Chapter One

Introduction:

Bakhtin, Dialogism on Human Suffering, and The Book of Job

“(T)ruth itself, in its uttermost, indivisible, ‘atomic’ kernel, is dialogue”.

- Viladimir Bibler

Every culture has its ways of story telling so as to transmit its accumulated knowledge and wisdom. The Hebrew tradition is no exception. Israel’s ‘wisdom literature’, especially ‘the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible’, belongs to this tradition of transmitting knowledge and wisdom. Scholars see ‘wisdom literature’ as a literary genre designation, a category to define ‘a large body of literature that is present not only in the Hebrew Bible but also in the literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia’. The books generally reckoned under ‘the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible’ are the books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms.

Though it is difficult to define ‘Wisdom Literature’ by virtue of its variety, dialogic nature, pedagogical intent, and many other complex characteristics, it can be said that, in the course of dealing with everyday life and experience, it, especially biblical wisdom literature, is concerned with, as Von Rod, an influential biblical scholar notes, ‘a practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world, based upon experience’. Readers familiar with books we have today, books like The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and Who Moved My Cheese?, may see affinities, if not similarities, in the books under wisdom literature on illustrations of the ‘how-to live genre’ in terms of human efforts to master self, society, and environment, to cope
with the dynamic tension between order and chaos, and to savour the quest for self-understanding in terms of relationships with others, people and God, the divine order revealed and the practical side of human affairs.

As an online-website -- http://barrybandstra.com/rtot4/rtot4-19-ch14.html -- informs, there was a time when ‘wisdom literature’ was treated as ‘the orphan of Israelite theology when the study of theology was dominated by a salvation–history paradigm’ -- occasioned most emphatically by the conflict between the Torah–Prophets worldview of a God-given order and the plight of the postexilic community --, an approach that no longer dominates biblical studies, that may not have much relevance to today’s postmodern generation, to the arenas of contemporary theologizing and hermeneutics which focus more and more on contemporary angsts and anxieties keeping aside binaries such as the divine and the secular. Though it is true that wisdom literature rests on a basic belief in ‘the goodness of God’s created order’, linking theodicy as an indispensable bind in human history, its aroma lies in its generic variety, dialogic pedagogy, and complexity of meaning in connection with the facts of human suffering and injustice, moral worldviews, and right ethical conduct exuding a down-to-earth thrust blending both the divine and the human, the secular and the spiritual, and the temporal and the transcendent.

Against this backdrop, the present study is an attempt to use and apply Bakhtinian dialogism as a reading guide, as a significant tool and agency in literary criticism, cultural geography, and ethical philosophy in the course of reading The Book of Job of the Bible towards sense-making. The Book of Job is 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. This researcher was keen to move beyond salvation-history paradigm and beyond ‘the blessing follows suffering’ approach. As a strategy towards conflict-resolutions and sense-making, she opted for bringing in Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism as a means. It is a way forward towards mutual understanding and resolution of contemporary problems and issues generated by consumer societies and by clash of civilizations. At individual, interpersonal, and social level, dialogism, as Michael Holquist states, as ‘a pragmatically oriented theory of knowledge’ which has its practical use, ‘seeks to grasp human behaviour through the use human beings make use of language’. A Bakhtinian dialogic approach to reading a literary text marks a paradigmatic shift towards what Anatolii Akhutin and Vladimir Bibler (Russian critics) call, “the transition from cognizing reason to dialogic reason whose mode is mutual understanding” (356). “A Bakhtinian psychology”, as John Shotter and Michael Billig comment, is a way of moving “from out of the heads of individuals into the dialogues between them” (13). The Book of Job in the Bible is a living book wherein language with regard to the problem of human suffering, is perennially alive, dialogic, heteroglassic, and polyphonic in terms of meaning-making relevant to life. ‘The nexus of voices’ is all the more tangible when Bakhtinian tropes of dialogism are applied in the course of reading this complex literary text that deals with human suffering, one of the most painful conditions humans endure.

The literary aesthetics of The Book of Job, which is relatively late among the biblical Old Testament Books, written before 300 B.C., and as Northrop Fry observes
in his ‘Lectures on Job’, warped in a seemingly dramatic form closer to Platonic
dramatic form of symposium than to the theatrical form of acted plays, hover around
ceaseless quests for solutions to human suffering. Instead of supporting a fixed
foreclosure on the problem it deals with, the book urges readers and critics to
appreciate quests from varied points of view, from the point of view of diachronic
multiperspectifying which implies that there can be ‘no last word’ on human
suffering by virtue of its complexity. Yet, it is possible and necessary that quests for
an answer should continue beyond fixity as answers ought to be found.

This researcher strongly believes that reading The Book of Job in the light of
Bakhtinian tropes of dialogism against the backdrop of moving beyond the theology-
centred salvation-history paradigm is one fine way of promoting such quests. This
explains the rationale behind the formulation of the topic of the present study under
the guidance of two subject-specialists from two different (cross-disciplinary)
disciplines. The purpose of the present study is double hinged. While commenting on
the Bakhtinian tropes of dialogism, it explores the ingredients of the nexus of voices
in the structurality of The Book of Job in the backdrop of the suffering of Job.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975), a Russian philosopher, literary
critic, semiotician and scholar who significantly contributed to and made a profound
impact on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language during his life-time,
is known and remembered for his extraordinary contribution to modern philosophy,
areas of linguistics and schools of literary theory, to the idea of interrelatedness of
language and society, and above all, for presenting a pragmatic, practical, and
effective alternative to systems based on Greek philosophers. The concepts he
developed, concepts such as ‘chronotope’ ‘dialogism’, ‘carnival’, and terms/phrases
he coined, such as ‘heteroglassia’, ‘discourse in the novel’ and ‘grotesque realism’ have terrific utility-value even today in an era of new and emerging knowledge societies, cultural diversity, and seeking conflictual situations through acknowledging differences and appreciating interdependent dialogues.

‘Bakhtin as a theory of reading’, to use the title phrase of the Technical Report No. 579 (1993) authored by Judith Davidson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is an exhaustive task on reading achievement and analyzing a literary text, that demands diachronic-synchronic critical attention interconnected with three crucial domains, namely language, representation, and interpretation. Two critical texts of Bakhtin – “Discourse in the Novel” and “The Problem with Speech Genres” – demonstrate how Bakhtin addresses and connects these domains. In connection with her reading of Bakhtin's theoretical ideas, Judith Davidson comments:

Theories of reading, whatever their bases, encompass, in some form, both a theory of language and a theory of representation, coupled with a theory of interpretation. A theory of language discusses the nature of language and thought and the relationship of these two elements to each other, positions them vis-a-vis the individual and the collective, and provides the basis from which connections can be drawn to ideas about text, reader, and author. A theory of representation provides a discussion of the characteristics of texts and textual features, how they came to be represented in particular fashions, and the role of the author in this process. Lastly, a theory of interpretation provides a rationale for the process, or mechanisms, by which meaning emerges for the reader from the text, readers respond to texts, and critics
analyse texts. These three elements--language, representation, and interpretation (virtually inseparable)--and the roles they imply are the essentials of a theory of reading. (2)

Bakhtin’s theoretical ideas have been in focus since the last century, especially since last several decades, mainly by virtue of their interconnectedness with varied domains of language and thought, metacognitive approaches, multivocality, dialogism and societal and cultural links. Researchers across a number of disciplines have been influenced by Bakhtin’s concepts and ideas which have propelled them to challenge ‘hierarchically arranged paradigms of thought about knowledge and language’ and have prompted them to look for alternative paradigms to guide them in their reading, discourse analysis, and construction of meaning. As Judith Davidson notes, “anthropologists, for example, write about ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘the carnivalesque’; literary critics speak of Bakhtin’s concepts of ‘voice’, ‘dialogism’, and ‘intertextuality’” (2). Literary researchers have been focusing on Bakhtin primarily from the point of reader-responses, diachronic readings, intertextual sites, and multiperspectifying dialogism. To be more precise, ‘the range and depth of Bakhtin's ideas present an enormous opportunity to look not just at one aspect of the reader, writer, or text, but to weave these ideas together into a more comprehensive perspective of reading’. The research-scholar of the present study is of the view that The Book of Job provides enough space for a dialogic reading on the angst of human suffering, all the more ‘innocent suffering’, on the lines of and in the light of Bakhtinian tropes of theory.

The present study posits that Bakhtinian dialogism is a tool towards a diachronic-synchronous sense-making and arriving at certain interpretive polyphonic perspectives on the question of human suffering as imagined and narrated in The
The Book of Job in the Bible. It is a fact that The Book of Job consists of honest indignations and moral contestations linking ‘innocent suffering’ within a framework of intertextual heteroglassic dialogues which are part of the structural cruxes of the book, which are better understood when mediated through a Bakhtinian ‘nexus of voices’. This study is an attempt to discern and capture the connotations of Bakhtinian ‘chronotope’ (spatial-temporal frame), a theoretical framework that reflects, as Philippe Lorino elucidates, “an organizing process mediated by systems of signs, languages, and tooling, which allow reflexivity and dialogue” (1) on the theme of human suffering as navigated and negotiated The Book of Job. The present study posits, argues and defends that when the structural cruxes of this book are mediated through certain concepts of Bakhtinology, such as chronotope, dialogism, and heteroglassia, the interplay that exists in the construction of language and in the intertextual complexity and diversity of the book becomes an effective tool and temporal agency of synchronizing many different/polyphonic voices within the framework of dialogic structurality that is the hallmark of the book. In other words, the major aim of the present study hovers around discerning the Bakhtinian ‘diachronic-synchronic dialogicity’ ingrained in The Book of Job towards meaning-making which converges towards assimilating certain nuances of existential spirituality that has some perennial relevance in terms of coping with the reality of human suffering and foregrounding the triumph of the human spirit against odds faced in life.

