavanna's vachanas. He says:

> My legs are pillars,
> The body the shrine,
> The head a cupola
> Of gold.
>
> Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,
> Things standing shall fall,
> But the moving will ever shall stay. (Ramanujan 1973: 19)

As Ramanujan explains in his commentary on the poem, the poem makes a distinction between *making* and *being.* By contrasting *stavara* (that which stands) and *jangama* (that which moves), the poem juxtaposes two value systems, one based on prestige and ownership and the other rooted in mendicancy and

renunciation. When the image of the body becomes consecrated as a temple, the lowest of the lowly also becomes divine. As Ramanujan says:

> The Virasaiva movement was a social upheaval by and for the poor, the lowcaste and the outcaste against the rich and the privileged; it was a rising of the unlettered against the literate pundit, flesh and blood against stone. (21)

Obviously, Bhakti poetry not only denies authority to a scriptural view of the world, but also turns away from other-worldly themes. It firmly resists ideas of heaven, hell, salvation, and the afterlife while retaining a sense of the material world as the finite reality that cannot be transcended. The Bhakti poets' insistence on bearing testimony to the lived reality of their lives transforms their poems into a quest for alternative systems of belief that can collectively transform society. This shift from the individual to the collective is a significant aspect of Bhakti poetry. While commenting on Tukaram, the poet-saint of Marathi who lived in the seventeenth century, Nemade says that "to him, literature was part of his faith in life" (41). Tukaram records faithfully the various stages of his journey toward faith and surrender to God. In one poem he tells, "There could be no greater sinner than myself." He is also aware that this world cannot be transcended easily: "This 'samsar' (everyday world) cannot be set aside". In his translation of Tukaram, titles one section, "Being Human," where one can hear Tukaram's existential struggle to make both ends meet, his helplessness in confronting caste prejudices and his sense of utter despair and solitude in the land of his birth. He tells God: "I am tired./You are my last stop./My final place of rest" (Tukaram 2007: 56). Tukaram questions the authority of the upper caste to interpret the sacred texts. In one well-known abhang (couplet), he says:

> We alone know the real meaning of the Vedas,
>
> Others only carry it on their shoulders like a burden. (Nemade 1991: 31)

He has many poems on the caste system where speaks of his low birth as a Kunbi and condemns the hierarchy of varnashram. Nemade comments, "He condemned the paraphernalia of brahminism: notions of high birth, blind beliefs, chanting of the Vedas, orthodox standards, ritualism, verbalism and bookish learning. He recognized only individual morality, because it was by the core of the individual morality that a man was truly tested" (53).

His poems are replete with references to famine and rural poverty. His helplessness and isolation, for example, are vividly described in poem after poem: "Where shall I go now?/What shall I eat?/With whose backing shall I live in this village?" (Tukaram 2007: 39). But in another poem, he can speak of his tragedies with ironic detachment:

> My wife died:
>
> May she rest in peace.
>
> The Lord has removed
>
> My attachment.

My children died:

So much the better.

The Lord has removed

The last illusion.

My mother died

In front of my eyes.

My worries are all over

Says Tuka. (Tukaram 2007: 49)

In his acute agony while searching for an anchor that can save him from the shipwreck of loss of faith, Tukaram cries out repeatedly of his isolation, lack of knowledge, inability to decide the future course of action. Sentences such as "I am just a casteless destitute" (101), "the truth about you is in my own heart" (106), "Falling into the ocean, where can a droplet choose to go?" convey the poet's struggle with his own self, and his efforts to confront the other in the horizon of his everyday experience. In one of his poems, he says: "Speak only that which meets the meaning. Or else, do not speak" (Nemade 1991: 62). Tukaram's moral dilemmas speak of his roots in common rustic life with little access to the sub-continental traditions of knowledge. He had abundant imagination and great faith in his own creativity. This transforms his personal narrative of doubt, anxiety, struggle and despair into poetic utterances of great force that allows his followers to participate in his existential quest.

The emancipatory potential of Bhakti poetry kept the spirit of resistance alive in India, creating a space of dissent. The poetics and politics of Bhakti have enabled intellectual negotiations with institutionalized religions, particularly with the priestly hegemony. Dissent structures a deeper interior realm of desire and aspiration in the sub-continental social history. The emphasis on the contingency and transience of worldly phenomena as represented by the Bhakti poets shape an idiom of resistance to the essentialist notions of other-worldly narratives. That the Buddhist nuns spoke in Prakrit and the Bhakti poets spoke in regional languages, mostly in their dialects, further complicate our discussion on the idea of dissent as an ethical act of disavowal of exclusionary, hierarchical and essentialist notions of self and society. When Tukaram speaks to God in the ironic tone, "bar jhale deba, nikhale divale/bari ya dushkale peeda keli' ("Well done, O God, I became bankrupt/ Well done, this famine has tormented me", Nemade 1991: 19) the tone of double-voiced irony communicates a heightened sense of self-consciousness. The poem exceeds its context, by questioning the common sense born of complete surrender to providence. The irony opens up a self-reflexive space of textual memory, recalling into its ambit the other-worldly fatalism that circulates in the grand narratives of the sacred language. This clears a critical space of dissent that defies theorization in terms of borrowed concepts. In Bhakti and Sufi poetry, the speaking subject positions herself at a point of liminality where multiple worlds are brought into critical relations.

Namdeo Dhasal: Dissent and Dialogue in Dalit Poetry

This is also seen in the poetry of Namdeo Dhasal, the iconic Dalit poet of the twentieth century, whose Marathi is a mixture of Bombay Hindi and many other languages such as Urdu, Telugu and Tamil spoken in the shady world of Bombay in and around Kamatipura, thus underlying the polyphony of modern city. In one of his poems, he addresses the elites of the society in these words:

> Their Orthodox Pity (Thyanchi Sanatan Daya)
>
> Their orthodox pity is no taller than a Falkland Road pimp
>
> It's true, they haven't raised any ceremonial tent for us in the sky
>
> After all, they are the feudal lords; they have locked all light in their vault.

The poem ironically captures not only the denial of humanity to the Dalits, but even the possibility of seeing the sky. In the original, we find the line, "boloon chaloon te samantshaha tyani tijorit lock kalela prakash," which suggests that the ghettoization of Dalit is a direct consequence of the hegemony of the upper caste:

> We can't find even dust to fill up our scorched bowels
>
> The rising day of justice, like a barbed person, favours only them
>
> While we are being slaughtered, not even a sigh escapes their generous hands.
>
> (Dhasal 2007: 47)

This heightened awareness becomes an attribute of Dhasal's poetry as he speaks from a crowded underworld of emaciated figures struggling to find an exit from their dark tunnel. His articulation bristles with restlessness and rage, as in the following poem, "Man, you should explode":

> Launch a campaign for not growing food, kill people all and sundry by starving them to death
>
> Kill oneself too, let disease thrive, make all trees leafless
>
> Take care that no bird ever sings, man, one should plan to die groaning and screaming in pain
>
> Let all this grow into a tumour to fill the universe, balloon up
>
> And burst at a nameless time to shrink
>
> After this all those who survive should stop robbing anyone, or making others their slaves
>
> After this they should stop calling one another names—white or black, Brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya or shudra. (36)

Dhasal's poetry in Chitre's English translation reminds one of the American poetry of the counter-culture of the 1960s, particularly Allen Ginsberg and Black American poets. This is poetry as performance where the powerful speaking subject mobilizes the community to confront its depravity through evocations and invocations, speaking from within the crowd and from outside. The intertextual relation with a larger narrative of subversive political movement adds a strong sense of

self-reflexive element to his tone and texture. While his orality is derived from the lived reality of the local, his poems with its verbal energy enact a movement toward breaking the barriers of ghettoes he is trapped in. The oral is also derived from the dissenting voices of Bhakti we discussed above. Dalit poetry is richly intertextual seeking its resources from both the oral/local and the universal/transnational and from the political/performative. He is deeply aware of the polluted nature of the space he inhabits and packs its destructive potential in the profane idioms of everyday, calling into question all notions of elitist nationhood. In the poem "Water," he realizes something of its flowing torrential eloquence in the very dynamics of verbal structure of the poem. In a poem called "An Ode to Ambedkar" we confront the performative aspects of Dalit poetry, where the poetic voice goes through many shades of emotions ranging from lyrical invocation to rage and unbearable torment. The ethical plane of Dalit poetry has to be located at this level of performative dialogism where it rises above the individual voice to the collective, and questions and confronts issues of power and authority. Dissent here transforms itself from a critical and reflective attitude toward a revolutionary consciousness that calls into question the very nature of institutional authority that constitutes the Dalit subject.

The tradition of dissent discussed above also provides a critique of Eurocentric modernity as it constitutes the limits of our visibility in contemporary society. An alternative paradigm helps us understand how the imperial gaze infiltrated our consciousness to erase what was local, intimate, personal and contingent and inscribe a set of categories that falsified our sense of the self as well as our mode of experience. The homogenizing monumentality of the elitist nationalist narrative has created cognitive blockages that have plotted India into the Eurocentric system of thought. India is an object of knowledge and not a subject that can recover its experience and reconstitute it into knowledge. This moral aporia can be confronted only with categories rooted in the experiences of everyday moral dilemmas we have outlined above. Alternative poetic traditions can open up possibilities here. Dissent as revealed in the dialogic potential of the alternative traditions of poetry discussed above brings home the relevance of Bakhtin's insightful comments on the human predicament in the modern world, for understanding India and its cultural and political trajectories through the ages.

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Chapter 8
Animal as Hero: Narrative Dynamics of Alterity and Answerability in the Elephant Stories of *Aithihyamala*

Bini B.S.

Animal as Hero: Alterity and Answerability in the Elephant Stories of *Aithihyamala*

This study examines the elephant stories in *Aithihyamala*[1] (a garland of legends and myths) against the socio-cultural scenarios constructed around elephants in the textual and ritual traditions of Kerala. The dialogic possibilities embedded in such scenarios and their heteroglossic semantics open up a narrative—performative interface involving the divine, the human, and the animal. The divine, the human, and the animal in *Aithihyamala* stories are emplotted in a discursive web of relationality and answerability.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first part contextualizes *Aithihyamala* and reads into the rich dialogic connections it has with diverse cultural and literary domains. The second part explores the possibilities of representing the elephant as a conscious, diligent, and emotional being and problematizes simplistic notions of anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is not merely a kind of appropriation; in a broader sense, it can also accommodate a dialogic dynamics and answerability. While reading into the life of the animal in *Aithihyamala*, I interpret answerability as communicative action and an ethical principle.

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[1]Kottarathil Sankunni's work *Aithihyamala* is a compilation of stories and accounts of events from several sources, including the regional oral tradition, Malayalam adaptations of stories from the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions. It also has some historical incidents narrated with a touch of fantasy. Originally written as a series for magazines, *Malayala Manorama* and *Bhashaposhini*, subsequently printed in eight parts over a period of twenty-five years (1909–1934), and later compiled into two volumes (containing four parts each) on the 120th year of its first publication, *Aithihyamala* has a vibrant life in the cultural context of Kerala. In this study, I have used the twin-volume text published by the Kottarathil Sankunni Memorial Committee in 1974.

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Answerability is also about negotiating with alterity and accountability in relational scenarios of thoughts, words and deeds involving others.

The Text and Its Contexts

The connections of *Aithihyamala* stories with the regional and pan-Indian socio-ethical conventions, literary and linguistic tropes and narrative genres are intricate and multidirectional. The textual life of *Aithihyamala* has a curious dialogic relationship with its locale and culture. An assemblage of more than a hundred legends and myths, it is doubtlessly a polyphonic text containing multiple narrative voices. Kottarathil Sankunni is the compiler-narrator of Aithihyamala stories. The elephant tales form one of the most delightful and instructive narrative categories of the text.

A majority of the *Aithihyamala* stories touch upon myths, folklore, beliefs, life, and ceremonial practices of the Malayalam-speaking region of South India, known as Kerala. *Aithihyamala* is being read by children and adults of many generations in Kerala and has been reprinted and translated. *Aithihyamala* defies categorization into a single rigid generic framework of history, mythology, folklore, or hearsay. The life-worlds emplotted and narrativized in *Aithihyamala* are open to many perceptions and interpretations. The text maps the tonalities of life in a variety of spatio-temporalities. Myths and legends in *Aithihyamala* construct multiple chronotopes in which "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin 1992: 84).

The text has borrowed, provided alternative perspectives to, and modified some stories of Indian mythological traditions. Sometimes a character from the narratives from another region is represented as part of a significant local mythical narrative branching out to several substories. A good example would be Vararuchi in the story "Parayipettu Panthirukulam," who appears in the legends about the mythical emperor Vikramaditya of Ujjain. The language of events in the *Aithihyamala* text is not always Malayalam. In certain stories, there are segments of events that had taken place in faraway lands. Sankunni has narrated them utilizing the richness and complexities of Malayalam language deftly. Bakhtin's observation in *Dialogic Imagination* elucidates the connection between the language of narration, and assorted spatio-temporalities of events narrated:

> …at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present. (Bakhtin 1992: 291)

The elephant stories in *Aithihyamala* weave the animal into human life-worlds and institutions. The most highlighted aspect of elephants' existence is the ritual responsibilities connected with Hindu temples. The nuances of associations

between the temple elephant, the deity, the mahout in charge of the elephant, the feudal patrons, and the community around the temple are vividly portrayed by Sankunni.

The *Aithihyamala* narratives unfold in such a way that we get a glimpse into the milieu with its complex socio-ritual aspects and hierarchies of caste, class, and gender. A peculiarity of Sankunni's narration is that even if he does not refer to the minor figures in the stories by their names, he gives an indication of their gender, religion, and jati.[2] We see characters being referred to as an old *antharjanam* (Malayala Brahmin woman), a Muhammadiya (Muslim) woman, a kanakkan, an ezhavan, a moothathu, a nair, an ambalavasi, etc. (terms indicative of jatis). Myths and legends in *Aithihyamala* may not be an authentic substitute for regional history, but they are lively subtexts that supplement alternative perspectives to the cultural history of a people.

Aithihyamala moves in time and space forming a web of associations. Bakhtin examines narrative discourses as composite dialogical phenomena in which events and personae need to be looked at in their relational dynamics and not in isolation. Dialogism, according to Bakhtin, comprises several expressions including actual tropes of conversation, besides exchanges with other cultures, temporalities, and genres. Dialogic expressions are unfinalizable, never to be completed, and capable of generating endless strings of responses. They imply inconclusive narrations and a semantic condition for non-closure in which diverse meaning are suggested, and kept open-ended. When Bakhtin states that "the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (Bakhtin 1984a: 166), he does not mean a temporal rupture between the past, the present, and the future, but an unending flux that cannot thus artificially be compartmentalized. It is not a return to linearity; Bakhtin deconstructs the tangible trajectory of events that seeks a facile ending at a point in time deemed to be the limit of temporal perception. Dialogic dynamics in a narrative resists finality as the narrative enters the fluid cultural imagination of a people and lives a life outside its own textuality. I quote at length the passage in which Bakhtin captures the complexity of the dialogic equations between texts and contexts:

> There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) —they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its

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[2]The system of jatis in erstwhile Kerala is not the same as the *varna* system based on four divisions. Jati is not restricted to occupational division, though some jatis are associated with occupational practices. Jati is a more nuanced division in which small communities of people are grouped according to customary practices and ceremonies. Purity pollution norms and untouchability were practiced in erstwhile Kerala. Jati identities played a key role in determining the ritual and social status of individuals.

homecoming festival. The problem of *great time.* (Bakhtin 1986: 170; emphasis in the original)

The dialogism of *Aithihyamala* is not restricted to multilayered speech acts within the stories and interactions happening between diverse contexts and temporalities of authoring (production of narrative) and reading (reception of narratives).[3] Words or utterances constitute a narrative and it is not merely a semantic entity. Bakhtin observes in *Dialogic Imagination* that "The word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context" (1992: 284). *Aithihyamala* stories have several origins or no fixed origin: some stories were in circulation as tales narrated by grandmothers; some are local historical events transformed by a touch of fantasy; some stories retell narratives from other places to match the regional life-worlds. All stories, narrated in the signature style of Sankunni, are enriched by imagination and fanciful exaggeration. The intertextual allusions to pan-Indian texts and suggested associations with other literary and ritual traditions further reinforce the dialogic complexity of *Aithihyamala*.

Indian narrative traditions such as mythology, epics, puranas, and didactic *Jataka*, *Hitopadesha* and *Kathasaritsagara* stories have meandering plots in which divine, human, animal, and demonic beings play a plethora of roles and display several shades of character. The elephants in *Aithihyamala* occupy a liminal ontic space between the human and the animal and are also endowed with god-like attributes. In the characterization of elephants, Sankunni often alludes to Ganapati or the elephant-headed god of obstruction-free beginning of all endeavors and guardian of communities (ganas). In Hindu mythology, Ganapati accommodates divine, human, and animal realms simultaneously with his grotesque corporeality. Ganapati, whom Goddess Parvati (consort of Shiva) had created from her body, has the head of an elephant with one of the tusks broken by his brother Skanda. Ganapati's human head was chopped off by Shiva in a quarrel and eventually replaced with the head of an elephant in a rite of resurrection and transmogrification to pacify Parvati. The asexually created body of Ganapati has gone through experiences of injuries, disfigurement, death, mutation, and reincarnation with a different face. He who is imperfect is invoked before acts aspiring for perfection. Ganapati symbolizes the promise of endless regeneration. The gluttonous Ganapati has a fat belly and a puny rat for his carrier. The mythological narratives around him portray Ganapati in an ambivalent comic-reverential way. The respect given to the elephant in Hindu temple and ritual spaces owes partly to the cult of Ganapati.

The author of *Aithihyamala*, Kottarathil Sankunni, was urged by a literary stalwart to record the myths and legends. Kandathil Varghese Mappila, the managing editor of *Malayala Manorama* publications and a friend of Sankunni, requested him to write the rare stories he had the habit of narrating to his colleagues and contemporaries. The author, the one who was instrumental in making him write

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[3]If we take a chronotopic view, authoring is not a process involving a single individual, especially in the case of a text like *Aithihyamala*. Since the text so widely read by several generations and cultures, its reception is also not singular or group-specific.

and the intended readership in the case of *Aithihyamala*, form a complicated dialogic matrix. From a Bakhtinian view, the fuzzy deployment of words and ideas forming a narrative and the indeterminacy of authorship of *Aithihyamala* can be explained as a dialogic process. This view enriches our understanding of the process of gathering and retelling the legends, folktales and myths in the form of a single text:

> A word (or in general any sign) is interindividual. Everything that is said, expressed, is located outside the soul of the speaker and does not belong only to him. The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one). The word is a drama. It is performed outside the author and it cannot be interjected into the author. (Bakhtin 1986: 121–122)

Admittedly, the compilation of *Aithihyamala* is done with a didactic intention and a sense of moral responsibility of educating the minds of readers. Kandathil Varghese Mappila felt that stories that Sankunni narrated should be published for the benefit posterity because:

> Such myths and legends are not meant for casual narration and forgetting. Though packed with humour, pranks, exaggerations, and irrationalities, these narratives also contain great philosophical principles and timeless wisdom that all of us should internalize. (Quoted in the "Preface," *Aithihyamala* Volume I, 11)

Aithihyamala, therefore, has a context of addressivity. The text's answerability or responsive exchange with its context is characterized by nuances of interactions, a hybrid linguistic style combining the classical and the folk, and a purposeful moral vision. Bakhtin's views on answerability and ethics might not favour a normative position. He asserts: "There is no aesthetic ought, scientific ought, and beside them—an ethical ought; there is only that which is aesthetically, theoretically and ethically valid and these validities may be joined by the ought, for which all of them are instrumental… The ought gains its validity within the unity of my once-occurrent answerable life" (Bakhtin 1999: 5).

Cultural discourses fleshing out in different genres of artistic and literary expressions are imbued with heteroglossia or meanings attributed and appropriated by many perspectives and tonalities. That makes any cultural discourse invariably polyphonic or many-voiced. In other words, many voices, points of view, tones, styles, registers, references, and meanings that emerge in a narrative or other forms of art need not be the sole expression of the narrator-artist. Bakhtin points out:

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other… The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's *own* only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language… but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (Bakhtin 1986: 293–294)

In the elephant stories of *Aithihyamala,* how the non-human or the animal takes a crucial role in the life-worlds is a complex phenomenon. The text is embedded with possibilities for animal—human interactions in socio-ceremonial scenarios. In Kerala, no temple festival is considered complete without elephants. Elephants are part of the sites of interaction between the divinity and the humanity in locations of rites and worship such as temples and village shrines. In the text, one also sees human beings of different castes, classes, and gender intermingle with domestic and wild animals who are part of their lives through adventure, ritual, and everyday needs.

Aithihyamala captures an indeterminate time period and has an obscure historicity. There are stories about people and animals who lived and died in recent pasts. Some other stories cannot be associated with a definite temporality and a line between fantasy and history cannot be drawn. The transformations happening to certain narratives that are transposed to a different oral-cultural tradition exemplify numerous possibilities of dialogic exchange. The conditions for polyphony manifest as the narrative shifts through diverse imaginings, cultures, and regions. The narrative is *loosely* chronotopic because human identities, emotions, and thoughts are associated with the space-time of events, even though the association is not rigid or definite. According to Bakhtin:

> In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values. Abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities and conceive them as things apart from the emotions and values that attach to them. But living artistic perception (which also of course involves thought, but not abstract thought) makes no such divisions. (Bakhtin 1986: 243)

Aithihyamala, in its eight-part form, had a suggestive structural arrangement which is also retained in the two volumes version. Each of these eight parts begins with a story about a goddess and ends with an elephant story. The rest of the narratives about people, places, and beliefs are embedded between the stories of the divine feminine and extraordinary tuskers. Kottarathil Sankunni is a devotee of the goddess and has *aanakkambam* (great fondness and fascination for elephants). Sankunni associates hyperbolic narrative tropes of miracles and extraordinary heroic feats to the stories of the divine feminine and the elephant. The animal-protagonist becomes pivotal to the events and actions in the elephant stories. The heroization of elephants is done also by attributing them god-like and human qualities.

Before entering the domain of *Aithihyamala* stories about elephants, I present the following scattered instances to give an idea about the social and ritual roles and status of elephants in Kerala, and how their lives are entangled with the lives of people. This psycho-social overview is by no means exhaustive. Elephants have a space of importance in the cultural domain and popular imaginings of Kerala. Being the official animal of the Kerala state, it appears on the state emblem and on the logo of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC). A recurring motif in mural art and kavya traditions, elephants sometimes symbolize unharnessed desire. In some songs of Mohiniyattam, a sensuous dance form of Kerala, a

beautiful wholesome woman's slow tread is compared to that of an elephant. There is an ancient text, *Mathangaleela*, about elephants and the herbal and Ayurvedic treatment to be given to them for various ailments. Vailoppilly Narayana Menon's long poem *Sahyante Makan* (The son of the Sahya mountain range) portrays the sad plight of an elephant in captivity who remembers the wild days spent in the jungles of Sahya ranges. A movie was made on the life of Guruvayoor Kesavan, the legendary temple elephant. The tusks of Kesavan adorn the entrance of the famous Guruvayoor temple; he has a monument and an annual memorial day that is observed reverentially.

The elephants had been captured from jungles for work in sawmills. It was, and still is, a matter of great prestige to be able to keep a captive elephant. A person who owns an elephant usually utilizes it for temple events and labour. The Guruvayoor Krishna temple, for instance, owns many elephants who have a sanctuary in Punnathoor Kotta. Sometimes, elephants are targeted by poachers who kill them for expensive ivory. The ill treatment of elephants has often aroused the ire of the common public and activists.

Elephants are part of temple festivals, public events, and activities such as the *gajamela* (gathering of more than a hundred elephants) for promoting tourism in Kerala. Statuettes of elephants made of wood and clay and reed mats with paintings of elephants are popular souvenirs tourists carry from Kerala. Sometimes, elephants are used as an auspicious presence during weddings and inaugurations.

A typical scenario during a Kerala temple festival has a carnivalesque air about it. In a carnival space where disparate elements conjoin, hierarchies are challenged and subverted. A temple festival brings together devotees, merchants, fortune tellers, elephants, artists, and musicians. In a space resonating with the music of drums and trumpets, caparisoned elephants stand in a row, fanning their ears in the heat. It is believed that elephants have a sense of rhythm and hence the movement of ears in coordination with the drum beats. The tallest elephant at the center of the row carries the idol of the deity. Colorful sets of umbrellas are on display, music is at its loudest and some people are drunk. Occasionally, they break into a dance. At night, there could be elaborate rituals in the sanctum sanctorum; outside the temple, however, there would be stage performances, ballets, kathakai, and folk dances. The temple festival ends with fireworks. The elephants and their mahouts, who come from various parts of the country, are well fed and attended to. There have been many incidents of elephant violence during the temple festivals, which have resulted in the loss of life and property. The coming together of "the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (Bakhtin 1984a, b: 123) can be observed in the temple festivals held in open spaces. This space is different from the official cloistered spaces of the temple interior and religious observances.

Temple grounds during the annual festival are for equality and camaraderie: "People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind" (Bakhtin 1984a, b: 10). A human being in the carnival space

participates in a collective rejuvenation through laughter and acts of merriment. Bakhtin further elaborates: "This is why festive folk laughter presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts" (Bakhtin 1984b: 92). Carnivalization of the festive ground is about the subversion of social ordering resulting from free and familiar contact among people and elephants. It is a space where relationships thrive and exchanges happen.

