Chapter TWO

Chronotope and Heteroglassia:

Structural Cruxes in *The Book of Job*

“It is an unfortunate misunderstanding (a legacy of rationalism) that truth can only be the truth that is composed of universal moments; that the truth of a situation is precisely that which is repeatable and constant in it”.

- Mikhail Bakhtin

The beauty of the Bible lies in its blend of literary artistry and thematic content. It consists of sublime themes, variety of literary genres, poetic, prosaic and figural structural cruxes, and narratologies related to a number of episodes, events, and characterization from history and from fictitious narratives built on truth which have been perennial springs of inspiration towards a variety of readings propelling literary scholars of varied background to analyse select literary texts of both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible from cross-disciplinary theoretical idioms and multiple perspectives which have polyphonic connotations. The intersections between theories and biblical hermeneutics have contributed significantly to the mutual enrichment of the quality of theorizing and interpreting making their impact across disciplines and across polyphonic ways of meaning-making. It is a fact that *The Book of Job* is “the tallest tree in the literary forest” (56) of the Bible, to quote Dorothy Minchin-Comm, by virtue of its vivid narratives with focus on characterization, complex structural cruxes, colourful vocabulary, rich metaphors, connotative nexus of voices, vast range of ideas mediated through broad coverage of
human experience dealt with intensity of passions, immense depth with which it
approaches the concept of God, God-man relationship, and not the least, by virtue of
its superb literary craftsmanship.

*The Book of Job* is part of the Bible that consists of an anthology of sixty-six
individual books. It is part of the ‘Wisdom Literature’ of the Bible reflecting ‘one of
the most accessible yet perplexing genres within the guild of biblical studies’. Among
The books of Wisdom Literature, *The Book of Job* explores the nature of suffering,*
*The Book of Proverbs* gives guidance on matters as routine as avoiding laziness, and
*The Book of Ecclesiastes* reflects upon the vanities of life. While *Ecclesiastes*
prevents such a pessimistic view of life, *Job* has a few contestations with God on the
unmerited suffering of Job. Bringing in and developing figures such as clouds, the
passing of the weaver's shuttle and the courier's course, and warfare as if “the terrors
of God were setting themselves in array” (*Job* 6:4) and “his troops coming on
together” (*Job* 19:12), the author of *The Book of Job* has a twofold strategy in
portraying the characterization of Job, one as an agency of “denoting spite, chance
and injustice on the part of God” (Zelie 369), and the other as voicing the pathetic
state of his predicament. Throughout his speeches and figures, there is a fine blending
of pathos and humanity. Simplicity prevails when Job describes his fate against the
reality of the wicked man's prosperity (Chapter 21), the plight of the poor (Chapter
24), and when he makes a comparison between his own former life (Chapter 29) and
his present fate (Chapter 30). In these speeches, figures are not that many, and a few
are redundant. Whatever may be the kind of description – simple, complex,
intertextual, and figuratively curved – vision bordering on human experience of pain
and suffering is the preeminent aspect. A careful reading of the book takes this
researcher towards opting for an inductive approach in the course of mediating the chosen text through Bakhtin’s ideas of chronotope and heteroglossia which facilitate her to appreciate the depth of the author’s knowledge and his dialogic creative power which has been able to produce marked and different characters and styles with which he is able to personify his ideas on human suffering and God-man relationship.

Despite the fact that the book is a universally acclaimed literary masterpiece in world literature, acclaimed for the way it accommodates and embraces truth through figurative elements in between the curved lines of thought, there is little unanimity regarding the purpose and message of the book because of the complexities associated with the structural cruxes which have shaped the texture of The Book of Job. The structural cruxes evident in the Prologue (1:1-2:13), the Dialogue (3:1-31:40), the Elihu Speeches (32:1-37:24), God’s Speech and Job’s Answer (38:1-42:6), and the Epilogue (42:7-17) of the book contain a number of figurative elements and paradoxes which, as John S. Zelie of Yale Divinity School, New Haven, observes, “are used less consciously”, which hover around and border on “human experience sub-serving thought in such a way that the blending between thought and figuration is inseparable” (368). The author’s highest artistry lies in his capacity to conceal the figurative rhetoric within thought in a natural and spontaneous way. The thought revolves around human suffering as a major theme linking Job’s predicament coloured by his own calamity. Though initially two connotations reflected in the muddled perception of life by Job, namely ‘life is short and worthless’ and it is a ‘struggle’, emerge by way of semantics, the truth the structural cruxes of the book embrace cannot be understood in terms of fixity or totalitarian essentialism. Truth in Job is portrayed and projected as ‘voice ideas’,
centripetally and centrifugally dialogic in nature, scope, dimension, and sense-making. ‘Relational Striving’ becomes a focused priority in terms of dialogicity towards conflict-resolution. It is against this backdrop that this chapter makes an attempt to analyse the structural nuances of *The Book of Job* in the light of the Bakhtinian concepts of chronotope and heteroglossia.

The Bakhtinian theory of chronotope involves a spatial-temporal frame in the organizing process which, in fact, is a social and human process towards sense-making with a prospect for a plurality of interpretative perspectives. Deriving its etymological connotations from Russian (*хронотоп*) and Greek (*χρόνος* and *τόπος*), Bakhtin, in his 1937 essay originally written in Russian and translated later into English, with the title as “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics”, defined ‘chronotope’ as an agency that ensures the configuration of ‘time-space’. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin goes further defining the term in the following words:

We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature. … In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one
carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, and becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic. (84-85)

The intersections Bakhtin speaks of with regard to the theory of chronotope indicate and point to the values of ‘interdependence’ and ‘relational striving’ making their profound impact in the sense-making as a whole, as a collective endeavour. In Bakhtin’s understanding, chronotope denotes the ‘intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships’. In the world of construction of a literary narrative text, it encompasses a coherent combination of spatial and temporal indicators. Its embodiment in the temporal and spatial values of any given fictional environment facilitates “the ‘possession’ of the eventness of being, to permit the representation of a living image, as opposed to one that might variously be described as ‘abstract’, ‘fixed’, or ‘monological’” (Renfrew 119). It was through this theory that Bakhtin tried to explain the central role time-space configuration plays in human life, examine the chronotopic nature of language, elucidate the nature of genre and generic variety with reference to his catalogued system of various chronotopes in the
historiography of the novel, and dialogically assess and arrive at the nexus of voices a specific generic literary text embraces.

As Bakhtin himself acknowledged, Emmanuel Kant and Albert Einstein had impacted his thinking and theorizing on ‘chronotope’. Nele Bemong and Pieter Borghart note that Kant’s philosophy inspired him to work on the idea that ‘time and space are, in essence, categories through which human beings perceive and structure the surrounding world’, and therefore, time and space, as Morson and Emerson observe, are “indispensable forms of cognition” (367) within Bakhtin’s framework of chronotope. The difference in their thinking was while Kant undertook ‘a scientifically based attempt to gain insight into the universal system of human perception through time and space’, Bakhtin was looking for ‘historical evidence of such perceptual activity as manifested in literary texts’. Bakhtin shares a common ground with the Relativity theory of Einstein from the point of view of ‘time as the fourth dimension of space’. He uses the theory of Relativity as a metaphor, just to the extent required, in literary criticism in order to express ‘the inseparability of space and time’ in his vision of the complete taxonomy of chronotopes which have specific generic, historical and ontological implications. He was also probably inspired by the neo-Kantian German philosopher, Ernst Cassirer’s mythological treatment of time and space in the course of his musings (in his book, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms) on the distinction between artistic, mythological, and scientific strategies of knowledge.

Bakhtin scholars -- Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist -- and linguistic anthropologist -- Keith Basso have invoked and elucidated the Bakhtinian concept in their writings. In the recent years, the term has been applied by Raymond Brown and
Peter Renshaw (2006) in the course of ‘positioning students as actors and authors in the process of collaborative learning activities’ and by Kumpulainen, Mikkola and Jaatinen (2013) in ‘the technology-mediated creative learning practices’. The volume titled, *Bakhtin’s Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, edited (2010) by Nele Bemong *et al.* mentioned earlier in the review of literature in Chapter One, is an outcome of the proceedings of the workshop entitled “Bakhtin’s Theory of the Literary Chronotope” (27-28 June 2008), supported by the Royal Flemish Academy for Sciences and the Arts, Brussels, Belgium. It is a valuable edition that dwells at length on ‘chronotope’ as a state of art tool for philosophical reflections and chronotopic readings.

