Cementing and Synthesizing the Polyphonic Poetics in the Contemporary Era

Prof. Manminder Singh Anand

Abstract

The present paper attempts to analyse the conceptual aspects of Polyphonic discourse, as also to figure out the radical elements in post colonial writing carried out abroad as well as in India. An attempt has been made to focus on the radical elements in individual authors like Homi k Bhabha , Mikhail Bhaktin , Roland Barthes , Julia Kristeva , Edward W Said , Edwin Ardner , Ferdinand De Saussure , Jachques Derrida and also to compare and contrast their specific preferences and techniques like Intertexuality , Ambivalence , mimicry ,pastiche , Wild zone , heteroglossia , carnivalesque , Mimicry , Dialogism , Chronotype , Third space . The paper, thus, presents an overview of the polyphonic voices having a specific tilt towards radical elements. However, this paper also tries to point out how Multiculturalisation has entered in literary texts and has stormed the entire world . The literature plays a considerable role in the development of understanding across cultures. Literature and criticism has eventually emerged as a polyphonic multicultural products in the contemporary era.

The purpose of this article is to provide an operational definition of multiculturalism and its value for all groups as a basis for understanding the changes coming to our society. The motive of the paper is an endeavour to construct futuristic visions of literature and criticism.

Keywords: Multiculturalism , Hybridity , Trans cultralisation ,Polyphony ,Orient , Occident, Post - Colonial , Marginalized , Orientalist , The Other , Subaltern , fiction , Third world

Defining Multiculturalism

With large-scale immigration into Western and Northern Europe, "multiculturalism" has become a major topic of political and intellectual discourse. Multiculturalism is the new paradigm for education for the 21st century, is the most controversial term which is greatly misused and highly misunderstood. Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that

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recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society. Multiculturalism describes the existence, acceptance, or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single jurisdiction, usually considered in terms of the culture associated with an ethnic group. This can happen when a jurisdiction is created or expanded by amalgamating areas with two or more different cultures (e.g. French Canada and English Canada) or through immigration from different jurisdictions around the world (e.g. Australia, United States, United Kingdom, and many other countries).

Multicultural ideologies and policies vary widely,[1] ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society, to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity, to policies in which people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed by the authorities as defined by the group to which they belong.[2][3] Multiculturalism that promotes maintaining the distinctiveness of multiple cultures is often contrasted to other settlement policies such as social integration, cultural assimilation and racial segregation. Multiculturalism has been described as a "salad bowl" and "cultural mosaic".[4]

Multiculturalism is a "system," a set of interrelated parts , beliefs and behaviours which make up the whole of how humans experience today's world. It includes what people believe about others, their basic paradigms, and how these impact, and are impacted by, behaviour.

Two different and seemingly inconsistent strategies have developed through different government policies and strategies. The first focuses on interaction and communication between different cultures; this approach is also often known as interculturalism. The second centers on diversity and cultural uniqueness which can sometimes result in intercultural competition.Cultural isolation can protect the uniqueness of the local culture of a nation or area and also contribute to global cultural diversity.[5][6] A common aspect of many policies following the second approach is that they avoid presenting any specific ethnic, religious, or cultural community values as central.

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Polyphonic Discourse and Transculturalisation

Transculturation is the reciprocal process by which two cultures, upon contact, engage in a system of give and take and adaptation to each other's ways, though often not in an equal manner, resulting in the emergence of a new cultural reality (Ortiz 1970).[7] It is a two-way process of cultural exchange, where the various groups learn from each other, each impacting the other, without totally losing their unique distinctiveness. This rich blend of ethnic groups, coming together on the basis of coalitions of interests and not of color, with a common set of values, is what makes the United States of America distinct and gives us the competitive edge in the world today.

Many critics of the literary world like Homi K Bhabha has contributed a lot in synthesizing the field of Polyphonic discourse . **Homi K. Bhabha** is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language, and the Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University. He is one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies, and has developed a number of the field's neologisms and key concepts, such as hybridity, mimicry, difference, and ambivalence and also authored the essay "Of Mimicry and Man" .

Hybridity

Hybridity's contemporary uses are scattered across numerous academic disciplines and is salient in popular culture.[8] *Hybrid talk*, the rhetoric of hybridity, is fundamentally associated with the emergence of post-colonial discourse and its critiques of cultural imperialism. It is the second stage in the history of hybridity, characterized by literature and theory that study the effects of mixture (hybridity) upon identity and culture.

Mimicry

Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial literature is most commonly seen when members of a colonized society (Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers (the British or the French). Under colonialism and in the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behavior: one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself. Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity, though in some cases immigrants and colonial subjects are left so confused by their

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cultural encounter with a dominant foreign culture that there may not be a clear preexisting identity to suppress.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, semioticianand scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language. His writings, on a variety of subjects, inspired scholars working in a number of different traditions (Marxism, semiotics, structuralism, religious criticism) and in disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology. He Coined revolutionary terms like Heteroglossia, dialogism, chronotope, carnivalesque,and polyphony .