As focusing on Bakhtin, merely on Bakhtinology as a theory, would be an exercise in dry abstraction, this study has brought in a critical reading of The Book of Job mediated through Bakhtin’s notions of dialogic imagination. As the Bakhtin
Circle for reading literatures of varied hues, continents, and cultures have a wide-ranging accommodation of discourses across universities in and beyond Russia and as it would be too vast to sustain a lengthy focus on Bakhtin as a theory, this research-scholar opted to limit the reading of Bakhtin as a theory only to the extent required and focus more on the structural and the thematic cruxes in *The Book of Job* which has been taken as the primary source text for reading, mediated through Bakhtin’s notions of chronotope and dialogism, in the course of writing the thesis. As Akhutin and Bibler note, it is good and relevant to keep in mind, with regard to this study, that though Bakhtin has long been considered as a philosopher and social thinker in Russia, as opposed to the West, and though Bakhtin, as a gifted thinker and seminal contributor to highlighting ‘the significance of dialogic structure of texts and the necessity of taking into account all those components of a text that determine its specific genre, has made a name for himself in the fields of literary criticism and structuralist-semiotic studies’, his ‘first and foremost orientation and focus was on his philosophical intention’ (357).

Moreover, the problem of human suffering is an age-old issue which requires more attention because of its relevance to contemporary contexts and predicaments. 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 with reference to *The Book of Job* and 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 Bakhtinian 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.

To elaborate further, human suffering is a perennial and complex problem. As an unpleasant experience, it takes many twists and turns causing enormous physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual pain. Apart from natural calamities resulting in suffering, man-made conflicts and calamities have aggravated the problem of human suffering. Pessimists would say pain and suffering are inevitable because we live in a bad and fallen world. The problem of evil and suffering has been the subject of theological discussions for ages. Philosophies of varied schools and religions have been preoccupied with the problem of suffering. Readers may be familiar with the memorable writing of late Pope John Paul II on “The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering” (1984). Hinduism talks of human suffering. Marxian notion of suffering revolves around the concept of ‘alienation’, an outcome of the virtual bondage of human beings in exploitative industrial economy and class struggle. Almost all the Indian systems of philosophy, which consist of parallel growth and co-existence of many schools, acknowledge the fact of human suffering and propose ways of overcoming it. The law of Karma and Dharma, implying ‘reaping what one sows’, is an accepted law in Indian Philosophy. Practical systems of Indian Philosophy based on this twin-law imply that lack of morality and discipline could also cause pain and suffering. As Sanjeev Nayyar puts it, ‘most quests for self-realization start with the reason for pain and suffering’. The “Four Noble Truths” of Buddhism dealing with dukkha, translated as suffering, acknowledge that suffering is a fact of life, there is a
cause for it (experienced due to one’s inability to discern and experience the inner self), there is a state in which suffering ceases, and there is a way of attaining freedom from all pain.

With a realistic view on human suffering, Existentialist Schools of Philosophy have focused on bewildering dualism in human nature between good and evil, pleasure and pain, and suffering and bliss. As Debashis Guha comments, Existentialism is a form of

“protest against self-estrangement, dehumanization, mechanization, and objectification of experience. It is a voice against metaphysics referring to the abstract, the absolute, and the supernatural. As man is the destiny unto himself, he is always in the making and the actual concrete lived personal reality is prior and basic to his conceptual and ideal essence. The essential freedom of man to choose and act shapes his personal existence. Existentialism is thus an attempt to delve into the subjective, minor depths of human personality for philosophical reflection” (140).

Sciences, particularly Psycho-analytical and Therapeutic Sciences, and Social Sciences have not kept away from the question of suffering, from the physiology and pathology of pain and suffering. Medical practitioners have looked at pain and suffering as a ‘warning noise’. Psychology has dealt with pain as mental suffering. Students of English language and literature are not alien to literary and artistic works on tragedy and human suffering. Literary artists like Fyodor Dostoevsky, Albert Camus, Elie Wiesel, and Günnewald have dealt with the tragic complexities and the mystery of human suffering in their writings. W.H.Auden’s classic poem, “Musée des Beaux Arts” sums up how ‘life goes on’ with suffering:
About suffering they were never wrong.
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully
along:

(lines, 1-4)

Knowledge societies within the historiography of civilizational gyres have not yet found complete or perfect answers or solutions to suffering. Despite intellectual developments, scientific achievements, and technological advancements, human beings are constrained to walk in the valley of the shadow of suffering. If one enters into polemics why human suffering occurs, what causes it, why the almighty God who is the supreme expression of love and concern for humanity permits it, whether man is free enough to prevent or solve it, and above all, how to face and cope with the reality of human suffering, one may arrive at divergent views resulting in a number of moral contestations. In other words, human suffering continues to haunt and confront humanity. It remains a mystery difficult to fathom prompting reasoning minds to do a polyphonic reading and understanding of the mystery. The complexity of human experience of suffering and the complexities of modern/postmodern times we live in call for a multi-disciplinary approach and entail a polyphonic reading, a reading that takes hermeneutics beyond authorial intentions, fixity and foreclosure.

This researcher is aware of the current theoretical trends impacting literary hermeneutics. Contemporary times pose hard times for literary hermeneutics. To put it reductively, the concept of ‘intentional fallacy’, as propounded by W.K.Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (1946), hovers around a stance that ‘the authorial intention
cannot be known’ because the meaning of a work of art does not originate with the author’s intention, or as the New Critics would say, all we have to do is ‘to focus on text alone’ while determining meaning or when we are involved in sense-making. Questioning the habit and relevance of taking ‘nourishment from the fecundity of Structuralism’ (Derrida 3), Jacques Derrida problematizes, in and through his seminal writings, particularly his book, *Writing and Difference* published in 1967, the year that marks the emergence of Derrida as a major figure in contemporary French thought, the impact Structuralist invasions have made upon the human psyche and literary hermeneutics as well, and foregrounds ‘deconstruction’ as the art of cultivating ‘différence’ (difference) and ‘differance’ (deferral), playing on both meanings simultaneously and deconstructing the totalitarian invasions Structuralism allegedly indulges in the name of ‘Centre’ maintaining a relationship between the signifier and the signified. Derridean theory of deconstruction, as Lucie Guillemette and Josiane Cossette comment, “runs counter to Saussurean structuralism (the legacy of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure)” (1). In other words, Derrida rejects the whole current of logocentric (speech-centred) thought that originated in the time of Plato. With writing as his basis (the written sign), Derrida takes on the task of ‘disrupting the entire stream of metaphysical thought predicated on oppositions’. He challenges ‘the idea of a frozen structure’ and advances the notion that ‘there is no structure or centre, no univocal meaning’. By rejecting the tenability of a direct relationship between signifier and signified, he avers that ‘we have infinite shifts in meaning relayed from one signifier to another’.

More or less subscribing to the same premise, poststructuralists hold on to a view that the authorial intention is ‘unknowable’. Roland Barthes argues, as he does
in his well-known essay, “Death of the Author”, that ‘textual meaning is determined by the reader’. It implies that the author as the oracle to be consulted, or the author as the one having the last word is dead, and in his/her absence, the presences of the text that contains ‘the anxiety of language’, to use another phrase of Derrida, and the reader who has the privilege of experiencing ‘jouissance’ (endless rapture) matter most in the course of validating interpretations.

Life is a complex experience. As literature emerges out of life, fed by life, and reacts against life, its texture has a warp of a number of ‘intertextualities’. As Julia Kristeva, the Bulgarian-French philosopher, psychoanalyst and theorist, avers, “authors do not create their texts from their own mind, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts”. Thus, the text becomes “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text,” in which “several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another”. She argues that “texts are always in a state of production, rather than being products to be quickly consumed”..., “ideas are not presented as finished, consumable products, but are presented in such a way as to encourage readers to come up with their own interpretation of their meanings” (68-69). As A.S.Dasan notes in his essay, “Intertextuality, a Metaphor for Dialogicity: Hermeneutical Consequences and Emerging Canons for Reading New Literatures”, Kristeva ‘combines both Ferdinand de Saussure’s position (‘relational nature of the word emerges from a vision of language seen as a generalized and abstract system’) and that of Mikhail Bakhtin (‘relation originates from the existence of the word within specific social registers, and specific moments of utterance and reception’), critiques Structuralist semiotics that argue in favour of the objectivity of language
that tends to ignore the plurality of signifiers, and attacks the notion of ‘stable signification’ centred on the transformation of Saussure’s concept of semiology.

Against this summated theoretical backdrop, this researcher has taken upon herself the task of reading *The Book of Job* as an ancient but timeless text that poses enormous complexities and difficulties in the course of hermeneutical plausibility. As a living literary text, it still continues to be an expression of life. As an expression of life, it consists of and revolves around human experience that is often marked by binaries – joys and sorrows, good and evil, peace and conflicts, and greatness and pettiness. A monoglossic worldview, or a Eurocentric, or a mere message-code-centric approach to resolution of conflict-situations, or to the problem of human suffering to be more specific, is not tenable anymore. Instead, meaning-making calls for a dialogic, diachronic, and synchronic reading, a reading that moves beyond fixity or a totalitarian Centre, and foregrounds and affirms the richness of dialogism on the lines of Bakhtinian chronotope that provides enormous scope for nexus of voices, sideward glancing, and negotiation of differences.

This study takes into account and subscribes to the view that, as A.S.Dasan reiterates, ‘a writer or critic blessed with the third eye knows that life-situations and experiences forming the basis for literary articulations cry for conflict-resolution through meaning-making’. Whatever may be the times we live in, whatever may be the circumstances and predicaments we live with, it is indispensable for literature and literary hermeneutics to converge towards connoting the existential triumph of the human spirit against odds and oddities life consists of. Life has to go on lest it should have dénouements towards nihilism. Literatures, old and new, are more or less inclined towards facilitating critics/readers to see the plausibility of meaning-making,
to appreciate ‘understanding-culture’ that ennobles life with a compassionate worldview rather than ‘abstraction-culture’ that tends to indulge in epistemic constructions that constrict hermeneutics to mere academic discourses as if ethical dimensions were not to be prime concerns in literature’. Intertextuality may complicate the process of meaning-making by virtue of its openness towards dialogicity, multiperspectifying, but meaning-making cannot be dispensed with as it means so much to ennobling life.

