AN ABSTRACT OF THE STUDY

The present study is an attempt to read *The Book of Job* of the Bible as an intertextual, polyphonic, and multi-generic text that addresses circumstances of life which frustrate individuals’ effort to achieve happiness and prosperity, that deals with a human predicament where suffering is too much to cope with, and that speaks dialogically on how to go about when ideal forms of justice fail to be the propellers of the social order all of us, as human beings, wish to have. In the course of reading, the research-scholar has used Bakhtinian dialogism as a reading guide, as a significant tool and chronotopic agency towards sense-making of the book chosen for study. In this study, as this researcher was keen to move beyond salvation-history paradigm and beyond ‘the blessing follows suffering’ approach, she opted to bringing in Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism as a means towards an end, as an agency of diachronic-synchronic sense-making towards conflict-resolutions. The purpose of the present study is double hinged. While reading *The Book of Job* in the light of the Bakhtinian tropes of dialogism, it explores the ingredients of the nexus of voices within the structurality of the text vis-à-vis the suffering of Job.

Though *The Book of Job* has been studied and commented upon by readers and critics in the thousands since ages, the book continues to haunt thinking minds across civilizations and continents even today as much as the problem of human suffering does. A number of readings and discourses – exegetical, philosophical, sociological, psychological, and cultural – go on reading and commenting on *The Book of Job*. A comprehensive review of literature done in the study shows that a number of books and articles have been and are being published through varied media. The complexity the book poses in terms of discerning meaning-making, the fascination the book provides in terms of the Bakhtinian kind of intertextual, diachronic, polyphonic
dimensions, and the connotations the book indicates in terms of existential triumph of the human spirit and transcendent spirituality are grounds, good enough, for justifying the title of the research-work done with prime focus on one primary text, namely *The Book of Job*. Dividing the research into Five Chapters, the present study focused on Bakhtinian dialogic ways of reading the ingredients and implications of Joban dialogue and arrived at certain significant research-findings.

The research-findings may be stated as follows:

- Complexities associated with the book call for a diachronic-synchronic reading of the text with an openness towards a dialogic journey vis-à-vis hermeneutics lest readers, particularly those who experience and endure suffering unfairly to a great extent, should get stuck up with understanding suffering as a lonely world of trauma. Bakhtinian dialogic approach facilitated the researcher to capture ‘the Heideggerian angst’, rather than ‘the Nietzschean will’ or ‘the Epicurean nihilistic hedonism’ as a way forward in finding answer to the haunting problem of human suffering.

- Whether *The Book of Job* presents a common and unified theme is a moot point. Heterogeneity in the narratives, variety of genres used, ironic devices wrought in, and symbolism and imagery integrated either as conceits and objective correlatives do convey varied angles and aspects of the problem of human suffering discussed and varied voices heard and listened to. But, theme-wise, the presentation does hinge around Job’s predicament which can be any man’s or everyman’s.

- ‘Relational striving’ is projected as the natural and spontaneous outcome of dialogic reasoning the book promotes through multi-generic narratives and a number of lively literary devices which irony, paradoxes, symbolism, and
imagery. Relational striving eliminates arrogation of knowledge and wisdom as represented by the three friends of Job, reasons out violation of moral and ethical norms on the basis of ground realities rather than on the basis of stigmatization or dogmatic norms, and sees prevailing and perpetuated individual and social iniquities as real ground-realities which contribute enormously to human suffering. Relational striving is a way forward towards seeing the complexities involved and appreciating the challenges involved in finding solutions. This is where Bakhtin’s linguistic semiotics and social semantics gain indispensable value and significance. This is how Joban dialogues become purposeful and meaningful, shaping Job, the central figure of *The Book of Job* as an archetypal, mythopoeic, and metaphoric figure.

- The researcher has grounds and reasons to arrive at another finding, namely ‘garnering existential spirituality’ may be posited as one of the prime values to be cherished in life. As indicated and argued in Chapter Two and further reiterated in Chapter Four of the study, inconsistencies in the narrative are resolved towards emphasizing the threefold dimensions of existential spirituality, namely theocentric, anthrocentric and cosmocentric, through manifold literary devices. From this point of view, suffering may be viewed as a compliment to one’s spirituality, one’s holistic understanding of human nature.

- The human face of God that consorts with theocentric, anthrocentric, and cosmocentric dimensions within the semiotic and semantic framework of *The Book of Job*, ushers in the poetic and real plausibility of God becoming ‘the dialogic Other’ within a framework of a nexus of voices, who ultimately stands with the victim of human suffering. It is the human face of God that prevents
Job from the denouement of pessimism, fatalism, and nihilism, that chides Job’s friends, particularly the first three, for their self-righteous stances and ‘holier-than-thou-attitudes’, that asserts that God is indeed caring and outreaching for mankind without conditionality, asserting that the Divine Providence is capable of outreaching gratuitously in all fairness and compassion like a good and great mother who never retires from caring.

Dividing the research work into Five Chapters, the researcher concludes that if there is one book that withstands the periodicity of time and the burden of history and remains as an evergreen beauty that appeals to beholders of varied ages and civilizations, and backgrounds and experiences, that credit goes to The Book of Job for the reasons posited and defended in the present study. In the same way, if there is one theory that remains still as a valuable tool and aid towards reading life-situations and literatures across cultures and civilizations, it is Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism as a chronotopic critical idiom.

While summing up the arguments, this study also notes how it has contributed to new knowledge to a considerable extent and has hinted at the prospects for further explorations vis-à-vis The Book of Job. By way of cross-referential readings of the primary text, various editions of The Book of Job in the Bible have been done in the course of writing this thesis. Besides a more or less comprehensive select bibliography added, the study also contains citations of works referred to in the course of writing the thesis. As the 8th edition of MLA handbook titled, MLA Handbook: Rethinking Documentation for the Digital Age (MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers) has been launched in April, 2016, the researcher has tried her best to recast the citations in resonance with the guidelines provided by the 8th edition.