In the course of analyzing a literary text, chronotope as an agency of inquiry paves the way for semiotic mediation through systems of languages and signs which allow reflexivity and dialogue and for semantic mediation in terms of sense-making. As Deleuze explains, through the matrices of situated meaning-making, roles, identities, values, boundaries and crossings, cultural classes of discourse and tools, ‘the chronotope of the narrative relates its interpretation by a reader, a spectator, or a researcher with the broader historic, social and cultural setting in which it is interpreted’. In the light of these observations, the focal features in chronotope may be listed as follows:

- The organizing inquiry takes place in space and time (temporality);
- It involves movement in terms of diachronic-synchronic readings, relational striving, sideward glancing, and voicing the nexus of ideas;
- It ushers in dialogic leadership towards organizational objectives, philosophical foundations, and ethical appreciation and assimilation of
truth-values. As Richard P. Nielsen observes, “the key to dialogic ethics leadership is that in those situations where there may be a conflict or contradiction between what is ethical and what is in the material interest of individuals and/or the organization, there is at least something of a prior ethics truth intention and not singularly a value-neutral, constrained optimization of organizational objectives” (765), marking differences as plausible, tenable, and contributing to voice-ideas;

- It facilitates heteroglassia towards integrative win-win results with a centripetal-centrifugal movement from one intensity to another deeper union and further communion.

In a compact and significant essay titled, “Bakhtin, Temporality, and Modern Narrative: Writing ‘the Whole Triumphant Murderous Unstoppable Chute’”, Stacy Burton, the author of the essay, succinctly summarizes Bakhtinian notions of temporality, dialogism, heteroglassia, and chronotope. He states that

A deeper understanding of temporality and narrative must recognize that the experience and perception of time vary from individual to individual and event to event, and within texts as well as between them. It must explore the interrelation of past, present, and future in both textuality and life, must find ways to consider twentieth-century multiplicity without forcing it into neat typologies, and must address the complex relations of time and the languages in which we discuss, understand, and represent them. It must, in practice, combine acknowledgment of literary form with attention to consciousness and experience. (1)

In his book-length essay, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics”, written in 1937-1938 and amended
significantly in 1973 with the addition of a section titled “Concluding Remarks”, Bakhtin develops his ideas on time-space compression (temporality) and heteroglassia through chronotope. Collectively, Bakhtinian notions of dialogism, heteroglassia and heterochrony stand, by dint of chronotope, as ‘a figure for wholeness’ without a closure in the process of sense-making. To quote Bakhtin,

Languages of heteroglassia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is broader, more multilevelled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror. (“Forms” 250)

He emphatically adds that chronotopes “do not merely characterize representation, but actually make it possible” and that “the chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied” (“Forms” 250). Observing that experience can only be represented chronotopically, he avers that

It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events. All the novel’s abstract elements -- philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect -- gravitate toward the chronotope, and through it takes on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope. (“Forms” 250)

Expanding his theories further, he notes how our understanding of time-space compression shapes even our language through chronotope. He explains how chronotopes are ‘mutually inclusive’, how they ‘co-exist’, how they ‘may be interwoven together’, ‘replace or oppose one another’, ‘contradict one another’ or ‘find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships’, and comes to the
conclusion that ‘dialogism’ is the general characteristic of these interactions. In his view, both art and life are ‘fundamentally dialogic’. Commenting on ‘the dialogic fabric of human life’ in another text of his titled, “Towards a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book”, he adds: “To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds” (293). According to him, as Stacy Burton paraphrases, “the human world exists as an ongoing dialogue in which multiple languages and chronotopes engage and reshape each other perpetually. It is characterized not only by heteroglassia, but equally by multitemporality or heterochrony” (2).

Bakhtin extends the idea of dialogic consciousness found in human life into the realm of literature as literature is an expression of life itself. The interrelation of voices embodied in literature though the fabric of words categorized by genres within a certain sociohistorical matrix indicates how a work of art is characterized by heteroglassia, multitemporality, and heterochrony by virtue of the presence of chronotope as an agency of organizing everything within the texture of the work of art. In the whole process, “language acts as heteroglot form top to bottom” (“Discourse” 291) representing the world into words, marking the co-existence or the contradictions or the ascending and descending movements of different epochs of time and history, and showcasing different points of worldviews. In short, Bakhtin emphasized the multi-layered nature of language, which he called ‘heteroglassia’, as its vitality comes from varied sources – contextual, cultural, sociological, political, and ideological. In Bakhtin’s grasp, as Kathleen Wales comments, “words are living entities ….carrying opinions, assertions, beliefs, information, emotions and intentions of others, which we partially accept and modify, …and therefore, “all speech is
dialogic and it has an internal polemic” (77). In his view, the reality of a work of art is completely mediated by language, the mediating language is dialogic in nature and scope, and “the active life of a literary text is sustained by the responses of readers” who in turn, “disseminate and continue the dialogic process that generates and is embodied in the narrative itself” (“Discourse” 252). Bakhtin was of the view that literary works, especially the novel, and particularly the modern novel, exploited to a great extent the dialogic polemics language ushers in.

While examining The Book of Job on the lines of Bakhtinian dialogism, Carol A. Newsom points out that a polyphonic text like the one taken up for study in the thesis has ‘three distinctive aspects’ (21-23):

1. It “embodies a dialogic sense of truth”: In contrast to monological truth, dialogic truth is ‘non-propositional and non-referential’. Nothing, no one’s voice including that of the author, is privileged. It does not seek unity by gravitating towards a system. It challenges the dominant conception of truth that is hegemonic.

2. Unlike monological truth, dialogic truth embraces ‘a personal quality’: As Bakhtin says, “The ultimate indivisible unit is not the assertion, but rather the integral point of view, the integral position of a personality” (Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics 93).

3. In dialogic truth, there is a drift towards the dynamic rather than towards the systematic or the standardized. It is event, not fixity, which gives voice, it is voice that provides dynamism, and it is dynamism that ensures openness. All these put together usher in an intertextual/interstitial heteroglossia without fixity or foreclosure. Stressing on the ‘unfinalizability’ of the meaning of a polyphonic text, Bakhtin avers that
“the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future, and will always be in the future” (ibid 166).

In parenthesis, one can imagine how much Jacques Derrida and his contemporaries owe to Bakhtin and his circle on their attempts to deconstruct Eurocentric worldviews and foreclosed metaphysical categories which have sustained hegemonies and marginalized the Other for ages in the name of ‘Centre’, or ‘tradition’.

To put it differently, Bakhtin’s approach to dialogism takes him beyond the dialectic reflexivities of Hegel’s notions of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis and Emanuel Kant’s containment of metaphysics to what is a priori to sense making (time and space reasoning). As David M. Boje comments in his book, *Storytelling Organizations*, in Bakhtin’s approach, “there is a paradigm-shift from systems thinking to complexity thinking in storytelling organizations” (2). Systems thinking promotes “monological narrative in storytelling as if there were a linear ordering of levels of reality, a tower of systems that is an all-encompassing deep structure of our world” whereas complexity thinking is informed by looking at the variety of narrative and story sense making” (ibid). Bakhtin’s aspects of dialogism hover around what he terms ‘systematicalness’ (*The Dialogic Imagination* 152), rephrased as “systemicity” by Boje, that brings into hermeneutics “the dynamic unfinished, unfinalized, and unmerged, and the interactivity of the complexity properties with storytelling and narrative processes” (ibid).
As Boje puts it in a diagrammatic chart placed here below, in Bakhtin’s theorizing of the aspects of dialogism, dialogism ushers in an interplay dynamics in connection with four kinds of dialogism:

It is this dialogical relationship that opens up an exploration of complexity and facilitates a dialogical story sense making. It is this dialogized heteroglassia that enriches the quality of authenticity in hermeneutics. Bakhtin’s readings of the novels of Dostoevsky and The Book of Job inspired him to view them as sources and agencies of facilitating such explorations.