Animal Hero and Answerability: Feats of Love, Hate and Revenge

Elephants in *Aithihyamala* stories are intelligent and sentient beings who could even communicate through a language of gestures and performative bodily acts. Their centrality in the narratives is indubitably established. The relationship of the elephant with ruling kings, rich feudal patrons, and other individuals of great social standing are described in a reverential eulogizing tone by Sankunni, highlighting the greatness of the elephant and the human being. Sankunni tries to capture the emotions and thoughts of the elephant through observation and imagination. The link between the author and the hero is akin to or a trope for the self—other matrix. Authoring a protagonist or hero is a dialogic act establishing a relationship with the other. It implicates simultaneously a break and connectedness. Here the rupture between the hero and the author is more explicit since the former is an animal that does not communicate in a language legible enough to make much sense. So, the author's outsideness is absolute and it is through anthropomorphizing the protagonist of the narrative (elephant) that the author tries to break into its psyche. Anthropomorphism, as Agamben puts it, can also be interpreted in terms of an ambivalent relationality, simultaneously indicating a rupture and a continuum:

> The division of life into vegetal and relational, organic and animal, animal and human passes first of all as a mobile border within living man and without this intimate caesura, the very decision of what is human and what is not would probably not be possible. It is possible to oppose man to other living things, and at the same time to organize the complex —and not always edifying—economy of relations between men and animals, only because something like an animal life has been separated within man, only because this distance and proximity to the animal have been measured and recognized first of all in the closest and most intimate space. (Agamben 2004: 16–17)

This relational dynamics is not merely for projecting an idea about the self which had presumably remained intrinsic. The relationality has an exterior rationale in the social space occupied by the human and the animal. In other words, the connectedness is not an intuitive feeling; it is established and sustained through actual tangible acts. Answerability is not limited to a simplistic verbal response. It has powerful underlying vision concerning fairness. The accountability implicated in selves and others involved in a dialogic exchange is also about an ethical view

about the other. In his *The Animal That Therefore I Am* Derrida has coined the neologism *limitrophy* in the context of the exploration of animal—human interfaces. He affirms that both human and animal are porous and malleable that they spill over and expand into one another, while projecting visible boundaries. More than a transformation of the human into the animal or vice versa, a dialogic possibility that implicates permeable, negotiable boundaries would be suitable for understanding the captive elephant in human society. In such a dialogic relationship, the uniqueness of the '*I*', the *other* and the *once-occurrent act* should be acknowledged. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin explains this idea:

> From my own unique place an approach is open to the whole world in its uniqueness, and for me it is open only from that place… Man-in-general does not exist; *I* exist and a particular concrete *other* exists… All these are valuative moments of Being which are valid individually and do not universalize or generalize once-occurrent Being, and they are revealed to me from my unique place in Being as the foundations of my non-alibi in Being. (1999: 17)

In each elephant story, Kottarathil Sankunni claims that the protagonist of that particular story is the most majestic one and also the wisest. In the story about Kidangoor Kandankoran, a famous elephant who belonged to a Subrahmanya temple in Ettumanoor Taluk, Sankunni asserts: "In the physical form and nature, there was no other elephant who could excel Kandankoran who was bigger and more beautiful than even Thiruneelakandhan" (Part I, Volume I, 188). The second part of the first volume ends with the story of Vaikkam Thiruneelakandhan in which Sankunni affirms without any qualms of contradicting himself: "There had never been another elephant comparable to Thiruneelakandhan; his mahout Govindassar was also an exceptional individual. I am sure there would not ever be an elephant as great as Thiruneelakandhan in future also" (332) Kottarathil Sankunni attributes timeless uniqueness and peerless supremacy to elephants Konniyil Kochayyappan, Avanamanakkal Gopalan, Aranmula Valiya Balakrishnan, Kottarakkara Chandrasekharan, Panthalam Neelakandhan and Thiruvattath Adikesavan each of whom is described as "a never-before and never-after kind of an elephant."

Each elephant story describes the inimitable abilities and feats of the protagonist elephant. The eventful lives of these elephants have had ups and downs and episodes of pain and pleasure. According to Sankunni, all these elephants were well loved by the community. They were also excellent workers who could carry the heaviest of tree trunks from the jungle to other places. Kidangoor Kandankoran, the hero in the first elephant story in the compilation, is described as the epitome of cleverness, innocence and valor. Never subservient to mahouts, he had a mind and will of his own. Kandankoran was very adept in time management during the temple rituals and circumambulation with the temple deity. He was also smart in matters of money and would not commit to hard labor without a good offer of food and wages. On not being paid justly, Kandankoran used to carry heavy logs and tree trunks back to the same place where he had brought them from. Avanamanakkal Gopalan was also an excellent worker, but was not so adamant in matters of payment for his labor. Sankunni has described how intelligently Gopalan had pulled

out a jackfruit tree that had crashed into a well. Vaikkam Thiruneelakandhan was like a pious human being in his dealings and according to Sankunni, he resembled a Brahmin in his disposition. He was so well-behaved that there was no need to chain him; he also had a wonderful memory and never repeated a mistake. Konniyil Kochayyappan was skilful in the art of capturing wild elephants and taming them. He had assisted in trapping more than seven hundred elephants. Adikesavan was able to perform the temple duties assigned to him without the supervision of a mahout.

Sankunni has described exceptional acts of kindness performed by these elephants. They were endowed with empathy, sense of justice and concern for other beings. Despite his strength and bravado, Kandankoran was generous to all living beings, including buffaloes of the locality whom he regularly helped for finding food. Sankunni describes an incident to illustrate Kandankoran's kindness. Once, while the elephant was walking through a narrow path, an old *antharjanam* was passing by. She fainted with fear on seeing the massive elephant face to face. Kandankoran gently picked up the unconscious woman to place her gently on the side of the path. In a similar fashion, Avanamanakkal Gopalan rescued a blind Naykkan (a tribal) who was trapped in a fenced narrow lane, blocking the elephant. He had also saved a labourer of the kanakkan jati from drowning. Thiruneelakandhan of the Vaikkam temple and Valiya Balakrishnan of Aranmula used to share their food generously with other elephants and were tolerant to mischievous children. Children used to play fearlessly with the gentle elephant, Konniyil Kochayyappan. He saved a festive crowd by controlling another elephant that had become restless with fear during the fireworks. Kottarakkara Chandrasekharan was grateful to a Muslim woman who gave him water while he was tired and thirsty. He continued to help her till the end of his life by giving her a share of the gifts and money he received from the king and other patrons. Chandrasekharan rescued the children of the same Muslim woman from a fire accident. He had a long friendship with an ezhava toddy tapper who allowed him to drink from his toddy pot. He helped the people of a locality by killing a murderous rogue elephant of the nearby forest. Aranmula Valiya Balakrishnan saved the people of Naranganam by killing a man-eater tiger.

The elephants are depicted as being unusually gifted beings. They are full of passions and emotions. Their relationship with human beings and other elephants is a significant thematic interest for Sankunni. Thiru Neelakandhan's fondness for his mahout, Govindassar, is described in detail by Sankunni. Aranmula Valiya Balakrishnan had strong ties with his patron, Thottavallil Kurup, and whenever he had any difficulty with his mahouts or people of the region, he used to approach Kurup. Kottarakkara Chandrasekharan was greatly loved by the Maharaja of Travancore, Swati Thirunal Ramavarma, for whom he found a rock with a rare gem inside it. Swati Thirunal used to wear this gem on special occasions. When Ramavarma passed away, the elephant grieved for a whole year. Chandrasekharan fell in love with Bhavani, a female elephant and lived with her and their child as a family. Konniyil Kochayyappan's attachment with his patron, Ranni Kartha, was such that he insisted on being fed a ball of rice every day by him. Kochayyappan

was shattered after the death of his patron. Sankunni also refers to Kochayyappan's friendship with the elephant Padmanabhan and affection for his mahout, Thirumoolam Pillai. Avanamanakkal Gopalan belonged to a *mana* (traditional Brahmin homestead) and he treated the oldest woman of the house as if she were his mother. Adikesavan, an elephant endowed with auspicious features, was given that name by none other than Marthanda Varma, the most famous Maharaja of Thiruvithamkoor (Travancore, an erstwhile princely state in Kerala). Every month, the elephant used to travel to the palace in Thiruvananthapuram so that the king would be able to see him. This tradition was then continued by the next king. Adikesavan was described as a true and respectful subject of the Travancore kings. He had such a strong connection with his mahout, Azhakappa Pillai, that both died on the same day.

The lives of elephants narrated in *Aithihyamala* challenge the notions about human exceptionalism and that it is not restricted to evolutionary continuum. In trans-species sciences, human psychology and animal behavior are studied and animals are found to have similar traits of memory, emotions, revenge, forgiveness, boredom, and empathy as human beings. Elephants may also have diverse personalities; they can practice care, fairness, competition, and cooperation and be violent and angry. Daphne Sheldrick, who has done extensive studies on elephants, has noted: "Elephant can be happy or sad, volatile or placid. They display envy, jealousy, throw tantrums and are fiercely competitive, and they can develop hang-ups that are reflected in behaviour… They grieve deeply for lost loved ones, even shedding tears and suffering depression. They have a sense of compassion that projects beyond their own kind and sometimes extends to others in distress. They help one another in adversity, miss an absent loved one, and when you know them really well, you can see that they even smile when having fun and they are happy."[4]

Beckoff points out that the new developments in the research on mirror neurons convincingly explain the anthropomorphism in animals. Captive elephants tend to copy the behaviour patterns of human beings around them (Bekoff 2007: 128–31). Mirror neurons imply direct simulation and communication through feelings. Knowledge about elephant behavior, he affirms, is essential for the safety of the mahout and for the just treatment of the elephant. The idea of mirror neurons takes dialogism to a biological plane. Agamben's view, "The total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man" (Agamben 2004: 77) corroborates the possibility of a biological dialogism proposed by Beckoff and Daphne Sheldrick.

The plight of elephants in captivity is sometimes more miserable than Sankunni portrays. Elephants captured from the jungle undergo rigorous training, suffer from illness due to lack of nutrition and movement, and work hard without any rest. The exploitation of elephants resulting from their commercial utility and uses in the

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[4]Quoted in Bradshaw (2009: 24) (The article by Daphne Sheldrick, "Elephant Emotion," is available on David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Website, https://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org (accessed on March 1, 2014.)).

show business is not uncommon. Anthropomorphism of animals presents a new ethical proposition. Regan and Singer, referring to a similar Kantian idea, remark: Our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties towards humanity. Animal nature has analogies to human nature, and by doing our duties to animals in respect of manifestations of human nature, we indirectly do our duty to humanity… We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals (Regan and Singer 1989: 23–24).

Sankunni emphasizes how the elephant-protagonists had maintained close ties with some of their patrons, mahouts, and other elephants. He also records that they were often very murderous in targeting unkind mahouts and erring elephants. Bradshaw has a sensitive explanation for elephant breakdown and inter- and intra-species violence. In his opinion, elephants are nonviolent by nature. During musth, or the period of heightened sexuality, captive elephants can become openly aggressive. Fear can also make them go out of control. Bradshaw observes that elephant violence has little to do with elephants than with human culture. He says: "Hyperaggresion, depression, infant neglect and other symptoms are not uncommon for elephants in captivity, but are unheard in the wild" (Bradshaw 2009: 71).

Sankunni has mentioned a few acts of violence by the otherwise noble elephants of *Aithihyamala*. Kandankoran, though he never killed a mahout, had the habit of doing things without bothering to take instructions from human beings. On being controlled, he used to show signs of displeasure. Elephants sometimes also caused unintentional harm. Vaikkam Thiruneelakandhan, who was very fond of his mahout, Govindassar, was aggrieved at injuring him by mistake. The same elephant once wanted to eat some bananas hanging outside a Muslim woman's shop and the shop owner accidentally died while trying to stop him. Avanamanakkal Gopalan killed a cruel mahout named Achyuta Menon by holding him under water. Aranmula Valiya Balakrishnan also has killed erring mahouts and took revenge on people who harmed him by pelting stones. Kottarakkara Chandrasekharan was a revengeful elephant who would punish people who hurt or misbehave with him. Panthalam Neelakandhan was a performer who could reenact how he had killed a cruel mahout named Kannamodi. If someone, after giving Neelakandhan delicious food, requested him to act Kannamodi's killing, he would happily perform how he had torn Kannamodi into two pieces and tossed the bits of the body into the air.

Aithihyamala stories about elephants have engendered love and a lot of interest in the lives of elephants. This text may make a person more considerate and kind toward elephants, though the precarious side of the lives of captive elephants has not been discussed in detail by Sankunni. *Aithihyamala* also has the potential to lead one through the path of self-reflection and critique. It's narrative ideal may facilitate a process similar to what Bakhtin describes, "After looking at ourselves through the eyes of another, we always return—life—into ourselves again, and the final, or as it were, recapitulative event takes place within ourselves in the categories of our own life" (*Art and Answerability* 17).

The text has also presented some misconceptions through an exaggeration of elephants' god-like and anthropomorphic behavior. Jean Christophe Bailly's observation that the narratives and representations focusing on the mythical and

allegorical power of the animal world often generate a wrong conception about animal experience is true in the case of elephants. Bailly recommends that despite the prevalent depictions of animals, one should be prepared to remain on a threshold that precedes all such interpretations: "A threshold where, prior to any definition, animals are no longer reducible to a body of knowledge that localizes them or to a legend that traverses them; they are perceived in their pure singularity, as distinct beings that participate in a world of the living and that regard us in the same light" (Bailly 2011: 13). This view anticipates a just conception and just treatment of animals. Animals have a vast range of behavioral variations. Limiting these diverse behaviors into categories derived from texts and arts without actually observing and knowing animals is a dangerous mistake. Each animal is a once-occurrent being going through once-occurrent experiences of life.

Aithihyamala is basically a text meant to impart valuable lessons of life to people. Sankunni expects us to learn noble virtues from elephants. A text like *Aithihyamala* is a dialogic site of endless possibilities. One cannot underestimate the role of its elephant stories in generating affection, compassion and curiosity about the protagonists, which might, in the long run, result in justice for them by creating a sense of answerability in human beings.

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Chapter 9
Translation as Dialogue: A Perspective

Pooja J. Mehta

I

India is a multicultural, multilingual country. The time when diversity prevails at every level and sphere of life, translation has helped knit India as a nation throughout her history. It brought, and still brings, languages closer to one another and introduces to one another diverse modes of imagination, varied perceptions, and various regional cultures, thereby linking lands and communities together. In the absence of translations, the ideas and concepts like 'Indian literature', 'Indian culture', 'Indian philosophy' and 'Indian knowledge systems' would have been impossible to negotiate. Translation plays a vital role in extending the scope of language as well as reframing the boundaries of the sayable. New terms and coinages necessitated by translation create new vocabulary and contribute to improvements in expressibility. According to G.N. Devy, Indian consciousness is a "translating consciousness."

Translation has been an almost unconscious activity in the Indian tradition, occurring almost invisible. In both the Indian and the Western context, the subject of translation has not yet received much attention. The tradition of translation is as old as language itself. In India, it has existed since Vedic times or even earlier.

In Hindi, translation is known as *Bhāshāntar* (linguistic transference). Terms such as *parakyāpāravesh* (the transference of the spirit from one body to the other, or transmigration), *sweekaran* (making the other as one's own), *pāltukaran* (domestication), *sahasarjan,* and *tarzumā* are also used to denote the action of translation. There is therefore some debate as to what term should be used to pertain to the nomenclature of translation: translation, transcreation, transference, code-switching, recodification, reproduction, reconstruction or the words mentioned

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above. The term *anuvād* is also used in many Indian languages to denote transla-
tion. According to Avadhesh Kumar Singh, *anuvād* is a more appropriate word than
the other terms which means 'subsequent discourse' (target text) based on a *vād*
(discourse, i.e., source text). The existing discourse, i.e. *vād*, or the source text is
presupposed in *anuvād*. The literal meaning of the term *anuvād* inheres the import
of Dialogism. In that it literally stands for "post statement" that follows, continues
and compliments the earlier stated. This link of consequentiality and interconnec-
tivity makes the discourse bilaterally relevant. The *vād* and *anuvād* lead to the third
stage which can be termed as *samvād* (dialogue) with one's own self and the other.
Samvād (dialogue) becomes an instrument for the transformation of the self and the
other. In his paper "Translation Studies in the twenty first Century," however, Singh
argues that the term '*anuvād*' is a wrong translation of the word 'translation' as it
existed before the term 'translation'. In his view, the word '*rupantar*' is more
suitable to approximate translational practices in Indian context. The word '*ru-
pantar*' (formal transference) literally includes all kinds of various *roop-s* (forms):
linguistic, thematic, formal, modal, semiotic transference, and appropriation (in-
cluding domestication). Unsurprisingly, all forms of translation have been practiced
in India for many centuries.

II

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian theorist, is one of the most prominent and original
philosophers of the twentieth century. Although renowned as a literary critic and a
linguist he himself asserted, "I am a Philosopher". He is also considered to be a
"Philosopher of Human Communication." The quest for self and selfhood led him
to research which lasted for many years and his theories of *dialogism*, *heteroglossia*
and *polyphony*, *monologism*, *outsideness*, *chronotope, carnivalesque*, *utterance*,
and *word*, etc. are the result of this quest.

Bakhtin endeavored to attempt the question, very basic as well as the ultimate
question, Who Am I? He went out of his way to search the various notions of
Selfhood, being a keen student of questions about individual subjectivity. His
preoccupation with such questions resulted over the years in the formulation and
reformulation of the question "How can I know myself?" into other questions with
different connotations such as "How can I know that it is I or it is another who is
talking?" In his work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin outlines his
thinking:

> I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another,
> through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting
> self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (towards
> thou)… The very being of man (both external and internal) is the deepest communion. To
> be means to communicate… To be means to be for another and through the other for
> oneself… I cannot manage without another; I cannot become myself without another.
> (Bakhtin et al. 2003: 287)

Bakhtin's search for an answer to such questions led him to explore the parallels
between the day-to-day communication, utterances and the condition in which the

author writes. In the process, he made important contributions to several different areas of thought.

In his work on literary theory *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin discusses concepts such as *Dialogic* and *Dialogism*. In this work, he contrasts the dialogic and monologic work of literature. The 'dialogic' work carries a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors. The term 'dialogic' applies not only to literature. For Bakhtin, it applies to all languages, since for him all thoughts are dialogic in nature. No word is spoken or written in the vacuum. Every thought is either a response to the things said before or an anticipation of the things to be said in future. In his words: "Every word gives off the scent of a profession, a genre, a current, a party, a particular work, a particular man, a generation, an era, a day, and an hour. Every word smells of the context and context in which it has lived its intense social life" (in Todorov 1998: 56).

Dialogism has a very strong relation with the language. Dialogue is a conversation. The word 'dialogue' suggests two people talking to each other, exchanging ideas, and conveying a message. 'Dialogism,' to his mind, is not limited to dialogue in the usual sense of the word. According to Bakhtin, language itself is dialogic as it is used in a response to some utterance. The language looks different when all its components are conceived as dialogue. As stated in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

> The dialogic nature of consciousness is the dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human existence is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds…. (Bakhtin et al. 2003: 293)

His theory of dialogism can be applied at multiple levels and on various subjects. The Dialogic criticism proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin opens up the new perspectives to study language, literary work, culture, history and so on.

Dialogue is an epistemological exercise. The word *Dialogue* derives from the Latin word *dialogos*, *dia* meaning through or inter and *logos* meaning speech, oration or a discourse. It is communication with multiple works. In the literary sense, dialogue means the way we interpret; de-/re-construct the text in relation to its context. Dialogism is the organizing principle of both *polyphony* and *heteroglossia*. The term 'dialogism' represents the quality of discourse defined by its relationship to other instances, both past, to which it responds, and future, whose response it anticipates.

The writer, when s/he writes, responds to, or engages with, the past and present discourses. Composing is never a solitary business of the writer working in isolation. It is always the result of his or her interaction with the world, dialogue at various levels. In short, writing is a socio-historical process and one that is collaborative in nature. Subsequently, in the process of translation the translator chooses and translates a part of the writer's past and, through the process of translation, makes it present to himself and perhaps also to others generates the

future for other readers, researchers, and translators. A translated text serves as a source text for many languages in many cases and this is a continuous process. Thus, translation renders itself useful in generating dialogue between past, present, and the future.

III

The discourse, the source text, is contingent on the context. Without context, it becomes either inadequate or ambiguous. Context includes co-texts, situations, interactional biographies, cultural context, and so on. The act of translation can be seen as a type of communication. Any process of communication starts with the context and idea, rather than with the sender. Communication involves interactions with other people, other systems, and another dimension of one's own self. These interactions involve interdependencies which cannot be avoided or reduced. A single utterance by one is also dialogic in nature. It is interactive.

Translation is a complex process which involves many disciplines: language, linguistics, culture, semiotics, stylistics, etc. Every translation constitutes part of a moving and circulating process, filled with multidirectional cultural transfers, assimilations, and hybridity. The translator indulges in a dialogue with the text, and with the author to understand the written text. As a reader, he interacts with the text, parts of the text, and the text as a whole. The meaning of the text results from the author's construction and the reader's reconstruction. The latter is not just a reconstruction of the author's meaning but the reader relates and reacts to the text, and develops an understanding which is active and responsive. Reading a particular text involves relating it to the past experiences, previous knowledge, and to the other text read before means an "intertextual reading."

The task of the translator becomes more intricate as s/he has to be conversant with not only one language, its tradition and culture but also with the other languages and traditions which influenced the source language. Such a situation generates a dilemma in the translator's mind. This dilemma was very well captured by Cicero long ago, when he stated that: "If I render for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator."

It matters what type of a text is being translated as well as the type of translation. Types of translation can be categorized in various ways. Roman Jacobson, in his article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", distinguishes between three types of translations:

(1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language).
(2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language).
(3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems).

These types describe the process of transfer from SL to TL (Brower 1959). Here, in all the types, the central problem, as defined and pointed out by Jacobson, is that the messages may serve as adequate interpretations of code units or messages, but there is ordinarily no full equivalence through translation. Further, he draws attention to the issue that even apparent synonymy does not yield equivalence so one has to resort to a combination of code units in order to fully interpret the meaning of a single unit. Hence, throughout the process of translation, the translator engages in dialogue, to interpret the text correctly. The dilemma which the translator experiences, while translating itself, is an evidence of the dialogue going on within.

Language manifests a socio-historical context. So, the word is not merely a lexical entity but also a cultural memory in which the entire society participates. When a word is put into context, the whole society participates and recapitulates this experience. The translator recreates this participatory experience from the source language to the target language by re-contextualizing it so that the target language reader can participate in an alien cultural experience. The translator is able to create such a participatory experience only when his contextualization is sound and to make context sound s/he has to engage in a dialogue with the text, with the author, with the words and language used in the text.

Translation is comprehended as an anthropological act. It is, in a sense, an act of reconciliation amongst various groups, nations, languages, and so on. On the other side, dialogue also serves as a reconciler in many ways. In the case of India, being a multilingual and multicultural nation, translation is inevitable and translations have facilitated the dialogue possible from ancient times to the present day.

IV

Translation is an interpretation of the text. In the Indian knowledge tradition, for the interpretation of the text, there are three considered standards of the truth, the knower, knowledge and the known. The *known* is the text itself which the reader (translator) intends to interpret (translate). The *knower*, in the case of a text like the *Upanishads*, is the original *dṛṣṭā* (or seer) of the hymn. In the case of other key texts, he will be the author. The ancient Indian scholars have named this discussion matter of the unity of 'knower, knowledge and the known' as *triputi* or tried. In this context, it can be understood that the translator ought to be in spiritual contact with the original seer (author). As a result, the communion between the author, the translator, and the knowledge that is revealed by the text form a triangular cognitive basis of translation. This will continue again as the triad of translator, knowledge revealed by the target text and the reader of the target text. The translator is ought to be a *sahrday*, a kind of identity in which the entire being of the translator throbs with a radiance and luster of the original. In this triad, dialogue takes place between the known (text), the knower (Author or the translator), and knowledge. In other words, it is a communication between the original author, translator, and the knowledge which is revealed by the text. To Bakhtin, too, a text is not a self-contained organism and the language represented in the text is not an alien

entity; instead, a site for dialogic interaction of modes of discourse or multiple voices.

Further, as critical yardsticks of translation, in the contemporary period, Indian poetic theories like '*Dhvani*' (suggestive meaning) and *Auchitya* (appropriateness) have been applied. There has been a controversy about whether a word is to be translated literally or in terms of its sense (i.e., word for word vs. sense for sense translation). In the Indian context, beyond the literal meaning, there is suggestive meaning in the word used in a text. In the Rig-Veda Samhita (687), it is said that a man who sees only the literary meaning of a poem sees, but does not see; he hears but does not hear. Anandavardhana, a ninth-century critic, calls this theory of poetic suggestion *dhvani*. As defined by Anandavardhana, *dhvani* is the capacity of a word to suggest a charming sense other than its literal and expressed meaning. He establishes the theory that *dhvani* is the soul of poetry. A question may arise here of how to communicate the suggestive meaning in the target text. The suggestive meaning depends mainly on three factors. It depends first on the peculiar expression of the word in the text with a particular motive, second on its shades of meaning, and third on its socio-cultural context.

Meaning is both cognitive and socio-historical. It is dialogically constituted, made in dialogue. It takes place with the reference to the world and even against to the background of the world. To get the suggested meaning, the translator has to indulge in dialogue with the original author, the text. Thus, throughout the translation process, translator is in constant dialogue with the text, the author.