Underscoring that conflict-situations depicting the brutality of life, contrapuntally indicating or connoting the glory of existence, have prime space and focus in literature, its sociology and its aesthetics, the research-scholar assumes and sees the plausibility that a literary work, using the word as an agency of articulation portrays and deconstructs, within a framework of temporalization, human experience with ‘visitings of Nature’, to use a phrase of Shakespeare, and with multiperspectival visioning in the midst of acknowledging differences. The human face of literature can never be lost or dismantled. The researcher is of the view that Bakhtin’s theory of chronotope strengthens the prospect for sense-making beyond binaries without yielding to nihilism or deferral ad-infinitum, and The Book of Job is an ageless text that contains a number of intertextual and multi-generic structural cruxes. St. Jerome’s comment that the book is “like an eel”, for “if you close your hand to hold an eel …..the more you squeeze it the sooner it escapes” (qtd. in Carol A. Newsom, 3) hints at the dynamics ingrained in the narration of the text and the need for a dialogic reading of the text.

Such an underpinning propels the researcher to aver that the author of the literary word is both a seer-like wordsmith and poetic myth-maker at the same time.
The stories he narrates, characters he portrays, dialogues he constructs, and meanings he connotes make his word a multidimensional beacon towards discerning the quotients and wisdoms required for life, for ennobling human existence beyond what and how life is and towards what and how life ought to be. The poetic plausibility of literature he ushers in through ‘logos and mythos’ makes a profound impact upon the human psyche, sensitizing the human mind about the ethical imperative of cherishing a sense of poetic distributive justice, an objective way of arriving at truth, the ultimate altar before which all of us, reasoning minds, tend to genuflect. It has an enduring therapeutic value providing a soothing and healing touch. *The Book of Job* has such tenacity rooted in imagined facts of life and routed through multi-generic literary articulations necessitated by virtue of the complexity it connotes while conversing on human suffering. The eternal verities of life it touches on while focusing on human suffering resonate the existential philosophical ethos with a spiritual thrust, and hence the perennial contemporary relevance of the book.

In the light of these observations, this research work premises that Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of ‘dialogism’ and ‘heteroglossia’ and his theory of ‘chronotope’ can serve as significant tools towards discerning the complexities involved in suffering, the meanings implied in these complexities, and finding answers to the problem of human suffering. Bakhtin posits that “the forms and meanings of language are constantly shaped by history and culture”, and “culture is inherently responsive and interactive involving individuals acting and reacting at a particular point in time and space.”(96), and hence his stress on dialogism and heteroglossia.

Commenting on how language, like the novel, is always in motion, emerging and permeating through human culture, moment, and milieu, Bakhtin elucidates how
a literary text is caught between “centripetal or unifying forces on the one hand and 
centrifugal or division forces on the other” – forces historical, political, and cultural 
in nature -- squeezing the together, shaping them into ‘intersecting with utterance’ an 
authentic environment in which they become ‘dialogized heteroglassia’. He 
proclaims the complex and active ways from and by which meanings are constructed: 

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and 
tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, 
weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils 
from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape 
discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its 
expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (Discourse in Poetry and 
Discourse in the Novel 276)

Dialogism, according to Bakhtin, is a way of posing of one voice against 
another. As Judith Davidson notes, ‘the tensions, resolutions, and reformations of 
language and ideas under these conditions are the mechanisms Bakhtin proposes as 
central to representation and to interpretation’. Moreover, dialogism, ‘exists in the 
very relationship between word and object, and therefore, exists in language and 
literature at every level, permeating every feature of expression’. Bakhtin declares in 
"The Problem of Speech Genres," that ‘the dialogic relationship of the word to the 
object is situated in time and space. It looks backward and forward, to where it came 
from and to whom it will be addressed’.

Dialogic process sets up a new field of possibilities for the speaker or listener 
in every encounter. It facilitates understanding through evaluation, sifting, 
comparing, and arriving at the possibilities. As Bakhtin states, ‘listening, speaking,
understanding, as Bakhtin describes them, can never be passive acts’. As they are subjective acts, participants work back and forth across various conceptual horizons appreciative of one another’s perspectives. As literary language is a heteroglassic expressive system, “its stratification is accomplished by specific organisms, called genre” (Discourse in Poetry and Discourse in the Novel 288). This stratification is both within genres and across genres. It comes about in many ways, for instance, the differences among social classes, geographic regions, and professional groups stratify language. This paves the way for heteroglassia and dialogic discourse. As Judith Davidson comments further, ‘discourse is constantly in motion, and the mechanism of that motion is dialogism, the active process of weaving together different kinds of texts against various axiological backgrounds, moving in and out of those perspectives, constantly creating new forms. This is how meaning is constructed and interpretation is achieved’. This is why this study opted for a diachronic-synchronic approach to sense-making.

Viewing these Bakhtinian dimensions of dialogism as ideal and pragmatic matrices for reading the multi-generic structures of dialogues ingrained in The Book of Job, this study applies the Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglassia and chronotope as tools and agencies for sense-making in the course of dealing with the complex ethos of human suffering which is the major theme of the book chosen for research. As stated earlier, this researcher is of the view that the dimensions of dialogue in The Book of Job provide a fine topology, a Bakhtinian topology, for a reading of the polyphonic voices on the testimonies of human suffering, that too innocent suffering, or suffering out of proportion with sin, ingrained within the dynamics of narration of the story of Job. The enormity of the number of commentaries and critical considerations published and available on The
Book of Job – in print and online media – and still being written and published, are a collective testimony to the fascination the book commands beyond its time and history by virtue of its richness and complexity on all the counts it deals with.

To come back to Bakhtin, for Bakhtin, truth is not a single statement that can be held within ‘a single mind’ or expressed by ‘a single mouth’. It connotes and needs a multitude of carrying voices with ‘mutual addressivity, engagement, and commitment to the context of real-life situations’. To put it differently, truth is polyphonic and it requires many simultaneous voices. As Michael Holquist (1984 and 1990) notes, Bakhtin ‘resisted the Neo-Kantian emphasis upon an all embracing unity’. While Bakhtin was closer to the original Kantian concept of the heterogeneity of ends rather than to the later Neo-Kantian lust for unity, he was receptive to Einstein’s revelation of a complex unity of differences – his demonstration that one ‘body’s motion has meaning only in relation to another body’ – from which Bakhtin seems to have inferred that all meaning is relational, the result of a ‘dialogue between and among bodies -- physical, political, conceptual’.

Though an in-depth reading on the Bakhtinian notion of ‘chronotope’ is done in Chapter Two of this study linking its application to understand the structural cruxes of the textuality of The Book of Job, it is necessary that a brief note is added here in the Introductory part of the study so as to ensure certain familiarity with the concept. The Bakhtinian topology revolves around an organizing process which he christens as ‘chronotope’, meaning a spatial-temporal frame. It is a tool to study literary narratives. It is a semiotic way of organizing inquiry mediated by systems of signs and languages. As Peirce elucidates, it is ‘triadic agency which involves sense-making and multiple interpretive perspectives’. As Tsoukas comments, it ‘intertwines
both the world and the world in a transformative mode’. In this process, sense-making happens with a plurality of interpretative perspectives through dialogical interactions. As Lorino summates, ‘chronotope’, as an organizing tool and interpretative agency, facilitates an integrated reading of literary narratives, old or new, provides scope and space for the reader / critic to come in within a broader, historic, social and cultural setting, and plays a key role in the process and production of sense-making (meaning making).

In this context, it is important to relate Bakhtin’s grasp of the concept of ‘heteroglassia’. To Bakhtin, ‘heteroglassia is a broader concept than polyphony, a description of speech styles in a language, especially characteristic of the novel but apparent in languages generally’. As he elaborates in “Discourse in the Novel”, heteroglassia as ‘a complex mixture of languages and worldviews that is always, except in some imagined ideal condition, dialogized, as each language is viewed from the perspective of the others’. This dialogization ‘creates a complex unity’ ushering in hybridization.

Having survived the Russian revolution, the Stalinist purges, and the hardships of the Second World War, Bakhtin was always a socialist in thought and at heart and was committed to change. As promoter of literary freedom, he was anti-reductionist in temper and stressed the multi-layered nature of language. Words, to him, as C. John Holcombe (2007) comments, are ‘living entities’ embedded in language that comes ‘populated with the intentions of others’ with contextual tastes, and therefore, all speech is ‘dialogic’ embracing internal polemics. His sociological line of thinking through language takes him beyond Saussure and anticipates Derrida and Foucault but goes further than Derrida’s notion of ‘trace’ and Foucault’s ‘archaeology of political usage’. The significance of his contribution to the fields of
philosophy, linguistics, cultural studies, aesthetics and literary theory is widely known posthumously by virtue of translations available.

Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia and chronotope have given readers and critics a legacy of seeing the realities of life beyond the boundaries of individual arenas, enclosed specificity and so-called universal frame of references built on beliefs, ideologies, emotions and power-relations, and deriving value out of literature beyond the limits of Russian formalism, French structuralism, or any system-builder-mentality. They illuminate the poetics, rather than the politics, of interpretation in terms of genuine creativity and celebration of multiculturalism, heterogeneity, and eclecticism. It is this Bakhtinian topology that serves as the matrix-collective for the reading of the polyphonic voices in *The Book of Job* on human suffering in the present study.

To move further in reading *The Book of Job*, no area of human suffering has been more mystifying than the inner pain experienced in the course of life due to innocent suffering. *The Book of Job* is one of the finest literary and theological articulations on the nature and meaning of innocent suffering. The dilemma of Job, a man of remarkable character, signifies the predicament of all those who are innocent but suffering. A careful survey of Job’s life, his character and conduct, his integrity, loyalty to God, and his selfless service, shows that he can never be a logical candidate for disaster. Yet, Job faces enormous suffering. God allows evil (Satan) to strike him with series of assaults. In his sorrow, Job laments that “God does not hear me” (*Job*, 13:3), “God is punishing me” (*Job*, 6:4), and “God allows the wicked to prosper” (*Job*, 21:7). In the midst of his friends accusing him, and his wife calling upon him to ‘curse God and die’, Job, cursing the day of his birth (3: 11-19), is
constrained to ponder over the problem of suffering (3: 20-26) in the midst of defending himself even to the extent of becoming guilty of self-righteousness. Humanly speaking, one tends to appreciate the depths of Job’s complaint. Mixing the mundane with the sublime, *The Book of Job* consists of a number of debate cycles involving God, Satan, and Job and his friends in connection with the losses he endures, the struggle he faces, and the stigmatic humiliations he suffers. It provides no perfect comforts or complete answers.