In the light of these observations on Bakhtin’s concepts of chronotope, dialogism, and heteroglassia, one thing is certain with regard to reading Job: Any attempt to place the book under one overarching category of literary genre or interpretation would remain as an incomplete exercise because the literary fabric of the text is quite complex. Its complexity arises out of many counts, counts such as lack of accurate information available about the author, the date, the place of writing,
and even the context of writing, the profundity of thought the book embraces in terms of God-man relationship, the sovereignty of God and Job’s claim of sinless life (Job: 7:20) which itself could be considered as dangerous because the Bible backs a strong sense of sin in one’s life as connoted in the Gospel according to John (1:8 and 10), mixture of genres, author/s’ familiarity with multiple usage of Hebrew words (description of mining for instance in Job: 28:1-11), his/their familiarity with foreign cultures (Job:6:18-20 and 9:26), with the world of animals, with the specific parallels between Job and Ugaritic literature found in Syria, and with the ingredients of wisdom tradition of Israel evident in his/ their use of the literary techniques, rhetorical questions, riddles, personification and such other techniques of writing, and above all, the dialogues that set up the moral contestations with a number of accusations flying back and forth between Job and his ‘friends’ defending and accusing God at several levels and Job repeatedly asking tough questions about the righteous suffering. As Roger Hahn comments, “For people who are not satisfied with simple answers, Job rings a word of truth” (2). The measure of influence the book commands outside the spiritual communities of Christianity and Judaism, the manifold influence the book has upon theology, philosophy, art, and literature (David Clines, for instance, lists over four pages of works of literature, art, music, dance, and film inspired by The Book of Job), and the down-to-earth messages it conveys about coping with the pain of human suffering are perennial.

Against this backdrop, the researcher has attempted here below a re-reading of the structural cruxes of The Book of Job by way of substantiating the Bakhtinian dialogic nature of the book on human suffering which is the prime focus of the study. Here, a re-reading attempt is made to capture the structural and literary features
intertwined with the contending perspectives of multiple voices as portrayed by the polyphonic author of *The Book of Job* in relation to human suffering, God-man relationship, and the moral order of the cosmos. The dialogic nature of these perspectives is addressed by and reflected in ‘a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses engaging one another in open-ended dialogue’. The contending perspectives do not mean that the author has set up confrontation against one another. The structural cruxes in the book connote one thing unambiguously, and that is, as Newsom comments, “no one voice triumphs, for no one voice can speak the whole truth” (24).

Commenting on the relevance of the multiple genres and literary features adorning the structure and texture of *The Book of Job*, Mary, K.T. observes in her PhD thesis, that

“The purpose of *The Book of Job* is far from giving a picture of the life of the Jewish community, or even of the protagonist Job. It is rather to give an image of an ideal human being in relation to God and to man. This calls for selectivity of subject matter as well as for careful use of a variety of literary devices. Literary devices such as the use of a prose-poetry-prose sequence, effective imagery and the creation of a fictional milieu raises the pure didactic story of *The Book of Job* to the status of a literary piece. The images, metaphor, tones of feeling, perspectives, transitions, clashes of view, the use of existential questions, key words, and irony are all used in such a way that the real Job emerges in a sense, as a textual construct in the book” (37).

The literary and artistry greatness that underlies *The Book of Job*, the profundity of thought that is blended together, the moving language and style with
which the dramatic storyline unfolds, “alternating”, as Robert Gordis highlights, “between earth and heaven” (80), and the subtlety of figures of speech – such as ‘paronomasia’ (using one word by virtue of its similarity in sound to another – for instance ‘mśspāt’ (justice) and ‘miśpāh (bloodshed) which have their affinities with what the Arab rhetoricians call ‘talḥin’ (a figural way of deriving effect not from sound but from meaning) have prompted critics to equate the stature of the author/s of the book with that of literary geniuses of all time such as Homer, Greek dramatists, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe. The superb structure that straightaway captures the integrity of Job, the four disasters that befall him in a climatic and mind-boggling series, the three cycles of speeches involving Job’s friends, speeches that widen the chasm between their convictions with such passion and emotion bordering on honest indignations and moral contestations rather than on a Platonic kind of logical development of ideas, and the speeches of God, the eternal witness to all that is happening around Job, who ultimately becomes his redeemer addresses the problem of suffering that is unmerited in a dialogic manner with an open mind, with a number of what Bakhtin calls, ‘voice ideas’ with an epic tone. The voice ideas textured chronotopically with twists and turns through puns, sarcasm, and emotiveness incorporating structures of parallelism, imagery, and analogy within ‘the parameters of a wisdom cosmology’ that hinges on the eternal principle of order evident in the primordial design of the universe, the creation the natural world, wring in polyphonic connotations of sense-making without a foreclosure or fixity as the problem of evil and suffering dealt with is too huge and complex to afford a definitive and decisive foreclosure. Applying the Bakhtinian chronotope and dialogism is an ideal way of re-reading The Book of Job as such an application ushers in a variety of readings and polyphonic connotations in terms of meaning-making.
As John E. Hartley points out, ‘an epic substratum’ underlies *The Book of Job*. Its prologue sets the stage for the epic features of the book more in terms of the seriousness of purpose of the book and the grandeur of the theme it deals with than in terms of the heroic features of the main character. The epic nature and scope of the book starts with the first chapter of the book with a brilliant way of narrating, narrating with heroic dimensions, setting the tone and the matrix for the dialogic discourse on the seriousness of the theme, the theme of unjust suffering. The epic account is composed of beautiful and simple prose wrapped in Hebrew style, a style marked for poetry, poetic connotations, multidimensional interpretations, and mythopoeic language marked for dynamic meaning-making, which is a hallmark in the Bakhtinian dialogism. All the characters involved in the dialogic ruminations are voices of epic dimensions with God coming as the heroic dialogic Other in support of Job, the central character standing for the universal man who endures unmerited suffering. The author’s knowledge is so vast, wide, and deep that it connotes cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, cross-referential, and multidimensional insights on human conduct and disciplined ways of living. His wide-ranging knowledge on the marvels of creation, the world of animals, the cosmic spread of God’s outreach to the human race, and on God-man relationship gives him the stature of a wise man to be counted as one of the luminaries of the ancient world of geniuses. Job as the central figure is more an archetype who epitomizes the ageless and perennial question of how God can justify the suffering of the righteous, all the more when He allows and knows that the wicked thrive. He focuses on this problem traversing through varied polyphonic contours of voices, motifs, and figural combinations and transmutations mediated through use of proverbs (6:5-6), rhetorical questions (21:29), enigmatic riddles (5:5), gamut of tones blending honest indignations with passion and
tenderness (14:13 and 19:13-19), and varied shades of irony ranging from earthly sarcasm (12:2) to heavenly persiflage (38:3). His contemplation on the created order of the universe, his artistry in relating and linking it to morality of human conduct, to Job who represents the cosmic man, and to the humanizing outreach of God as the dialogic Other within a wide-ranging framework of dialogicity calls for not one, or two, or three, but many more readings of the book chosen for study here.

Textual Criticism, and the Poetry of Job” (2011) may be mentioned here as sources which helped this researcher to shape this chapter.

With recourse to his readings of the primary text and certain select secondary sources, Gregory W. Parsons speaks of 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. The predicament Job endures, extended as a broad issue of human life, forces him to file a secular suit. The secular lawsuit by Job is against God wherein Job’s friends file a counter suit in the course of serving as witnesses. Chapters 4 to 14 may be viewed as a preliminary attempt in vain at reconciliation out of the court proceedings and chapters 15 to 31 as formal court proceedings between Job and his friends. The resumption of the case against Job by Elihu and the judgment of God (38:1-42:6) are in the form of a secular counter-lawsuit between God and Job resulting in the withdrawal of the accusation by Job.