If closely observed, it can be derived that translation is a process of decision making. It starts with the choice of the text to be translated. It involves making decisions in terms of the choice of words, expressions, etc. Prior to this, the translator engages in a dialogue with him- or herself to know why s/he wants to translate and why s/he wants to translate a particular text. It is obvious that when the matter comes to taking a decision, one consciously or unconsciously dialogues with one's self or with the other person involved in it. The translator does this to remain faithful to the text s/he has undertaken to translate.

V

Bakhtin has given much importance to translation. He has not mentioned explicitly, but it is implicit in his definition of the humanities as a discipline: "In the Humanities, as distinct from natural and mathematical sciences, there arises a specific task of establishing, transmitting and interpreting the words of others". Here, the task of interpreting and transmitting the words of others clearly involves translation. In Bakhtin's later work on dialogism, which pertains to social interaction, he indicates a theory of translation by emphasizing the inevitable transformation that occurs when words or utterances move between self and other, between social dialects, languages, and even cultures. He states that any meaning, culture or subject changes in encounter with other, foreign meanings, cultures or subjects.

Bakhtin was fascinated by the multiplicity of languages not just the national languages like Russian, English, French, and Spanish, etc., but the scores of different 'languages' that exist simultaneously within a single culture and within a single speaking community. Bakhtin was particularly interested in the issue of translatability between these languages and speech communities. Translation process was required for one social group to understand another in the same city, for children to understand parents in the same family. For him, the multilingual environments liberate human beings by opening up new vistas of knowledge. As said earlier, dialogue is epistemological. Putting emphasis on the epistemological aspect on dialogue he says: "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction". For Bakhtin, to be means to communicate and one cannot be or manage without the other. Thus, according to him, dialogue becomes the prime need *to be one's self*.

Translation can be viewed as dialogue with a fresh dimension. Two decades ago, translation in history was merely considered a metaphor for new strategies of intellectual history, but today it is an object of epistemological analysis. Today, the understanding of translation is guided by linguistics and literary theory. Translation is no longer a simple transfer of words or texts from one language to another as perhaps might be found in a dictionary, but has become a translingual act of transcoding cultural material and a complex act of communication.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism provides an opportunity to look at translation and translation theory in a new light and can open up new vistas of knowledge in the future. I have limited myself up to Bakhtin's theory of dialogue and dialogism and viewing translation as dialogue. Further, translation can be viewed and analysed in the light of his other theories like *heteroglossia, carnivalesque, chronotope*.

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Chapter 10
A Bakhtinian View of the Development of the Novelistic Genre in India

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In his book *The Novel and our Time* (1948), Alex Comfort, claims that the 'novel' was a product of an 'asocial society.'[1] According to him, historically the novel is not only the art form of social barbarism but the art form of scientific method.[2] He points out that, "The novel has grown to its present position (i.e. its position in 1948 in Europe) through the nineteenth century from roots which existed before the industrial revolution and the advent of technical-asocial society"[3] in which the technical development in printing made the novel accessible to a vast majority of people for 'a novel cannot be memorized, it must be printed'. Also in the age of thorough individualism, 'it is radically individual in its approach, since it addresses itself to one reader at a time, and it can make no assumption about his beliefs or activities comparable with those which the early nineteenth century novel, addressed to a section of society could make…' Comfort further comments on the subjugation of the drama, primarily to the novel and secondarily to lyrical poetry, and the elimination of communal forms of poetic and dramatic expression, except in closed groups.

Novels have a very special relationship with conversational language and with life and everyday genres. The novel is the youngest and the sole genre that continues to develop—a final definition of the word novel has not been reached. It contains within itself several genres and sparks the renovation of other genres. It presupposes epistemology as the dominant discipline and performs a thorough contemporization of language and thoughts. According to Bakhtin, "Literary language is not represented in the novel as a unitary, completely finished off and

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[1]Comfort (1948).
[2]Ibid., p. 14.
[3]Ibid., p. 13.

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indisputable language—it is represented precisely as a living mix of varied and opposing voices, developing and renewing itself."[4] Thus, according to Bakhtin, it is language, and its use as both a means and an object of representation, that makes the novel a unique genre. The author loses his authoritative position. He is himself a participant despite his omnipresence in the novel with almost no direct language of his own. Since his job is to represent, to present images of characters as they exist or could exist in real life, the language of the novel cannot be a single unitary language. In Bakhtin's words, "It is impossible to lay out the languages of the novel on a single plane, to stretch them out along a single line. It is a system of intersecting planes."[5] Bakhtin was of the opinion that the novel is grounded in 'contemporary reality' and is essentially a genre in the making and is inseparably related to the contemporary reality as it unfolds.

In his comments on Bakhtin's 'Discourse in the Novel', Richard L.W.C. Clarke points out that "From Plato onwards, art has frequently been defined as a 'mirror held up to nature'. As Ian Watt points out in 'The Rise of the Novel' it is not for nothing that there was the so-called rise of the novel during the early modern period of Cartesian Rationalism and Lockeian empiricism. The result of this is that the novel form has come to function as the classic paradigm of literary realism. The novel is thought to verbally represent 'life' as apprehended through physical senses of the novelist."[6] Bakhtin maintains that the novel acquired its present form following the appearance of other forms (those considered low, e.g., parody and travesty), reflecting the real and lighter side of life. He contrasts the use of novelistic language with the language used in a poetic and straightforward genre such as the epic. The novel as a genre makes specific demands upon language and opens up specific possibilities for it. In their introduction to Mikhail Bakhtin, David Lodge and Nigel Wood state that "in 1929, Bakhtin published under his own name, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art,* arguing that Dostoevsky inaugurated a new 'polyphonic' kind of fiction in which the variety of discourses expressing different ideological positions are set in play without being ultimately placed and judged by a totalizing authorial discourse. Later on he thought that this was not unique to Dostoevsky's style but an inherent characteristic of the novel as a literary form— one that he traced back to its origins in the 'parodic travestying' genres of classical and medieval cultures—the satyr plays."[7] In his article 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', Bakhtin tries to establish the role of 'laughter' and 'polyglossia' in the development of novel as a literary form. One must remember that Bakhtin acknowledges the existence of novel as, e.g., 'Greek Romance' in ancient time; for him, however, it was a narrow form, or monological, as the title suggests. For Bakhtin, the novel is essentially formed out of many styles and many images which can be depicted when there is impiety which can develop only through

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[4]Bakhtin (2008a).

[5]Ibid., p. 129.

[6]L.W.C. Clarke, Notes 078. R on Bakhtin's Discourse in the Novel, LITS, p. 3.

[7]Lodge and Wood (2008).

laughter. According to Bakhtin, "parodic travestying forms… liberated the object from the power of language in which it became entangled as if in a net; they destroyed the homogenizing power of myth over language, they freed consciousness from the power of the direct word…"[8]

In another article, 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin states "At the time when major divisions of the poetic genres were developing under the influence of the unifying, centralizing, centripetal forces of verbal, ideological life, the novel—and those artistic prose genres that gravitate toward it—was being historically shaped by the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces. At the time when poetry was accomplishing the task of cultural, national, political centralization of the verbal ideological world in the higher official ideological levels, on the stage of local fairs and at the buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all… where no language could claim to be the authentic incontestable face."[9]

Throughout this article, Bakhtin uses his idea of discourse as a 'social phenomenon'. The social tone of language, according to him, has been ignored in the analysis of genres, resulting in the privileging of individual and period-bound overtones of style. Bakhtin discusses the ever-present state of heteroglossia in a society, emphasizing the fact that the language of each individual is a combination of various voices and is therefore 'unique'. It should be noted that a closed society, one not open to a situation of polyglossia, will itself be limited and 'unique'. A society monologized by the influence of myth will be imprisoned in—and by— its heteroglossia. In his analysis Bakhtin emphasizes the importance of parody. There will be no escape from the power of myth unless looked at from outside (i.e., in a polyglot situation) and travesty, which would enable thinking about every situation in its multiple possibilities. It is clear that a conscious selection of the serious word and rejection of any possible comic reflection as profanation would seriously limit any literary development in the direction of 'novel' writing.

For Bakhtin, the processes involved in creating direct word and novelistic discourse are different. The writer of epic, tragic or lyric uses the direct word and deals only with the subject whose praises he sings, or represents or expresses, i.e., he does not take other languages into consideration. He perceives his language as the sole and adequate tool for realizing the word's 'direct objectivized meaning'. The person who creates such a form ascribes meaning to it in a language which cannot escape the hold of the national myth and the national tradition.

When a myth serves the purpose of giving identity to a community it becomes restricted in the proportion of the identity of the community for the community cannot allow it to grow beyond itself. So the community 'myth' and the community grow mutually restrictive and reading the myth also becomes repeating or retelling it. Actually, myth is in fact a celebration of disorder, of that which cannot be controlled. But this is what gives the mythmaker the power to distort. Myths, because of their illogic, are more manipulable by the hegemonic since they involve

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[8]Ibid., p. 136.
[9]Bakhtin (1981).

no accountability or answerability. It has been observed that myth and history are opposed to each other—where myth signifies the sacred constant. This explains the return to the myth. If the logic of community text is followed the 'archetype' or social consciousness is created by allowing only a certain kind of thinking. Community text raises no questions, but only offers solutions. So while myths permit centrifugalization to a certain extent community texts translate mythos into logos, thereby ensuring centripetalization. V. Turner points out that without a deliberate disruption being brought about by risk takers, the given hierarchy will tend to inertia, rigidifying, injustice and inequality….[10] A myth is essentially open in the sense that one can interpret and reinterpret it. It is also always in the making. However, when the myth assumes a certain shape in the epic, it enters an utterly finished state. It is impossible to change, rethink, or reevaluate anything within it. It is possible that heteroglossia is responsible for an arrest of the distance between the imagination projected through the epic and the existing social imaginary. The epic, which captures and restricts collective consciousness of any society can be challenged by active polyglossia which inter-illuminates languages. As pointed out by Bakhtin in his article, 'Epic and Novel', the time of the epic is sacred and 'high' in comparison to the narrative time of the novel which is of a lower order.[11] The contemporary and low, Bakhtin suggests, was 'subject of representation' only in the low genres.[12] He points out that the authentic folkloric roots of the novel are to be sought in laughter. It is in parody and laughter that the high world of gods and legends is to be 'contemporized' and brought low.

For Bakhtin, the language of the novel is categorically different from the language of straightforward genres such as the epic poem, the lyric and the drama. The novel has the potential to bring out the dialogical aspect of language. Heteroglossia creates the potential for the development of novel in every society, but a condition of polyglossia is essential to animate language, i.e., to look at language from 'outside' and to ridicule it. The social reality of a society cannot be expressed through literary forms which privilege the word of the author alone. Bakhtin believes that novel has resulted from the comic forms which preceded the appearance of the novel. Due to these comic forms in a novel "Language is transformed from the absolute dogma it had been within the narrow framework of a sealed off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality."[13] He traces the origin of the novel form in a multilingual Europe where a polyglot situation enabled the writer to create images of various languages and worldviews.

In his various articles, Bakhtin's concern is with the neglect of the study of the most important aspect of novelistic discourse: the style. According to him, the social tone of the language cannot be ignored. Novelistic discourse originates in the

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[10]V. Turner, p. 152.

[11]Bakhtin M.M., "Epic and Novel", p. 19.

[12]Ibid., p. 20.

[13]Bakhtin (2008b).

open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, social groups, generations and epochs. So it is not a product of 'private craftsmanship'. What finds representation in the novelistic genre is 'heteroglossia', i.e., an image of the unique language of people from different sections of the society.

Bakhtin emphasizes that the importance of dialogue in the society for conditions of possible dialogue enables the prose writer to present an elevated form of an otherwise singular, one-sided i.e., a monological heteroglossia. It would be interesting to study this contention of Bakhtin in the Indian context where dialogue between communities and peoples was hampered for various reasons, including caste, gender and linguistic differences. Not just poets but common people in India had to live and operate within these socio-linguistic bounds so language became authoritarian, dogmatic and conservative. About such conditions Bakhtin would observe, "such ideas as a special 'poetic language' a 'language of Gods' a 'priestly language of poetry' could flourish on poetic soil."[14]

The Novel in India

India, as we all know, has a long literary tradition. The writings in Sanskrit by Banabhatta and others indicate that prose narrations of considerable length were created in India from the earliest times. These may be described as 'novels' owing to their length, yet they do not seem to have emerged from the existing social reality of their epoch. Banabhatta's contribution in this field has been taken cognizance of, for the name of his heroine 'Kadambari' is now the name ascribed to the 'novel' in at least two Indian languages—namely, Marathi and Kannada.

Dr. Ganeshan, in his "Study of the Hindi Novelistic Literature," laments the fact that even today one fails to find the variety of experimentation in style and matter in the Hindi novel which can be seen in its Western counterparts. He also states that the Hindi novelistic form was an adaptation of the English novel, which reached Hindi writers through the translation of Bangla novels. One more reason why the novel did not evolve indigenously in India is the particular brand of multiculturalism which has existed in India from time immemorial. The impenetrable walls which communities erected around themselves enabled a peaceful and perennial existence through a process of compartmentalization. There was neither conflict nor dialogue. Such compartmentalization continues to this date and even a slight inkling of interference in what is considered an 'internal matter' of a community can cause a flare up in communal sentiments. English enabled the Indian writer, "to look at language from the outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of a potentially different language and style." About the content of the Hindi novel, Ganeshan points out that "the tendency of Hindi novel writers was not to look upon life as life but as a problem… our novelistic literature has been mostly concerned

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[14]Bakhtin (2008b).

with morality, to improve the society. The admonishing, moralizing voice of the novelist can be heard clearly".[15] Tracing the history of novel writing in Marathi, the noted novelist and critic Bhalchandra Nemade points out that the first novel written in India was *Yamunaparyatan* by Baba Padmanjee in 1857 in Marathi. Nemade comments that a novel is a linguistic creation by the novelist who consciously selects the content and assumes a certain moral position on the problems arising out of the relation between people and society. This preoccupation with morality throws light on the inability of the Indian novelist to allow the novelistic discourse to have a life of its own. Nemade also comments on the long tradition of poetic writing which existed in India prior to the introduction of the novelistic form in the nineteenth century. Very significantly, Nemade does not fail to point that the Marathi novelist, for a very long time, did not have the courage to choose his content from the existing reality of the society. The ideology which the novelist dealt with, and which was at the center of the novels, was borrowed from Europe. As a result, the novel failed to develop as an independent literary genre in India.

Yamunaparyatan, the first novel in India to emerge out of the coming together of the European and Indian cultures of the time when the English ruled India takes a particular moral stand and looks at the existing society around from a particular angle. This novel may be a reflection of how the Marathi society of that time desired to emerge as a modern society. Thus, prose writing emerged out of this combination of the restless and striving English and restful and deliberative Indian culture. Nemade observes that while the novel as a genre has proved to be a powerful vehicle for social deliberation and constructive creativity it has not worked as such in Marathi. For this, Nemade argues that the other novelists who found it difficult to project reality promptly turned to creating the 'strange' and 'unnatural'. But that is precisely the problem which may have its solution in Bakhtin's theory. In the case of, e.g., Sane Guruji (whose name Namade cites), this writer was so entrenched in the Hindu culture (as is reflected in his novel 'Shyamchi Aai') that he could never have presented a realistic picture of the society. Sane glorifies the shortcomings of both his father and mother and is not critical about them. As a result, the novel turns out to be a melodramatic narrative rather than a thought-provoking creative work.

The period of the realist novel in Marathi began soon after 1870. This reflects perhaps the influence of English writers on Marathi writers. Another noted Marathi critic, Rajwade, maintains that the origin of the realist novel is in Europe and most of this kind of writing in India is of a low kind. According to him, the reason for this is that the Marathi realist novelist did not know whom to imitate and how.[16]

Such attempts at using the originally European genre into Marathi seem to produce a picture of English society with Indian, or more precisely Marathi, characters. Rajwade discusses great English and French novelists and compares their writings. He states how English novelistic writing has limited itself to a large

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[15]Ganeshan (1962).
[16]Rajwade (2008).

extent while the French writers have not hesitated to criticize the entire society. To create great literature a nation needs to feel deeply unhappy and literature needs to show a way out.

Rajwade analyses the origin and development of European novel taking into consideration the historical reality and condition of the society which produced the novelistic literature. He relates the development of certain kind of novelistic literature in France and its lack in English by relating this to the historical reality of France and England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The national will in periods of challenges encourage the writer to write in a particular way. He talks about how 'Ramayan' was rewritten by Ramdas and Mudgal during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This brings us back to our question of why the European writer could think of different ways (reflected through their novels) of addressing their social problems while the Marathi writer could not move beyond 'Ramayan'. He takes up the case of the novels written by Hari Narayan Apte which, according to him, cannot be rated, highly because they are an imitation of European novels and not realistic in the Indian sense. He observes that it has taken very long for the Marathi novel to move the small steps from translation of novel to writing a realistic novel.

It is only after 1960 that Marathi novelists have come to grips with the existing reality of the society—the inequality, the caste system, the issues of women, poverty and problems inseparably linked with it are the subject matter of their writings. Nemade, not unlike Dr. Ganeshan, is not satisfied with the existing condition of this genre. He feels that it would be too early to prophesy a bright future for the Marathi novel. When one looks at the lack of significant development in this genre through the Bakhtinian lens we find that the average Indian (who is unaffected by the metropolitan culture) still remains under the influence of a monological culture. About the long prevailing caste and community system in the country Nemade himself remarks: "I am not against caste system but I am against casteism. In India caste system will remain. The system of innumerable groups in India will not sustain otherwise. In this vast ocean of mankind small mating groups have been maintaining their autonomy and identities through exchange of food and daughter on the basis of religion, dynasty and language. There is among them a basic principle of respecting each other. This horizontal system which has developed out of such arrangement is according to me the caste system."[17]

In an article titled 'Gandhi Centre Stage', Perry Anderson points out how Gandhi looked at the Indian civilization. It was, according to him, astonishing "that any culture or civilization should have this continuity for five to six thousand years or more; and not in a static or unchanging sense, for India was changing and progressing all the time…".[18] There was 'something unique' about the antiquity of the subcontinent and 'its tremendous impress of oneness' making its inhabitants "throughout these ages distinctly Indian, with the same national heritage and the

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[17]Nemade (1990).
[18]Anderson (2012).

same set of moral and mental qualities". However, Anderson does not overlook the fact that "the elite or English speaking gentry were united in a very abstract way while they were in unity with their own communities/castes etc. in a very concrete way". So, the community and the caste system remained untouched by the colonial impact.

This phenomenon has had a very significant impact on the functioning of the society as a whole. While the elite-dominated public sphere of the nation tried hard to establish western values in politics and society the public sphere of the communities strived hard to retain the old set of values which held the community together. This divide in the society as a whole continues to this date. We can see that many nationalist leaders—most prominently Gandhi—were against any change in the rigid communal set-up in India. Anderson remarks how "Revolution was a greater danger than the Raj: Behind his of any prospect of it (e.g., violence) lay religious belief and social calculation. On one hand, Hinduism bound all who adhered to it into a single interwoven community, in which each was allotted their appointed station. To break its unity by setting one part against another was contrary to divine order…".[19] Very significantly, Gandhi's idea of ideal sociopolitical set up was one which was based on the set up imagined in the community text 'Ramayana' which deals with the myth of Rama. This throws light on the role of myth and deification of mythological characters in India.

In the lead essay in a volume of essays on Ramayana, edited by Paula Richman, A.K. Ramanujan takes up the challenge of commenting on the thousands of telling of the stories of Ram in India and its neighboring countries. He looks at five different Ramayanas: Valmiki's Sanskrit poem *Kampan Iramavataram*, a Tamil literary account that incorporates characteristically south Indian material; Jain which provides a non-Hindu perspective on familiar events; a Kannada folk tale which reflects preoccupation with sexuality and child bearing and the Ramakein, produced for a Thai rather than an Indian audience.[20] It is important to note that in spite of its innumerable retellings (which reflects the preoccupation with the epic and its monological content) one never comes across any reversal of tradition and Rama never really loses his seat of honour.

This needs to be contrasted with the observation made by Bakhtin in his essay, 'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse'. Here he talks about the problem of the so-called 'fourth drama' in the verbal culture of ancient times. "It is our conviction that there was never a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of direct discourse—artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary, everyday that did not have its own parodying and travestying double, its own *contre-partie*."[21] According to him, what is important is that these parodic doubles and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctioned by tradition and just as canonized as their elevated models.

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[19]Ibid.

[20]Ramanujan (1992).

[21]Bakhtin (2008c).

Not only is such sanction relatively absent in the Indian ethos, but any attempt or undermining of the myth was treated as blasphemy and more often than not resulted in severe punishment by the custodians of religious laws. Coming to the issue of the language of the epic we find that this language alone receives social sanction. Very significantly, Paula Richman points out, "The Ramayana in India is not just a story with a variety of retellings; it is a language with which a host of statements may be made. Women in Andhra Pradesh have long used this language to say what they wish to say as women."[22] That women have to fall back upon language of a misogynistic text like Ramayana to express themselves in itself throws light on how people have been imprisoned in the net of straight forward language. Richman does not fail to point out that "it is strictly forbidden to laugh at any aspect of the text. The element of laughter is restricted to the attempts of the writer. While these aspects (chosen by the writer) may be stretched further for creation of mirth any attempt at creating laughter at the expense of serious language or character can have disastrous consequences."[23] In the Indian ethos, a counter-discourse in the form of travesty was frowned upon. This treatment of the Indian myth and epic must be studied alongside Bakhtin's observations regarding the "fourth drama" of the ancient Greek theatre. According to him, "In most instances this drama which follows the tragic trilogy, developed the same narrative and mythological motifs as had the trilogy that preceded it. It was therefore a peculiar type of parodic travestying *contre-partie* to the myth that had just received a tragic treatment on the stage, it showed the myth in a different aspect."[24] In very simple terms, one can say that the highly placed characters were freed from the burden of absolute past and were 'brought low' to the level of contemporary life. This introduced to the audience the binary tone of the word and the various ways in which the otherwise straight forward word could be represented.

The absence of such a balancing mechanism in India has been pointed out by the noted critic G.N. Devy. Here the ability of literary creation was itself considered divine, resulting in the deification of both text and author, and raising him above the level of ordinary day-to-day life. "A unique feature of literary traditions in India, a feature entirely unknown in the literatures of the world, is that in India literary texts, mostly poetic but occasionally prose biographies as in case of the Mahanubhav sect is treated as divinely ordained… Thus, literature and worship become overlapping: all forms of literature are worshipped and all forms of worship are literary…."[25] This elevated the literary texts and put them beyond the scope for parody and travesty. The straightforward language of the texts, i.e., the language of reverence percolated in the day-to-day life of people, for all religious texts, whether in the form of poetry or prose, used a monological language and preached reverence and piety toward all religious texts in the many different languages in the country.

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[22]Richman (1992).

[23]Ibid., p. 114.

[24]Bakhtin (2008c).

[25]Devy (1998).

Piety and reverence is an inseparable part of Indian culture. It gets manifested in the everyday language of the people. The abundant use of honorific pronouns and the compulsion involved in their use, the element of non-symmetry and non-reciprocity indicates a system in which hierarchies are protected by every possible means, prime among these being language. Attempted carnivalesque in the form of festivals like the Holi provide restricted freedom for mirth in the form of irreverent verbal exchanges. However any possibility of taking liberty with another person is controlled by strict community rules. In the introduction to his book on comparative literature E.V. Ramakrishnan rightly quotes Nemade and points out, in India, individualism cannot be the dominant credo as each individual is not a single person but is constituted by a network of multiple relationships. Nemade says, "just as a single chimpanzee is no chimpanzee, a single Indianis no Indian".[26] This network of relationships is kept in place by a set of rigid unbending rules and a rigid hierarchical structure. Hierarchies are everywhere. About access to knowledge Ramakrishna states, "Even when such traditions of shared knowledge exist, as in India, it may not be free from the hegemonic attitude based on caste, religion or gender. Replicating an orientalist or Bhadralok/Brahminic view of 'Indian literature' uncritically will reproduce the hierarchies of the feudal/colonial period."[27]

It is clear that the free participation of people in the creation of literature was blocked in various ways. The only way of expression open to people was the Bhakti way, or the path of reverence. So, the basic requirement for novel as a genre to originate and develop was lacking. According to Bakhtin, the novel rose out of a complex of parodically reflected words and voices. The parodic travestying genres unified in order to provide a corrective of laughter and criticism to all existing straightforward forms. Bakhtin very specifically draws the attention of readers to the essential 'impiety of the novelistic form' He states, "These parodic travestying forms prepared the ground for the novel in one very important, in fact, decisive respect. They liberated the object from the power of language, in which it had become entangled as if in a net; they destroyed all homogenizing power of myth over language; they freed consciousness from power of the direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own discourse, within its own language…"[28]. Such freedom could not be experienced in India for a very long time. The thorough monoglossia which has permeated the Indian ethos was both responsible for and itself a result of a lack of 'a corrective of laughter.' Since criticism of the existing straightforward forms was not possible no contradictory reality was experienced. The word continued to be used in a straightforward monological way as there was never any liberation from its power. It suffered from the homogenizing power of myth over language and the consciousness of the people remained imprisoned within its own discourse. Language never got

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[26]E. Ramakhrishnan (2013).

[27]Ibid., p. 7.