Set in the Patriarchal period -- sometime between Noah and Moses -- *The Book of Job*, commonly referred as the first of the five ‘Books of Poetry’ and part of the ‘Wisdom Literature’ of the Old Testament of the Bible, has been a powerful source of hope and comfort to people who have suffered or who have difficulties in keeping up their faith in God in the midst of undeserved suffering. Although *The Book of Job* wrestles profoundly with the question of suffering without providing an explanation, it is a text read, and re-read even today, by many across the globe mainly because suffering is a perennial problem and those who suffer know what it means to read the book. It facilitates those who suffer to come to terms with their plight. More than answering the question of why one suffers, it provides a meaningful analysis on how to suffer and how painful experiences of human existence can compliment one’s spirituality. It rejects the notion of retributive justice textured in *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Its theological stance counterbalances, even challenges, some perspectives of *The Book of Proverbs*. And above all, as a typical of wisdom book, it views the world from the perspective of human need and concern rather than God’s requirements.
The worldwide commendation the book has received from people of different faiths and even non-believers speaks of the valuable lesson the story of Job has. Victor Hugo (1864) stated that "tomorrow, if all literature was to be destroyed and it was left to me to retain one work only, I should save *Job.*” (qtd. in Mark.A.Copeland 1) Tennyson (1892) praised it as “the greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature” (*ibid* 1). Its influence is manifold on theology, philosophy, art, music, dance and literature.

Its literary structure and features consist of two major parts: a narrative framework surrounding a series of dialogues. The Satan appears in the opening narrative only. It is highly poetic and metaphorical and it includes mythical elements such as symbols (Rahab, Yamm, Leviathan, and the Ba'el Myth). The cycles of speeches are incomplete and some chapters, such as the speech of Elihu and the poem about Wisdom, appear to be later additions. The dialogic nature of the narration implies that God and the world cannot be put into definable categories.

As a poetic achievement, *The Book of Job* is a landmark of ancient Hebrew verse. As a theological document, it is unmatched for its integrity about the issues raised by human suffering and God's workings in the world. As a compelling book, demanding a meticulous attention from the part of the reader, it appeals to biblical and literary scholars, theologians, philosophers, pastors, legal scholars, psychologists, therapeutic counsellors and many others in various professional fields. This explains why alternate readings of the book ought to be encouraged by way of further research studies. *The Book of Job* provides enormous scope for moral contestation on human suffering. Both the overall meaning of its subject matter and the form of the book pose complex interpretative problems. The mastery of poetic genius and literary
nuances the book evokes means that one must be willing to go beyond the simplistic meaning the prosaic opening of the book presents. As Carol A. Newsom observes, the elusive nature and complexity of the book not only lends itself to a number of “hermeneutical assumptions” but also allows readers to see “perspectives congenial to the tenor of their own age.” (3). The dialogical dynamics of the book resist the subordinate process of ‘monopolization’, the coercive privilege of a single perspective as definitive, and resist finalization. This is not to state that the polyphonic composition of the text yields to ‘different forms of postmodern intellectual display that embody pastiche without purpose’ bordering on mere relativism or nihilism. Instead, the variety of perspectives the book ushers in revolves around the book’s own moral seriousness with which meanings are constructed with dimensions of dialogism in relation to claims of truth, in all humility and multiplicity.

Whatever the intentions of the single or multiple Joban authorship were, readers across the globe continue to struggle to read the book with different assumptions. The question that arises at this juncture is: What models of reading will do justice to the existence of the book? Does a polyphonic reading, a Bakhtinian-kind of reading different from and as an alternative to a Derridean type of deconstructive assumptions and practices, justify the affinities between ethos of innocent suffering and the dynamics of narration intertwined in The Book of Job? Do the generic multiples serving as modes of perception of moral contestations ingrained in the chosen text converge towards craving for redemption, a quest for the ultimate confluence of the mundane and the sublime, propelling those who suffer to discern an existential spirituality that stands as a transcendent signified and that leads to the existential triumph of the human spirit against the odds of human suffering? This
study proposes to dwell at length on these questions and explore into the layers of polyphonic connotations the language and the message codes intertwined in the book usher in.

From this point of view, this research-scholar is of the view that the affinities between the ethos of innocent suffering and the dynamics of narration interfaced and fused together in *The Book of Job* contribute to the reiteration of dialogic engagement of ideas, sensibilities and moral imaginations which inspire readers to pursue a dialogic and synchronic approach in order to construct patterns of meaning, value, and significance. Such an approach encourages this researcher to have recourse to Bakhtin’s poetics and positions, as applied in his study of Dostoyevsky's poetics, justifying the dialogic nature of truth and polyphonic ways of discerning truth and as propounded and elaborated in various other writings of Bakhtin.

The present study revolves around a twofold strategy, namely exploring and highlighting the Bakhtinian notions of dialogism and heteroglossia through Bakhtin’s theory of chronotope and adopting the Bakhtinian approach to truth or resolution of crisis in the course of reading the dynamics of the dialogic narration in *The Book of Job* on human suffering. *The Book of Job* itself demands an exhaustive reading by virtue of its generic multiples, dialogic principles, polyphonic voices, and thematic moral contestations. This researcher has made a modest attempt to bring in Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism which has been studied in depth with reference to the primary theoretical concepts and notions attributed to Bakhtin’s seminal critical thinking. The following texts were crucial to the pursuit of the topic of the study: *Writing and Difference*, as noted earlier, wherein his seminal musings on dialogism, heteroglossia, and chronotope are posited and discussed, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1919-
1921) that deals with the philosophy of aesthetic activity and the ethics of artistic creation, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928), that could be read as a critique of Russian Formalism’s essentialist approach to literature, projecting, instead, sociological poetics, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929) wherein he outlines his socio-historical theory of language, and *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Art* (1929) Bakhtin shifts his focus from philosophy towards the notions of dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia. Cross-references have been made to certain other related writings including his text, *Rabelais and His World* which is a treatise on Bakhtin’s insightful dissertation on the French Renaissance writer, François Rabelais, written during the II World war but published in 1965. This text has some relevance in the sense that Bakhtin, as Holquist (1990) notes, concerns himself with the need for openness with regard to ‘the language that was permitted’ and ‘the language that was not permitted’ during the Renaissance time and meticulously analyses the carnival and the grotesque through the interaction between the Renaissance social and the literary. As Tullio Maranhão (1990) observes, Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination* (1941), makes a significant contribution to the discourse on language and the novel, to the generation of meaning through ‘the primacy of context over text’ (heteroglossia), ‘the hybrid nature of language’ (polyglossia), and ‘the relation between utterances’ (intertextuality). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* comprising of six essays related to the problems of method and the nature of language and culture show and reflect to what extent Bakhtinology could be Bakhtinian in terms of dialogism, heteroglossia, polyphony and such other concepts discussed by Bakhtin.
Recent theoretical readings done by scholars and critics in the West and elsewhere in relation to select biblical texts propel this researcher to attempt a Bakhtinian–kind of polyphonic reading of *The Book of Job*. Bakhtinian perspectives on dialogism and polyphony in the course of opposing characters and voices within *The Book of Job* could provide a framework and methodology to re-read the chosen text. There are already a few studies of recent scholarship -- studies done by Carol A. Newsom, T. Stordalen, Walter L. Reed, Sonya Petkova, David Burrell, Robert Sutherland and others -- which have applied a topology of dialogism to the reading of *The Book of Job* with or without reference to Bakhtin. These studies are a valuable contribution to new knowledge on interpreting or problematizing the semiotics and the semantics of *The Book of Job*.

This research study goes further, via Bakhtin’s dialogism and polyphony, in exploring the significance of the existential triumph of the human spirit in the midst of innocent suffering. It explores how the literary dimensions of the book serve as a way of discovering its theological resources regarding innocent suffering, rationality, and wholeness. This researcher contends that the studies already made on *The Book of Job* in the light of Bakhtin’s dialogic theory are grounds enough to explore further the traces and dimensions of affinities between ethos of innocent suffering and the narration interfaced in *The Book of Job* and argue that the subject matter and the form of communicating the subject matter go together juxtaposing, counter-pointing, complimenting, and converging towards a synergic signification which is in tune with Bakhtinology. A thrust area of this kind and scope is an unexplored arena, and this researcher believes that such a thrust can empower the reader to discern the transcendental spirituality ingrained as a synergic value in the chosen text.
Job’s story is a study of tragedy and triumph of man’s existence. *The Book of Job* haunts even the 21st century reader because, as Alphonse de Lamartine (1790 -1869), a poet and outspoken statesman of French Romanticism, averred, “Job is no longer man. He is humanity!” (qtd. in John Barton and John Muddiman, 331). The legacy of learning *The Book of Job* provides goes on expanding with new meanings, fresh interpretations, and moral connotations and contestations. As stated earlier, the complex and elusive nature of the book opens itself to hermeneutical perspectives congenial to our times, and hermeneutics it yields are inexhaustible and they have a perennial value. This is why this researcher has opted to select this book for a through analysis on the lines on Bakhtinian topology.