The structure and flow of The Book of Job opens with introducing Job as a wealthy and righteous nobleman having large family, many flocks of animals, many servants, a large home, perhaps an estate. His righteousness stands as the anchor of protection to his family. Job is so conscientious that he even offers sacrifices for sin that might have been committed inadvertently during the feasts celebrated by his children. After this introduction, the narrative-focus shifts to a Bakhtinian chronotopic dialogic process. It begins in heaven where God praises Job for his uprightness. But, diabolical Satan, who waits at the gates of heaven to wreck havoc in the life of Job and challenge God’s providence, retorts by saying that Job has ulterior motives in being righteous. Satan challenges God regarding the veracity and
genuineness of Job’s devotion to Him and dares asking God to allow him to test Job on earth. God accepts the challenge posed by Satan on the condition that no physical harm is done to Job. The suspense is that Job is not aware of this intriguing conversation in the court of heaven. The daring presence of Satan, though not as intense and daring as Milton’s characterization of Satan in “Paradise Lost”, is an indication of how evil can contest against God and challenge the idea of divine Providence, how it cause enormous human suffering, and consequently, how humans, particularly the innocent and the powerless can become victims.

A conservative reading of the prologue and the first eleven chapters of the book chosen for study here may prompt readers to think that the narrator’s voice is an authoritative and determinative one and there is nothing much to dialogue about. But, as Seong Whan Timothy Hyun comments in his book, Job the Unfinalizable: A Bakhtinian Reading of Job 1-11 (2013), Bakhtin’s dialogic idea advocates chronotopic and cross-referential reading by “reading other characters’ voices such as Job’s, God’s, hassatan’s, the four messengers’ and Job’s wife’s voices in the same position as the narrator’s voice”. He adds that “the narrator’s voice and the other characters’ voices play their roles in inviting readers to expect more different voices to satisfy their readings on Job in The Book of Job rather than to provide a clear definition of Job as a perfectly pious man” (18). To Bakhtin, The Book of Job is a fine text of voice ideas. He was of the view that essential and fixed notions arrived at by way of commentary would mar the polyphonic richness of the book, and dialogism wherein all the voices were equally weighted was the finest way to decode the texture of the book that tended to ask more number of questions rather than answers to the problem discussed in the book.
As readers read through the initial chapters, they have a story line to follow which may be summed up as follows: A series of hard times in the form of loss of his children and possessions befall due to natural calamities or other causes reducing Job to the fate of a pauper forcing him to endure enormous mental agony. Job grieves and the author/s is/are particular to note, to the discomfiture of Satan, that he does not sin. Satan hopes that Job’s loyalty would crumble in the face of illness. God gives Satan permission to afflict Job’s body with the restriction that he not be killed. Satan attacks Job with "loathsome sores" from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet to the extent that Job’s wife suggests that he curse God and die. Yet, Job refuses and suffers in silence, refusing to sin. Such a stance of Job resonates with the very first verse of Chapter One of The Book of Job states that “Job was a man without guile and upright, and he feared God and turned away from evil” (1:1).

At the end of the prologue, Job’s three friends -- Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, visit to console him although they are shocked of the enormity of pain and anguish endured by Job due to losses of varied kind. After seven days of silence, they visit again. Then, the dialogues (Chs. 4-27) start. Job laments cursing the day of his birth. Three cycles of speeches follow. In each cycle Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar speak in that order and Job answers each one of them. The first two cycles consist of six speeches, and the third one seems to be an incomplete one. Zophar’s speech is missing and Bildad’s seems to have been cut short. Much of the arguments are carried forward by the three cycles of speeches. Eliphaz represents a traditional theological stance, what conservative theologians call ‘the doctrine of retribution’. He is of the view that no one can claim self-righteousness before God and Job’s calamities are a pointer to his guilt. Job reacts
and rebukes his friends for being too theoretical and dogmatic. He complains to God and asks for healing. Bildad butts in, opines that God is always just and fair and extends an accusing finger at Job as if Job had committed sin. Indirectly responding to Bildad, Job pleads for the right to argue with God about the terrible occurrences happening in his life. Disappointed with Job’s responses, Zophar blames Job for his idle and foolish talk. But, Job goes on defending himself and complaining again to God and asking for a healing touch.

The second cycle of speeches begins with Eliphaz’s second speech. Retaining his already known stance, Eliphaz insists that Job should repent. Job rejects his stance, brands his friends as ‘poor comforters’ and again defends himself and his right to speak in the way he is speaking. Toeing his line of thought similar to that of Eliphaz, Bildad responds with an almost taunting description of the punishments the wicked must suffer. Job retorts accusing his friends of ‘attacking God when they attack him’, stands firm about his innocence and holds on his hope that God would be his redeemer. Appalled by Job’s claims of innocence, Zophar, in his second speech, calls on his friend to repent lest he should endure a worse fate. At the end of the second cycle, Job, even though he is aware of the fact that ‘the wicked thrive’ and goes on lamenting about his predicament, stands firm about his trust in God’s goodness. In the third cycle, one could see Eliphaz losing his patience with Job and angrily telling Job that he deserves the suffering he endures. His repeated plea for Job’s repentance is rejected by Job. His laments become bitter and bitter. His honest indignations at his fate makes him argue with God again. He desperately wants a chance to defend himself to God and seeks God’s hand to protect him. Bildad too fails to convince Job and Job again maintains his innocence.
In between there is a hymn in praise of Wisdom (Ch.28) with vivid description about how Wisdom lives with God and how difficult it is for mankind to seek it or understand its depth. Noting that “the earth, though out of it comes forth bread, is in fiery upheaval underneath” (28:5), the unknown author of this Chapter uses ‘the mine-minerals metaphor’ to emphasize how difficult it is for humans to quest for Wisdom:

“Mortals do not know her path, nor is she to be found in the land of the living. The Deep says, “She is not in me”; and the Sea says, “She is not with me.” Solid gold cannot purchase her. Nor can her price be paid with silver.

She cannot be bought with gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or lapis lazuli, gold or crystal cannot equal her, nor can golden vessels be exchanged for her” (Job 28:13-17).

He avers further: “She is hidden from the eyes of every living thing; even from the birds of the air she is concealed” (28:21), and concludes by urging the mortals to “see the fear of the Lord as wisdom and to know that avoiding evil is understanding” (28:28).

Viewed as an interlude, interpretative communities continue to debate about the necessity and the role of this chapter. Varied interpretations apart, this chapter is a pointer to what Wisdom does and how Wisdom makes its impact upon those who seek and why it is inaccessible to those who turn away from God, who are part of the problem in conflict situations and cause human suffering, who are self-righteous and sanctimonious with holier-than-thou attitude, and perhaps, even to those who are not
in a position to discern the power of Wisdom because of the plight they are in and their perceptions are coloured by their own calamities. Against this perspective, this poetic and connotative interlude can be viewed as a brilliant masterstroke towards the open-ended closing of the epilogue of the book, dialogism regarding God-man relationship and interpersonal relationships, and towards inspiring and propelling believers, non-believers, and agnostics to appreciate the need for Wisdom to guide as true friend and guide so that life-realities including honest indignations and moral contestations around the pain and anguish of human suffering are viewed diachronically, chronotopically, and synchronically lest half-baked truths or illusions prevail as pathways.

A cross-referential and comparative reading of Chapter 28 of The Book of Job with a few other books of the Bible may further highlight the fact that this chapter stands tall as a forerunner to many other the biblical versions of Wisdom which cherish and promote the view that Wisdom is available, to all those who seek, in proper measures, if not in abundance, to the extent they seek, or are worthy of seeking. A re-reading of this interlude inspires this researcher to add that the whole chapter textured in 28 poetic verses is full of paradoxes, similes, and metaphors. Tradition-wise, this interlude may be viewed as a commonplace of the Wisdom-tradition. Conventional hermeneutics-wise, it may relate and refer to the description of Job as ‘one who fears God and avoids evil’ (Job 1:1 and 2:3). But from a Bakhtinian chronotopic point of view, this unsigned vivid and beautiful description about where Wisdom dwells has other more fascinating and plausible implications. Though it riffs and connotes that, for mortals including Job who is portrayed as righteous and upright, Wisdom is not that easily available as it lives fully with God.
alone and the worldly-wise cannot understand what it is, the moral of the chapter is that the fear of God that goes with an awe towards the scope and power of this divine Wisdom is the right way of becoming wise in a truly human sense. It is not impossible to attain Wisdom as man/woman has been placed as the crown of creation, as co-creator endowed with the power of reasoning, reasoning in dialogue and reasoning through relational striving. It means that the measure of Wisdom available and accessible to seekers can be enhanced and enriched by dialogism that insists on relational striving, a striving that calls for diachronic-synchronic reasoning, that takes seekers beyond binary positions, that facilitates them to see beyond themselves, their predicaments, their attitudes, and their tradition or custom-bound cultural constructs, that endears them to other viewpoints, perspectives, and worldviews.