[28]Bakhtin (2008d).

transformed from the absolute dogma it had been. Social distinctions and hierarchies were protected through strictly imposed linguistic practices such as the use of honorifics. A narrow and closed-off monological consciousness of people led to creation of internal dialectics privileging already privileged people through suppression of others. The reason why caste and gender differences in India could become so rigid and oppressive lies in the failure of any language powerful enough to make a counter discourse possible. In fact, there is in many instances no scope for discourse in self-defence. Gayatri Spivak's article 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' clearly points out the rigid boundaries of language that people use in order to be 'heard', since the upper-class vanguardism appropriated subaltern speech and a dialectic within a monological system was created and worked out. Spivak's exposition regarding 'sati' shows how the egalitarian yet monological language of the Vedas got twisted and was made to work against women.[29]

Bakhtin emphasizes the importance of polyglossia in the development of novel as a genre. The model of 'other-languagedness', for example, "played a fateful role in national, straight forward forms of artistic discourse in Rome. It overwhelmed all of the tender shoots of national epic and lyric, born in an environment their epic and lyric word—born of a muffled monoglossia, it turned the direct word of the barbarian peoples—into a discourse that was somewhat conventional, somewhat stylized."[30] This, according to Bakhtin, 'greatly facilitated the development of all forms of parodic travestying discourse'. He also mentions the polyglot condition in the Orient where several cultures and languages directly cohabited and specifically mentions places such as Mesopotamia, Persia, and India.

The development of the novelistic genre in India should be compared to its development in Greece as described by Bakhtin in 'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse'. Talking about the development of Parody and Travesty in Greece, he points out how the 'fourth drama' consisting of figures such as the 'comic' Odysseus' and the 'comic Hercules' was "an indispensable conclusion to the tragic trilogy." Such a fourth drama was written by the same writer who had composed the earlier 'serious' trilogy. Though in India Drama was a much-developed genre right from… the time of Kalidasa dating back to second century BCE but we do not find any comic double of any play being written by the same writer. So even when something like a novel come into existence in India even before it did in Europe it remained in the shape of a "'romance' which was the form in which the Greek novel originally made its appearance. This eponymous work which is written in poetic prose has led to two Indian languages 'Kannada' and 'Marathi' giving 'Kadambari'—a woman's name to mean novel, romance, fiction or tale written in the first half of the seventh century. It is self-consciously artificial prose. In other words, it had not the "matter of factness essential for the novel." But it could not have had such a language for the novel was in Sanskrit, (which was the language of select elite) and like Latin rigid and rule based. The 'intentional dialogized hybrid'

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[29]Gayatri (1994).
[30]Bakhtin (2008e).

which developed in multilingual situations in Europe failed to develop in India despite its multilingualism because of the inbuilt piety in the language. With its honorifics and specific genres which preach love for one's own language, with language treated as a prized possession of groups of people who were taught not to tolerate its violation at any cost the mutual illumination of each other was blocked to a great extent. Social distinction and hierarchies were protected through such strictly imposed linguistic practices.

In other words, there was no ground for the novel where the object would be free from the power of language; language was itself entangled as if in a net forced to operate under the homogenizing power of myth over language. The thick walls of the direct word imprisoned consciousness within its own language and would not allow authentically realistic forms of discourse. The binary tone of the word which becomes available only through laughter remained absent to a very great extent. In India, the ability of literary creation was itself considered divine, resulting in the deification of both text and author, raising them above ordinary day-to-day life. It is not difficult to imagine how such a situation led to the straight-jacketing of the writer himself who, working under the burden of divinity, could never give way to his mundane and ordinary self in his writings. The straightforward language of the texts percolated into the day-to-day life of people, for all religious texts, whether in the form of poetry or prose, used a monological language and preached reverence and piety toward all living creatures. This was aggravated due to the dependence of the teeming illiterate masses on the oral transmission of literature. The passage of the text from rhetorical to logical, which is generally accompanied by a move from the collective to the individual, has only been partial. The several literacy drives undertaken by various governments have resulted in the emergence of people from different communities who can express themselves in the written form. However, their play with their language was restricted by the homogeneous culture of which Nehru and others talk.[31]

It became possible for Indian writers to enter into a dialogic with their vernaculars when they came into contact with the English language. It was a language about which and with which one could be as irreverent as one liked. An opportunity for 'other languagedness' arose. External multilanguagedness played a role in the author's ability to question the authority of custom (itself beyond contradiction) and traditions which restricted freedom to experiment. Bakhtin has emphasized the importance of polyglossia in freeing language from its dogmas. Though there was a polyglot situation in India, we can see how a singular myth has bound most of the vernaculars with its homogenizing power. English as the language of the outsider was free from this power of the direct word. Very significantly most of the noted novel writers were and are well versed in English. English enabled them to look at their language 'from the outside' and to experience reality in other than prescribed ways. It became possible for them to think outside monoglossia and the extreme semantic narrowing of the singular language was countered. Baba Padmanji—the

[31]Nehru (2004).

writer of the first Indian novel, was the son of a government servant (in the British Raj) and knew English well.

The writer of the chapter wants to imagine what happens when a society refuses to rise above its monologic and blocks other languages and myths and makes systems impenetrable through hegemonic assertions. The Brahmin community in India were successful in doing this and acquired unquestionable hold over the language of the entire society. In a cloistered society caste and gender differences were worked and reworked as a kind of negative dialectics in a situation which was rigid and unmoving. Since assimilation was unthinkable separation and further division became the rule. Hegemony moved towards absolute domination. Gayatri Spivak's article 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' clearly points out the rigid boundaries set around languages.

Historical Differences: The Novel in Europe and India

The origin of the particular kind of novel which has been discussed by Bakhtin has been repeatedly traced in Europe. Timothy Brennan points out how "The rise of European nationalism coincides especially with one form of literature—the novel."[32] Timothy Brennan, for it objectified the 'one yet many' of national life, mimicked the structure of the nation which was clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Bakhtin has also pointed out how "the naïve and stubborn co–existence of 'languages' within a given national language also comes to an end, and there is no more peaceful coexistence between territorial dialects and jargons, literary languages, generic languages within literary languages, epochs in language and so on" when the world becomes polyglot. In Europe, the rise of the novel implied the victory of European vernaculars over Latin and a dusk of religious modes of thought. The invention of printing brought a kind of uniformity in peoples' thoughts. This also coincides with the rise of middle class and a new concept of 'reality' coming into existence. Bakhtin associates the rise of the novel with lower sections of the society, their modes of entertainment such as the carnivalesque. The rise of the middle class made it possible for these modes to find a place in the literary expressions of 'realistic' literature of the time in Europe i.e., the novel. Brennan compares the implant of this form in 'third world countries'. He points out, "…under conditions of illiteracy and shortages, and given simply the leisure time necessary for reading one, the novel has been an elitist and minority form in developing countries when compared to poem, song, television, film."[33]

Though this apparent paradox intrigues Brennan one must look critically at the difference between the rise of nationalism in Europe and developments in the developing world, especially India. Here nationalism was more or less an idea borrowed from the West and imposed on the Indian masses from the top.

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[32]Brennan (2008).
[33]Ibid., p. 56.

So was the 'realistic novel'. For a very long time, it remained a genre controlled and used by the elite. Serious questions continue to be raised regarding the mode and language chosen by Indian English writers for such writing does not seem to serve any purpose in the Indian setting. The masses continue to connect with the epics which are religious texts and therefore unquestionable as far as content is concerned. A purely intellectual critical treatment of the text or any attempt at parody or travesty of the characters or content of these epics can lead to serious social disturbances and riots. In India, we are yet to see the disintegration of the national myth, not to talk of its death and must wait for a long time to see the birth of 'novelistic matter-of-factness' in case of practitioners of this genre in languages other than English.

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Chapter 11
Dialoguing the Web: Digital Technologies and Pedagogy

Atanu Bhattacharya

Introduction

Web technology, in its current avatar, has been fiercely debated in terms of its efficacy in the field of humanities pedagogy. However, the verdict has not yet been delivered. This chapter is an attempt to explore the theoretical premises of web technology within which they operate and its interactions with pedagogic forms—its circulation, dissemination, and hybridization; its impact in terms of teaching-learning behavior; the space of internal dynamics of such an interface and the challenges that such interactions throw up; the integration/externalization of digitization within the pedagogic framework; and the possibilities of indigenization, and, by extension, transformation of such technology within the Indian classrooms. I would like to probe, within a Bakhtinian framework particularly and a larger technoculture theoretical framework generally, three recurrent questions that beset the Indian humanities pedagogy context:

1. Does the transition from an analog to a digital technological format institute a conceptual shift in the socio-cultural politics of pedagogy?
2. Can the humanities/technology 'monologue/dialogue' be viewed simply as a tool of efficiency in humanities research and development in India?
3. Can technology mark a constitutive/integrative paradigm shift within the humanities curriculum?

For this purpose, I trace the theoretical foundations of the interaction between technology and socio-cultural matrices in the Western knowledge paradigm and then try to relate them to contemporary concerns of the use of technology in the Indian pedagogical context. I must state at the outset that any reference to 'humanities practices' during the course of this chapter would not refer to all the

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possible disciplinary boundaries or interdisciplinarities within the humanities. The thrust of this chapter, however, would be to examine the nature of social/political/cultural discourse in the West that circumscribes technology and how they might be usefully refracted to impinge upon the discursive matrix of technology use in pedagogy in India. It would also be imperative at this point to elucidate what I refer to as 'technology'. I would limit myself to the use of digital technologies, with the focus being on web-based technologies. However, it would also encompass computer-based digital technologies that do not necessarily depend upon the internet.

My primary intention during the course of this chapter will be to collate and correlate theories of technology—either computer-based or in its more generic sense—that emanated from the West since World War II and how a meaningful 'dialogue' can be created, working within a larger Bakhtinian framework, between what seems to be a largely apocalyptic vision of technology and pedagogic practices. In other words, what I propose to do is to weave with the help of Bakhtin a tapestry of dialogic pedagogy. With a view to achieving this, I have tried to categorize the various theories of technology into what I term as 'thesis'—a discursive formation that defines the space within which the theorists operate. As we will see, discourse involving Western technology can be categorized within the ambit of four major paradigmatic theses—'perceptual-ontological', 'transformative', 'power/knowledge', and 'usage-impact'. I will elaborate on these theses later in the chapter.

Humanities, Pedagogy, Bakhtin

Humanities pedagogy today seems to have encountered a certain digitality that traditionally it was not used to. Though this has given rise to disciplines like 'digital humanities', this seems to be a largely American phenomenon (see Kirschenbaum 2010; Davidson and Goldberg 2004). Within this largely notional framework of web technology, which has become pervasive not only in the lives of Indian students but also in actual classroom practices, it is perhaps necessary to pause and reflect on a certain critical framework that could be promoted for a meaningful pedagogy. For example, the disruption of time/space and the creation of new spatial relations that digital technology entails is something that can be theorized about. In fact, spaces are insistently being tied together in interconnected networks, rather than existing as separate and bounded entities. Increasingly, classroom spaces could be seen as intersections of trajectories: place and its components comprise mobilities and movements, which are formed and reformed continually and dynamically by networks across space and time. Central to my argument here is the idea that though space and time can be, and has to be, reconceptualized in significant ways in a digital classroom, it does raise a few questions about the nature of interactive dialogicity that seems to be lacking in larger institutional

frameworks. I think that the work of Bakhtin becomes central here. This is nothing new, however: the concept of dialogism has been successfully applied to the analysis of classroom interactions (Haworth 1999; Landay 2004; Sidorkin 2002), the monologue/ dialogue split (Mahiri 2004), questions of addressivity (Hayes and Matusov), the heteroglossic classroom (Doecke et al. 2004), and finalization (Matusov and Smith 2007). One needs, however, to locate it within the particular context of Indian class-rooms and whether or not it is possible to create a dialogicity that negotiates institutional constraints/enablings and actual classroom transactions.

Digital Pedagogy in the Indian Context

On January 2, 2009, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs formulated a new centrally sponsored scheme by the name of National Mission on Education Through ICT (NMEICT). The scheme envisaged the allotment of 4612 crore by the 11th Five-year Plan. The scheme outlined that the funds were meant for Higher Education Institutions, that it would focus on 'content generation' and 'connec-tivity', would make use of online teaching-learning, EDUSAT and DTH, and would provide infrastructure and connectivity to over 18,000 colleges, including each of the departments of 419 universities and institutions of national importance (web). The scheme was based on the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission (2007) which proposed the creation of a national ICT infrastructure, the setting up of a National Education Foundation to develop web-based common open resources, and the use of ICT-based pedagogy and learning aids. The focus throughout was on the ICT-enabled mechanics of pedagogy.

A survey conducted by Developmental Education and Communication Unit (DECU), a unit of ISRO, identified only a handful of states or institutions that have been able to implement the NKC vision. Among them were Meghalaya, especially IIM, Shillong which implemented ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) platform for its pedagogic management; Madhya Pradesh, where village schools had A-V lec-tures using web-collaboration tools; Haryana, which had a massive EDUSAT programme for its schools and colleges albeit not very successful; and Gujarat, where rural and tribal children are being educated through ICT infrastructure (Pereira 2010). Despite the massive mobilization of resources, there seems to be a substantial gap in terms of production and reception. The moot question therefore is, what has gone wrong?

One needs to understand that digital technologies mark a conceptual shift in classroom pedagogy, especially when it comes to humanities pedagogy. It needs to be emphasized, however, that technology was never completely absent from the Indian classrooms. The analog language labs of the 1960s and the 1970s, which in India existed till the 1990s, tape recorders, OHPs, were quite common as teaching

technology. What marks a sort of seismic shift in terms of digital formats can be summed up in one word—*interactivity*, and the attendant socio-cultural shift involving pedagogic control. Once the unidirectional analog technologies have been replaced by multidirectional digital ones, one needs to sort of align the unidirectional classrooms to more interactive, multinodal ones. Here lies the socio-cultural paradox and it is possible that 'dialoguing the web' through a Bakhtinian framework might help. Before we explore such possibilities, however, I would like to put forward a few, what I call 'theses', that have historically been conceptualized vis-à-vis technology in the West. I would then proceed to examine whether a Bakhtinian framework of language pedagogy can be used as a sustainable model within this historical mapping.

Imagining the Web

One needs to remember that 'imagining' digital computer technology is not a contemporary manifestation, having been envisaged as early as 1945 by Vannevar Bush. Bush (1945) was alarmed by the explosion of information and the lack of adequate information-retrieval machines that could aid scholars and decision makers to select and synthesize such superabundance of texts. He proposed a device —a 'memex'—that could store great amounts of information and would be mechanized in such a way that they could be consulted with "exceeding speed and flexibility" across texts and media (104).

Theodor H. Nelson, popularly known as Nelson (1987), expanded Bush's idea and during the 1960s he imagined a more multidirectional model of information dissemination and retrieval. He coined the term 'hypertext' and 'hypermedia' along with many other terms that have been assimilated in common parlance today, defining them as a form of "non-sequential writing—text that branches and allows choices to the reader" by offering them "different pathways" (1987: 0/2). Nelson envisaged a communication network that did not follow a linear patterning, but a nonlinear branching that allowed the users to comment and interact with the text.

With the advent of the 1990s and the invention of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee, initially for private organization networks—CERN in this case, the digital 'explosion', or as Baudrillard calls it—'implosion'—was truly underway. The web and digital technology had announced its arrival and was here to stay. How does then this 'arrival' signify, predict, intrude upon, or even liberate existing socio-cultural/political space? How does this 'arrival' affect, enfranchise or even disempower pedagogy? Technological transition, as we are witnessing today, has to be studied, aligned and comprehended in conjunction with its impact on the humanities and on culture in general. Simply put, how do I dialogue with it? One need not view it as an isolated and detached phenomenon and with a view to study this I have, in the next few sections, tried to summarize the debates that surround technology use in the West.

The Perceptual-Ontological Thesis

We will under this thesis explore four major theorists and their impact on contemporary cultural theory vis-à-vis technology. What I mean by the perceptual-ontological thesis is the insistence of these group of theorists on viewing technology as capable of altering the way we perceive the world and, in turn, creating an alternative ontology—an 'othered' reality that 'transposes' the real one.

One of the most significant questions raised with the advent of technology in the European world was that coined by Heidegger (1977): is technologization a means to transformation of a 'real' experience into a 'visualized' one? Heidegger argued that technology, with its propensity to oculize, has substituted the world as phenomenon by the world as a visual concept, designating it as the 'rise of the world picture'. The 'world picture' for him did not refer to a 'picture of the world' but, rather, to the world as conceived, grasped, transformed and then represented in the pictorial mode: "the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age" (Heidegger 1977: 130).

While Heidegger saw technology as having the power of substitution, Benjamin (1969) perceived the world of 'mechanical reproduction' as ushering in a newer sort of poetics of perception in art forms. By the use of the term 'mechanical reproduction,' Benjamin was hinting at the new analog forms of technology like photography and reprography that were prevalent at the time. The central tenet of Benjamin's argument is that while the age of mechanical reproduction does delimit, and possibly annihilate, the 'authority' and the 'aura' of the work of art by placing them in contexts that are far removed from the original, it, at the same time, creates conditions of 'transitoriness' and 'reproducibility', leading to "adjustment of reality to the masses and the masses to reality" (Benjamin 1969: 18). In a sense, technology, for Benjamin, has a liberating power by making art forms accessible to masses by abstracting them from their original contextual constraints.

The celebratory note struck by Benjamin for technology is further echoed by McLuhan (1962) while enunciating the concept of 'Gutenberg configuration'—the impact of print technology on forms of experience, outlook, and expression. Recalling Heidegger, McLuhan views the 'print revolution' as a marked perceptual shift from the aural/oral to the visual. However, taking one step further McLuhan claims that since this perceptual mode has been ensconced in the West for a considerable period of time, the new electronic technologies pose a unique challenge since they lead to a spatio-temporal dislocation. The new technologies create a rift between what we perceive as 'real' and what 'simulates' as real. Our perception of space and time has been completely transformed or 'morphed'. McLuhan cites the example of how the advent of hypertext and information networks has led to the notion of 'specialization' in a discipline utterly redundant—in fact, multidisciplinarity becomes the norm. He contends that while the Gutenberg revolution led to an 'explosion' proliferating into various specialized branches, the electronic age leads to an 'implosion' where all knowledge is available through fragmented 'space' and 'time'. McLuhan, like Benjamin, celebrates this as a founding moment

where knowledge/information is liberated from the constraints of authority and control.

On the other hand, Benjamin and McLuhan's thesis of perceptual liberation through technology is fiercely contested in the oft-debated writings of Jean Baudrillard who moves on from where his predecessors had left off but offers it a more (post)modern, and, often, posthistorical interpretation. Baudrillard's (1975) analytic trajectory locates itself by dislodging the Marxian analysis of 'commodity' by positing the cultural economy of the 'sign'. This shift marks a turn for the capitalist economy—from a 'labour-oriented' to that of a 'consumer-oriented' one. In fact, for this economy to survive it is imperative, according to Baudrillard, that 'consumerism' be projected as more significant than 'labour-power' by "expanding the field of consumption, signification, information and knowledge by expanding its jurisdiction and control to the whole field of culture and daily life, even to the unconscious" (Baudrillard 1975: 142). The crux of Baudrillard's argument is that the *form* of the media sign has overtaken the *message* of it resulting in simulacra—the endless repetition of sign and the code on which the global process of capital is founded. The 'medium' and the 'real' has been imploded in such a fashion that the 'medium and the real are now in a single nebulous state whose truth is undecipherable' (Baudrillard 1983a, b: 103). The 'hyperreal' nature of digitization is darkly foreboded by Baudrillard in claiming the death of the 'subject' and, in turn, "critical instrumentality": "Digitality is its metaphysical principle… and DNA its prophet" (Baudrillard 1983a, b: 24).

The Transformation Thesis

Under this paradigm, I would focus upon theorists who claim that technology in its present form is a dehumanizing, substantive, and abstract agent but retains the possibility of being transformed by bringing within its fold moral, ethical, social, and cultural value systems, thus engendering a more neutralized, multidirectional communicative arena.

Unlike Baudrillard, who condemns technology as an instrument of domination and control, Marcuse (1969) argues that one needs to identify the core of modern technology—its instrumentality—with a view to transform it from a 'modern' unilinearity to a postmodern multidirectionality. Technology, he posits, can lead to cultural freedom by establishing a 'fraternal relation' to the natural context, but in its present avatar it has often assumed the role of appropriation, segmentation, and violation by severing and abstracting use-value from its natural/social/cultural values. They would have to be reconstructed in accord with a new sensibility—"the demands of life instincts" (Marcuse 1969: 42).

Habermas (1984, 1987) approaches technology, however, as a correlate of modernity, a dehumanizing agent that belongs to the domain of 'work'— a "purposive-rational action" oriented towards success and control—rather than "interaction"—communication in the pursuit of common understanding.

For Habermas, the crisis of modernity is precipitated by the propagation and fulfilment of what he terms 'cognitive-instrumental rationality' (this would include technology) and the erosion of 'moral-practical rationality' (social laws and morality) and 'aesthetic-practical rationality' (domains of eroticism or art). Technological rationalization in the (post)modern world does not, thus, take recourse to 'communicative action' but rather tends to 'delinguistify' dimensions of social life by organizing interaction through objectifying behaviors, technology being the instrument and people being the objects (Habermas 1984: 128). This needs to be redressed by allowing 'moral-practical' and 'aesthetic-practical' rationalities to successfully emerge within the domain of technological innovation, thus negating objectification and promoting interaction.

The Power/Knowledge Thesis

Since the advent of digital computer technology, there have been powerful arguments for destabilizing the myth of 'universal progress' that such technologies are supposed to bring in their wake and emphasizing that they are rather instruments of knowledge, control, and extension of power structures. Weizenbaum (1984) makes a scathing comment on the supposed belief that the computer was made operative in institutions as a 'labour-mitigating' force. He states that it was primarily meant to keep intact "social and political structures that otherwise might have been either radically renovated or allowed to totter under the demands that were sure to be made on them" (Weizenbaum 1984: 31). He further argues that they were used to buttress and immunize these structures against which there were enormous pressures for change.

Similarly, Noble (1984: 328) suggests that though automated control and computing are inevitably trumpeted "in the name of patriotism, competitiveness, productivity, and progress… its twin aims however remains domination and control." Webster and Robins (1986) have demonstrated how the chimera of a decentralized world where information circulates sans boundaries is often a myth that is generated by re-centralized powers—an increasing privatization and commercialization of social life; a greater objectification of information and knowledge; and an extension of surveillance and control. Smart (1992), for example, traces the explosion of technology in today's world to the political and economic impetus provided to it by the 'military-industrial complex' of the West especially since World War II.

Borgmann (1992: 102ff) terms the computer functions like e-mail and the internet "hyperintelligence". Though these forms of communication provide unlimited extension of space and time, they themselves create a sense of distancing since the users plugged into the network might temporarily feel and enjoy a sense of omniscience and omnipotence, but once severed "they turn out to be insubstantial and disoriented" (Borgmann 1992: 108). In other words, knowledge that such technology produces is often interweaved within interstices of power.

The Usage-Impact Thesis

New technologies, especially digital computer technologies, have a major impact in the way we conceive of our 'self' and the way we negotiate social life. Quite a few studies have been conducted on the way these technologies have impacted social life. For instance, Cohen (2000) reveals that e-mail sharing is often a contentious issue among partners, raising questions of 'intimacy' and 'disclosure'. Turkle (1995) raises the issue of identity and multiplicity in the age of MUD and MOO. The way, for example, social or clinical psychology have evolved and operated on the notion of the 'alter as hidden' needs to be re-defined since they are being replaced/displaced by the 'alter as display' in such virtual networks.

Virtual experiences have become a part of our cognitive and emotional make-up and have transformed the way we conceive of or perceptualize things. One of the oft-commented issues that recurs in the discussion of digital technologies is the sublimation of concrete forms of social realities, like violence, into something abstract, ethereal, and virtual. Gleick (1999), for example, warns against a declining attention span among youth due to ever-quickening production values as well as speedier transfer and reception time. Oppenheimer (1997) demonstrates that there is hardly any credible research to establish a reliable and valid correlation between the introduction of computers and an increase in the pedagogic or receptive efficiency of students. He characterizes it as a "glamorous tool" that may not be the panacea to all the troubles in education. And, of course, related to these are the electronic copyright issues (Barlow 2000; Mann 1998) and gender issues, e.g., the fetishization and medicalization of the female body by technology (Balsamo 1998).

'Dialoguing' the Web

From the survey of the theories of technology, one can deduce three persistent strains that may be considered, if not opposed to, at best critical of, the incursions of digital technology. In this section, I will briefly try to address each of these strains from a humanities pedagogy point of view. The strains are:

1. digitization leads to a creation of a binary opposition where the 'real world' is subsumed by a 'digital world' which, in turn, operates within the domain of signs and, therefore, leads to loss of 'critical subjectivity';
2. digital technology is an extension of a purposive rationality oriented towards control, domination, and subjugation and lacks the possibilities of emotional and moral development;
3. digital technology has led to more dependence and commodification, a sort of monologism, instead of developing autonomy and independence which are the goals of pedagogy.

I would propose here that a Bakhtinian framework might redress some of these conundrums.

The concept of the 'dialogue' in Bakhtin hinges on the dual aspects of a perfect fit as well as endless proliferation. In the Indian context, there seems to be a mismatch, discord, displacement, and even a kind of unhinging, in terms of this fit. Pereira (2010) points out many such misfits are widespread, ranging from the lack of resources, the absence of teacher development programmes, and a shortage of staff, to an inconsistency in delivery and evaluation. What the Indian language classroom, especially in higher education, seems to struggle and catch up with is the pace of the digital proliferation that constantly seems to defer the possibility of configuring pedagogy and technology.