Furthermore, *The Book of Job*, as it is evident, is a feast of language. From simple and beautiful language of the prose tale to the verbal fireworks of the dialogue between Job and his friends, to the haunting beauty of the poem on wisdom and the sublime poetics of the divine speeches, the text is a celebration of polyphonic voices. In his essay, “Dialogue and Dialogism in *The Book of Job*”, T. Stordalen, a Norwegian critic, notes that at least three elements of Bakhtin’s poetics can be traced in *The Book of Job*: “(i) a non-hierarchical representation of characters (ideas); (ii) the nature of voices in Job, and the author’s way of interrelating them, and (iii) a non-narrative dimension of the book.” (18-19) As part of the polyphonic voices, “the voice of ‘tradition’ can be discerned as the most conspicuous “other” to which characters in the text make their “sideward glance”, to use Bakhtin’s phrase. In the same essay he also contends that “certain characters (viz. Job) represent several, internally incommensurable voices (ideas)” (ibid, 21) prompting the reader to think that the narrator’s voice in the text may not be that unreliable, and therefore, the
framework of the tale of *The Book of Job* has a Bakhtinian “double voiced quality.” Finally, the rationale for a Bakhtinian dialogic approach to *The Book of Job* in relation to the topic of the proposed research is all the more justified when one becomes aware of the fact that the ancient Hebrew “sapiential thinking”, to quote Stordalen again, “did inherit a certain dialogical quality.” (32)

A detailed survey of the review of literature limited to Bakhtin’s theory of chronotope and the concept of Dialogism and to the readings on *The Book of Job* may be relevant here:

Bakhtin’s major works which could serve as part of primary sources for reading on dialogism have already been mentioned in the earlier pages of this chapter. Select secondary sources that helped this researcher to gather certain critical insights on Bakhtin’s notions of chronotope, dialogism and heteroglossia have been placed in the select bibliography annexed to this study besides having been cited in this chapter and elsewhere in other chapters as well. Among the other books not mentioned earlier, Bakhtin’s important book, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929) composed in the years before his exile, may be noted here for his seminal contribution to the exploration of the structures of novelistic prose. It introduced the concept of ‘dialogism’ ‘to describe the polyphonic and dynamic totality of language possibilities in a given discourse or text’. As Gregory Castle, the author of the book, *The Literary Theory Handbook* (The Wiley Blackwell Edition, 2013) notes, Bakhtin’s contribution to theory (discourse as dialogic) ‘received more attention and better recognition after the death of Stalin in 1953’. He also notes that Bakhtin introduced two other concepts in the 1930s and 40s – ‘Heteroglossia’ to mean the discourse environment characterized by polyphony, and ‘the Carnivalesque’, a mode
of subversive representation based on the inversion of hierarchies. That Bakhtin, whose primary interest was in the material implications of language and literature on social discourses, was a well-known and respected figure among the Soviet intellectual elite and among European circles familiar with Russian Formalism is well documented in Castle’s book. Michael Holquist’s edition (1981) of Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination* and Pam Moris’ edition (1994) of the book, *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov*, posit, explore, and comment on the significant contribution of Bakhtin to the scope of chronotope and tropes of dialogism, and to the cause of poststructuralism and to the theory of the novel by extension.

As noted earlier, ‘The Centre for the Study of Reading’ located at the University of Illinois has done a fine service for the cause of Bakhtin by publishing a Technical Report (No. 579) on ‘Bakhtin as a Theory of Reading’, authored by Judith Davidson, in 1993. In a world consumed by reading achievement, this Report, interconnecting three critical elements, namely language, representation, and interpretation, examines Bakhtin as a theory of reading by focusing on two critical essays of his, "Discourse in the Novel" and "The Problem with Speech Genres". A reading of this Report helped the researcher to understand how “anthropologists write about ‘heteroglassia’ and ‘the carnivalesque’, terms Bakhtin coined, how literary critics speak of Bakhtin’s concepts such as ‘voice’, ‘dialogism’, and ‘intertextuality’ and his ideas about language, representation, and interpretation could be woven together into a coherent and persuasive theory of reading… and how they could be compared to reader-response theories” (2).
The study / reading material available on *The Book of Job* is enormous and vast. Besides the primary and secondary sources already referred earlier in this chapter, the theme-based and theory-related review of literature done here below, to the extent of relating it to the topic of the study, was a valuable beacon to propel this researcher to shape the overall content and chapter-divisions of the study. The enormity of data available in the thousands in the form of books, articles, and online – official and unofficial – publications, is too huge to be accommodated here. The researcher is aware of the stupendous input and output available under the umbrella of Christian (both Catholic and other denominations) theological and exegetical studies through centuries. Select ones have been taken into account and commented on.

On the theological front, two among the earliest authors who should be mentioned here are Augustine of Hippo (354-430), later known as St. Augustine, who was the staunchest critic of Pelagianism, and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who was influenced by St. Augustine. Viewing *The Book of Job* as a fertile ground for theology, St. Augustine, as Jeffrey Boss comments in his book, *Human Consciousness of God in The Book of Job: A Theological and Psychological Commentary* (2010), stressed on ‘the human face of God’ in the context of the predicament of Job, whose plight can be anybody’s / everyman’s. Aquinas wrote an exhaustive commentary on *The Book of Job* wherein his central concern was ‘the question of divine providence’, meaning that it is God who is ultimately in control of things. Rejecting the idea of ‘fatalism or determinism’, he explains how God’s providence works through a hierarchy of causes. ‘God who is the universal cause of all creation, ordained that the universe would be governed by a series of inferior or
secondary causes’. Such a reading of the book inspires him to speak of God’s ‘hands-off attitude’ towards human affairs implying that man as co-creator / as secondary cause has the privilege and responsibility to create a better world free from suffering. Arguing more or less on similar lines of multiperspectival thought-forum, Harold Kushner’s book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (1986) claims that God cannot stop contingent events from happening. He asks:

Would this be a better world if certain people were immune to laws of nature because God favoured them while the rest of us had to fend for ourselves? A world in which good people suffer from the same natural dangers that others do causes problems. But a world in which good people were immune to those laws would cause even more problems. (59)

Contingent nature means that conflict and suffering are inevitable phenomena in a world man / woman plays his/her role as a co-creator/secondary cause. But, yet at the same time, both Aquinas and Kushner are of the view, though not fully free from ambiguities, that God is a personal God, His grace is truly and utterly gratuitous, and He ultimately ensures that everything goes as per His vision and plan of salvation for the mankind.

Going beyond Aquinas’ position on Divine Providence, readers may also be aware of the Reformative Theological or Calvinist approach to the reading of *The Book of Job*. A perusal of the two books whose authorship is attributed to John Calvin --- *Calvin’s Calvinism: A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God* (translated by H. Cole -- 1956) and *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (translated by H. Beveridge -- 1989) helps this researcher to sum up Calvin’s position regarding Job
and his suffering in Chapter Four of the study as it is more relevant there in the context of focusing on the concerns related to contemporary existential spirituality.

The Chapter on *The Book of Job*, written by Rev. R.A.F. MacKenzie, S.J. in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Vol. I – The Old Testament), edited by Raymond E. Brown *et al.* (1968) is an elaborate and comprehensive reading on *Job*, its texture, dialogic structure, theme, and style. This chapter was a valuable aid in the course of reading the book as 'a poetic-dialogue in a prose-narrative setting' (511) and writing the second, third and fourth Chapters of the study enabling the researcher to see the profound theological relevance of the meaning and function of suffering in the life of a just man in relation to the consequences of it for a man’s attitude to God and his relationship with others. As Carol Newsom notes, other early practitioners among interpretative communities – Theodore of Mopsuestia (fourth century C.E.) and Theodore de Beza (sixteenth century C.E.) -- considered *The Book of Job* to be “akin to Greek tragedy” (4). Milton commented on the ‘epic scope’ of the book. Victoria Kahn’s paper, “Job’s Complaint in Paradise Regained” (2009), is an elaborate commentary on how Milton modelled his poem, “Paradise Regained”, on *The Book of Job*.

Theological and Biblical studies have buttressed the impression that the book is a unified composition until this impression was challenged by historical criticism. “Historical-critical scholarship”, as Carol Newsom remarks, “honed the ability to hear distinctive styles and genres.”(10), privileging the language code over authorship and composition of *The Book of Job*. Richard Simon (1678) pioneered the historical criticism and commented on the stylistic variations in the book. Later Biblical studies brought forward ‘literary-critical and tradition-critical arguments’
and acknowledged the possibility of stylistic differences. These New-Critical readings provided powerful models for reading the book as a whole. Attempts to project Babylonian theodicy facilitated the discovery of Mesopotamian texts bearing striking resemblances to the poetic sections of *The Book of Job* in relation to form and content. This discovery has complicated the social and cultural analysis of *The Book of Job*. It makes the modern reader's sense of intertextuality and the genre configuration of the structure and purpose of *The Book of Job* complex.

Lev Shestov, Russian philosopher who worked out a structured philosophy of existentialist thought, viewed Job as “the embodiment of the battle between reason and faith”. To him, the whole book is “one uninterrupted contest between the "cries" of the much-afflicted Job and the "reflections" of his rational friends” (120). In his book, *In Job's Balances* (1929), he indicates how *The Book of Job* inspired him to see beyond science and reason and view individual experience as an agent of bringing man closer to the ultimate truths that lie beyond ‘a pair of eyes, beyond the natural world’. Albion Roy King’s book titled, *The Problem of Evil: Christian Concepts and the Book of Job* (1952) illustrates how the struggle of every generation and every individual continues with the problem of evil. He advises that *The Book of Job* ought to be studied by every youth groping in darkness. Carl Gustav Jung (1952) considered *The Book of Job* as a landmark development in ‘the divine drama’ contemplating for the first time ‘criticism of God’, that too in an age where such criticisms were an anathema sit, viewing ‘God as a Narcissist’ preoccupied with his ‘self-object transference to man at the total expense of Job’. In fact, the friends of Job accused him, on that ground, of the folly of human audacity to revolt against God.
Wesley C. Baker’s book, *More Than a Man Can Take: A Study of Job* (1966) speaks of the mysterious antiquity of a giant classic that effectively touches on ‘the hurting heart and the bruised spirit’. The author brings out the idea that each generation interprets the message of Job in its own idiom and context, but yet the integrity of the book remains intact. Paul S. Sanders’ book, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Book of Job: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1968), consists of significant contributions by eminent scholars and critics like Gilbert Murray, Arnold J. Toynbee, and Richard B. Sewall. It explores a host of centuries-old questions about *The Book of Job* -- its origins, its poetic and dramatic structure, the character and purpose of its unknown author, and its place in Hebraic and ancient literature, and in world literature as a whole. It examines another fundamental question which Kenneth Rexroth in his essay calls ‘the ultimate mystery of man's existence’. It is an interesting reading with thought-provoking reflections on whether evil is consonant with meaningful existence. Robert Gordis’ the *Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (1978) has a dual background of Job both in Oriental Wisdom and in the biblical thought concerning the authenticity and integrity of each section with special reference to the content and the contribution to the meaning of the book as a whole. The great variety of views on these issues obtaining among scholars, thinkers, and general readers is presented and analysed, and it is the question of evil in the world.