As noted earlier, the unknown author of this chapter provides broad hints through abundant mine metaphors and cross-references to the colourful grandeur in the world of creation about how to seek and quest for Wisdom despite the fact that it lives fully with God alone. He uses pronouns connoting the feminine nature of Wisdom, ‘Wisdom as God’s companion and partner in creation’. It is the feminine nature of Wisdom that makes the understanding of ‘God as feminine’ tenable, and the idea of the triune-God, an article of faith in the Christian circle, is a way forward towards promoting dialogism as a great value. The dialogic nature of the triune-God wherein the feminine attribute of Wisdom is an ever-active principle activated in the Holy Spirit is also reflected in creation, especially man/woman as crown of creation. With regard to human relationships and interactions, it is the psyche of the woman that is more open to cross-referential musings, dialogues, relational strivings, and
listening to polyphonic voice-ideas. A re-reading of Chapter 28 of *The Book of Job* propels this researcher to one can appreciate Wisdom not only as God’s companion but also as man/woman’s guide and teacher to facilitate mankind to focus on the perennial need for promoting dialogic relationships in all the human endeavours, even when pain and pathos strike, even when good people suffer on account of bad things happening, in the course of making right decisions.

Other versions in the Bible on the beauty and power of Wisdom are found in *The Book of Proverbs* (3:13-18), *the Gospel according to Mathew* (23:23), and a few other books. If the Old Testament insists on ‘the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom’ (Proverbs 9:10), the New Testament brings in the dialogic incarnational and human face of God that reflects the unconditional empathetic affinities God maintains with mankind sustaining the Creator and co-creators’ relationships with an option for the marginalized poor, innocent victims of human conflicts and hegemonies. This is the power of love, outreaching and gratuitous, manifest in the grandeur of creation wherein man/woman stands as the crown of creation. From this point of view, the dialogism ingrained in *The Book of Job* prefigures and anticipates the arrival of Jesus Christ who reflected the human face of God through his dialogic, negotiating, and prophetic relationships during his life on earth.

The intertextual dimensions Wisdom wrings in connote, as *The Book of James* note in the New Testament of the Bible, that the same God, who is the source of all knowledge and wisdom, who provided it abundantly to Solomon, is capable of providing it to all without discrimination, to all those who seek it. The implications of the biblical teachings on Wisdom are that it is dialogic in nature, it is gathered and enriched by polyphonic interactions and dialogues with others. The ways of Wisdom
also usher in social harmony as it inspires humans to promote conflict-free ambiences for harmonious living. It cautions against less-than-wise impulses. It counsels patience and its payoff in self-esteem and inner peace can compensate humans many times over. In the light of these observations and musings, the insertion of this interlude in *The Book of Job* may be justified for the values it adds on to the dialogic discourse happening in the book relating Job’s predicaments. Its profound significance lies in its relation to the solutions sought through dialogism to the problems faced by Job, the archetypal character who represents everyman / woman who is confronted with or who is confronting the problem of evil and suffering, everyman who suffers despite his/her innocence. To put it in a nutshell, the Chapter - 28 follows this path: Wisdom lives with God. Man/woman requires for making right decisions. It is possible for man/woman to seek and acquire it provided he/she is attuned to appreciate why ‘the fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom’ and how ‘avoiding evil is a sure way forward towards acquiring it’ and provided he/she believes in relational striving and polyphonic dialogism in order to acquire it.

To come back to the dialogic discourse of the storyline, Chapters 29-31 consist of Job’s final defense. As Job stands to his ground about his innocence and the correctness of his response, his three friends give up and a younger man named Elihu joins the dialogic conversation. His four speeches (Chs. 32-37) are reasonable attempts to defend God. He suggests that God could intervene in Job’s life only if he would stop defending himself and he must be humble enough to listen and learn. Realizing that Job is adamant, he leaves the stage. Finally God appears and speaks up (Chs. 38-42) out of the whirlwind, asks certain pertinent and tough questions to Job and demands response from him. As Job fumbles to answer the questions, God
challenges him to argue his case before Him. God speaks of the grandeurs of His creation. His reference to gigantic animals like behemoth (40:15-24) and leviathan (41:1-34) have multiple and polyphonic connotations, connoting the power of evil and its apparent invincibility on the one hand, and God’s supremacy over all creations including His invincibility over the monstrous animals such as the ones mentioned above, which are associated here with Satanic powers, on the other. God’s intervening speeches are so impressive about God’s goodness and almighty power that they move Job towards reconciling with himself and with God. This process of reconciliation involves Job’s confession of his unworthiness, his lack of understanding, and of course, his full and unconditional trust and faith in God that acknowledges the empathetic presence of God.

As readers come to the final chapters of the book, they can see how the narrative revolves around the dialogue wherein God speaks to Job. The dialogues ‘reflects a personal encounter’ moving past mere abstract explanations of suffering. Job’s indignations over the suffering he has been enduring melt away in the power of the simple presence of God. The final chapters which include the epilogue of the book are an indication and vindication of how God can become the dialogic empathetic Other ultimately defending Job. He chides Job’s friends for misrepresenting Him in the name of traditional and conventional theodicy and demands expiation from them. He restores Job’s lost fortunes and blesses him with twofold measures. Beyond the pastoral ending the epilogue implies and demonstrates, the final chapters keep up the dialogic force of the discourse in proper and right perspective with focus on divine providence and tackling the problem of evil and human suffering. Its open-ending closure has scope for various
interpretations on God-man relationship, affirmation of man’s humility, and relational striving that aims at reconciliation, understanding, empathy, communion and solidarity. As Bratcher observes and comments, ‘the book is not about Job’s history but about Job’s life and the way we relate to God and others around us’. From this perspective, the closure of the book is open enough to facilitate readers to understand that Job stands more as an archetype rather as a historical person.

Andrew E. Steinmann’s standard approach to the book has the following divisions:

I. Prose Prologue (i 1-ii 14)

II. II. Job’s Complaint (iii 1-24)

III. III. The Speeches of Job and his Friends in Three Cycles (iv 1-xxvii 22)
   A. First Cycle (Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, Job, iv 1-xiv 22)
   B. Second Cycle (Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, Job, xv 1-xxi 34)
   C. Third Cycle (Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Job, xxii 1- xxvii 23)

IV. A Wisdom Poem (xxviii 1-26)

V. V. Job’s Complaint (xxix 1-xxxi 41)

VI. VI. The Speeches of Elihu (xxxii 1-xxxvii 25)

VII. VII. The Speeches of Yahweh and Job’s Replies (xxxviii 1-xl ii 6)

VIII. VIII. Prose Epilogue (xlii 7-17). (86-87)

Though the prosaic prologue and the prosaic epilogue pale in comparison to the poetry portions of the book, the standard approach views them as ‘utilitarian devices’ towards what Yair Hoffman calls, “getting into the real discussion and giving the book a sense of closure” (161). It defends the apparent coherence in the
structurality of the book by suggesting that it contains a structural framework around which the rest of the book is built. Norman Habel, another exponent of the standard approach, views the legal framework ingrained in the structure as an extended metaphor indicated in the prosaic opening-prologue-section – Chs. i 6-11 and ii 1-6), indicative of what follows next. According to him, ‘the lawsuit theme is developed chiastically by the author’. It follows this pattern: Job filing a lawsuit (Chs. ix-x), challenging his accuser (Ch. xiii), seeking an arbiter (Chs. xvi 18-21, xix 21-9), submitting testimonies (Chs. xxix- xxx), Job taking an oath and presenting his challenge (Ch. xxxi), receiving a verdict from Elihu, the arbiter (Chs. xxxii-xxxvii), which is challenged by God, his accuser (Chs. xxxviii-xxxix and xl 6-xl 26), then Job retracting his litigation (Ch. xlii 1-6), and getting exculpated (Ch. xlii 7-9).