Bakhtin, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1999), puts forth the parameters of a dialogic author as opposed to a monologic one who creates characters that are a mere replica of their consciousness. It is this finality that Bakhtin critiques:

> Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another *I* with equal rights (*thou*). With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form) *another person* remains wholly and merely an *object* of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness. (Bakhtin 1999: 292–293; italics original)

It is interesting to note that top-down discourses like NMEICT and NKC seem to concur on a singular agenda—making available the infrastructural necessities—budgetary allocation, EDUSAT, DTH, connectivity—with a neglect of perhaps more valuable aspects like maintenance, continuity, and buttressing of human resources. This, I think, has spliced open a monologic regime at the cost of a more dialogic possibility. While technology tools are essentially being viewed as tools of efficiency, often normative in nature, its deliverability and reception are often areas that remain blurred. This has given rise to often very interesting reactions within the pedagogic framework of the humanities—from banning mobile phones within institutional premises to proscribing chatting in the computer and language labs. The ubiquity of technology is often perceived as a threat, reiterating the perceptual-ontology thesis that we have discussed, and buttressed by the usage-impact thesis. This also ties up with the socio-cultural modes of perception of technology as alien to the classroom, especially a 'humanities' classroom. There may, however, be an added dimension to this—a generational shift—that further strengthens the monologic. While most of the learners in an urban or a semi-urban set up would be conversant with the cutting-edge technological tool, the pedagogues would not be. However, this is only a conjecture and the demographic split needs to be probed scientifically. As a consequence, there seems to be a practice that does not accommodate an expectation that students can occupy what Bakhtin describes as "a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy…" of a certain discourse (Bakhtin 1999: 63). In addition, the everyday literacies of students and teachers—engaging in a dialogic discourse through the medium of

technology either at an individual level or at an institutional level—are within the space of institutionalized discourses like NMEICT and NKC always already outside the possibilities of a dialogue.

One also needs to locate the co-ordinates of the theoretical discourse that we have surveyed and refract them through a dialogic framework. Firstly, there seems to be an overwhelming emphasis within the technoculture paradigm that the possibilities of digital technology is based on a principle of *either/or*, primarily, in my opinion, due to a misconstruing of the digital code. On the contrary, there seems to be a major convergence between humanities theories and computing theories in recent times. Both disciplines seem to endorse that "conceptual systems founded upon ideas of centre, margin, hierarchy and linearity" (Landow 1997: 2) need to be replaced by more fluid forms like multilinearity, multinodes, and networks. The hypertextual technology that is available today does not simply constitute an either/ or but embodies the postmodern ideas of the open text blurring the boundaries between the reader and the writer. Two pertinent examples would be in place here —the rise of the Wikipedia and the proliferation of blogs. Both web tools offer the users a space that can be negotiated and critically appropriated as one's own. This, therefore, does not 'de-subjectify' as these theorists claim, but creates a 'critical subjectivity', an essential component of humanities pedagogy. We also possibly need to re-think the digital technologies outside the domains of a monologic institutionalized space since students often create 'intersubjectivities' that are open for dialoguing in the classroom. I will later discuss, reporting on a classroom practice, how this can be made possible. It is the percolation of this intersubjectivity, this interplay of live voices, that Bakhtin considers the real site of meaning-making; "[t]he idea is inter-individual and inter-subjective… a live event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses" (1999: 88).

Secondly, these theorists seem to invoke that such digital technologies have an impact on the unconscious and, therefore, form a 'virtuality' that is divorced from 'actuality'. The emphasis here seems to be increasingly, on what technology *does* than what *can be done* to it. However, one need not view such technologies as an abstract, substantivist entity that creates decontextualized hierarchies of power that objectifies the world, but rather as situated within a context. The focus, I contend, should be on the potentialities of the 'object' (consumers/users) to act upon technology. Feenberg (1999), for example, argues that in order to "realize" technology within a certain context, it must "systematize" (integrate isolated objects in a complete whole), "mediate" (with the contextual necessities, often ethical and moral in nature), and provide "initiative" (allow for freedom on the part of the consumer/user). This is what provides technological freedom—the ability to mold and shape an 'abstract' entity by creatively re-constituting it. This, in a sense, also ties up with the Bakhtinian notion of intersubjectivity and unfinalizability.

This brings us to the third question. I would strongly argue that we as pedagogues need to integrate web-based technology within the language/literature curriculum. The rationale for this is threefold: web-based technologies being

omnipresent, as it were, cannot be divorced from classrooms since it would create a de-contextualized arena where the binaries of pedagogy (within a classroom) and contextuality (outside the classroom) would be re-imposed, leading to a reconstitution of a monologic regime; secondly, autonomy and independence of the learner can be fostered when learning is self-directed and not teacher-controlled, a space of dialogue that technology can provide; and, finally, these web-based technologies can be harnessed to create a more intersubjective classroom, a prerequisite for any humanities teaching.

Pedagogy, Dialogue, and Intersubjectivities

One of the major assertions of Bakhtin (1986) was that all speech acts in their generic manifestation are echoes of other utterances, and that words never exist in neutral and impersonal form, but rather are encountered within the speech acts of others; "the word… exists in other people's mouths, on other people's concrete contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own" (Bakhtin 1981: 294). It is this propensity of the 'word' to reach out, and resonate, the 'other' that allows dialogic possibilities to emerge when we "enter into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses" (Bakhtin 1981: 345–346). Within the pedagogy/technology interface, a large body of research has now shown that new technology can form social networks that sometimes form the basis of communities (Rheingold 2000); can engage individuals in an active social dialog, foster interactive communication, and deliver significant political, social, and educational benefits in the process (Anderson et al. 1995); can be information-oriented and, therefore, open to more criticality (Katz et al. 2001; Nie and Erbring 2000); and, in terms of pedagogy, can foster autonomy in the learner (Oxbrow 2000; Warschauer et al. 1996; Dam 1995), create a sense of independence (Ward 2004), and motivate learners to 'explore' and 'access' (Sauer et al. 2005). The question, therefore, needs to shift its focus from what technology does to an inert user/consumer to what possibilities can be explored within it by opening up creative vistas on the part of the user. In the terms of humanities pedagogy, instead of treating the learners as objects whose sole functions are to assimilate and replicate, they need to be equipped and empowered with the new dialogic potential of emerging technologies. There are examples galore, for example, in the 1960s counter-culture of America, where computers/technology was turned to purposes that it was not meant for. The hacker subculture is a case in point. Levy (1994: 156) puts it succinctly as to how the computer subculture is a "testament to the way computer technology could be used as guerrilla warfare for people". By extension, pedagogy too can co-opt the new technologies for innovative and successful practices. One can draw upon Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue as created through mutual responsivity, "[u]nderstanding comes to fruition only in the response; understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition one another; one is impossible with the other"

(Bakhtin 1981: 282), with a view to explore the possibilities of a more integrative humanities pedagogy. I would here offer my own experiences, and research, limiting myself to three of them, in using web tools for teaching. In doing so, I would be supporting the transformative thesis of technology. However, I will end on a cautionary note.

My first example stems from using blogs in the English classroom. Though blogs were originally developed as a private online diary that could be shared among a select community, they can be transformed into an interactive pedagogic space. It is commonly observed in the Indian classroom that discussions based on topics often assume a one-way communicative mode with scant inputs from the students. This is when a colleague and I conceived of the blog project. I will not spell out the details of the project here (Bhattacharya and Chauhan 2010), but, in brief, the students were divided into small groups of three or four (in a class of 50) and asked to create their individual blogs with support from peers and tutors. The first blog post needed to be based on the topics that were discussed in the classroom —in their own words and within a given topical framework. The second blog post was a 'niche' topic that was based on the students' own interests. The students were then asked to publicize their blogs and cross-comment. The tutors also commented on each of the blogs as well as the cross-comments that these blogs received. The findings of this experiment were quite staggering. Students who would seldom participate in classroom proceedings were, to say the least, voluminous in their comments. It opened up a space for intersubjectivity to operate as well as a dialogic vista that would allow the hearing of other's words. A substantial amount of self-correction, revision, and re-drafting was ensured and we are still inundated by mails from students indicating that they have posted something new on their blogs. This is what Levy probably refers to as 'guerrilla' tactics—stretching the possibility of technology to re-channelize it for pedagogic purposes. This also led to a more intersubjective space that was possibly more fluid than the humanities classroom that uses a monologic regime of delivery. I am not suggesting here that the Bakhtinian notion of dialogicity was completely realized within the space of the blog, since the monologic presence of the coordinating teacher was always present, but the absenting of the monologue was made slightly more possible within the dialogicity that the blog offered.

The second example that I would cite is that of transforming the possibilities of chatrooms for pedagogic purposes. One of the major hurdles that we face in the humanities classroom is the reluctance of students to read supplementary reading materials, possibly triggered off by their inability to process dense theoretical texts. In the context of the classroom, this assumes an even more complicated texture, as 'good' students tend to respond more to discussions than 'weak' students. We found a special kind of chat room, called MOO, quite liberating. The students were again divided into groups and given a critical/theoretical text to read at the end of every week. On a predetermined day and time, all the groups were asked to enter a private chatroom designed by the tutors. I would not venture into the technical details here, but it is perhaps necessary to state here that all participants in a MOO represent an object which the tutors are aware of but not the

peer group. This has an advantage—there is a sense of anonymity that operates, liberating the possibility of a dialogue to take place. Each group was asked to pose questions based on the reading text, ranging from areas that they did not comprehend, to critical comments that they conceived of. Again, the findings were, to say the least, encouraging. A lot of peer interaction was observed instead of a monodirectional tutor—student interaction. A tutor intervened only when the interaction 'jammed' or if a direct question was posed to them. This led to more autonomy and exploration of ideas within a more or less anonymous space. This also opened the sluices of interaction, often blocked by inhibition in a humanities classroom, leading to further use of the language, an imperative for any pedagogic space. Interestingly, this also opened up a lot internal dialogues, private chats within the peers that allowed them to discuss and transform what was not necessarily a part of the pedagogic discourse of the chatroom, what Bakhtin terms an "[i]nternally persuasive discourse: half-ours and half-someone else's". Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words (Bakhtin 1981: 345).

The third example is related to the first two, but in this case involved the use of the group space—in particular, Google Groups. The methodology being the same, every week an article or link was posted on the group on which the students were asked to respond within a given framework. Initially, the interaction was unilinear, that is student to tutor, but post-feedback became multimodal. After the students had received their individual comments from the tutors and revised their write-up, they posted them for all users. This again led to pointed discussions and interactions within the group.

With the help of the examples above we can return to the question that was posed at the start: what implications does digitization have for humanities pedagogy in India? Theoretically speaking, the digital space by eliding the encumbrance of 'authority' or the 'aura', in Benjaminian terms, of the pedagogue can open up fissures—dialogic spaces—that may not be possible in a teacher-fronted classroom. Secondly, as Marcuse suggests, it can explore the possibility of a 'fraternal' relation to the context that exists outside the classroom by extending the co-ordinates of the classroom to include what learners engage in outside. Thirdly, the digital 'implosion', which McLuhan mentions, can be innovatively garnered to create a more multidisciplinary space. Fourthly, unlike what Baudrillard suggests, the digital space can be used for purposes that it was not originally meant to perform, thus, giving rise to 'critical subjectivities', rather than an annihilation of it, and possibly culminating in 'communicative action,' as suggested by Habermas. It is possibly through such an interaction that a dialoguing can come to exist and the lure of finalization can be countered. It is perhaps this dialogue that can provide a means of self-reflection when the institutional monologic voice embodied in discourses like NMEICT and NKC can be made partial, and sometimes contradictory, by engaging with them and open up a rhizomatic space within the humanities classroom.

Conclusion

I would end this chapter, however, on a cautionary note. Digitization and pedagogy needs to be complementary and one should not overwhelm the other. Mistaking the tool for the task and thinking that just transferring words on a screen from paper is the same thing as real learning is reversing the order altogether. Pedagogical principles—input, interaction, feedback, revision, re-drafting, critical thinking, sustained engagement—should hold sway over the mere use of digital technology. Anthony Oettinger (n.d.) of Harvard playfully termed the advent of computers as "compunication technology" or computer-mediated technology, and I stress the word 'mediated'. It would indeed be banal for us, the users, to shut this mediation out from the English classrooms. Any language/literature with a view to be learnt needs mediation and usage, and as acquisition theories reiterate, need to be nurtured not in an authoritarian monologic space but in a democratized dialogic one. This space, I think, could be mediated through technology.

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Chapter 12
Talking Texts, Writing Memory: A Bakhtinian Reading of Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines*

Paromita Chakrabarti

> What I have forgotten is what I have written: a rag of words wrapped around a shard of recollection. A book with torn ends visible. *Fault Lines* (1993, 2003: 3)

Introduction

The first edition of Meena Alexander's memoir *Fault Lines* (1993) was written at the request of her friend, Florence Howe, in the belief that writing it would allow her to claim a place in the United States and shed her marginal existence. Signaling to a "theory of multiple meanings and violent negotiations,"[1] Alexander demonstrates that her identity is situated at the various and chaotic intersections of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, historical, and cartographic fault lines. Using the term as the title of her memoir and positioning herself in the fractured space of dislocation, Alexander points to the necessary violence that accompanies any splintering of the self. As a postcolonial, multilingual, multicultural, woman of color—fault lines are what makes her up. As a "woman cracked by multiple migrations,… who cannot connect nothing with nothing… [whose] words are all askew" (2) she embodies the fissure, the opening, the gap, that is produced by the relentless push of memory against history and the continuous wrestling of language of scholarship with the voice of the body.

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[1]I am using this phrase from Stella Oh's article "Violence and Belonging: The 'Fault Lines' of Language and Identity" in *Passage to Manhattan: Critical Essays on Meena Alexander* (Basu and Leenerts 2009).

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The revised edition, published in 2003, is a deeply felt personal response to the tragic events of 9/11 and the uncovering of a long-repressed trauma of sexual abuse that she suffered at the hands of her maternal grandfather in her childhood. In the first edition of the memoir, Alexander had idealized her grandfather who she lovingly called Ilya and had portrayed him as an adoring and nurturing presence; handholding her through childhood, telling her stories of India's history, teaching her the joys of planting, enabling her to explore dreams and fueling her imagination to run riot. The revised and expanded edition retains the idyllic childhood memories, but sutures it with a terrible secret that threatens to puncture any sense of coherence, stability or a structure of meaning, that the writer might have tried to distill through writing her 'self' into a memoir. The interesting thing about the first edition are the silences which quietly hints that the seemingly perfect, magically stable, and totally idyllic childhood in Tiruvella, is a cover for the violent dangers lurking in the recesses of 'safe home.'[2]

This chapter will attempt a Bakhtinian reading of *Fault Lines* enabling the two editions to be read simultaneously as competing and complementary texts that can be put in conversation with each other. Both the editions testify to the multilayered nature of consciousness through the workings of memory and language. Meena Alexander uses both the texts to reveal her own struggle with what is allowed to be remembered and what one is compelled to forget. Alexander's memoirs engage, contest, and alter each other to disrupt the possibility of singular meanings and absolute truth by rewriting and writing over a single text twice. In doing that she is able to crack up the discourse of silence and unlock the dark, painful past that was carefully concealed. Both the 1993 and 2003 versions offer a conflicting and incommensurate idea of the past and a fractured, yet intensely interconnected vision of the future. The memoirs testify to the presence of multiple voices that keep pushing against each other to resist the authority and autonomy of any single authorial voice. In this sense, the memoirs become dialogic facilitating the articulation of a hybrid, diasporic sensibility that destabilizes narratives of singular origin and absolute identities.

Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* (1929), clearly points out that Dostoevsky's work is "symptomatic of a profound crisis of authorship and of the utterance in general" (Brandist 2002: 91). Bakhtin's ideas of a fluid, questionable narrator who replaces the author, as seen most prominently in Dostoevsky's novels, is cause for celebration. Bakhtin sees this supplanting of the dominant authorial discourse by a free-flowing, relativized, narrative which renders the former

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[2]The idea of an 'original *safe home*' has been used by feminist critic Roberta Rubenstein who says that our desire for a safe home is an expression of our earliest needs for security; a desire that culminates in our longing for the idealized mother as the site of an original safe home. My use of the term *safe home* borrows Rubenstein's concept in so far as I want to show how the first edition of *Fault Lines* is a mapping of the desire for an original home that is rooted in a longing not for the mother but for the grandfather; the patriarch, the father-figure. This longing for an original home that is built by the law of the father cannot be a safe, nurturing and naturalized home as it suppresses the longing for the maternal and represses the trauma of sexual abuse.

inadequate, an indication of a new kind of writing. He went as far as to assert that this new writing was a mark of progressive democratic culture and irreducible pluralism. This is not to say that Bakhtin considers Dostoevsky's works simply as celebrations of social dialogue; rather, what he sees in his writings, is the ability of the author to find his/her "unique and unrepeatable place in relation to the characters… without imposing a causal and deterministic logic on them" (Brandist 2002: 95). This allows the emergence of varied perspectives, relativity of points of view and the presence of multiple voices in the text.

For Bakhtin, in 'Discourse and the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981 [1934]) and in *The Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984[1963]), the presence of multiple voices inside as well as outside the self generates conversation which is articulated through language. This multiplicity of contesting voices is dialogism. As an antidote to monologism, dialogism decentres authoritarian discourses to generate the idea of difference, of plurality, of talking back. Dialogism, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, would provide opportunities of renewal, regeneration, and offer multiplicity of meanings. Discourse in the Bakhtinian sense would hence incorporate messy communication such as cross-talking or writing over, thus hinting at the very Janus-like nature of utterance. According to Bakhtin, there is no dialogism if no response is anticipated. Every utterance becomes meaningful only through its addressivity. It is in this Janus-like utterance that context gets defined and new social realities are formed.

Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines* testifies to the plurality of perspectives and the multiplicity of voices. The reported discourse is set off by the narratorial voice cutting through and crossing free of the dominant authorial hold over the text. The revised edition has the author of the first edition competing with the narrator of the second. While the authorial voice in the first edition is circumscribed by the logic of historical time, the utterance of the narrator of the second edition is available only in the present. While the former is an example of "causality and determination", the latter evidences the logic of "unrepeatability and freedom" (Brandist 2002: 94).

Contesting Memories, Conflicting Voices

Alexander's 2003 *Fault Lines* talks back to the 1993 version and cuts through the authorial voice of the past to do the re-telling. This latter version contradicts the earlier version and offers an alternate reality through intrusions, responses, objections, pauses, and narratorial intervention. In the Bakhtinian sense, her writing of the 2003 memoir is evidently an example of "dialogized heteroglossia" that cross-talks in multiple tongues: literally in Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil, Arabic, French, English, and metaphorically to the 1991 memoir in conflicting voices that hide as well as reveal, continue as well as disrupt and concede as well as interrogate. A close reading of both the works show how Alexander is able to create a fountain head of composites that threaten to open the floodgates of memory, dislodge boundaries of literature and gender, and signal the upheavals and "perils" of

contact zone.[3] This chapter asserts that 1991 *Fault Lines*: *A Memoir* and the 2003 revised version can be read as competing centripetal and centrifugal texts that operate in simultaneity and in constantly shifting moments of utterance; cautioning us about the painful unreliability of history and memory, and the deeply ambiguous contours of language and discursive representation. The revised edition is built like an aesthetic superstructure on which the foundations of a polyphonic memoir is reconstructed. Devoid of any finalizing function, the memoir works like a Dostoevsky novel, placing the unreliable, yet conscious narrator in a difficult, yet provoking position, uncovering the past and unlayering the present. Alexander has a twofold objective in rewriting the memoir: one, to force remembrance of the past act of sexual violation by her grandfather and two, to articulate her deep anxiety of living in post-9/11 USA as a dark-skinned woman in present time. This chapter engages with these two aspects of her memoir and tries to offer a possible analysis of how memory, language and identity are fused in order to produce a discourse that is at the edge of what Bakhtin would term intersubjective interaction. A kind of text that battles with a variety of 'angles of interaction' (Brandist 2002: 101) and imposes   and   superimposes   the   authorial   discourse   with   the   narratorial counter-discourse. This dialectical engagement of discourses results in a merger of interruptive and contradictory voices in the present and conflicting and corresponding images of the past.

   Writing a memoir offers Meena Alexander a mode to unravel her past and a strategy to deal with the pain of multiple dislocations and the trauma of fractured identity. Responding to Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva in an interview, Alexander points out how "the whole issue of self-disclosure as it plays into postcolonial culture is a difficult one, but it may be more attractive to women because of the possibilities it offers of inventing a space for oneself" (Bahri and Vasudeva 1996: 47). In the same interview, she observes "I think this focus on the self is very peculiar to the culture of North America, and generally, so is the desire to create 'autobiography.' A constant attempt to vivify what one thinks of as identity by redefining one's self is a very American project. The interest in postcoloniality […] and about looking at one's self is also part of the current wave of the culture" (Bahri and Vasudeva 1996: 36). By writing a memoir Alexander is doing a very American thing and redefining what being American might mean for her. Concurrently, the memoirs give her the space to explore the pressures of being

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[3]The idea of peril and danger of contact zones which are social spaces where culture, language, race, and class, meet, clash and grapple together in a violent tussle of power is taken from Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation Discussion on Contact Zones* (1992). She argues that "autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression" along with "miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread masterpieces, absolute heterogeneity of meaning," serve as both "arts" and the perils of the contact zone. I want to show how Meena Alexander's memoir becomes the contact zone where past memories and present realities meet to open up a third space of negotiation and enunciation; how ethnic identities in a multicultural and multiracial America clash with postcolonial identities of resistance and autonomy; and how hybrid diasporic contestations wrestle with transnational feminist collaboration.

a postcolonial woman, living and writing in America. Most importantly, by choosing to write a memoir twice over, Alexander pushes against the boundaries of the text, prying open the dark memories of abuse sutured in silence and placed in the gap between forgetting and remembering. In the chapter "Dark Mirror" she confesses: "My aim is not to cross out what I first wrote but to deepen that writing, dig under it, even to the point of overturning one of the most cherished figures I created" (*FL* 229). With her 2003 edition of *Fault Lines*, Alexander acknowledges the silences that a text conspires to keep, in order to tell itself. For her, the *memory gap*[4] closes on itself facilitating a reclamation and recovery of memories that remained hidden in the blank spaces between writing and consciousness.

Alexander's writing occupies a space that is discursively spaced between layers of loss: of memory, of home, of language, of family, of location, of identity; and is marked by the urgency of breaking free and leaving. Loss becomes an important feature of migrant subjectivity and leads to a serious deficiency or lack in Alexander's attempts at self-construction and self-definition. In an interview to Susie Tharu, she says: "I write because I don't know what I am" (Tharu 1982: 74). Attempting to reconstruct her subjectivity through a recovery of her childhood and a mapping of her several dislocations, Alexander enters her own narrative as a fractured and "self-declared deficient subject who has been traumatized, by her multiple migrations, sexual abuse and forgetfulness" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2010: 29); and needs to make up memory in order to reconstruct her fractured subjectivity and reclaim her past.