In the 1980s, a number of writers and scholars reflected on the theme of unfathomable loss and unmerited suffering. Ray C. Stedman’s *Expository Studies in Job: Behind Suffering* (1981) exposes *The Book of Job* as an epic drama. It answers an age-old, haunting question: why does apparently senseless tragedy strike people? It depicts a man who experienced the agony of human despair and desolation of spirit
which accompanied the apparently meaningless, senseless tragedies of life. In the course of elucidating the Job-motif as an archetype within the framework of mythic possibilities wherein solutions are sought to the mystery of human existence and of God’s dealings with the just and the unjust, Harold Fisch’s essay (1981), “Biblical Archetypes in The Fixer” (Bernard Malamud’s novel), demonstrates how the Joban model of human predicament serves as the matrix of Malamud’s novel. Gleason L. Archer’s The Book of Job: God’s Answer to the Problem of Undeserved Suffering (1982) states that God is the only answer for all our suffering, and from a merely human point of view we are never going to solve the problem of evil.

In their thought-provoking essay, “Job’s Questions and Their Distant Reply: Goethe, Nietzsche, Heidegger” (1982), Hans-Robert Jauss and Sharon Larisch argue that the complex and highly dramatic dialogic structure of The Book of Job has more to do with ‘aesthetic implications rather than theological legitimatization’. With reference to the philosophical ideas of Goethe, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, the authors imply that “it is art that assumes the functions of final justice and redemption” through the tale related to the suffering of an upright man, and “the world appears … as an aesthetic phenomenon-and as that alone” (195). Chapter Two of this study includes a further discussion with reference to this book. René Girard, in his book, Job: The Victim of His People (1987), focuses on the cause of the misfortunes of Job, stating that it has something to do with human failure rather than with the divine or Satanic. While examining and commenting on the presence of God with his dominant voice-ideas which contribute to the theological ending of the book, Thomas A. Vogler’s paper, “Eighteenth-Century Logology and The Book of Job” (1988) highlights the Jewish responses to The Book of Job within a framework of eighteenth century logology which was conducive to pastorally comforting end of such stories.
as the one narrated in *Job*. Subscribing to another critic’s (Herder’s) view that “the final and magnificent response of the Divine Being" constitutes "the soul of the whole" of the book, the author tends to agree with another critic’s (Young’s) comment that the ending in *The Book of Job* may be “fictitious” but it is “fiction built on truth” (27).

Among the books and articles published in the 1990s, Roy B. Zuck’s edition, *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on The Book of Job* (1992) is a collection of multifarious studies on *Job* from writers of diverse background and skill. In her review of the book, Katharine J. Del states that ‘it is a kind of introduction to introductions, articles and portions of books on Job’. The edition has brought together some of ‘the best thinking’ on *Job*. Though the anthology of articles gathered is a selection based on conventional thinking, some of the articles focusing on the structure and the literary devises of The Book of Job are insightful contributions to reading on *Job*. Jonathan Hober Lamb’s *The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading of The Book of Job in the Eighteenth Century* (1995) was a touchstone for the contradictions and polemics that infect various 18th century works like poetry, philosophy, political oratory, accounts of exploration and commentaries on criminal law which tried to account for the relations between human suffering and systems of secular and divine justice. This book examines the complaints that fall into this dissident and singular category, and relates their improbability to the aesthetics of the sublime, and to current theories of practice and communication. Andrew E. Steinmann’s *The Structure and Message of the Book of Job* (1996) speaks of integrity and faith as the heart of *The book of Job*. The dialogue between Job and his friends connect to the book’s prologue as the human contribution to the discussion on the theme of human integrity.
Andrew E. Steinmann’s article, “The Structure and Message of The Book of Job” (1996), is a significant reading on the structure of The Book of Job with reference to what Henry McKeating had already raised (1971) about the speeches of Yahweh in Chapters 38 - 41 which speak of hippopotamuses and ostriches and whales, and of the breeding propensities of wild goats, and expatiate eloquently on meteorology and astronomy and cosmology, and on sundry other interesting matters but ‘never once mention the problem of suffering’. Steinmann makes readers think of issues such as the silence of God on the question of suffering of Job, how he could justify his decision to allow Job to suffer, and whether Job’s suffering is merely a foil for a larger issue. In his article, “Job and the Unanswered Question” (1999), Samuel A. Meier comments on the perplexing and disappointing ending of The Book of Job. When hard questions, such as “what kind of a world is this, what kind of a god is in charge, how can a human such as Job suffer for no discernible reason”, are raised in the preceding dialogues between Job and his friends, that too “in a monumental work of extended poetry”, readers do expect “some resolution or synthesis, some ethical currency that one can deposit in one's psychic bank account” (265-266). The voice of God coming at the end bringing the dialogues to a close with more questions than answers to the predicament of Job is not at all convincing. Substantiating his comment with a quote from Katherine Dell’s book, The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature (1991) and with reference to the David Penchansky’s book, The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job (1990), he notes that contemporary readers see the presence of God as ‘anticlimax’ (266). Such readings embracing dissonance may be viewed as a hermeneutical strategy. The lack of satisfaction at the end of the book with regard to a tenable answer, as Meier adds, ‘lends the book its appeal, compelling further readings for signals that were missed’. This explains the bizarre nature of the
book, readings pursued even now despite the fact that the text belongs to ancient Hebrew literature, and also justifies the rationale for the present study.

In the first decade of the third millennium, new grounds focusing on philosophical, psychological, and legal perspectives and on reading *The Book of Job* with critical theory were explored. *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings* (2002) edited by Nahum N. Glatzer has solid essays by eminent critics on modernist readings on the Judaic tradition, the Christian tradition, and the humanist vein, and the question of God-man relationship has been discussed from the points of view of theodicy, humanist perception, and sustaining faith. G.K. Chesterton’s essay titled, “Man is most Comforted by Paradoxes” in this book touches on the profundity of the substance of *The Book of Job*, the beauty of its form, and the grandeur of its hero. The book, *Putting God on Trial: The Biblical Book of Job* (2004) by Robert Sutherland, a Canadian criminal defense lawyer, is an impressive and engaging book defending God in the face of God’s authorization of undeserved evil. It is a literary, legal and philosophical study. The book contains a philosophical analysis of *The Book of Job* as a “myth building on myth with a number of truth claims that describe the human condition.” (15). If myth is a fictional account of the origin of certain ideas illustrating certain truths about the human condition, then *The Book of Job* can also be read as a polyphonic myth revealing certain truth claims and values about the divine and the human in the backdrop of innocent suffering. Sutherland’s book is a fine reading on the dynamics of good and evil at play in the world and on God’s *raison d’être* in using evil in the world.

Taking into account several features of *The Book of Job* and relating them to dialogic readings, Carol A. Newsom (2003) illuminates the relation between aesthetic forms of *The Book of Job* and the claims made by its various characters. Using
Bakhtinian elements of poetics such as a ‘non-hierarchical representation of characters’, ‘the nature of voices’ in the book and the author’s way of interrelating them, she rejects both the dismantling of the book by historical criticism and the flattering of the book with a fixed closure. Reading this book was a great help in writing the third chapter of the present study. Her reading reminds readers of what Walter L. Reed’s paper, “Dimensions of Dialogue in The Book of Job: A Topology according to Bakhtin” (1992) had done on the book, the major focus of the present study. Reed’s paper is an insightful reading wherein he demonstrated how the general idea of a "poetics" of the Bible could ‘benefit from a Bakhtinian reconstruction’.


James E. Patrick’s essay, “The Four-fold Structure of *Job*: Variations on a Theme” (2005) is a step forward in the approach to the problem of the composition of the speech-cycles in *The Book of Job*. His approach to and elucidation of the speech-cycle in *Job* -- speeches forming two groups of four: chapters iv-xvii (Cycle I) and chapters xviii-xxvi (Cycle II) -- prefaced by Job's complaint in chapter iii which 'serves as the trigger that propels Job's friends into speaking', and concluded by Job's speech in chapter xxvii which has the final reply to all his friends' speeches, hints at the persisting difficulties faced in understanding and analyzing the structural cruxes of *The Book of Job*. Pieter van der Lugt’s ‘response’ paper, “Speech-Cycles in *The Book of Job*: A Response to James E. Patrick” (2006) is a way of reiterating the complexities associated with grasping the structural framework of the book. Jamie Mayerfeld’s book, *Suffering and Moral Responsibility* (2005) is a lengthy but systematic inquiry into the moral significance of suffering. It makes an important
contribution to moral philosophy and political theory, and will interest specialists in each of these areas. In his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (2006), Viktor E Frankl, a psychiatrist, with his personal and painful experience in four different Nazi death camps, argues in the light of Job’s predicament that we cannot avoid suffering but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose.

Browsing through the dissertation of Trisha M. Gambaiana Wheelock on *The Book of Esther* in the Bible, titled “Drunk and Disorderly: A Bakhtinian Reading of the Banquet Scenes in *The Book of Esther*” (2008), enabled this researcher to broaden her grasp of the Bakhtinian concepts of chronotope, dialogism, and polyphony and apply the same to the reading *The Book of Job*. Doğan Yüksel’s paper on “A Bakhtinian Understanding of Social Constructivism in Language Teaching” (2009) discusses how Bakhtin’s theory of language ‘is centred around dialogic utterances as opposed to grammatical structures’ and how, in his school of thought, ‘truth is born collectively when people are co-building it in their process of social interaction’. Pastor Tom Tompkins’ book, *Understanding The Book of Job: Separating What is True from What is Truth* (2010) is of pastoral nature, an attempt to correct the misunderstanding that prevails on the character of God and reiterate that ‘God is not the architect of calamity’ in one’s life and that a painful experience of loss is a way of experiencing the revelation of God’s abundant and unconditional love. Highlighting the exegetical complexities involved in decoding the internal vowel markers in *The Book of Job*, C.L. Seow’s paper, “Orthography, Textual Criticism, and the Poetry of Job” (2011) avers that “the visual poetry in *Job* constantly demands interpretive decisions on the part of the reader -- decisions that,
once made, may yet be questioned again and revised” (84). David J. A. Cline’s commentary titled, *Job 38-42* (2011), launched as Vol. 18B by the World Biblical Commentary and published by Thomas Nelson, Inc., is a fine analysis of the dialogue between God and Job that facilitates readers with textual commentary, explanation, and notes to understand the significance of dialogism. The ‘Testimonials’ given as part of the preliminaries of the Volume speak of the greatness and uniqueness of *The Book of Job*, acclaiming the book as ‘the greatest masterpiece of the Human mind’ (Victor Hugo), ‘the greatest poem of ancient and modern times’ (Alfred Lord Tennyson), and ‘nowhere in the world has the passion of anguish found such expression’ (Soren Kierkegaard). Alissa Jones Nelson’s book, *Power and Responsibility in Biblical Interpretation: Reading The Book of Job with Edward Said* (2012) is a valuable contribution to critical considerations on *The Book of Job* on two counts, namely it helps readers to read *The Book of Job* in the light of Edward Said’s notion of ‘contrapuntal hermeneutics’, opening a broad range of interpretations, and it inspires them to understand the suffering of Job from ‘a global context and perspective’.