Heteroglossia

The term *heteroglossia* describes the coexistence of distinct varieties within a single "language" (in Greek: *hetero-* "different" and *glōssa* "tongue, language"). In this way the term translates literally as "different-speech-ness", which was introduced by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin in his 1934 paper published in English as "Discourse in the Novel." Bakhtin argues that the power of the novel originates in the coexistence of, and conflict between, different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of narrators, and even the speech of the author. He defines heteroglossia as "another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way." Bakhtin identifies the direct narrative of the author, rather than dialogue between characters, as the primary location of this conflict.

Dialogism

Bakhtin contrasts the dialogic and the "monologic" work of literature. The dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors. It does not merely answer, correct, silence, or extend a previous work, but informs and is continually informed by the previous work.

Dialogic literature is in communication with multiple works. This is not merely a matter of influence, for the dialogue extends in both directions, and the previous work of literature is as altered by the dialogue as the present one is. Bakhtin's ideas were familiar with T.S.Eliot as his "dialogic" is consonant with Eliot's ideas in "Tradition and the Individual

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Talent," where Eliot holds that "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past".[9]

Chronotope

In literary theory and philosophy of language, the **chronotope** is how configurations of time and space are represented in language and discourse. The term was taken up by Russian literary scholar M.M. Bakhtin who used it as a central element in his theory of meaning in language and literature.[10] The term itself is derived from the Greek ('time') & ('space'); it thus can be literally translated as "time-space." Bakhtin developed the term in 1937 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel."

Here Bakhtin showed how different Greek literary genres operated with different configurations of time and space, which gave each genre its particular narrative character. For example, the chronotopic frame of the epic differed from that of the hero adventure or the comedy.[11]

Carnivalesque

Carnivalesque refers to a literary mode that subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humor and chaos. Bakhtin traces the origins of the carnivalesque to the concept of carnival, itself related to the Feast of Fools, a medieval festival originally of the sub-deacons of the cathedral, held about the time of the Feast of the Circumcision (1 January), in which the humbler cathedral officials burlesqued the sacred ceremonies, releasing "the natural lout beneath the cassock."[12] Also Bakhtin derives carnival and the carnivalization of literature from the reign of the "Serio-comical" with the examples of Socratic dialogues and Menippean satire. Within the Socratic dialogue carnival affects all people into the behavior and rituals in to the carnivalistic life, as in every individual is affected by carnival, meaning everyone is a constant participant of carnival.

Polyphony

In literature, **polyphony** is a feature of narrative, which includes a diversity of points of view and voices. The concept was introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin, using a metaphor based on the musical term polyphony.For Bakhtin the primary example of polyphony was Dostoevsky's prose. Bakhtin argued that Dostoyevsky, unlike previous novelists, does not

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appear to aim for a 'single vision' and goes beyond simply describing situations from various angles. Instead, according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky aimed for fully dramatic novels of ideas in which conflicting views and characters are left to develop unevenly.In 2015, Svetlana Alexievich was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time.[13]

Roland Barthes also speaks of intertextual codes as a 'mirage of citations,' likely to prove evasive and insubstantial as soon as one attempts to grasp them. The codes are nothing other than the 'deja vu,' and readers, in whom these codes dwell, may be thought of as the representatives of a general intertextuality. '*I,*' writes Barthes, *'is not an innocent subject that is anterior to texts.... The I that approaches the text is itself already a plurality of other texts, of infinite or, more precisely, lost codes (whose origins are lost).* The paradoxical nature of discursive systems: Discursive conventions can only originate in discourse [But discourse depends on discursive conventions].

Intertexuality

Julia Kristeva coined the term **Intertextuality** which means the shaping of a text's meaning by another text. Intertextual figures include: allusion, quotation, calque, plagiarism, translation, *pastiche* and parody. Intertextuality is a literary device that creates an 'interrelationship between texts' and generates related understanding in separate works. These references are made to influence that reader and add layers of depth to a text, based on the readers' prior knowledge and understanding. Intertextuality is a literary discourse strategy utilised by writers in novels, poetry, theatre and even in non-written texts (such as performances and digital media). Examples of intertextuality are an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text, and a reader's referencing of one text in reading another. 'Intertextuality' thus has a double focus. On the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, insisting that the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion and that a work has the meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written. Yet in so far as it focuses on intelligibility, on meaning, 'intertextuality' leads us to consider prior texts as contributions to a code which makes possible the various effects of signification. Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture.

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Pastiche

     Pastiche is another form of polyphonic discourse . Pastiche is a creative work that imitates another author or genre. It's a way of paying respect, or honor, to great works of the past. Pastiche differs from parody in that pastiche isn't making fun of the works it imitates – however, the tone of pastiche is often humorous. This literary device is generally employed to imitate a piece of literary work light-heartedly but in a respectful manner. The term pastiche also applies to a literary work that is a wide mixture of items such as themes, concepts and characters imitated from different literary works. For instance, many of the pastiche examples are in the form of detective novels that are written in fashion of the original stories of "SherlockHolmes".