In the 1993 memoir Alexander begins with the question: "Where did I come from? How did I become what I am?" (*FL* 2). Doing a genealogical search for origins, and realizing the ambiguity of beginnings, Alexander is tormented by issues of belonging and roots. By the time she rewrites the memoir in 2003, she is a woman cracked by multiple migrations who now needs to write to remember, to connect nothing with nothing. Going back to the mother and her mother's mother and to all the mothers that came before them, Alexander searches for the maternal home that holds the promise of safely ensconcing her and making her whole. Unfortunately, her search for the original, primary, maternal home draws her only to the "darkness of the Tiruvella house with its cool bedrooms and coiled verandas: the shelter of memory" (3). The darkness of the Tiruvella house holds a terrible

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[4]I am using the term *memory gap* to indicate a slip in accessing a certain period of time in the life of the individual. Borrowing the term from the field of computer science which means "a gulf in access time, capacity and cost of computer storage technologies between fast, expensive, main-storage devices and slow, high capacity, inexpensive secondary-storage devices," I want to show how certain amount of time in the life span of the individual is not available to *secondary memory* (embedded in the body and might be available only on recall through repetition or trauma) although there might be an uncomfortable remnant of it in the *primary memory* (part of the brain that holds information for reasoning and comprehension and is available in the form of active recall). But this lapse or fault in the ability to access that time is not permanent. Just like the movements of the earth's surface cause fault lines that creates a shift or transforms boundaries; an extremely significant external event can dislodge the repressed memories to surface and claim ground, closing the memory gap by suddenly filling it up with the forgotten time (all italics mine).

secret; which, if disclosed, will crack open the neat layers of silence that protect the family from splintering. The coiled verandas, a meandering maze complicates the search for truth and access to the past. Although she is aware of the powers of recall, she is also certain that:

> …the house of memory is fragile; made up in the mind's space. Even what I remember best, I am forced to admit, is what has flashed up for me in the face of present danger, at the tail end of the century, where everything is to be elaborated, spelt out, precariously reconstructed. And there is little sanctity in remembrance. (*FL* 3)

By linking the present danger at the tail end of the century with the dangers of sexual violation, Alexander is attesting to the ways in which personal histories are always related to larger global histories. The terror attacks of 9/11, national trauma and the subsequent increase in racial and ethnic profiling in the United States and in a lot of countries in Global North, incidents of violence in America trigger the recovery of a personal trauma. The private self gets inextricably linked with the public history of the nation, intersecting the personal with the political and "initiating a complex interrelational process of evaluating the self with respect to the greater history" (De 2009: 136). Alexander becomes a commentator of times whose embedded and relational self is hinged upon the unstable hyphenations with people, community, places, and events. Recognizing how memory touches upon the questions of identity, nationalism, and power, Alexander forces herself to ask in the section "Writing in Fragments": "'How could I not have known what happened to me?'" (242) she then answers:

> The short answer is of course I knew. I simply could not bear to remember. I picked through any books I could find on trauma theory. I taught myself to accept that there is knowledge that is too much for the nervous system to bear, that disappears underground, but sparks up through fault lines. […]
>
> As I remembered Ilya, as I wrote him into being, I saw the child that I was, the child who set herself the harsh task of forgetting. To learn to forget is as hard as to learn to remember.
>
> The girl child and the woman flow together. Will the hand that was cut off become part of my body again? How slowly I pick up the *qalam.* (*FL* 242)

Writing her way into the home of her past, pushed by the image of the severed hand in Djebar's *Fantasia*, she jolts the reader into a shock. The reader is shocked not because she remembered but because she forgot. The other reason why it is doubly difficult to deal with the omission of the abuse is her representation of her grandfather in the 1993 memoir:

> Almost seventy by the time I was born, he [Ilya] was well established as an intellectual and community leader […] I began to accept his place in the world around him, his public power. I loved him more than I have ever loved anyone in my life – in that intensity that childhood brings […] (*FL* 52)

In the early chapters of the 2003 version, Ilya remains the central figure in her imagination and in her discourse. He is the one who teaches her about her family roots and her culture and provides her with a sense of belonging to a nation and to its history. She goes on to say "I could not conceive life without Ilya. I drew

nourishment from him as a young thing might from an older being gnarled with time" (*FL* 36) and even as a grown-up woman many years after his death, Alexander's connection to the Tiruvella house is embedded in her being through the fluid and intimate longing she feels for Ilya. As the writing starts flowing out of her body, she marks the fault lines of memory, a two way of remembering things. The loving, nurturing, enabling figure of Ilya begins to crack up into something else; hinting at trouble under the surface.

At the beginning of "Katha", Alexander talks about "two sorts of memories; two opposing ways of being towards the past. The first makes whorls of skin and flesh, […]. A life embedded in a life, and that in another life, another and another. […] The other kind of memory comes to her in "bits and pieces of the present, it renders the past suspect, cowardly, baseless" (*FL* 29–30). The first type of memory is the external 'legitimate memory' and the second kind is the 'deep memory.' Hyphenated and contradicted by the location of the body from which one speaks and the self that one speaks of, Alexander's subjectivity is represented through conflict and contradiction. In 1933, her memoir used the whorls of skin and flesh of memory to paint Ilya, tracing him in her blood and in the bloodstream of the Tiruvella clan. In 2003, the bits and pieces of scrap that were enfolded in forgetfulness begin to emerge "filled by the burning present, cut by existential choices" (*FL* 30), placing her previously told childhood history on a fault line, and turning her postcolonial identity into an arbitrary and contingent thing.

Writing Body, Breaking Silence

Re-writing the memoir points to the transmutation that takes place in the case of memories and how memories become gnarled and garbled with time. In her own words, it was impossible to feel at home with all those memories as they sat layered in the recesses of her mind, making her breathless and restive. This feeling of discomfort, of not being able to inhabit her own body and the pain of homelessness, is not because Alexander did not have a home but because she had too many "to count, to describe" (*FL* 51). Just like there were rooms after rooms that made a maze out of the Tiruvella house of her childhood, Alexander's memory also causes her tremendous unease. This sense of alienation and homelessness can be negotiated only if she writes her abuse into language; confronting rather than concealing. "*Write in fragments, the fragments will save you*" (*FL* 237) she notes after reading Djebar's book. Fragments become an important discursive tool through which Alexander attempts to make sense of herself and her multiple dislocations. Her memoir thus does not follow any chronological order, nor does it remain bound in one language, or maintain cartographic divisions. It moves from her childhood memories to present circumstances, to lyrical explorations of history, geography, even etymology, of the words she is using or source-images she is encountering. Stories about her childhood gets morphed into her awakening of class consciousness in Khartoum, Sudan; and then gets transported into a story told in India about

being too shy to talk to Westerners, sentences get juxtaposed with each other to give the impression of continuity but concealing the crack of the faulty grammar. Her sentences come out gnarled and wrapped in time and in stone that carries the dead weight of shame, always threatening her with consequences that might be violent and fatal.

Grandfather Ilya and the memory of abuse are registered not in her consciousness but are fused into her mind as one indivisible flesh. This kind of remembrance which is embodied points to a conflicting, oppositional-consciousness. The socially constructed external memory of Ilya marks him as the nurturing, loving grandfather while the deep memory hides him and the heinous act that he perpetrated by this act of fusion. Deep memory, according to Charlotte Deblo, is "the persistence of the past in its own perpetual present"[5] (Culberston 1995: 170), memory that runs through Alexander's memoirs and her body like an undercurrent whose force is palpable yet cannot be seen. The external memory and the deep memory gets superimposed holding Alexander's body and her writing to ransom, pushing her through the layers of loss and pulling her to the spaces of desire.

Memory filtering through the body that tries to remember has long been recognized by scholars of trauma theory where it is believed that "*there is no memory without body memory*" (Casey 1987: 172) and is evident in the struggles that *Fault Lines* exemplifies. "The Stone-Eating Girl" and the "Book of Childhood" raises important questions regarding body memory in reference to private trauma and public shame. Body memory is the implicit memory of a traumatic event or an incident that has been experienced through the body but has not been neutralized or completed or resolved by the conscious mind; thus, remaining buried in the body itself. Body memory, stored in the unconscious and experienced only through the body in the mode of disassociation, is in opposition to the external/explicit memory which is stored in the conscious mind. Both kinds of memories produce conflicting signs and images fracturing the subject from deep within. Yet the individual subject is able to move between two sets of memories, navigate between extreme positions of being, displacing one with the other or recalling implicit memories in order to integrate them into the present conscious. The process of healing for such a split subject begins only when there is a ritual or deliberate re-enactment of the body memory in the present; discharging and releasing the trauma from the unresolved unconscious and integrating it with conscious memory, in the present.

In Alexander's case, body memory is activated through the stimuli of an equally traumatic public event. Confronting the memories of sexual abuse for the first time, not after her father or her grandfather's death, but in 2001 in the national and collective trauma of 9/11 and its aftermath, Alexander's individual narrative of trauma splits open the "dark mirror" and "[tears] open the skin of memory"

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[5]Roberta Culberston cites Charlotte Deblo who gives an example of "deep memory": "I feel it again, through my whole body, which becomes a block of pain, and I feel death seizing me, I feel myself die […] the cry awakens me, and I emerge from the nightmare, exhausted. It takes days for everything to return to normal […] I become myself again, the one you know, who can speak to you Auschwitz without showing any signs of distress or emotion" (Culberston 1995: 170).

(*FL* 229), making her write the memoir once again. Re-writing the book of remembrance and scratching the wounds open she begins to approach her past with the sense of discovery. Invoking Walter Benjamin, who she quotes in the preface to the section divider for "The Book of Childhood", she justifies her attempts to re-open her memoir in order to complete it: "He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging … He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter…" (*FL* 227). Like the man who digs, turns over soil, and scatters it, Alexander writes her self into the soil of her past in order to disclose, disgorge, and disperse the trauma of childhood abuse.

Creating a counter-memory where exits a vacuum and where no words have ever gone, Alexander painfully explains her need to forge, to create incidents and images from the past: "The house of memory is fragile; made up in the mind's space" (*FL* 3). She is at times forced to fabricate characters she has never met but only heard (like her maternal grandmother Kunju) and at times assume the burden of the past by re-creating it (as her fragile memory fails to recall). This attempt to represent the past by inventing it calls into question the limits of memory and radically disrupts the reading of history. This discontinuous process of recalling and retelling the past, according to Foucault, is a result of counter-memory. Counter-memory disrupts the straight, simplified, clean lines of history and resists the coercive epistemic closure that such a history demands. By writing about Ilya and his abuse of her, she exposes the violence of the family past; placing her history in direct opposition to the official narrative of the family as remembered by the Tiruvella and Kozencheri members. By using counter-memory, Alexander is able to re-create the scene of abuse and name the abuser. In the 1993 version, Ilya is represented as a figure who is associated with the awakening of her cultural sophistication while the 2003 edition suggests Ilya as the sexual abuser who took little Meena apart and broke her down.

When she begins to talk about her abuse she becomes an Other to her own self. Her dislocated and mutilated self embodies the violence and is unable to bridge the deep sense of fracture that had cracked her up and rendered her divisible. Living within the skin of one Meena and experiencing the dark otherness of her alter-ego Susikali, the demoness; or the stone-eating girl of the road; Alexander refuses to call herself as the abused, but realizes that she is not I, that she is not one, not whole or single, but is a composite of selves stitched together, and somehow held by fear and shame. Putting a tongue to the wound, Alexander acknowledges the ways in which her subjectivity is split between two selves who simultaneously exist inside her, one self, taught to remember; the other, forced to forget. Once she falls through the *memory gap* between two selves, she is able to free herself from the tradition of silence and eject the stones of shame "through the miraculous gut we call the imagination" (*FL* 80).

Gathering the courage to defy censorship, Alexander encounters her trauma in the discursive textual space of her memoir. Courting the risk of alienation, shame and family dishonor, she deliberately goes through the rites of passage to remember what was meant to be forgotten. Her relationship with her mother, who always taught her to honour family tradition and uphold family values, is particularly vexed. During the writing of the 2003 version Alexander remembers what her mother did: "My mother, it seemed to me, as I read my book again, was constantly

averting her eyes, looking elsewhere, not being able to see" (*FL* 241). Later, when Alexander is struggling to write about Khartoum and reconstruct memories of her life, she tells her mother of the difficulty and the struggle to express herself and remember: "Perhaps it's just that I am scared, having covered it over for so long" to which she replies: "the first thing a girl should learn is when to keep her silence" (*FL* 191). Even though she does not have conscious memory of the abuse, she remembers the censorious voice of her mother teaching her the tradition of silence and putting the fear of shame in her if she ever broke her female vows: "I heard her voice coming back to me from a lifetime ago. It made a black space in my ear, a savagery I could not yet decipher" (*FL* 191).

Troubled by her gradual awareness that she has excluded something very important from her memoir, Alexander realizes that she needs to write once again. Later in the memoir Alexander tellingly describes the way the Tiruvella ancestral home with its teak and brass fixtures, is torn down to construct a new residence with modern conveniences. The metaphor of tearing down the old in order to make way for the new is symbolic of the rebuilding and restoring that she does by writing into memory the interiors of the house that remained hidden behind the fixtures, the gloss and the order. This rebuilding of the house by unearthing the traces of the "interior" is what Walter Benjamin alludes as "the asylum of art" "where to dwell means to leave traces. In the interior these are accentuated" (*FL* 260). According to Alexander, re-writing the memoir by accentuating the traces of what had happened and what got left out is to acknowledge that "zone of radical illiteracy." It is in this zone that trauma and shame come together in a fiery muteness wherein the possibility of translation is directly linked to the author's ability to transport the violent unevenness and the sharp jaggedness of the self and it's past. Alexander talks about this zone as a place where we go to when words fail us, "where a terrible counter-memory wells up" and which can be found only when one falls through the door into the dark gap (*FL* 260).

Falling through the memory gap, picking up the memoir to put together the missing pieces, particularly after 9/11, after the massacre of Muslims in Gujrat in 2002 and on reading Djebar's *Fantasia*; Alexander confesses: "My aim is not to cross out what I wrote, but to deepen that writing, dig under it, even to the point of overturning one of the most cherished figures I created" (*FL* 229). As she confronts the truth in the discursive space of the memoir, she wonders what really fractured her and what defines her subjectivity. Is it the material facts of her many border crossings and her multiple dislocations or is it the betrayal and violation she experienced at the hands of the one she had most loved and most trusted? For Alexander, there is no easy answer. Just as her transoceanic journeys took her from nation to nation, from culture to culture, from languages to languages; her journey from the dark chambers of secret shame to the white pages of imagination lit up by the sharp sunlight of disclosure takes her from trauma to healing. Her ablution lies in going through the pain of first swallowing the stones and then spitting them out. Her experiences of migrant dislocation and the trauma of private violation are intricately linked with each other to create a self that is dangerously split and deeply fractured, turning her into a subject who lives on the fault lines of a dark indigo body.

Using deep memory to draw up the un-remembered past, Alexander does not give into the pitfalls of lame nostalgia but, instead, creatively constructs a future that offers her the possibility of a negotiation with her fractured subjectivity and provides her the space to participate in her own healing. *Fault Lines* use of memory as work, in the Bakhtinian sense can be read as a restorative and recuperative text. By writing back to the 1993 version in 2003, Alexander is able to make sense of the past, reclaim the stories that remained un-told and caution us to the deeply ambiguous and inconclusive nature of all representation. In Bakhtinian terms, *Fault Lines* (1993, 2003) points to "intentional hybridization" bringing both versions in contact with each other without offering the possibility of any final resolution. The readers are free to choose the versions they find convincing and are open to shifting loyalties. Playing with continuity, Alexander keeps writing the same story twice over; but also disrupts it by inserting her memory of the sexual abuse and challenging the very foundations of the earlier memoir. Thus, *Fault Lines* is both continuous as well as discontinuous. By opposing one value system over the other, Alexander destabilizes the authorial subject in the first edition while making the post-authorial narrator of the 2003 version an unreliable one. Interestingly, what *Fault Lines* (1993, 2003) does is to question the very nature of writing, memory and language. It shows how the remembering subject and the writing subject in spite of being one, is still a dialectical synthesis of antithetical forces, entangled with and shot through with the possibility and the inevitability of another memory, another voice, another language and another point of view.

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Chapter 13
Exploring Bakhtin's Dialogic Potential in Self, Culture, and History: A Study of V.S. Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now*

Jasmine Anand

> The world is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object … every word is directed towards an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates. (DN 279–80)

It is with this anticipation to find answers for himself and India's evolving and changing culture and history, the working of Mikhail M. Bakhtin's dialogism at self, stylistic, narrative, cultural, and historical level can be applied to Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990). The text is not written dialogically, but it's dialogic potential can be explored at various levels. As believed, it is only through our use of language, our dialogue with others, that we can orient ourselves toward a comprehension of our environment, our place in time and space (DN 345). V.S. Naipaul's personal history and diasporic experience propels and prepares the backdrop for his venture into the Indian historical terrain. In this, he tries to understand his situatedness in India with an active engagement with others in dialogue, whether by appropriating their words and voice, or in seeking to understand the voices of others, that once became for him '*an area of darkness*'. In fact, this not only works therapeutically for V.S. Naipaul's nerves but gives him "new ways of seeing and feeling" (IMMN 516) and becomes an experience of dialogic fiction. As, by stepping into the place of someone else, losing ourselves for a moment, we are paradoxically better able to understand ourselves in relation to that other. As V.S. Naipaul remarks:

> What I hadn't understood in 1962, or had taken too much for granted, was the extent to which the country had been remade… restored to itself… (IMMN 517)

> In 27 years I had succeeded in making a kind of return journey, shedding my Indian nerves, abolishing the darkness that separated me from my ancestral past. (IMMN 516)

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This working up of 'I' in terms of locating identity is dialogic, according to Michael Holquist (2002), as it "insures that my existence is not a lonely event but part of a larger whole" (36). The importance of the growth of consciousness in the dialogic novel is, in part, the result of the fact that people whose identities are denied/lost/confused/fused have no other place to find their stories, except in the historical or autobiographical literature they themselves produce. Naipaul's perspective is internally dialogized as he anticipates other people's views and their reactions and creates a micro-dialogue in his mind. His consciousness appears as a mosaic of competing individual and collective perspectives; everything he observes is drawn into dialogue.

Literary discourse is dialogic as it is realized on the boundary between its context and the context of an "other" who brings to the story a different perspective (DN 284). This dialogism can be seen at two levels, firstly as dichotomy between various people—their movements and Naipaul's perspective, and, secondly as dichotomy between the microhistory at the individual level and macrohistory at the official recorded level. The book provides the assessments of the socio-politico-religious movements in contemporary India when the country was aflame with Rath Yatra and the anti-Mandal agitation. In juxtaposition to the Indian perspective, Naipaul senses optimism in the awakening of the masses, in the rise of Tamil militants in the South and of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Bihar; the resurgence of the Bodos in the East, and that of the Dalits in the West and the Naxalites in several states.

Naipaul projects a nation at the threshold of change and break-up, with regional cultural identities trying to release themselves from the monolithic historical and religious traps. Amartya Sen also commented on the contemporary relevance of dialogic tradition and heterodoxy in India, in his book *The Argumentative Indian*, as "important for democracy and public reasoning … central to the practice of secularism and for even-handed treatment of adherents of different religious faiths" (Sen 2005: xiii). The change in the rage of communities, their dissent and realization of the wrongs done by the history and the emergence of identity, which earlier got lost into monolithic nationalism, is noticed by Naipaul. Linguistically, dialogism emphasizes on syntagmatic (horizontal) relations rather than paradigmatic (vertical) relations, which can be metaphorically seen in the context of syntagmatic working of various mutinies in this non-fictional novel (Holquist 2002: 40). Here an eternal dialogism can be seen at play as the multiple identities that have localized themselves either remain in conflict or keep on negotiating. Where, Amartya Sen's thesis laments the loss of tradition of dialogism in India, there, V.S. Naipaul observes it's existence in more vibrant forms through mutinies. In the preceding parts of the trilogy on India, he assesses Indian life and culture with the Hindu norms of 'karma' and 'dharma'. In *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, however, he tears his own thesis to shreds. On his third journey through India, he does not condemn or lament at the annihilation caused by the 'little wars' but attempts to explain their origins and motives and shows his interest in finding out the genesis of people's commitment to causes. He eventually deconstructs his thesis of India as Hindu India in order to make sense of India's critical understanding. Earlier there was just one mutiny of 1857 [now] there are million mutinies. The word *now* significantly

reflects upon dialogue across India's past and present. According to Naipaul, India cannot be encapsulated in a rudimentary manner because of its ever-evolving reality. India's protean image helps Naipaul in a dialogic understanding of her at the metaphorical level than at the monolithic, rigid, or conceptual level that swayed his opinion previously.

Bakhtin sees social heteroglossia behind production of dialogization of a novel. He remarks:

> The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices artistically organized …. The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. (DN 262–263)

Naipaul's book is divided into nine chapters and each chapter is a profusion of characters and voices, which speak for themselves. Instead of shaping his material, he simply lets his subjects talk, allowing them to reminisce freely about their families, their beliefs, their jobs, their dreams and disappointments. To quote Pravas from the 'Breaking Out' part:

> I have made one more level of transformation than my father did from his father's time. I am more liberal in outlook than my father. I've probably become more questioning …. My father got a part of what his father had, and I have only a part of the rituals my father had. (IMMN 167–68)

The chapter 'Breaking Out' portrays people from different walks of life who had come out of the old Hindu world of their parents and grandparents and were working towards new goals, and building up a new concept of selfhood. Working alongside were 'little wars' or movements that sought to break the old order in a gradual way but as a direct and immediate goal.

In Bakhtin's view, in order to allow for a plurality of voices, authors should not dominate the discourse of their novels with their own consciousness.

> A character's word [does not] serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice …. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, *alongside* the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters. (PDP 6–7)

Michael Holquist states "Dialogism opposes 'individualistic subjectivism' denies pre-existing norms and holds that all aspects of language can be explained in terms of each individual speaker's voluntarist intentions" (Holquist 2002: 41). The fact that this book abounds in dialogue, and dialogue is used as commentary on a given situation makes it important for study. The dialogue is predominantly conversational. Here Naipaul almost becomes devoiced in comparison to the earlier works. In this the voice of Naipaul is only used for the sole purpose to engage people in conversation. There are entire sections that are built up on direct speech. The use of narrative passages in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is concentrated only in the last chapter, 'The House on the Lake: A Return to India'. The passages mainly deal with factual details, but are reflective. Significantly, there is a change in

author's viewpoint between *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization* to *A Million Mutinies Now* as myriad viewpoints articulated by many different characters emerge independently. The characters are not only objects of the author's word, but also subjects of their own directly significant word. Bakhtin sees this quality as a kind of dynamic and liberating influence which conceptualizes reality, giving freedom to the individual character, thus subverting the 'monologic' discourse. This particular non-fictional work is inherently dialogic, as it incorporates a broad range of human voices; some associated with the characters, others with the author, and still others apparently unconnected and free-floating. Included within this medley of polyphony are the voices of authority (such as the author's), but they are consistently undermined, contradicted, and enriched by the various voices of subversion. All these voices interact and collide to create heteroglossia, in which there is no "last word," only a continuing dialogue. Here Naipaul almost becomes de-voiced in comparison to his earlier works. In this book, he has been able to come to terms with the plurality and paradox of India. He observes the individuals, records their opinions, and places them against those of an earlier generation. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* in comparison to Naipaul's previous travelogues *An Area of Darkness,* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*, can be seen as a non-fictional novel in a process that never achieves a resolution. Contrary to the other texts this text opens on to the future rather than seeking to explain the past.

By allowing his characters to express themselves through their own points of view, Naipaul tries to be as objective as possible; like a judge hearing all testimonies, but one who passes no verdict, has no finalizing word. He wants his characters to appear as people interpreting and evaluating their own selves and their surrounding reality. The autonomous characters are *conscious* of themselves and this "[s]elf-consciousness, as the artistic dominant in the construction of hero's image, breaks down monologic unity" (PDP 51). By making his characters self-conscious, Naipaul avoids turning them into a type or an image. He does not even explain his characters, for to do so would be to render them as something dead, as empty referents filled by the author's voice. As Bakhtin states:

> A living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition. (PDP 58)

Naipaul as an author maintains control, but brings to life believable, independent personalities expressing their own belief systems, their own consciousness, that interact and struggle with one another. But through the study of various personal histories, he delineates the contradictions in the public posturing and private lives of most of these characters. It is this internal, vertical split in the lives of the people that reflects, at the macro level, in the form of insurgency/rebellion/mutiny. He relates to his characters dialogically, his word on them is not absolute. The characters represented are written in a historically and socially specific time. What is created is a double-voiced discourse which erases the boundaries between authorial

speech and the speech of others. In this discourse, the author conveys a feeling for his character's participation in historical becoming and in social struggle. (DN 331)

In a novelistic discourse, a character is "a person of the idea" and the idea is a major force (DN 32). For Bakhtin, ideology is not a politically oriented system, but rather a way of visualizing and evaluating the world. In this sense, all speakers are ideologues, their own visionaries, and reveal their ideology in their discourse (DN 333). Thus, the text portrays the interaction of consciousness in the sphere of ideas. Naipaul undertook three journeys to India to understand both India and himself as a whole. The interaction with others as well as with self forms the part of the text. As far as travelogue as a literary genre is concerned, the emotional and intellectual changes experienced by the author remains an important function of it. Travelogue as a genre consists not only a geography, its history, people, culture but specific time and space that tends to be fictionalized through memory and response. In comparison to a dialogic novel Naipaul's travelogue is also intensely self-reflexive, grounded in historical, social, and political realities; and metafictional. In Bakhtinian terms, travelogue as a genre can be seen as chronotope, literally time-space, where time and space are together conceived and represented. Here the chronotope of travel is not only aligned with numerous individual lives but Naipaul's own life is fused in the making of his travelogues. The metaphor of path of life is linked with the actual narrative progression of Naipaul in his travelogues.

From the first chapter 'Bombay Theatre' in Mr. Patil, a Shiv Sena area leader one finds the earliest beginnings of the recognition of the 'self'. This was absent in his father's generation when the main concern was the day-to-day requirements of the family. In Mr. Patil's generation, the concerns had broadened from the personal to the social sphere. In another instance, Anwar, an educated and sensitive young man caught between his Muslim faith and its degeneration into violence, recognized the hopeless situation of the crime-infested area where he lived, but could never think of leaving that area for a better life elsewhere. His thoughts were not of personal progress but of the progress of the community. The very fact that he had been able to preserve his sensitivity and his reason in spite of living amidst group fights and murders was a sign of change. On the other hand, Mallika represents a third-generation woman who knows herself and her potential. Her self-assertion begins with the writing of autobiography and the growth of her legal consciousness. With the coming of education and equal job opportunities a beginning had been made. The self-conscious movements within the household and the political movements in the country like Shiv Sena and Namdeo's Dalit movement gave people an identity which they could be comfortable with, and even take pride in. The movement noticed by Naipaul was not from the top but from below. Devoid of respectable existence, the people had ceased to be abstractions. Now,

> They had ceased to be abstractions. They had begun to do things for themselves. They had become people stressing their particularity, just as better off groups in India stressed their particularities. (IMMN 4)

The chapter 'Breaking Out' records revolutions and rebellions at both the personal and the public level. The struggle was on both sides, it was between the old

world and the new. Both worlds changed, both adapted and continued. Only this time the continuity also spoke of a new identity among people—an assertion of their newly acquired idea of the self. Even after the failure of the Naxalite movement Debu from the chapter 'After the Battle' believed that he could have been part of the revolution in the late 60s and now shall be witness to it. He affirms, "I don't think the need for revolution has changed" (IMMN 333). The chapter 'Women's Era' shows the change that had come to the Indian woman's idea of herself and the rise of consciousness among women in India through women's magazines. In the penultimate chapter 'The Shadow of the Guru' Naipaul sees Sikh militancy as a part of a larger process of awakening in India:

> To awaken to history was to cease to live instinctively. It was to begin to see oneself and one's group the way the outside world saw one; and it was to know a kind of rage …. There had been a general awakening. But everyone awakened to his own group or community… every group sought to separate its rage from the rage of others. (IMMN 420)

Naipaul does not reject insurgency, but sees it as a part of a larger process of change in the people's idea of themselves. In the turmoil of the immediate period after Independence, socio-political disturbances and the failed attempts at revolution he saw sparks of India's growth:

> What the mutinies were also helping to define was the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and humanism of the values to which all Indians now felt they could appeal. And—strange irony—the mutinies were not to be wished away. They were a part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, part of its restoration. (IMMN 518)

Historically, the British did try to dismiss the Revolt of 1857 by merely calling it a "Sepoy Mutiny." The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 was also known as the Indian Independence Movement. The *Encyclopaedia War of Independence* mentions that the term,

> … is diffused, incorporating various national and regional campaigns, agitations and efforts of both Nonviolent and Militant philosophy and involved a wide spectrum of Indian political organizations, philosophies, and movements. (Kant 76)

The *Encyclopaedia* mentions the emergence of various mutinies in form of various movements to which Naipaul corresponds to in the contemporary times.