Improving upon this legal argument, Robert Sutherland whose background as a Canadian criminal defense lawyer really helps in his presentation of the legal arguments in The Book of Job, brilliantly argues, in his book, Putting God on Trial: The Biblical Book of Job, that ‘the legal distinction between causal responsibility for evil and moral blameworthiness for evil is at the heart of a Hegelian theodicy in The Book of Job, where God's authorship of evil may be excusable on the grounds that it is necessary for the production of a higher good’. This argument is an innovative one in the sense that it is a significant improvement on the traditional Augustinian theodicy which draws heavily on The Book of Genesis and blames man for all the natural and moral evils in the world. Sutherland’s argument, as John Barrington comments, demonstrates that ‘the connection between human sin and natural evils need not be there’. It is also a significant improvement on the traditional Irenean theodicy which draws heavily on the Epistles of Paul and views everything as a
means to character development. Job, being an archetype and with no information available on the question whether Job is a real historical figure, does not fully fit into a character development.

Critics aware of the stupendous exegetical framework provided by Thomas Aquinas, wherein he also pursues a theologically sound and logically tenable argument on the question of ‘Divine Providence’, have commented on how *The Book of Job* has been interpreted on the lines of God-man relationship with a thrust towards the divine and human face of God. Aquinas, best known as a systematic theologian, leaning on Augustinian impact, has written Patristic commentaries on a number of Biblical texts such as Psalms 1-54, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Matthew, John, and all the letters of Paul. His *Expositio Super Lob Ad Litteram -- Commentary on The Book of Job* is, as John F. Boyle opines, “a fine reflection of his capacity to grasp the speculative constructive elements of theology understood as a science, that is, as a unified coherent realm of rational inquiry” (1).

Keeping in mind Pope Gregory’s eloquent insights on the mystical sense of *The Book of Job*, Thomas Aquinas begins his interpretation of the book with a fine prologue on the evolution of plausible understanding of the idea of ‘Divine Providence’, or as he puts it, “how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments” (3). His Scriptural hermeneutic principle hovers around the code, applied to *The Book of Job* too in his every chapter-wise commentary, that ‘in disputing the truth of the matter, one should neither assert anything false, especially what would contradict the truth of faith, nor assert that what one believes to be true is a truth of faith’. As noted already in Chapter One of this study, one of the major thrusts of his analysis of *The Book of Job* is to strike a balance between fatalism and the role of the
Divine Providence. In opposition to a fatalistic viewpoint, he explains that the way God's providence works is 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. He sees reason in the reasonably tenable and theologically plausible ending of the structurality of *The Book of Job* that affirms God's gratuitous grace outreaching to help Job deal with his contingencies and predicaments. When contemporary theological divides are confronted with the question of how evil and God's providence coexist, particularly when moral evil directly impacts one's entire being in both a spiritual and a physical manner, an involved critic or scholar, keenly conscious of painful ground realities of human suffering, tends to problematize the traditional theological or Patristic approach that tries to reconcile the existence of worldly suffering and evil with the existence of an all-powerful loving God.

Combining and blending exegetical, theological, and Patristic approaches to the reading of *The Book of Job*, R.A.F. MacKenzie's outline of the book, done under 'Five Main Divisions' is a very comprehensive one. His decoding is conducive to the reading of the book and doing textual analysis on the lines of Bakhtin's chronotope:

By way of decoding the prologue (Main Division -I) (1:1-2:13), he notes six subdivisions the following narratives: 1.a. Job's Character and Prosperity (1:1-5); 1.b. The First Scene in Heaven (1:6-12); 1.c. The Loss of Job's Possessions (1:13-22); 1.d. The Second Scene in Heaven (2:1-7a); 1.e. The Affliction of Job's Person (2:7b-10), and 1.f. The Coining of Job's Friends (2:11-13).


God's Speech and Job's Answer (Main Division - IV) (38:1-42:6) are brought into another main division which is subdivided into six: 1. Yahweh Speaks (38:1); 2. Does Job Understand Yahweh's "Counsel"? (38:2-38): 2.a. "Who Is This?" (38:2-3); 2.b. Was Job Present at Creation? (38:4-15); 2.c. Does Job Know His Way About the Cosmos? (38:16-24); 2.d. Would Job Know

The final main division is restricted to The Epilogue (Main Division V) (42:7-17) subdivided into two: 1. Expiation for Job's Three Friends (42:7-10 a) and 2. God's Blessing of Job Restored and Increased (42:10 b-17). (MacKenzie 513-14)

To sum up R.A.F. MacKenzie’s outline, he concludes that “a poetic dialogue in a prose-narrative setting, dealing with the profound theological problem of the meaning and function of suffering in the life of a just man and with the consequences of it for a man's attitude to God” (503) pervades the whole book. His commentary posits that though the book has its forerunners in both Egyptian and Babylonian literatures, particularly in some dialogues dealing with problems of human life, the literary talent exhibited by the author/s of The Book of Job in composing the texture and the content of the book with a number of moral contestations is unique. He also touches on the question whether the book is a composition of one author or more than one with reference to the Elihu speeches, which biblical scholars contend that they may not be
part of the original composition, but which add up to the dialogic nature and scope of the book. He elucidates how the other parts, namely the prologue, the dialogue, the Yahweh (God's) speeches, and the epilogue have a fine sense of coherence and unity implying that the author of these parts must be 'a learned man, a very great poet, and a religious thinker of genius'.

MacKenzie's effort to combine Aquinas' reading with the teachings of the Catholic Church and contemporary readings can be discerned in the way he comments on the role of God in the book. The idea of God brought into focus in the last phase of the dialogic process has more than one purpose. Theologically speaking, God may be viewed as the source of truth and justice, as liberator from all forms of injustice and oppression, and as defender of the poor, the righteous and all those who are His 'covenant partners', who are loyal to Him. As Creator of the universe, he is provident and powerful enough to ultimately stand by the side of victims of injustice, oppression, and satanic forces. This is one of the messages in the book resonating with the collective ethics of the people of Israel, the moral laws governing their lives wherein the Wisdom Literature 'stressed the efficacy of righteous living' with the prospect of God being the custodian of their lives and the prospect of individuals living in happiness, prosperity, and success. But the author/s of The Book of Job go beyond the exercise of retributive justice by bringing in dialogism, by introducing the dialogues of three friends -- Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar -- with Job and integrating them with the later additions such as the Elihu speeches, and by conning the human face of God who can stand as the Other against hegemony imposers and in support of people enduring Joban kind of predicaments. It is clear that even the author of the book thinks that 'divine retributive justice', defended and exaggerated by the three
friends, has its limitations in terms of providing solutions to the problem in hand, namely the question of unmerited suffering endured.

A careful reading of MacKenzie’s commentary on Job helps this researcher to see that God may have other purposes in testing righteous people. This perception is substantiated by the narrative of the book that polyphonically connotes that the mystery of human suffering has other sides to be seen, other texts to be read, and other voices to be heard and listened to. None can force anyone to agree with their understanding of facts as it would be a sign of monologue, not dialogue which seems to be the predominant chronotopic mode within the structurality of the structure of The Book of Job.

Commenting on the intertextuality ingrained in The Book of Job, Dennis Bratcher notes how the book shares some characteristics with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon and how its narrative is highly poetic and metaphorical in the course of dealing with mature reflections on issues of everyday living. He suggests that the book, “in contrast to Proverbs, but like Ecclesiastes, must be read in its entirety to understand its message as single verses often contradict the overall message of the book” (1). A perusal of his outlines provides a glimpse on how ‘the theological stance of Job counterbalances, even challenges, some perspectives of Proverbs, and the book views the world from the perspective of human need and concern rather than God’s requirements. Such a worldview is in resonance with the typical ‘wisdom thinking’ of the era. His analysis also mentions about the historical background to the book, about the fact that the author is unknown, about the rationale for the three theories about the time of writing of the book -- 700 BC, 550 BC, and 400-300 BC, about the three theories regarding Job – whether he is a historical
figure who spoke all the words attributed to him, whether a literary creation by the author can be viewed as a teaching parable, and whether the historical kernel adapted by the author addresses certain issues related to human suffering. Commenting further on the structural and literary features of the book, he notes that the book is ‘heavily metaphorical wringing in mythical elements as symbols such as Rahab, Yamm, and Leviathan’, it has a blend of monologues and dialogues consisting of Job’s laments (monologues) and his friends in dialogues with him, and God speaking to Job and Job responding, and the message of the book has multidimensional perspectives moving beyond orthodox or traditional answers to the question why righteous people suffer unjustly. His outline helps readers see how God understands honest indignations, concerns, and questions and why ‘God and the world cannot be put into easily definable categories’.