A browsing through the website -- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Job -- presents a brief overview of major focuses in the history of interpretation of *The Book of Job*, a note on readings from the text in liturgical usage, and a note on the book’s varied influences in music, films, and other arts. As the website notes, Joban influence may be noticed in texts such as Neil Simon’s *God's Favorite*, John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*, Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*, the Coen brothers' 2009 film, *A Serious Man*, which was nominated for two Oscars, Terrence Malick's 2011 film *The Tree of Life*, which won the Palme d'Or, a 2014 Malayalam film called "Iyobinte Pusthakam" that tells the story of a man who is

In the light of the fairly comprehensive review of literature done above, this study has a reasonable ground to assume that *The Book of Job*, that has been read, understood and interpreted throughout the ages and is being read even now, foregrounds chronotopic dialogism with a focus on ‘the concept of alienation (suffering). As Karol Wojtyla, the author of the book, *Job: A Drama From the Old Testament*, notes, the thrust of *The Book of Job* involves ‘the human condition per se’. Later, when he became Pope John Paul II, his Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris: On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering* (1984), commented and mused on how ‘Job’s time is perennial’ and how the Joban model remains as an archetype, as a universal phenomenon. *The Book of Job* is an evergreen resource-book that continues to make a deep and profound impact upon the human psyche, upon all those who are “Jobs”, inevitably all of us by extension, who endure, as Thomas Vogler adds, “a life that brings with it inexplicable sufferings” (26), a life that endures dust and ashes.

The validity and justification for reading *Job* alone as a primary text in this study hinges around the research scholar’s awareness of this fact of life ‘as the basis of ‘human praxis and morality (and consequently ethics) and … as the basis of culture, civilization, and politics’, to quote Steinar Stjerno, the author of the book, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (2005). The reading goes beyond the limitations of justifying ‘God-theories’, or theodicy that insists God as the only answer to the problem of human suffering. It is true and possible that God can offer Himself as an answer to the sufferer as He did in the case of Job. But, modern and postmodern times coupled with complex life-situations we live in and live with require dialogic
responses. *The Book of Job* provides enormous scope for such multiple voice-ideas, and hence the justification for the use and application of Bakhtinian chronotopic dialogism to read into the structural cruxes of the primary text. Bakhtin as a theory has been brought into the reading of *The Book of Job* on the tenable ground that solution to human alienation or suffering cannot be achieved through political, or cultural, or religious education alone. It requires synergic education on the art of 'the phenomenology of solidarity', to cite Pope John Paul II again, as praxis for a better tomorrow with hope on the dawn of a new creation-day in the life of those who endure suffering.

The rationale for the present study may be stated thus: As pioneers in employing critical theories in Scriptural studies, Biblical scholars have contributed immensely to multiple approaches to hermeneutics by reading a good number of biblical texts in the light of theories of varied hues. A good number of the books of the Bible, particularly *The Book of Psalms*, *The Book of Job*, and *The Book of Esther* in the Old Testament, have been mediated through theory-induced reading so as to ensure a methodical understanding of the chosen biblical texts. Against the backdrop of emerging knowledge societies, multiculturalism, and foregrounding differences, Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism and polyphony in particular, have been quite appealing to biblical scholars across domains and disciplines. Though the review of literature done in this chapter gives a broad survey revealing a variety of interests and concerns with reference to *The Book of Job*, what captivated this research-scholar was applying Bakhtin as a theory in the course of reading *The Book of Job* in the light of the predominant theme of the book, namely human suffering, that too unmerited suffering.
Regarding the objectives of the study, this researcher wishes to state that to this researcher, as it is also to many readers across the globe attuned to discerning literary and moral aesthetics in great works of art, to read *The Book of Job* is, on the one hand, to discern the dynamics of moral imagination in the book as an aesthetic device towards formulating certain moral contestations in the light of the depths and heights of human suffering, and on the other, to consider the book as a polyphonic composition accounting for, as Carol A. Newsom (2003) remarks, “bewildering alternation of genres, styles, and perspectives” (261). The beauty and the depth of the composition of the book lie in the author’s tenacity to use the masterpieces of his storytelling not as mere literary genres or types but as modes of divergent perception and as forms of moral contestations. From this point of view, the literary genres and styles in the book “invoke” and “participate” (221), to use the phrases of Carol, diachronically and synchronically manifesting and stressing the affinities between ethos of human suffering and the polyphonic voices and narration in the book.

Going beyond the known theological exegeses, this researcher has made a modest attempt to read *The Book of Job* as a polyphonic text of moral imaginations and contestations. The Bakhtinian dialogic approach highlighted and used in the study enabled the researcher to identify the checks and counterbalances within the polyphonic composition of *The Book of Job*, reiterate the significance of dialogic reading of the book against human suffering, and discern the transcendent signified if there is one with reference to and in the light of Bakhtinian dialogism.

In the light of what has been stated in the foregoing pages, the major research questions addressed in the study may be stated here below:
1. Is there a rationale behind the polyphonic composition of the narrative structure, divergent genres and styles, and the framing of the story of Job?

2. To what extent can Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia and polyphony serve as matrices for the reading of polyphonic voices in *The Book of Job*?

3. Do the polyphonic structures in *The Book of Job* serve as didactic forms of moral imaginations within the ambience of polemics, i.e. moral and ethical contestations? What are theocentric, anthrocentric, and cosmocentric imaginations in *The Book of Job*?

4. To what extent do thematic progression, verbal allusions, motif repetitions, verbal and dramatic irony, and legal metaphors in the text lend cohesion to the book, to the affinities between ethos of innocent suffering and the narrative techniques?

5. In a world of individual and social sinning and pervading and persuasive evil, can an individual, despite his/her virtuousness, be totally free from sinfulness and suffering? Does *The Book of Job* connote vicarious suffering as a possibility or a redemptive value?

6. And finally, should suffering be viewed as a compliment to one’s spirituality, one’s holistic understanding of human nature? Does *The Book of Job* signify a transcendent signified?

With regard to the methodology used, as Carol Newsom notes, apart from the implications of the insights provided by the historical critics of the late 19th century on *The Book of Job*, “diachronic redactional theories, final-form literary analysis, and deconstructive readings have all provided alternative solutions to the perplexing
problem” (261) of discerning the message of the text and understand the complexity of the form of the text. The intellectual context of the book does not foreclose the generic multiples despite the authorial pastoral attempt to present a unified composition. Though the narrative revolves around one individual, namely Job, the predicament he endures has an archetypal and mythic representation on the problem of innocent suffering and the relevance or irrelevance of retributive justice. The book seldom provides scope for an easy and monological reading. Therefore, the basis for the research will be the intertextuality of the text chosen that calls for a polyphonic reading.

More than just the prologue-epilogue prose tale, the poetic portions -- the wisdom dialogue and the wisdom poem, and the speeches of Job and God, Elihu’s speech, speeches of differing personalities with opposing set of forces in language in *The Book of Job* contribute to the dialogic nature of the composition of the book and complicate the moral nature of reality. As Carol A. Newsom points out, the “voices that populate the text are not just character-voices but generic voices as well.” (18) The aesthetic devices such as repetitions, idealized exaggerations, and binary character oppositions, employed in the narrative add to the complex shading of the didactic narrative, facilitating the reader to be at home with a narrative and moral world. The radicality of moral imaginations becomes acute and justified by the variety of moral confrontations presented as self-justifications. Although the modern reader may feel more comfortable with the defiance of Job, aesthetically and morally speaking, the wisdom dialogues, fused with sophisticated poetic styles, rhetorical devices, rare words, archaic verbal forms, and complex metaphors assign a tougher role to the reader. The proposed study will analyse and connect how all these
append and embody a Bakhtinian ‘dialogic sense of truth’, ‘author’s position without being privileged’, and ‘polyphonic endings without finalizing closure’.

In the course of reading The Book of Job as a polyphonic text, it is important to keep in mind that recuperation of genre as a critical category is crucial to the understanding of the text. It is genre that mediates both as a literary and social phenomenon between matter and form, and as Fowler and Jonathan Culler add, between production and reading of texts. Therefore, it can be argued that genre is part of the intertextuality within the text, and intertextuality is part of every reading experience. In other words, it is genre that cements the relationship between the author and the reader and ushers in a dialogic relationship. From this angle, The Book of Job, as David Clines posits, can be read as “a discourse” (123) within and beyond the sense Jonathan Culler or Roland Barthes or Derrida connotes while using the term. As modes of perception, genres can also articulate form-shaping ideologies and values associated with social contexts and values associated with particular cultural groups.

In the light of this perception, this study justifies the use of the Bakhtinian notion of ‘dialogism and polyphony’ as a major tool of analysis to discern the affinities between the theme and the form of the book chosen for study. Cross-references by way of analogical and comparative perspectives have been be made to other versions of the story, interpolations, additions, dramatic versions of the story, novels and films based on Job, other related theoretical considerations. In this attempt for a polyphonic reading of the text and her search for issues related to the genres, verbal texture, and play of ideas, this study has not bypassed or sacrifice the hermeneutical and pastoral significance of the book, the book as a unified
composition with potential possibilities for open-endedness, without yielding to indeterminacies. By virtue of the interdisciplinary and intertextual ingredients involved in the topic chosen for the research, this researcher, on the advice of the guide, has opted for a co-guide also.

The study has been divided into Five Chapters:

Chapter ONE:

**Introduction: Bakhtin, Dialogism on Human Suffering, and The Book of Job**

This Chapter is an exploration into the theoretical ideas of Bakhtin and the rationale for applying his notions of dialogism in the course of reading *The Book of Job*. Bakhtinian dialogism has been used as a tool towards a diachronic-synchronic sense-making and arriving at certain interpretive polyphonic perspectives on human suffering as imagined and narrated in *The Book of Job*. The chapter has also provided sufficient space for the thesis statement, a comprehensive review of literature, objectives of the study, methodologies adopted, research questions for further exploration, and brief note on Chapter divisions.