> The decades following the Sepoy Rebellion were a period of growing political awareness, manifestation of Indian public opinion and emergence of Indian leadership at national and provincial levels. (Kant 80)

This working up of dialogism from below is witnessed by Naipaul in contemporary India. He studies the sections of society, which have been silent for centuries but through the hurly-burly and even through the corruption and confusion of democracy, assert themselves. In their assertion, he sees a new future for India. The assertion is both the result of and a part of self-discovery, a newfound collective confidence, an *atma-vishwas*. These life stories humanize Naipaul's understanding of contemporary India. What is significant is that each life story scripts a very

different story of contemporary India. It is almost as if these millions of individual life histories constitute the main tension of Naipaul's account, and also add up to the million mutinies now. There are pulls and counter-pulls, pressures and counter-pressures in all of these, and each story appears to reveal a new face of Indian reality or a new aspect of the familiar face of India. The people are divided against themselves or are ruptured from within, which in turn also forms the reason for the upsurge of mutinies. On the one hand, there are several fragmented micro stories and on the other, these micro stories add up to the macro picture. The emergence of mutinies results from the various clashes between tradition and modernity, liberalism and conservatism and also due to the difference between the situation of colonial and the postcolonial period. He looks at the other with a certain sense of inwardness. He tries to understand the change but cannot, as the secularism boasted of in India just appears to be a sham, due to the existence of diversity at various levels and within various groups. This is the very reason that India can never have a single history. Its history in totality can never be written.

The dialogism at the level of history can be seen as Naipaul brings up not the history of annals which just records "great things being built up or pulled down" but narrative history (IMMN 144). With the coming in of dialogism and discourse as a social phenomenon, history gets a regenerated perspective. It is rewritten and understood in a different light baring its monologic and formalistic origin. The chapter 'Breaking Out' deals not only with political history but also with "embedded history" in the form of myth of Ayappa—the son of Shiva and Vishnu. In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul talked of India's lack of historical sense but Romila Thapar, a contemporary historian, argues that "much of traditional Indian History has in fact been 'embedded' with cultural forms such as myths, i.e., in forms in which 'historical consciousness has to be prised out'" (as qtd. in King 2010: 198). Naipaul witnessed people of Karnataka seeing and feeling "Story within story, fable within fable … in their bones" (IMMN 144). And on this very structure of story-within-story he weaves his narrative.

Further, the unrecorded waft of history opens the seams in the book as the official history fails to cover the trials and tribulations of a dalit leader, namely, Namdeo Dhasal and just focuses on the fall of Dalit Panthers:

> … over issues such as whether or not to include, non-Dalit poor, non-Buddhist Dalits, primacy of cultural versus economic struggle, as well as over personalities, for example, Raja Dhale versus Namdeo Dhasal. (Chandra et al 446)

But Naipaul's interview of Mallika, Namdeo's wife gives another reason for failure:

> She uses an English word: *numb*. The movement fragmented and fragmented again, and there were allegations and counter-allegations about money being taken by various people from various sources. The Dalits, as a result, had lost faith in the people who had been their leaders. (IMMN 107)

In documented history, the separatist movement in Punjab is seen as "a low intensity war and a dangerous crisis for the Indian nation" (324) by Bipan Chandra,

as opposed to what Naipaul views it; as for him all social-political-religious movements in India "defined strength of general intellectual life and the wholeness and humanism of values" (IMMN 518). Chandra finds the genesis of the problem in,

> … the growth of communalism in Punjab in the course of the twentieth century and, in particular, since 1947. (324)

But Naipaul views it as a result of some "intellectual or emotional flaw in the community", a "lack of balance between their material achievement and their internal life" (IMMN 424). Gurtej, "a Sikh who had resigned from the Indian Administrative Service" (IMMN 427) whom Naipaul interviews, finds some very insightful reasons behind the Punjab problem:

> 'The water problem is the crux of the matter'. (IMMN 428)

> I think the adoption of machinery has changed the attitude and life… This again is one of the causes of the Punjab problem. (IMMN 443)

Another reason for this is the continuation of the Sikhs suffering from the persecution complex as a minority community. In an interview, Bhindrawale said,

> … that Sikhs were subject to such persecution in India they had to 'give a cup of blood' to get a cup of water. (IMMN 473)

The dialogism not only occurs at the level of history, culture or characters, but also at the level of genre; through the evolving character of the novel. On the stylistic level, the text can be seen through working of non-fictional novel or the genre of new journalism with the usage of particular travel writing strategies "(a) journalistic techniques (b) detailed ethnographic reporting, including landscape, geographic and human observation (c) historical perspectives and style (d) autobiographical features and (e) philosophical enquiry" (as qtd. in Mittapalli and Hensen 2002: 82). Hughes sees the simultaneous use of fact and fiction by providing the fictional and documentary version of the same experience by Naipaul as "paired narrative" (100). The presence of other texts and genres whether echoed or inserted, intended or not, demonstrates the doubled-voiced nature of all discourse as interpreted by Bakhtin. The insertion or use of other texts or genres also challenges the classical notions of authorship, form, chronology, and more conservative literary conventions. The dialogic novel is "a kind of epistemological outlaw, a Robin Hood of texts," write Clark and Holquist of Bakhtin's views (276).

This non-fictional novel also illustrates, to varying degrees, the carnival spirit of the dialogic novel. The creative disorder of carnival is reflected not only in the fragmentation of India in the wake of decentralization process but also in the fragmentation of the narrative. The disruptive form, and the multiple stories within, serves to make strange the reading experience and make afresh the form and substance of Indian fiction. In the text Naipaul has dealt with life stories or life histories. The criss-crossing of temporal sequence makes his narrative both discontinuous and ruptured. As against the linear chronological narrative history of official version, his narration is free-wheeling. It has 'story-within-a-story' kind of pattern. On the one hand, there are several, fragmented micro stories and on the

other, these micro stories add up to the macro picture. Fragmentation, rupture and discontinuity are built into the very nature of his narrative at both levels of narration as well as description. Akeel Bilgrami calls the book's *method of interviews* as "a very specific kind of phenomenology—a personal voice telling a *personal but representative history*", interspersed with Naipaul's descriptions and framing comments instead reading more compellingly like a *series of family histories.* (187; emphasis added)

The irony, paradox, and ambiguity of the carnival also contribute to a process of renewal of meanings, the entrance into another world of altered perceptions. In *Mutinies*, the irony can be sensed through Naipaul's remark that the pre-independence political workers wore "homespun as an emblem of sacrifice and service, [and] their oneness with the poor". But, "Now the politician's homespun stood for power" they "had forgotten the old reverences." "Men honoured only money now" (IMMN 4)—their self indulgence and selfishness finally slipped into "'corruption,' to the criminalization of politics'"—"Policeman, thief, politician: the [ir] roles had become interchangeable". (IMMN 4)

The renewal of meaning can also be seen as the book recalls his earlier books on India and attempts a revision of his earlier judgments on the same. The structure of *An Area of Darkness,* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is similar. Both begin with a description of the crowds of Bombay, but the difference in tone sets them apart. While *An Area of Darkness* ends in 'Flight,' an escape from the painful reality of India; *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, in its last chapter, declares a 'Return to India.' In *Mutinies* India is seen through the eyes of its various narrators, with whom Naipaul empathizes and arrives at a resting place for his overwhelming diasporic concerns for India.

Where, the various commentators see Naipaul's work as "documentation of a process" and not "history" (Mustafa 1995: 193), as not about "politics or history" but "about one man and his position in the stream of history" an "autobiography" (Kapur, "A Million Neuroses"); or "diasporic writing" or "India as result of self and other dialectic" (Baral) and for that matter Naipaul having "orientalist leanings" or being "pro BJP;" there, Sabin finds Naipaul's text resisting any charge of "hegemonic appropriations that characterize orientalism," "Since it allows a multiplicity of Indians and Indias to speak for themselves. In so doing it asserts "the plurality of differences" that constitute India" (237). Purabi Panwar sees *Mutinies* as an account of "civilization at a hinge moment" (123). Hence, the working of dialogism in *Mutinies* enriches the text in form of a continuing and evolving dialogue. Even Folch Serra remarks, "Dialogism with its connotations of open-ended possibilities generated by all of the discursive practices of a culture and of consonant interaction between meanings, may be utilized as a tool for understanding the popular response to the conditions created by states over particular landscapes, the tensions created by different ethnic groups over a national territory and the ways in which classes, age groups and genders communicate to each other in determined locales." To conclude, the paradox of *Mutinies* does not get reduced rather finds its way to be heard, answered, and reinterpreted through dialogism.

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Chapter 14
Dead Text or Living Consciousnesses? Bakhtinian Poetics in the Francophone African Context

Foara Adhikari

The motivation behind the study is the corpus of novels of the West African Ivorian writer, Ahmadou Kourouma (1927–2003), which cannot be analyzed completely through the use of traditional stylistic methods. The problems are related to the logic and ordering of utterances such as elaborations, justifications, hesitations, invocations and tone of voices which send conflicting messages and result in ambiguity. In the absence of clearly defining syntactic markers, utterances cannot be assigned to specific speakers.

Bakhtin's theory of the novel enables us to disentangle voices and intentions. It is not a question of recognizing the visual signs in the text but of listening to utterances in, around, and beyond the written discourse. The text is not dead; rather, it is the forum of a lively debate between the narrator, the characters and the author, into which the reader is drawn to participate.

The study using Bakhtinian poetics provides a deeper insight into the dynamics at work in the novels of Ahmadou Kourouma as the following examples illustrate:

In the first novel of Ahmadou Kourouma, *Les Soleils des Indépendances* (1968), Bakhtin's poetics proves to be useful in detecting a difference in tone and content between utterances (sometimes between words in an utterance) in relation to the interlocutor addressed: the dialogism in the couple (Fama and his wife Salimata) works at an intimate level, that between different characters in the text (the Muslim priest, the witch doctor, the impoverished prince) operate at an ideological level; and at the personal level there is the dialogism between narrator and reader, wherein the narrator plays the role of a persuader trying to change the belief systems of the reader.

Monnè, outrages et défis (1990) treats the common theme of colonization, but a dialogic understanding of the work adds new meaning to the novel. Dead colonial facts of history come to life as dialogic debates rage from the text in an atmosphere of total freedom. Suppressed and marginal voices participate on an equal footing with other voices.

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Likewise, Kourouma's novel, *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000), brings us to the living presence of the child-soldier, Birahima who is unable to introduce himself in clear terms without running into long justifications. These elaborations do not carry much significance unless they are seen from the dialogic angle. Birahima's self-appraisal brings to the fore his identity-crisis as he tries to judge himself dialogically from the perspective of the "other."

Bakhtin's poetics have special significance in the postcolonial scenario. Internal conflicts and secret intentions emerge from dialogic encounters of the postcolonial subject with his interlocutors. The profound influence of the "other" in the discourse of Kourouma's novels enable us to uncover effaced questions and unspoken rebuke or hidden polemic, to use Bakhtin's phrase. Certain stylistic traits in the corpus, such as metaphors, repetitions, abundance of conjunctions and conflicting juxtapositions, can be interpreted in a new light. The discreet masking and unanticipated unmasking of voices make a special case for study in the use of irony.

When V.N. Voloshinov, an eminent member of the Bakhtin Circle, described the method of the study of languages by philologists as the study of a 'living' language like a dead one, he was referring to the attitude the philologist adopted toward language. The philologist studied abstract, normatively identical elements of written language in ancient scripts as opposed to the ever-evolving concrete manifestation of language as 'speech' in society. The Formalists and linguists of the Saussurean School continued to study language in the tradition of the philologists as an impersonal, objective system of normative forms as opposed to 'parole' or personal, subjective speech. Commenting on the method, Voloshinov writes in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*:

> At the basis of the modes of linguistic thought that lead to the postulation of language as a system of normatively identical forms lies a *practical and theoretical focus of attention on the study of defunct, alien languages preserved in written monuments* […] European linguistic thought formed and matured over concern with the cadavers of written languages…
> (Voloshinov 1973: 71; emphasis in the text)

Drawing a parallel to Voloshinov's observation on the approach of philologists, it is observed that literary criticism of Francophone literature often privileges abstract, theoretical modes of study. The similarity in their approaches consists in the study of language in literary works based on stable historical and cultural facts rather than their living enactment in a concrete speech situation in what Bakhtin calls 'event'. Such a text that is severed from dramatic speech contexts is a 'dead text' in the sense that it has no relation whatsoever to the living world that gives it birth. Decontextualized, a dead text exhibits a remarkable stability of meaning, based on a notion of code that is fixed and what Mikhaïl Bakhtin calls "a killed context" (Bakhtin 1986a: 147).

Bakhtin opposes the conception of a text as codifiable wherein every stylistic element is considered in a "monologic context of a given self-sufficient and hermetic utterance, imprisoning it, as it were, in the dungeon of a single context" (Bakhtin 1986b: 274). He argues that meaning does not exist in the word, but is created in the process of transmission. Words are received and used differently by

social beings in different spatial, temporal, and social contexts. It is this sociological dimension of language that turns the 'dead' sign into a 'living word' carrying with it its own distinctive social accent (evaluation). Comparing a 'living word' with a 'word in a dictionary', Voloshinov observes: "The change of a word's evaluative accent in different contexts is totally ignored by linguistics… it is precisely a word's multiaccentuality that makes it a living thing" (Voloshinov 1973: 80–81).

In his analysis of Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin found that the voice of a character was not locked in a single consciousness (like the monologic utterance of a 'dead text' locked in a single context) but *"a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses"* (Bakhtin 1984: 6, emphasis in the text) reached out to interact with one other in a heterogeneous context of multiple voices and accents. As opposed to the 'dead text,' wherein the meaning of a word was easily derived and predetermined, these 'living consciousnesses' anticipated a struggle and a clash of intentions with words and accents of other consciousnesses in giving stylistic shape to their word.

In the light of the above revelation by the Bakhtin Circle, this article attempts to locate interactive 'consciousnesses' in concrete speech situations in the Francophone novel of Ahmadou Kourouma as an alternative approach to the study of African literature. Ever since its publication in 1968, the original French version of the first novel of Ahmadou Kourouma, *Les Soleils des Indépendances* (translated by Adrian Adams in 1981 as *The Suns of Independence*) has been widely acclaimed for inaugurating a new writing style characterized by a blending of the native African *Malinke*[1] syntax with French. But while critics studied the novel's innovative style and forceful themes,[2] the heterogeneity of speech in relation to changing contexts in the novel has, in my opinion, not received sufficient critical space. It is proposed to focus on this aspect in this study.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Francophone Novel

A brief review of contemporary literary criticism of Francophone literature will justify the need for an alternative conceptual framework to understand the modern African novel.

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[1]'Malinke' is the name of the ethnic group of West Africa to which the writer, Ahmadou Kourouma belongs.

[2]Justin Bisanswa, in "The Adventure of the Epic and the Novel in Ahmadou Kourouma's Writings," studies the form of Kourouma's novels to conclude that the form is a blend of the epic and the novel. Christiane Ndiaye's "Kourouma, the Myth: The Rhetoric of the Commonplace in Kourouma Criticism" deals with the politics of writing and shows how Kourouma creates authentic African prose to free the African novel from French domination. Amadou Koné, in "Discourse in Kourouma's Novels: Writing Two Languages to Translate Two Realities," examines the uneasy relationship between the use of Malinké and French in Kourouma's writing. Carrol Coates relates the fiction of Kourouma to his real life with special reference to the dictator Houphouet Boigny.

In recent times, African critics challenge stable interpretations of the African novel in the West with the help of the universal theoretical code. The canonical, monolithic reading often places the African novel in the cultural perspective of the West. Reacting sharply to this attitude, the Nigerian novelist and critic, Chinua Achebe, denounces Western critics who do not recognize Africa in its difference and who profess to understand Africa better than the Africans themselves. He asks them to adopt a new humility toward the African world (Achebe 1975: 6).

Contesting passive readings of African literature by the West, the Nigerian critic Abiola Irele proposes that African literature be understood as a subjective expression rather than an objective construct:

> Literature can be posed as an object of study, such study envisaged as a scientific investigation of its objective features, of its contours and expressive articulations. But it cannot be an object, simply because, as the symbolic transposition of lived experience, literature involves our deepest responses to the facts of human existence and intervenes in those areas of experience where we assume consciousness of our situation with regard to others and to the world. (Irele 1990: 23)

The questioning of the rigid Western canon by African critics takes the form of a larger controversy over the 'superiority' of Western literature in opposition to that produced in the non-Western parts of the world. African critics argue that the comparison of African literature with that of the West fails to take into account regional specificities based on ethnic, historical, linguistic, and cultural factors. African writing, born in a specific cultural context of colonization and social tension, is closely associated with the politics of the nation-states that constitute the continent itself. The focus is, therefore, not purely an aesthetic one. The true literary and artistic expression of Africa is to be found in the centuries-old vernacular-based oral traditions.

Moreover, African critics argue that the need for translating a typically African experience or expression in the language of the colonizer is a constant challenge that the African writer has to face. Ngugi wa Thiong'o contends that the choice of words that an African writer makes is guided by his subjective relation to the word rather than by aesthetic need:

> The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century. (Thiong'o 1994: 4)

This raises the issue of the difficult appropriation of the word from one cultural context to another. Situated in a chaotic world, the African writer must use words that convey, that carry his subjectivity, and that define his people, rather than those that serve as embellishment.

In the debates between Western and African critics, it emerges that African critics are more concerned with the role and signification of the social context and the subjective dimension of language use in the novel rather than with its objective form. As language and society are foregrounded in the African novel, these aspects

need to be studied in a conceptual framework that recognizes the plurality of language use in relation to the social context.

The critical tools of European literary criticism aim at unified thinking and an objective treatment of language and society 'as fact' or 'as description'. The basis for this unified thinking, according to Bakhtin, is the prerogative given to the single consciousness of the author who sees, understands, and describes without being contested. Such an approach is inadequate to deal with the contradictions and tensions of a plural, interactive, and discursive world as in the Francophone African novel.

Bakhtin's critique of linguistic and stylistic analysis is directed against the monopoly of a unified world vision. His dialogic theory conceives of 'the social' as the dynamic enactment of language use by social beings, fuelled by specific intentions. This contextualizing and animation of the 'social' in the novel as a multiplicity of 'speaking persons' grounded in a historical epoch deny the position of authority to the author and the critic alike. It is for this reason that postcolonial critics of the Orient resisting Western dogmatism find a productive challenge in the intersubjective dialogic thinking of Bakhtin that posits the importance of other voices alongside the dominant voice.

Bakhtin's Dialogic Theory of Language

Bakhtin's philosophy of language is based on the principle that a language cannot remain self-contained and that the voices of speaking persons in concrete historical and social contexts respond to one another, creating dialogue. Dialogism is a natural phenomenon of any living discourse in which "the word is born in dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien[3] word that is already in the object" (Bakhtin 1986b: 279). In this manner, a dynamic and uncertain environment is created around speakers which reserves vast potential for discussion and dissent.

Among the important tenets of the Bakhtin School is the assertion that a living word is a responsive word which means that a word not only evokes a response but also responds to another word as "any utterance—the finished, written utterance not excepted, makes response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn. It is but one link in a continuous chain of speech performances" (Voloshinov 1973: 72).

However, it must be mentioned at the outset that Bakhtin envisages a kind of struggle in the intersection of words in society and their response to each other. He opines that a word always encounters an "alien" word, be it in the object of discourse or in the conscience of the interlocutor. This is because words carry past

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[3]An 'alien' word is a word that has a different semantic and axiological content and, therefore, contradicts the word of the speaker.

evaluations by virtue of their usage in past contexts and interfere with the meaning that a speaker wishes to give to a word.

> But no living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualised and given stylistic shape. (Bakhtin 1986b: 276)

In his conception of the dialogic, Bakhtin seems to be more concerned with dissenting propositions of socio-ideological life than with consenting voices aiming at a resolution. When the internal dialogization of the word takes place, the dissent between two different world-views or ideologies "penetrate(s) its entire structure, all its semantic and expressive layers" (Bakhtin 1986b: 279). The word becomes 'double-voiced' and emits two intentions at the same time. This explains why Bakhtinian 'dialogism' cannot simply be used to mean a composed 'dialogue' between speaking subjects.

The novel finds a special place in Bakhtin's theory of the novel, being the only genre in which the dialogic principle of language is brought into full play. Unlike the real-life situation, wherein dialogic ties are spread over historical space and time, dialogic relationships in the novel are facilitated, rather hastened and manipulated in a conscious aesthetic act of the novelist when he decides to float his idea amid 'heteroglot' (multi-languaged), multi-voiced opinion in his novel.

Dialogic Analysis of the Corpus *The Suns of Independence*

Les Soleils des Indépendances (1968), *translated The Suns of Independence* (1981), Ahmadou Kourouma's first novel, is set at a turning point in African history, the independence of the country. Classified as "the novel of disillusionment," the novel describes the turbulent socio-political period which witnessed the rise of the African dictators and the downfall of traditional values. The much-awaited change in political leadership after independence deceived the hopes of the masses as poverty and misery reigned in the African capital.

Political in its theme at the outset, the novel of Kourouma does not simply recount history. Kourouma's writing may be taken to be a response to social pressures operating in his society resulting in the enactment of live voices and contexts in his work, recreating social debates. As Jean Ouédraogo writes:

> The man's vocation was to provoke discussion, to invite the master speakers, the fine talkers, the professional flatterers (griots, sora, djeli, interpreters, politicians), to join in these debates on the great evils where neither coarse words nor words of wisdom and beauty would be lacking. (Ouédraogo 2004: 1)

If "many were surprised by the narrative forms, the irregularity, the diversity, and especially the density of his oeuvre" (Ouédraogo 2004: 1), Kourouma's fictional world is incomprehensible when understood from the unitary monologic plane of the novel. It is pluralistic in every sense of the term: a plurality of languages, of voices, of styles, of ideologies, of registers of language, and of genres. However, the diverse elements in his work are not disjoint, they respond to one another and are woven into a heterogeneous unity.

An important feature of Kourouma's fiction is the special role assigned to the narrator and his speech. While the discourses of the characters present specific points of view on the world, it is in the discourse of the narrator that the phenomenon of *heteroglossia*, or the coexistence of several languages, is brought to bear. When the narrator speaks in a monologic context, other voices converge to correct or question his version of facts. At other times, the narrator draws on other voices, that of a character, a group, or "general opinion" to make a point, either merging in them or judging them. The result is an ambiguity and heterogeneity in the narrator's voice that unites or distances itself in diverse degrees from the other voices in the novel. The French critic, Madeleine Borgomano, on observing this phenomenon in Kourouma's second novel, *Monnew* (1993) (the title of the original novel in French is *Monnè, outrages et défis,* published in 1990) asks: "…how is it possible to be impersonal and personal, uninvolved and involved, distant and close at the same time? It is however this contradictory and fluctuating role that the narrator of *Monnew* adopts"[4] (Borgomano 1998: 142).

The Responsive Narrator

The novel, *The Suns of Independence* (hereafter referred to as SI), begins with the narration of a traditional *Malinke* storyteller who recounts the funeral ceremony of a certain Kone Ibrahima of the *Malinke* community. The particularity of this narration, apart from traits of 'orality' that are recognisable, is the extreme sensitivity of the narrator to other discourses around him, made in the social context of the novel. In fact, the narrator is placed in a 'living'[5] social context of voices whose questions

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[4]«…comment être, à la fois, non personnel et personnel, non impliqué et impliqué, éloigné et présent, contemporain et postérieur? C'est pourquoi ce statut contradictoire et fluctuant qu'adopte le narrateur *Monnè*.».

[5]The 'living' social context here is not the objective social context stated to describe a historical point of time but, taken in the Bakhtinian sense implies the dialogically interrelated plural language situation wherein the word of a speaker evokes a response and responds to another in turn. As Bakhtin writes in "The Problem of Speech Genres", "Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely" (Bakhtin 1986a: 68).

he anticipates and to whom he responds. By conjoining several discourses into his own, the narrator creates the condition favourable for dialogue.[6]

In the first part of the narration, the narrator is seen in a very active role, persuading the cause of the *Malinke* community, explaining, dramatizing dissent, reacting to questions, and openly giving vent to his emotion. He/she does not simply tell the story, but reacts to the provocative questions surrounding the object of his description (the Malinkes) and this presence of opposing judgments or evaluations in the socio-historical context of the novel, determines and shapes his style of speech: highly reactive, sentimental, and justificatory.