*The Book of Job* is full of paradoxes in its approach to comprehending divine truth and wisdom on God-man relationship. Paradoxes can be noticed in God testing Job, in the coining of Job’s friends, in Job’s expectation of divine blessings for his right conduct and behaviour ‘as if God owed him happiness’ and yet expected to endure mental agony/suffering as if it were his privilege, and expected to prove his unconditional love for God, in his being right in opposing the stances taken by his friends in relation to his predicament and in his being not right in his attitude towards God as if God denied justice to him, and in the ambivalence about the proportion of just punishment and the opportunity people like Job to serve God with a sense of martyrdom as understood in Christian theology (cf. Lk. 17:10 and Jn. 15:13).

A considerable number of literary devices are employed in the book. The usage of irony and mythopoetic language may be noted here as significant ones.
Dramatic irony plays a significant role throughout the book. As Parsons points out, though it may be difficult to give a concise definition of irony, Sophoclean kind of irony, which involves an audience who ‘perceives that a character is acting in complete ignorance of his true condition’, has been used in the prologue with regard to hinting at Job’s predicament. Power comments that this kind of irony places ‘the reader’s attention around his superior understanding of Job’s situation in contrast to Job’s complete ignorance of it’ and adds that Sophoclean irony is a kind of hedge and guard, known to the reader / audience only, against any tragic end falling upon Job. For instance, while readers are informed about the cosmic purpose of God through the conversation between Satan and God where Satan accuses God of ‘putting a protective hedge’ (1:10) around Job and dares insinuating whether Job “fears God for nothing” (1:9), Job and his friends are not aware of this cosmic plan and purpose of redemption. The idea of God’s protective hedge is misunderstood by Job when he starts feeling bad about ‘the restrictive hedge’. The irony could be noticed in his bemoaning and questioning God whether this ‘hedge’ means that he is a sea-monster so dangerous that he must be put under twenty-four hour surveillance (7:12-20). It irony again when God’s hedge, viewed as blessing, is seen as ‘restrictive hindrance’ by Job. The ambivalence arises because the narrator employs one and the same Hebrew verb (*Job* 7:12, 29:2, and 38:8) for both.

Job’s friends use verbal irony to imply that Job is a sinner. For instance, while Job’s words speak of his terrible plight, Eliphaz twists Job’s own words (4:7-11) so as to incriminate him, equating him with wickedness. He condemns Job in the name of an invalid dogma, namely the dogma of retribution. His question whether “the upright have ever been destroyed” (4:7) shows his naïve assent to the dogma of
retribution and his unwillingness to see that Job does not deserve such retributive justice. Bildad also tries to ironically twist the words of Job (7:21, 8:6 and 8:20) as if he had the monopoly over wisdom and he does not realize that his twisting, in fact, bounces against him. Job understands his jibes and sarcastically retorts critiquing him and suggesting that wisdom is a value that lives beyond his perspective, away from his monopolization. His retorting in 13:2 – “what you know, I also know”, is as Parsons comments, another Sophoclean ironical way of hinting at ‘the absurdity of the dogma of divine retribution’ and at the limitation of human knowledge and human dialogues and “adumbrating the necessity for divine perspective which comes from God’s speeches” (216).

Again irony is ingrained in the third cycle of speeches when Job’s prayer for the forgiveness of his friends as God chides them for not-so-innocent claims about the dogma of retributive justice, when this act of Job occurs in the backdrop of Eliphaz counselling Job to put away his ‘wickedness’ in order that "his prosperity would be restored (22:22-30) and concludes by suggesting that if Job would repent his prayers would once again become efficacious, not only for those who are innocent, but even for the guilty (those not innocent). When God hears Job’s prayer and does forgive them, ironic climax and fulfilment occur. What is significant to readers is that readers are given enough space to understand what Bakhtin terms ‘varied and polyphonic voice-ideas’ ingrained in the dialogues in the book as they are taken into confidence by the narrator/s about the implications and consequences of the dialogues going on and about the plausibility of God’s intervention as the dialogic Other empathizing with Job so as to stand by his steadfast integrity, uprightness and genuineness devotion towards Him, despite Job’s daring, questioning God’s ways of
relating with the world. God’s intervention as the dialogic Other sets several things right, righting wrongs, righting the errors committed by Job’s friends who mislead him in their defence of their traditional beliefs, facilitating the availability of forgiveness to them through Job lest he should nurture ill will towards them for their failure to comfort him, facilitating Job who gains new authority by reasoning with God and by his obedient endurance of undeserved affliction and steadfast devotion to Him. The dialogic Other’s stance is that a person can triumph over suffering through faith in God as that gives him the indomitable spirit to combat evil and confront suffering, pain, and anguish.

It is relevant to quote Parsons again by way of concluding the note on irony in *The Book of Job*:

The usage of this literary device causes the reader to desire (and anticipate) the voice of God from the "whirlwind." There is a noticeable lessening of irony in chapters 29-31. Apart from the mild "self-irony" of 29:2 and 29:18-20, which contrasts Job's former state with his present state (chap. 30), there is almost no irony either about God (cf. perhaps 31:3-4) or toward the friends. There may be an "implied ironic slap" toward the friends in 29:25. This technique of "deionization" (which allegedly verifies the spurious nature of 29-31) is fitting for Job's soliloquy in which he ignores the friends and turns his hopes toward God. The speeches of Elihu are particularly ironic (or even sarcastic) toward the friends for their failure to deal properly with Job (32:7, 9-11, 15-16). They also contain a few gently ironic utterances directed toward Job (cf. 34:33 and 37:17-20). (217-18)
Another significant literary device used in the text chosen for study is ‘the prevalence of mythopoeic language’. Poetic usage marks the reference to mythological allusions in the book. According to Smick, mythological terminology usually refers to four categories: 1. Forces of nature (sea and fire for instance); 2. Creatures cosmic or otherwise; 3. Cosmography, and 4. Pagan cultic practices. In Job 3:8, Job calls for enchanters to curse the day of his birth by arousing Leviathan, a sea-monster to swallow the sun. It was a common belief among ancient peoples across the world that a solar eclipse was caused by a dragon or monster which swallowed the sun. In Ugaritic literature, Yamm, the god referring to sea was viewed as a chaotic force. Drawing the parallel between Leviathan and Yamm, the author of The Book of Job employs through the utterances of Job “the most vivid and forceful proverbial language” (Smick 101) available to him to connote the depths of despair and the intensity of anguish Job is in. It is clear that the usage of mythopoeic language is more frequent in the speeches of Job with quite a few polemical overtones ingrained into it.

The author/s of the book also makes it clear that the use of mythological allusions does not mean that either the author of Job and Job himself subscribed to the belief in paganism that implies belief in other deities. There are also mythological allusions (9:5-13) where the emphasis is on the sovereignty of monotheistic God whose supremacy over monsters, evil by extension, is unquestionable. Mythopoeic language may also noticed in God’s speeches. It is present in the descriptions of God is capable of restraining the sea with bars and doors (38:8-10). It is there in the descriptions of Leviathan breathing fire and smoke (41:19-21) and in the personification of stars. The mythopoeic usage of language subtly serves certain
other purposes too. Besides embellishing the textual cruxes and nuances through its imagery and analogy, it implies by indirection the contrast between Job’s theological stance with regard to his belief in monotheism and his dithering, inconsistent, and unconscious action of self-deification in the midst of endured agony and questioning God’s supremacy in the context of evil thriving and the innocent suffering, and more significantly in the midst of polemical nuances, it emphasizes “the contrast between the uniquely sovereign Lord who operates by grace and the ancient Near Eastern gods who were bound by the dogma of retribution” (Parsons 46). The implication is crystal clear: The God of Job or The Book of Job cannot be manipulated by the dogma of retribution. This is how the author/s of The Book of Job prove Job’s friends and the forces of evil wrong. The God of Job who has the control over the sunrise and the sunset would also be responsible enough to render justice to Job.