Chapter TWO:

**Chronotope and Heteroglassia: Structural Cruxes in The Book of Job**

This Chapter takes into account the aesthetics of the texture of *The Book of Job* in the course of the development of plot and characterization which is embedded in “so much of irony that it reverberates and increases the density and intensity of the whole” (David Robertson 446) sensitizing readers to discern the paradoxical dimensions of both the semeiotics and semantics of the book. In the light of the researcher’s observations on Bakhtin’s concepts of chronotope and heteroglassia, this chapter makes an attempt to capture of nitty-gritty of the structural cruxes of *The
Book of Job. While examining and commenting on the multiple literary devices used in the book, the researcher cautions against the limitations of any attempt to place The Book of Job under one overarching category of literary genre as that would result in failure because the literary fabric of the text is quite complex. It sees the prospects of reading the book under three major categories of literary genre in the book, namely ‘legal or judicial genre’ as it is in a lawsuit, ‘lament genre’ as it is in The Book of Psalms, and ‘dialogic mode’ similar to the wisdom genre of contest literature in the ancient Near East. This is because the predicament Job endures is based on a broad issue of human life that addresses a number of existential angsts via-a-vis Gad-man relationship.

Chapter THREE:

Joban Dialogue: Honest Indignations and Moral Contestations

With the awareness that The Book of Job is amenable to multiple readings and meanings, this Chapter focuses on Joban dialogues --- his friends’ interventions and God’s interventions, as the dialogic Other. Daring asking the question whether pain be a privilege in the lives of those who suffer despite their righteous living, the researcher attempts to do a critical analysis of the enigmatic crisis faced when "we know", as Rabbi Harold S. Kushner observes, "bad things happen to good people" (1) prompting humans like Job to protest and express their honest indignations at one level, and social thinkers and critics to initiate moral contestations and phenomenological and philosophical questionings and questing at another level. By bringing in the notions of 'logos and mythos' as a blended mode of capturing the ingredients of truth in relation to the suffering of the innocent, this Chapter makes a modest and honest attempt towards appreciating the plausibility that pain can be a privilege in an ambience of the sublime. It reads into ‘the logos and the mythos’
The researcher argues in the light of textual analyses that the dialogic reasoning surrounding the mythopoeic language of *The Book of Job* has its own artistic way of blending the logistics of *logos* (reason/rational assimilation of meaning) and the therapeutic efficacy of *mythos* (transmogrification of reality) in the course of resolving the problem of human suffering. This artistic blending serves as a springboard for readers to move beyond the realms of theological hermeneutics of looking at Satan challenging God and inflicting evil upon humanity, or God approving the plan so as to test the loyalty of Job, or discerning the power of the Almighty God as the ultimate source of the saving grace of those who suffer, and facilitates readers to look at the book as a source of inspiring those who suffer the consequences of evil to cultivate, harvest and garner an interior therapeutic attitude which can propel them to view *pain as privilege* as pain need not always be the wages of individual sinning. It helps them see the iniquitousness pervasive everywhere affecting human nature, Adam-Eve’s progeny, -- humanity on the whole. Such a value-perception views the relationship between God and human suffering in a saintly light and values the power of God within in the midst of existential angst. The mythopoeic language complementing the 'logotherapy', to use the phrase coined by Viktor E. Frankl, permeates the polemics of the book and serves as an agency of inspiring those who suffer to discover the inner source of strength, the God within, a
unique experience of self-awakening that helps them cope with the impact of
suffering with calm and serenity.

Chapter FOUR:

**Garnering Existential Spirituality: Theocentric, Anthrocentric, and
Cosmocentric Dimensions in *The Book of Job***

As noted in Chapters Two and Three, the book’s theme, language, mixture of
genres and style, and the sense of meaning it conveys are quite complex. Mere
theodicy-centred canonical readings of the book have their limitations in making a
therapeutic impact upon the human psyche against human suffering. By extension,
the crisis endured by Job may be viewed as a perennial predicament of humanity,
endured from the time when sin exhibited its venom, when the fall of man occurred,
and when Cain began to ask with a brazen response to God, "Am I the keeper of my
brother?" (Genesis 4:8-10). Even today, such crises are evident everywhere across
civilizations, causing enormous human suffering. A sense of existential angst in the
form of despondency and helplessness accompanies the reality of human suffering.
Yet, despite helplessness, most cultures believe that attempts at alleviating suffering
are indispensable. The enormity and complexity of the problem demands
multidimensional focus, beyond binaries, towards resolution.

Against this backdrop, the Fourth Chapter foregrounds certain findings
ushering in the need for multiperspectival solutions to the crisis of human suffering.
These findings partly answer some of the research questions framed in Chapter One.
They 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 through
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. This pedagogical intent of The Book of Job and the therapeutic effect the reading of the book can have upon the human psyche are of prime importance when we think of the plight and redemption of Job, the central character in the book. This explains the rationale behind the polyphonic composition of the book.

- 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. More than the historical job, if at all there was one, the archetypal Job and the mythopoeic language and the diachronic-synchronic embraces surrounding him converge towards a wholesome sense-making that is relational rather than monological.

- ‘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. These devices are the hallmarks of the texture of the book which make the task of interpreting the book a complex but fascinating one beyond epochs, milieus, and period, and within contemporaneous contexts of human predicaments. 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. Mere stigmatization attributing guilt to the individual who endures suffering is a non-value that often reduces him/her to depression. 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 by virtue of their reference, as Michael Holquist puts it in his ‘Foreword’ to Bakhtin’s book-length essay, Toward a Philosophy of the Act, to ‘the naked immediacy of experience’ that has ‘an odour of the specific and the local’, by virtue of their potentiality to think and move beyond the dry abstractions of Kantianism, Kantian ‘ethical imperatives’ that foreground ‘the universality of the ought’ by ‘invoking the authority of an unproblematic God’ (ix-x) which has been problematized in the era of post-Enlightenment. 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 participating in moral contestations and ‘de-transcendalizing’ the abstract formulations of ethical imperatives.

- Bakhtinian approaches to the reading of The Book of Job mean that monological interpretations, hegemonic bases and superstructures, and even almighty-God-centred theodicies and abstract and dry exegetical hermeneutics of the texture of the book or the themes connoted within the texture have to be tamed by dialogic imagination and relational and reciprocal
striving with an embracing and therapeutic attitude towards the plight of the victims of human suffering, towards resolving the pain and the anguish associated with suffering, all the more unmerited suffering.

- 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. It is these threefold dimensions that signify the triumph of the human spirit, the transcendent, the poetic, and the sublime in the midst of temporalities.

- 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.
Chapter FIVE:

**Summation: Contemporary Relevance of ‘Voice Ideas’ on Human Suffering**

The Fifth Chapter summates the thesis content projecting the relevance of ‘voice-ideas’ in relation to complex issues such as human suffering. It concludes that both Bakhtin as theory and *The Book of Job* as a dialogic literary text are as important and significant as heart to the body and soul to the mind. They go together very well in terms of both chronotope, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque foregrounding their perennial contemporary social relevance.

The gentle and firm resistance Bakhtin makes against hegemonic meanings imposed at the cost of relational striving and the chronotopic ways by which he deconstructs sense-making demonstrate how deeply he was committed to dialogism. His personal experiences under totalitarian regimes and his reflective musings emanating from his exile experiences made profound impact upon his thinking, theorizing, and social involvements. His approach to Dostoevsky’s novels, analytical discourses, linguistic-structures, and literary narratives makes him a genuine dialogue-promotor at all circumstances, at all levels of life, and literature as well. This is how he found the books of ‘Wisdom Literature’ of the Bible as living sources of dialogism. To him, as it was to St, Jerome, the book is “like an eel”, for “if you close your hand to hold an eel …..the more you squeeze it the sooner it escapes” (qtd. in Carol A. Newsom, 3). The implication is that the dynamics ingrained in the narration in *The Book of Job* is dialogic, multivocal, and multiperspectival, open to polyphonic interpretations.

In the light of these observations and reflections, 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 in terms of crisis-management and existential spirituality, 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 that has a blend of linguistic, literary, aesthetic, social, moral, and ethical connotations. This points to how both Bakhtin and the author/s of *The Book of Job* have significantly contributed to ‘dialogic discourses’ which, in turn, do contribute to new knowledge, crisis-management, and conflict-resolutions.

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 into *The Book of Job*. It urges those who may be of the view that *The Book of Job* is ‘too small’ to be taken up for a doctoral research-study ‘to see’ with the third eye --- the seer’s eye, the eye of objective discernment -- the worth and value of pursing an in-depth reading of the book reiterating the importance of believing in ‘dialogic discourses’ as a way forward towards conflict-resolutions, and towards musing on the existential angst that helps all of us have an objective view of the ground-realities around us. In the contemporary context of multiple knowledge societies emerging and impacting our ways of thinking and living, it is crucial that we promote dialogic discourses. Bakhtin did promote dialogism as a value, literary and social as well, during the paranoid Stalinist era when and wherein he was compelled to live in personal obscurity, even in the midst of his book on *Dostoevsky* having been banned. International scholars have recognized the preeminence Bakhtin as a literary theory retains even today. Four of his seminal essays put together under one title, *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) can make greater impact upon readers today in
relation to aesthetics and hermeneutics. Reading and re-reading *The Book of Job* definitely inspires readers to cultivate the spirit of dialogism, reflect on the contemporary angsts of varied kind, and discern the nitty-gritty of God-man relationship, and human relationships by extension. Job, as an archetype, is a metaphor for dialogism against facing challenges in life and crisis-management. This is how the therapeutic sides of dialogism as reflected in both Bakhtin as a theory and in *The Book of Job* can work towards mutual understanding and relational striving, towards ‘understanding culture’ rather than ‘abstraction culture’.

By way of cross-referential readings of the primary text, various editions of *The Book of Job* in the Bible have been taken into consideration in the course of writing this thesis. This synopsis contains citations of works referred to shape this synopsis. It also has select bibliography. A number of books, articles, and webinar files not included in the Select Bibliography attached to this synopsis would be included in the Select Bibliography to be attached to the main 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 and the select bibliography in resonance with the guidelines provided by the 8th edition.