I would like to discuss three types of dialogues in the novel which have special relevance to the historical epoch in which they occur. The co-presence of several consciousnesses in the novel results in a situation of co-experience that Bakhtin conceives of as an 'event'. The first of these dialogues takes place continuously throughout the narration between the traditional narrator and a disembodied alien voice, the second relates to a dialogue among three consciousnesses triggered by an incident and the third is the dialogue between two competing voices in the novel.

1. **The narrator and the alien voice: two voices intertwined into one**

The speech of the traditional *Malinke* narrator, describing a funeral ceremony of the *Malinke* community, represents a specific point of view on the world, a *Malinke* ideology with an insistence on the traditional honesty and uprightness of the *Malinke* ruling class. This monologic discourse on the *Malinkes* is intercepted dialogically as in the sequence below:

> (1) Because the shade was *present*, *watching*, *counting*, giving thanks, the burial was *piously performed*, and the funeral rites observed with *prodigality*. Friends, relatives, even mere passers-by deposited gifts and sacrifices which were then divided up and *shared* out among those present and the *great Malinke families* of the capital city.

> (2) Since every funeral ceremony *pays*, one can readily understand why *Malinke* praise-singers and elderly *Malinke*, those whose trading activities were ruined by Independence ((3) and God[7] alone knows how many old traders ruined by Independence there are in the capital city!) all 'work' the burials and funeral rites. *Real professionals*! Morning, noon and night they keep on the move from one neighbourhood to another, in order to attend all the ceremonies. The *Malinke most unkindly* refer to them as 'the *vultures*' or 'that *pack of hyenas*'.

> (4) *Fama Dumbuya! A true Dumbuya, of Dumbuya father and Dumbuya mother, the last legitimate descendant of the Dumbuya princes of Horodugu, whose totem was the panther-* Fama was a 'vulture'. A Dumbuya prince! A panther totem in a hyena pack, Ah! The suns of Independence! (SI, p. 4; emphasis mine)

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[6]What is implied here by "dialogue" is the Bakhtinian sense of the term meaning "dialogic ties" or evaluations of different speaking subjects converging on a common theme.

[7]In Adrian Adam's English translation, the word 'Allah' of the original French text is translated as 'God'.

The three paragraphs cited above in juxtaposition as they occur in the corpus have been numbered for convenience as the order of the narration is an important prerequisite to the detection of dialogic links. Being a sociological analysis, the discourse of the narrator in the first paragraph is understood with reference to the social context which gives it birth. As is evident, the narrator spares no effort to rebuild the lost glory of the *Malinke* tribe situated at a point in historical time when the existence of the *Malinke* royal families is threatened, namely postcolonial Africa.

The narrator's discourse (marked 1) carries a strong note of persuasion with a select vocabulary that emphasizes communal values: 'piously performed', 'prodigality', 'shared', 'great *Malinke* families'. However, a slight tension develops in his narration when he associates the shade's watching and counting of gifts and sacrificial animals offered, on the one hand, to the pious performance of *Malinke* ritual, on the other. This linking of contradictory ideas in the same utterance indicates that it is an arena of dialogic struggle, a struggle with the alien word of his/her interlocutor who seems to ask, Are the *Malinkes* truly pious and generous?, and in anticipation of which the narrator frames his discourse.

The discourse that follows (marked 2) carries an axiological evaluation that brutally contradicts the intention of the narrator (marked 1), including a choice of "non-traditional" words ('work' with respect to funeral ceremony, 'real professionals'). A different ideological standpoint shows the *Malinkes* in bad light. It may be inferred, therefore, that this speech belongs to the intruding interlocutor who protests against the pro-*Malinke* discourse of the narrator, and, in its wake, unmasks their hypocrisy. It is now clear why the narrator's discourse mixed incompatible elements of watching, counting and piety.

The justificatory stance of the narrator, his overt justifications and claims, right from the beginning of the chapter (not cited in the extract) cannot be understood without bringing into perspective this antagonistic alien voice that challenges and disturbs the stability of the narrator's discourse. While the narrator insists that the funeral ceremony was a mix of piety and prodigality, the antagonistic voice substitutes the word 'prodigality' of the narrator's discourse with 'pays,' thereby bringing in a materialistic (characteristically capitalist) dimension to what was considered by the narrator to be the sacred funeral ceremony of the *Malinkes*.

Interestingly, the second 'alien' intruding voice that attests to a dialogic intervention is spoken in a different language and although this discourse is contained in a separate paragraph, there is no other syntactic marker to show that it is a different voice. Words like 'work' and 'real professionals', placed between inverted commas in the original text, explain their difficult appropriation in the context. These words are comparatively new, characteristic of the epoch and carry the capitalist legacy of the colonizers.

The utterance (marked 2) concludes with the remark 'The *Malinke* most unkindly refer to them as 'the vultures' or 'that pack of hyenas'. Here too, derogatory evaluations 'vultures' and 'pack of hyenas', used to designate the *Malinkes*, are separated by inverted commas, being alien and disruptive to the traditional discourse of the narrator. The remark belongs to the alien voice and is intended not only to reveal that the impoverished *Malinkes* were called names but to

mockingly imitate the sympathetic accent of the narrator towards the *Malinkes* with the inclusion of the words 'most unkindly'.[8]

A third voice (marked 3), separated by brackets, brings in a religious dimension where Allah, the God of the *Malinkes*, is invoked in a profane context by its content and intonation (the All-powerful God of the *Malinkes* is associated with the mundane counting of beggars) with the remark "and God alone knows how many old traders ruined by independence there are in the capital city!" In the historical context in which the utterance is made, the *Malinkes* are god-fearing Muslims. In making this comment, the speaker throws a mocking 'sideward glance' at the religious sentiment of the *Malinkes*.

Thus, the *Malinke* discourse painstakingly constructed by the narrator is challenged (deconstructed), for the time being, by a foreign accent (of the alien voice) which culminates in a hybrid construction[9] (marked 4). The first part of the hybrid utterance italicized is the parodic stylization of the language of traditional African griots (praise-singers) and contains the enthusiastic traditional glorification of the Doumbouya prince, Fama, completed by the denigration of the prince by the alien voice to the extent of calling him a vulture. The two voices in the hybrid construction are separated by an era and belong to the precolonial and postcolonial eras respectively.

In this way, the making and the unmaking of the *Malinke* discourse continues in a systematic manner throughout the first chapter that results in a double evaluation of the principal character, Fama. In the following utterances, Fama is insulted at the funeral ceremony and has to make a hasty retreat. There are two versions of the incident:

> (5) Diminished by shame and dishonour, how could he stay? No regrets either: the ceremony had degenerated into a pack of baboons at play. Best leave the apes to their snapping and tail-pulling. He hurried out.

> (6) This spectacular exit was greeted only with amused laughter and sighs of relief. Fama would be present next time, and at all *Malinke* ceremonies in the capital city; everyone knew it. Who ever saw the hyena stop hanging about the graveyard, or the vulture, the refuse-pit behind the village? Everyone knew, too, that Fama would behave badly and give rise to further scandal. In what company does the mastiff ever change his shameless way of sitting?… (SI, p. 8)

The two evaluations of the scene succeed one another in quick succession and leave an impression of disturbing ambiguity in the mind of the reader, as they are taken to belong to a single narrator. There are no formal markers to differentiate one speech from another. However, a dialogic interpretation shows that the first utterance (marked 5) typically belongs to the axiological system of the narrator with a

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[8]Bakhtin calls it a word with a 'sideward glance', which is an utterance that is made with a certain interlocutor in view, to hint at his/her sentiment.

[9]Bakhtin calls a hybrid construction "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses" (Bakhtin 1986b: 358).

positive evaluation of Fama, the *Malinke* prince, whereas the second (marked 6) carries the pejorative accent of the alien voice that calls Fama all sorts of names (a 'vulture', a 'hyena' and a 'mastiff').

The speech of the alien voice intertwined with the speech of the traditional *Malinke* narrator, functioning as two narrators and evaluating the same object differently, betrays semiotic logic. As Julia Kristeva points out, "logic other than scientific" is in place (Kristeva 1980: 64). This logic is understood from the perspective of dialogue between discourses rather than from the standpoint of a particular discourse taken in isolation.

Taking a holistic view of the novel, it is found that the contestation by the alien voice does not mean the complete effacement of the *Malinke* discourse. In Part 2 of the novel, there is yet another funeral ceremony, that of Fama's cousin. The traditional narrator bounces back into action and tries to impress upon his opponent (the alien voice) that the *Malinkes* are generous, tradition-loving and pious. His discourse provokes the alien voice to respond. The sequence provocation (utterance 7)—response (utterance 8) is reproduced below:

> (7) May God never cease to pour blessings and strength on the Malinke community in the capital city! Each *Malinke* outdid the other in generosity. Everyone took out money to give. Altogether there was more than enough for the journey, and for an imposing funeral. (SI, p. 55)

> (8) How *solemn*! how *dignified*! how *pious*! It was so *extraordinary* among Malinke, that the *spirits became angry* and an *evil whirlwind blew* down from the cemetery, caught up their robes and the leaves of manuscripts ((9) which in itself did not much matter), rushed at the pots and calebasses… (SI, p. 98, emphasis mine)

In responding to the praise of the narrator, the alien speech (marked 8) contains epithets like 'solemn', 'dignified', 'pious,' and 'extraordinary' which acquire a negative connotation in the context in which they are used. Words of the *Malinke* community in concealed form (i.e., without syntactic markers) like 'the spirits became angry' and 'an evil whirlwind blew' are parodic stylizations of the *Malinke* world-view as seen by the rationalistic alien voice. The profanity reaches its peak in the side comment, within brackets (marked 9) when the voice says that it did not matter that the pages of the manuscripts of the holy text were blown away. This straightforward comment that hits directly at the spirituality of the *Malinkes* resembles an authorial intervention.

In the description of the funeral ceremony of the *Malinkes* by the alien voice that follows (not cited), piety is replaced by greed and animosity. The marabouts are designated as the 'prestigious ones' who occupied the centre of the courtyard 'a step away from the food.' Their attitude towards prayer was seen as disinterested in the manner in which they 'shuffled yellowed sheets of paper' (SI, p. 97). On the whole, the funeral ceremony was not conducted with piety as the *Malinke* narrator had described in the first chapter, and as the alien voice reveals: "…piety too had departed; people read and prayed with one eye, while the other caressed the cattle and the calabashes full of cooked rice" (SI, p. 98).

While it is not possible to cite all instances of the vast dialogic web in the corpus and beyond, it would be worthwhile to mention that in the postcolonial context of the novel, traces of colonial discourse still exist. The *Malinke* narrator reacts to the word 'vulture' used to designate Fama when he sees real vultures on a tree in the second part of the novel: "Togobala, his native village! The same vultures (the bastards, who called Fama a vulture!)…" (SI, p. 70). The word 'bastard' is reminiscent of the colonial era. Similarly, the alien voice curses the *Malinkes* in pure colonial style, referring to the color of the skin and the teeth: "But the falseness! *Malinke* are full of duplicity because deep down inside they are blacker than their skin, while the words they speak are whiter than their teeth" (SI, p. 72).

Both negative and positive evaluations of the *Malinkes* in the novel are dialogically interconnected and represent two different world-views: while the *Malinke* narrator takes the traditional perspective of a world dominated by God, the alien voice takes the contemporary materialistic perspective of a world that revolves around money. The difference in socio-ideological perspectives results in a dialogic clash of intentions described by Bakhtin as "two embattled tendencies in the life of language" (Bakhtin 1986b: 272).

2. Convergence of consciousnesses: a discussion forum

As seen in the previous section of this study, dialogic interrelation is a constant between utterances of narrators in the novel. In the following dialogic event, an incident in the life of Salimata (Fama's wife) triggers the participation of other voices into the narration.

The subject of the present dialogic debate is the traditional *Malinke* Muslim belief that one who indulges in charity wins the favor of Allah. The belief of the community is relayed by the narrator in monologic utterances. Salimata's reasoning, before she offers charity to the needy, is also seen to attest to this view: "Righteousness is more than wealth, and charity is one of God's laws" (SI, p. 39). However, Salimata's act of charity meets with adverse consequences. She is attacked and robbed by those whom she served. The incident triggers a dialogic debate as in the sequence below:

(10) She had recognized none of her assailants, but she had no doubt as to who they were; the men who had robbed and beaten her were the very men to whom she had given food. African beggars are like that; they are enemies of God. Salimata had often been warned. Too much open-handedness in the marketplace causes evil deeds, riots and robbery; the paupers and rogues are too hungry, and there are too many of them. All the generosity of the world would only leave them half-sated or envious. And a half-sated or envious beggar is a ferocious beggar, prepared to attack.

(11) But Salimata had shown them the basins; they could see for themselves they were empty. She too was poor. Did God not see Salimata's poverty? (12) Or is it that he never pities misfortune, because all misfortune is his doing? (13) This was the most unlucky day Salimata had in months. Best go and see the marabout, to find out the cause.

For the fourth time that day she crossed the lagoon, this time unhappy and indignant. (14) Ah! Ingratitude of African beggars! Their wretched state was caused by God's just and

righteous anger. Salimata would continue to give alms but only to those truly in need, never again to such rogues, such lazy strays! (SI, pp. 41–42)

In the first speech (marked 10), the narrator puts up a rationalizing defence in support of the Muslim precept by insisting that charity is good but not its overindulgence. Salimata had been warned several times not to overdo her charity. In fact, there is a preceding utterance of the narrator that may be connected to this one "Just say, 'God grant you a child!' she'd give you credit. She was a bit crazy with kindness, you might say" (SI, p. 31).

The next speech (marked 11) contradicts the narrator and even questions the Benevolence of God: "Did God not see Salimata's poverty?" This speech carries the emotional overtones of Salimata, who questions God. But the utterance that follows (marked 12) has an even stronger accent, resembling authorial speech and is intended as a polemic against God: "Or is it that he never pities misfortune, because all misfortune is his doing?"[10] The utterance transmits anger along with the interrogation, emphasized in the use of the word 'never'. The context for the intervention is prepared by Salimata (utterance 11) whose 'zone of influence'[11] invites the participation of a third voice.[12]

In utterance (marked 14), Salimata changes her mind; from pleading the cause of the poor who are deserving of 'God's love' (SI, p. 39) to an acceptance that God's anger towards them is justified.

Seen from a third-person perspective, the utterance moves beyond the context of fiction and operates in the concrete socio-historical context surrounding the novel where the masses are awakening to reason. In the absence of syntactic markers to differentiate different voices, the analysis is based on the axiological systems of the voices.

3. **Competing voices in the novel: Patriarchal voice versus the voice of the woman**

In the dialogic instances cited above, a specific point of view incarnated in the discourse of the narrator or a character does not remain isolated or uncontested as the ultimate truth statement. An utterance provokes other consciousnesses (listening to it) to respond and the response is shaped by the utterance that provoked it. The *Malinke* discourse of the narrator provokes an alien discourse hostile to the *Malinke*

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[10]The same idea is relayed by the marabout when Salimata pays him a visit after being robbed when she tells him that she does not have the means to pay him: "Give what you can. Poverty is God's doing as well as wealth" (SI, p. 43).

[11]In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin writes: "A character in a novel always has, as we have said, a zone of his own, his own sphere of influence on the authorial context surrounding him, a sphere that extends—and often quite far—beyond the boundaries of the direct discourse allotted to him" (Bakhtin 1986b: 320).

[12]The 'third' party in the dialogue between two parties is explained by Bakhtin in his essay "The Problem of the Text": "Each dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue" (Bakhtin 1986a: 126).

community, and in turn, shapes the style of the narrator's discourse which is justificatory. It is now proposed to study two competing voices in the novel (out of the many) vying for attention.

In the social context of the novel, Salimata is childless. A number of social discourses shape Salimata's understanding of herself and her society. She is under constant pressure due to a lot of patriarchal discourses that circulate in the society valorizing man and maternity. Her thoughts bordering on other consciousnesses, she discreetly questions the authoritarian voices of her society.

The discourse on the woman in the novel is an arena of tension. On the one hand, patriarchal discourses overtly establish the superiority of man; on the other hand, the voice of the woman echoes with all its force from under the surface to contest his absolute authority. This silent contestation of the woman creates a tension in the narration, which, seen from the exterior, is not explicit. Let us examine a few instances where this contestation between the male and the female voices operate.

In the following utterance, the *Malinke* narrator describes Salimata's attitude from a traditional perspective. But there is another dialogue that goes on discreetly from within the narrator's discourse.

> (16) The porridge was ready; she set aside a plateful for Fama, well sweetened. (17) *Whatever the man's behaviour, whatever he might be worth, a husband was still a sovereign ruler, to whom a wife owed all her care.* (18) God has ordained that a woman be submissive in her husband's service; his commandments must be obeyed, for they signify strength, valour, grace and quality for the child of such a wife… (SI, p. 28; emphasis mine)

In the above example, the utterance of the *Malinke* narrator (marked 16) conveys the traditional practice of the woman serving her husband with great care as translated in the words 'well sweetened'. But the utterance that follows (marked 17) is double-voiced as the words 'sovereign ruler' and 'owed' carry two different opposing accents: that of the patriarchal narrator insisting on the supremacy of man and that of Salimata's protest on the condition of the woman who has to obey man unconditionally. However, the protestation is soon overtaken by the authoritarian patriarchal discourse of the narrator (marked 18) "God has ordained that a woman be submissive in her husband's service." In this dialogic instance, we get a fleeting glimpse of the woman who questions authority from within the constraints that are imposed upon her.

The protestation of the woman enters so silently into the narration that it often goes unnoticed:

> (19) She put rice on a plate and sauce in a bowl, then *kneeling* laid them at Fama's feet (20). *The husband was served.* (SI, p. 36; emphasis mine)

The utterance marked 19 is the voice of the traditional narrator with the characteristic patriarchal accent and choice of words "then kneeling laid them at Fama's feet" just as an offering is made to God. But the very next utterance (marked 20) is double-voiced, belonging formally to the narrator but bearing in addition the irritation of Salimata on fulfilling an obligation towards her husband that is not rewarding.

However, the patriarchal discourse is disrupted in other ways, one of which is by the participation of the third party that resembles an authorial intervention. As in

utterance 11 discussed above, the context for the stepping in of the third party to the dialogue is created by Salimata:

> (19) The other women at their stalls were jealous of her, and gossiped maliciously. Look at Salimata selling her rice out there in the sun! Badly cooked rice, too! And on credit! With her hypocritical smiles! They said all that and more. (20) Truly they were unworthy to be mothers… (21) *God, you who weigh good and evil, how could you justify having given these unkind creatures offspring, while Salimata, a true Muslim…* (SI, p. 38; emphasis mine)

The narrator's commentary on the other jealous women (marked 19) is interrupted by Salimata's subjective response to the narratorial discourse (marked 20) which provokes the third voice to participate in the dialogue. The utterance that follows (marked 21) is double-voiced and can seem to belong to an independent voice taking up for Salimata as well as be spoken by Salimata herself. Along with the interrogating third voice, the voice of Salimata is also heard questioning traditional belief in the fragment "you who weigh good and evil." The fragment is intended to discredit a preceding utterance of the traditional narrator: "…miracles belong to God alone, who can tell good from evil" (SI, p. 15).

Sometimes the monologic discourse of the narrator serves as a provocation and creates the context for a third voice to disapprove of it; the utterance marked 22 below belongs to the traditional narrator whereas the utterance 23 within brackets is the response of a third voice:

> (22) Fama became resigned to the idea that Salimata was incurably sterile. He sought out fruitful women, even tried ((23) *oh! the shame*) some of the capital city's women of easy virtue. (SI, p. 36; emphasis mine)

The dialogic ties that bind the competing patriarchal voice and other voices in the novel also develop in the inner speech of the couple. In his internal speech, Fama repeats Salimata's words with a patriarchal accent whereas the inner speech of Salimata rings with a distinct female subjectivity. The two instances are reproduced below:

The distressed Salimata once rebukes her husband for having to feed him. Although the boundaries of this utterance are not clearly demarcated from the narrator's discourse, it belongs to Salimata by its emotional and expressive content.

> (24) It was for that ne'er-do-well, that worthless piece of rubbish empty night and day, that she wore herself out, rising at first cock's crow to cook and sell porridge et earn the money *to clothe and feed and house him…* (SI, p. 21; emphasis mine)

In his internal speech, Fama uses the same words as that of Salimata, but fills it with his own semantic intention to accuse her in turn.

> (25) Huddled in a corner, she would drone out songs about human suffering, the suffering of *wives who feed, clothe and house their husbands*, the suffering of wives with ungrateful husbands, the duties of husbands, sterility, the obligation to provide each wife with her own room, and so on and so forth… in other words, *a series of bad-tempered outbursts* that in the end would annoy and provoke Fama (SI, p. 63; emphasis mine)

In the above internal speech of Fama, the same tension between the two socio-ideological languages is manifest. The struggle that Salimata endures to 'feed, clothe and house' her unemployed husband, expressed in the language of the woman (marked 24) translates as 'a series of bad-tempered outbursts' in the patriarchal language in which Fama speaks (marked 25).

In Salimata's internal speech, the tension caused by her childlessness and the concomitant desire for offspring take the form of a dialogue with the dominating patriarchal voice of the *Malinke* community. After many an attempt at traditional remedies, including the prescriptions of the fetish priest and the dictates of Islam, Salimata secretly contemplates infidelity for attaining maternity:

> …then she sat on the goatskin and confided in God,[13] the merciful provider. A child! Just one! Yes, a baby! That was the one thing on earth she prayed for, as Fama proved more and more inadequate. What stood foremost in God's will? Fidelity or motherhood? *Motherhood surely, motherhood above all.* Then let Fama's image fade from Salimata's heart, let her be able to lie with other men… But she was praying that she might be unfaithful, commit adultery. God, merciful provider, forgive the blasphemy! Had she sinned? *No! Salimata was not an impious sinner; her marriage bound together a sterile husband and a faithful wife, she was imploring God, the all-forgiving, the merciful, that motherhood might visit her there.* She smiled slightly, but quickly repressed it; never smile while on God's prayer mat (SI, p. 27; emphasis mine)

The discourse shows the presence of the dominating patriarchal voice in the conscience of Salimata that enters into dialogue with her own voice, contesting the idea of infidelity. According to this dominating voice that may also be taken as 'public opinion', infidelity is a sin. A dialogic debate ensues between the two voices whereby Salimata offers her justification in assertive terms: "No! Salimata was not an impious sinner; her marriage bound together a sterile husband and a faithful wife, she was imploring God, the all-forgiving, the merciful, that motherhood might visit her there." Here, the voice of the woman is seen to win a momentary victory over the patriarchal voice manifested in Salimata's smile. The narrator takes over with his authoritarian discourse: "She smiled slightly, but quickly repressed it; never smile while on God's prayer mat."

Located in the sphere of a single consciousness, the internal dialogue that takes place in the minds of the couple is an expression of their secret desires and does not take the form of a cooperative, open dialogue. They help us to gain an understanding of the couple's dynamic ever-changing relationship. In the dialogic dimensions of the novel, the internal dialogues of the couple are dialogically linked to the unfinished open dialogue that is at the heart of the novel, the question of the couple's separation:

> "Well? what do you plan to do, Fama?"

> "Nothing. I'll just go up there for the funeral, then come back."

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[13]'Allah' has been translated as 'God' in Adrian Adam's translation of *Les Soleils des Indépendances*.

"Do you really intend to come back to the city? To take up this life again? Fama tell me the truth," she begged (SI, p. 61)

Salimata's question stirs up past utterances on the same theme (the theme of his relationship with other woman, especially Mariam, the young and seductive wife of his older brother) in Fama's consciousness to which he relates dialogically. In this manner, dialogic relations are woven around questions in the novel that are left open ended, open to dialogic debates of the future.

Conclusion

The above study shows that utterances in the novel are motivated by the ideology of the speaker and arranged in the novel in a dialogic sequence of provocation and response. To Bakhtin, the stylistics of the novel is not just a matter of what aspects of formal linguistic norms a particular writer chooses to foreground; rather, it is an ideological position that the writer adopts against the background of multiple languages in the novel.

Bakhtin's theory is suited to Francophone works due to their ideological content, born as they are during a period of social change and ideological dogmatism. The novelist, therefore, deliberately creates an environment in which antagonistic voices enjoy free rein. Moreover, the inscription of orality in the Francophone text helps to look at literary discourse from Bakhtin's perspective of verbal communication in which the word of speaker is directed toward the interlocutor with an intention to communicate effectively, rather than aesthetically.

The instances of dialogism that we have cited show the subtlety and flexibility with which an alien word enters into the discourse of a speaker. Further, the provocation and response of discourses create a lively forum of a scene of characters playing out their roles. The African novel portrays a multiplicity of languages, genres, and voices. As long as the novel is looked upon as a 'dead text', the diversity of language use appears as a superficial static fact. But no sooner do we recognize language as emanating from and responding to a speaking, 'living consciousness' that the 'living' dimension of language use comes to view as different languages interacting, contradicting and competing with one another. Language is no longer the monopoly of a single consciousness; it is played out between two or more consciousnesses.

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