Adding a note on the complicated language and style may be taken as an apt conclusion to the analysis of the structural cruxes done in this chapter. As discussed earlier in this chapter, C. Westermann argues that major framework of the structure of The Book of Job revolves around ‘a dramatized lament’ format. Legal language is incorporated into the lament in order to develop Job’s complaints and accusations against God. Though his friends’ speeches are designed as words of consolation, disputation is introduced in their speeches as they feel compelled to persuade Job of the orthodox position, persuading him to adopt their particular theology of retribution. Their speeches consist of multiple genres, categorized as words of consolation, instruction, and exhortation. This researcher is of the view that the categorization of the book as part of ‘Wisdom Literature’ makes a lot of sense by virtue of the connotations ingrained in Chapter 28 dedicated to ‘Wisdom’ as God’s partner and companion and as propeller of man’s questing for wisdom through
dialogic processes and nuances. As stated earlier, though ‘Wisdom lives with God’, it is possible for man/woman, by virtue of his/her co-creator status endowed with him as he/she is the crown of creation, to seek and acquire Wisdom as a shared value. Chapter 28, in the researcher’s view, is a significant and logical inclusion to justify the dialogic nature of the discourse towards finding an answer to the complex problem of human suffering. It helps readers to understand why ‘complex seeing’, to use the phrase of Brecht, is a way of appreciating the cross-disciplinary nature of dialogism. A perusal of the book, *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* edited by Margaret Beissinger *et all* (1999) and going to back to our Indic traditions of storytelling evident in *The Mahābhārata* would also help readers to see how the author/s of *The Book of Job* anticipate in a way the arrival of contemporary critical theories emphasizing the dialogic nature of discourse analysis and hermeneutics crisscrossing with interdisciplinary dialogues among art genres. The polemical nuances wrought within the structural cruxes of *The Book of Job* are a pointer to the dialogic context of the intellectual climate prevailing today. This is what Bakhtin too argues for in almost all his writings. Therefore, using Bakhtin as a theory and applying his chronotopic dialogism that insists on polyphony of voices to the reading *The Book of Job* are justified.

With regard to the overall structurality of the book, particularly its language and style of *Job*, what Robert Gordis states may be taken a sum up: “The rich content of the book, the range and the depth of its thought, bear witness to the extraordinary intellectual gifts of the author”… Its profundity is matched by its literary greatness and its artistry is revealed in its superstructure within which “the traditional prose tale of the pious suffering of Job is utilized by the poet in masterly fashion as a
framework for the dialogue” wherein “the prologue and the epilogue are linked to the poetry portion by brief jointures written by the author”. “In a terse moving style, the five-scene drama” is mediated through three cycles of speeches by Job and his friends.” As the dialogue progresses, readers are facilitated to see how “Job is driven both to greater bitterness and to a new and deeper faith”. His conviction grows that God against whom he has his honest indignations would become “the great arbiter” in his favour in and through his “eternal witnessing” act that would come to mean “the ultimate redemption” of Job. The creation of the universe, the phenomena of nature, depicted in and through brilliant imagery and analogy juxtaposed in metrical structures of parallelism with strophic analysis adopted, and in and through mythopoeic language, which stands as an eternal and daily miracle and mystery, is projected as the background standing against “the dark burden of suffering to be borne even when it cannot be understood”. It is this vision of truth that paradoxically “belittles and justifies Job’s tragic experience” (79, 80, and 81). This is how Job, the sufferer is reconciled and he is in a position to submit himself to God’s abundant goodness.

To conclude this chapter, applying Bakhtin as a theory has facilitated this researcher to aver that the author/s of The Book of Job, as literary geniuses, has/have created a masterpiece that is, as John E. Hartley notes, “sui generis”, recounting Job’s story of trail and triumph, debating the issue of human suffering through the medium of dialogues/speeches, bringing in even God as a party within an artistic framework of honest indignation and moral contestations, drawing numerous genres in the composition of the speeches and dialogues so as to understand and articulate the interrelated ingredients about God-man relationship, and facilitating readers,
especially those who suffer innocently, to garner existential spirituality for that has theocentric, anthrocentric, and cosmocentric dimensions. From this point of view, the book “is both an epic and a wisdom disputation” (66) wrapped within the matrices of Bakhtinian carnivalesque, a literary mode that subverts and liberates the hegemonic assumptions through an atmosphere of dialogue, pathos and humour interpolated. Though all the four categories of Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque cannot be applied in entirety to The Book of Job, ‘familiar and free interaction between people’, the first of the four categories, seems to be a viable option. As long as carnivalesque addresses Bakhtinian concerns such as ‘liberation of the human spirit’, breaking apart ‘oppressive and mouldy forms of thought’ and clearing ‘the path for the imagination and the never-ending project of emancipation’, The Book of Job may be interpreted through Bakhtinian carnivalesque to that extent. From this point of view, Bakhtin ‘has also been influential through his Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Works and The Dialogic Imagination in 20th-century structuralism, poststructuralism, social theory, and the theory of the Novel’. His approach to subversion in the course interpreting a literary text is conducive to arriving at sense-making that is open-ended but not that which ushers in ‘deference or indeterminacy ad infinitum’, or nihilism.

To put it from Bakhtinian dialogistic point of view, a Bakhtinian reading brings out the dialogic ways of storytelling which by extension and expansion usher in, as David M. Boje comments and as already noted, ‘an inquiry into the intertextuality of Bakhtin’s four dialogisms -- ‘polyphonic, stylistic, chronotopic and architectonic’. As Bakhtin himself puts it in his book, The Dialogic Imagination, these four dialogisms, “regardless of whether they corroborate one another, mutually supplement one another, or, on the contrary contradict one another or have any other
sort of dialogical relationship” (156). They resonate with what Foucault calls “emergence story telling” which showcases “the moment of arising … always produced through a particular stage of forces … or against adverse circumstances” (148-149). As Holquist observes, Bakhtinian dialogicity is more inclined towards “neo-Kantian epistemology” and “Einsteinian worldview” rather than towards Hegelian kind of preference for “Absolute Spirit dialecticism” and “Newtonian kind of worldview” (17) preferring relativity of time-space combination.

Moving beyond the abstract notions of dialogism and at the level of transcendence in terms of the triumph of the human spirit, the Joban dialogue is supposed to become an instrument of solace or consoling conversation building a psychological bridge between Job, the lamentor, and his friends expected to be consolers. But, the Joban author keeps in mind a broad spectrum of chronotopic dialogic overtones within the overall structure of the book by bringing the elements of the Babylonian theodicy, the dialogic opposition Job’s friends and a by-stander maintain within the matrix of argumentative disputation that also provides space for God, the third secret partner in the dialogic conversation.

Yet, the author ensures that from the side of Job, his lament remains as the chief component of the dialogue because that reflects his mental state, the state of ‘turmoil’ -- rógez in Greek (3:26), a summery term that is used many times in the book, and it is only at the end of the last lament (31: 35-37) that God and Job come face to face, a conversation wherein Joban moments of crisis get resolved although the last word spoken by God to salvage the prestige of Job from all ‘the turmoil’ he endures need not necessarily be the final when one thinks of Job as an archetype, standing for everyman and representing the perennial problem of evil and suffering haunting the human psyche at all times from time the day Adam and Eve lost the
status of eternity. This is where *The Book of Job* becomes a site for what Newsom calls “critical curiosity” (72), and honest indignations and moral contestations with Joban dialogue remaining “internally endless”, to quote Bakhtin. Bakhtin comments: “In its structure Job’s dialogue is internally endless, for the opposition of the soul to God – whether the opposition be hostile or humble – is conceived in it as something irrevocable and eternal” (88). It is this internally endless dialogue that Bakhtin finds in *The Book of Job* that takes this research study to examine further in Chapter Three by way of textual analysis, particularly the speeches of Job’s friends and God in the context of Job’s lament that insists on his integrity and piety and therefore asks for a trail in the presence of God.