Women's Writing and Women's Culture in Elaine Show Alters
"Feminist Criticism In Wilderness"

     The theory of culture as a factor affecting women's writing is inclusive of the theories of biology, language and psyche. The influence of all these factors is guided by the cultural situation of a woman.

     Woman's culture is not a sub-culture of main culture. They are part of general culture itself. If patriarchal society applies restraints on them, they transform it into complementarity. Thus, women experience duality of culture including general culture and women's culture. Women form 'muted group' in society and men form 'dominant group'. Ardener suggested a diagram with two circles representing these two groups respectively. All language of the dominant group is all acceptable language. The muted group has to follow the same language. The part of the circle representing the muted group which does not coincide with the other circle represents that part of women's life which has not found any expression in history. It represents the activities, experiences and feelings of women which are unknown to men.

     Since they do not form part of men's life, they do not get representation in history. This 'female zone' is also known as 'wild zone' since it is out of the range of dominant boundary. Women could not write on experiences belonging exclusively on the wild zone. They have to give representation to the dominant culture in their texts. There are other muted

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groups as well than women. For instance, literary identity of a black American poet is forced upon her by the trends of the dominant group.

Feminist critics try to identify the aspects of women writers which do not follow the trends established by the male writers. For instance, Woolf's works show tendencies other than those of modernism. However, these tendencies are visible in the sections which have so far been considered obscure or imperfect. Feminist critics should attempt 'thick description' of women's writings. It is possible only when effect of gender and female literary tradition are considered among the various factors that affect the meaning of the text.

Wild Zone

The Concept of Wild Zone was coined by Edwin and Shirley Ardener . It is a term introduced in the 1981 essay "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," by Elaine Showalter which designate a specifically female area of culture. She adapts an anthropological model developed by Edwin and Shirley Ardener, wherein a dominant cultural group establishes structures that exclude or include other groups.

Orientalism is a 1978 book by Edward W. Said, a critical study of the cultural representations that are the bases of Orientalism, the West's patronizing perceptions and fictional depictions of "The East" — the societies and peoples who inhabit the places of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. Orientalism, Western scholarship about the Eastern World, was and remains inextricably tied to the imperialist societies who produced it, which makes much Orientalist work inherently political and servile to power, and thus intellectually suspect.[14]

In the Middle East, the social, economic, and cultural practices of the ruling Arab élites indicate they are imperial satraps who have internalized the romanticized "Arab Culture" created by British and American Orientalists; the examples include critical analyses of the colonial literature of Joseph Conrad, which conflates a people, a time, and a place into a narrative of incident and adventure in an exotic land.[15]

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The scope of Said's scholarship established *Orientalism* as a foundation text in the field of Post-colonial Culture Studies, which examines the denotations and connotations of Orientalism, and the history of a country's post-colonial period.

In practice, the imperial and colonial enterprises of the West are facilitated by collaborating régimes of Europeanized Arab élites who have internalized the fictional, romanticized representations of Arabic culture — the Orientalism invented by Anglo–American Orientalist. As such, Orientalist stereotypes of the cultures of the Eastern world have served, and continue to serve, as implicit justifications for the colonial ambitions and the imperial endeavours of the U.S. and the European powers. In that vein, about contemporary Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims, Said said:

> 'So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab–Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.'
>
> — "Islam Through Western Eyes" (1980) *The Nation* magazine.

The Challenges and Multiculturalism

The first Challenge is recognition of the rich diversity in a given society or organization. For the longest time racial/ethnic minorities, the physically disabled, and women have not been given the same recognition as others. The one-sided approach to history and education has been a testimony to that fact.   With recognition should also comes respect. Respect is the process whereby the Other is treated with deference, courtesy and compassion in an endeavor to safeguard the integrity, dignity, value and social worth of the individual. It means treating people the way they want to be treated. Respect and recognition are not the same, since recognizing the existence of a group does not necessarily elicit respect for the group. Our nation has a long history of not respecting the rights of the powerless. Multiculturalism also entails acknowledging the validity of the cultural expressions and contributions of the various groups. This is not to imply that all cultural contributions are of equal value and social worth, or that all should be tolerated. Some cultural practices are

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better than others for the overall betterment of society. These cultural expressions and contributions that differ from those of the dominant group in society are usually only acknowledged when there is an economic market for them, such as music for African American, native Indian dances for tourism or Mexican cuisine.

Multiculturalism thus means valuing what people have to offer, and not rejecting or belittling it simply because it differs from what the majority, or those in power, regard as important and of value.

Conclusion

In an age of cultural pluralism and diversity, multiculturalism is needed to provide a corrective to the reality of our American heritage. It is the only option open to educators, leaders and administrators in an ever-increasing culturally pluralistic environment. This is because today's diverse student populations are simply not going to go away, but increase. This is the direction of the future multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual and schools and communities will also reflect these dynamic changes.

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