

Editorial

BEING HUMAN DIALOGICALLY Literary Perspectives and Projects

To live is to dialogue, and to dialogue is to live. As *homo loquens*, use of language is fundamental to and constitutive of being human, and all language use is dialogical. Even in silence we continue to speak and in monologues and confessions listeners are implicit. Language use, like any human practice, is objective and normative and it could be perceived and understood by other human beings. It is inherently social, even when no one is explicitly present. Though words have use and, hence, meaning only in a stream of life, to imagine a human form of life without language use is difficult, if not impossible, and such a life will be characteristically different from other human forms of life. We would not understand them as human.

It was generally held in the past that human beings invented language to express thought, and language is considered the clothing of thought, a means to make abstract thought perceptible. The contemporary view, however, is that language did not emerge as a medium of thought but as a means of thinking. Human rationality developed together with the development of the capacity for use of symbols for dialogue – conversation and collaboration. Dialoguing is, thus, fundamental to language and to being human, and a life without dialogue will be categorically different from the way we live, move and have our being. Dialogue is fundamental to nurturing individuals and communities, for greater personalisation and socialisation. It is in dialogue that human beings express themselves and become persons and social beings. It is the means and expression of personalization and socialization. It is true, however, language could also be a cause for inauthenticity of individuals: many do not judge for themselves, do not dialogue and decide on their own account, but think, judge, and decide according to what they have heard, said by others. Language is also used to destroy individuals and communities; this is the abuse of language; instead of dialogue, language use becomes a monologue.

Dialogue in the ordinary sense refers to reciprocal communication and interpersonal communion. It is both dynamic and stable and rests on agreement in our forms of life,¹ which includes both agreements in actions and judgements. The bedrock of dialogue is regularity and agreement in actions rather than ratiocination. "It is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game."² Since dialogue is a practice, regularity is essential to language use. The dialogue partners must be able to see and judge similarities and act accordingly to form persons and societies. Dialogue, thus, relates to ways of living; it is a human phenomenon showing how we live, move, and have our being. Dialogues are practices that take place within the streams of life. They serve as the preferred and natural means of living together in harmony and community building.

Without these overwhelming agreements in judgements, our dialogues will be "confusion of language" (*Sprachverwirrung*), rather than language-game (*Sprachspiel*): "It would be a 'confusion of language,' and say that although each one accompanied his actions with the uttering of sounds, nevertheless there was no language."³ Both nature and nurture work together to create and shape language-games and forms of life. Without nurture leading to agreement in judgements, we end up with noises, marks and *Sprachverwirrung* rather than *Sprachspiel*.

In literature, dialogue is used in a variety of language-games to inform data, express feelings and emotions, direct characters for actions, and perform characteristic roles in forms of life. Wittgenstein's list of uses of language, which is not by any means exhaustive, shows the dialogical character of language:

¹Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 241.

²Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969, 475, 204.

³"Es wäre eine "Sprachverwirrung" und sagen, dass jeder seine Handlungen allerdings mit dem Ausstoßen von Lauten begleitete, das aber noch keine Sprache ergibt." Wittgenstein, *Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 165, 94.

Giving orders, and obeying them, Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements, Constructing an object from a description (a drawing), Reporting an event, Speculating about an event, Forming and testing a hypothesis, Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams, Making up a story; and reading it, Play-acting, Singing catches, Guessing riddles, Making a joke; telling it, Solving a problem in practical arithmetic, Translating from one language into another, Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.⁴

All these forms are linguistic use and find in various forms of literature – play, short stories, novels, narratives, biographies, travelogue, poetry, chronicle, history, etc. Language use could be considered as a part of the natural history of human beings, and literature does inform, express, direct and perform these complex forms of life. Our minds grasp things not as they are in themselves but in a discursive horizon, and words get their meaning not from their reference to external things but from their relations to other signs and symbols in a stream of dialogues and life. Our worldviews and perspectives are influenced by the dialogues that we engage in our lives. That there is a fundamental relationship between our dialogues and our forms of life is obvious; our forms of life are products and projects of dialogue – conversations and collaborations.

Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, points out that all individuals indulge in rhetoric to demonstrate the truth or righteousness in what one wants to say. Problems arise only when rhetoric is used to appeal to emotions, rather than reason. In the current times, when rhetoric is used by leaders for propaganda, to whip up emotions in terms of nationalism and racism, George Orwell's remark – "political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable"⁵ – sounds relevant. Sharmila, in her article, "Rhetoric as an Instrument for Manipulation and Distortion of Truth: An Analysis of Orwell's

⁴Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1953, 11.

⁵George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language* <www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/> (20 April 2016).

1984," examines Orwell's *1984* to demonstrate how rhetoric is a powerful tool in the hands of political leaders that can control the thoughts of individuals, to the extent of reducing them to non-entities. In an era where even manufacture of consent is possible, the paper highlights how the quality of rhetoric has vitiated over time and the concern that the abuse of language prevalent in fascist regimes of Hitler and Stalin is slowly creeping into democracies too. A peaceful and harmonious existence is possible only when political leaders engage in responsible rhetoric and are willing to dialogue with dissenting voices.

Mikhael Bakhtin has fundamentally changed our understanding of the novel form by shifting emphasis from monologism and freeing the novel from author's/narrator's vision controlled narrative to dialogism where multiple voices are possible and there is a recognition of more than one valid understanding of the context. Sidhartha Gigoo's novel *The Garden of Solitude* functions as a work of art that brings out the true nature of fundamentalism, which is characterised by a total lack of openness to the voices on the other side. The article "Understanding the Displacement of Pandits from Kashmir Valley: Dialogism in *The Garden of Solitude*" by Sujit R. Chandak reads into the multiple voices in the novel and constructs a critical understanding of the displacement of Pandit's from Kashmir that the insurgency of the 1990s in Kashmir, which was a result of aspiration for a separate political identity for Kashmir was turned into a 'Jihad' against the non-Muslims. Fundamentalism hijacked the age-old plurality of the Kashmiri culture and the casualties were the Pandits and the Sufi form of Islam practised in the Valley. The paper makes a case against fundamentalism that forced Pandits to leave their homes but could not break the emotional bond amongst the Muslims and the Pandits of Kashmir, and presents dialogue as an antidote.

If it is to be believed that no art exists in a vacuum and that it is in response to the preceding works of art, then the poetry of T. S. Eliot would prove more befitting, engaging and intriguing for the readers because of its relational approach and connection with

tradition. What Bakhtin proposed in his theory of dialogism was something that Eliot had already dealt with in his poetics. His awareness of the past, consciousness of his place in time and his realization of not being able to get on without a literary tradition, compelled him to leave Harvard in search of a rich literary past, which could offer him the 'Whole'. His sojourn in Paris and London are suggestive of his aim to establish dialogues with the various literary traditions, right from French, English to Indic. His dialogues with his immediate predecessors can perhaps best be joined within the frame work of *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. In her paper, "Intra-Poetic Relationship: T. S. Eliot's Dialogue with Tradition," Rajni Singh demonstrates the ways in which Eliot endeavoured to come closer to his precursors during his visit to Paris and London, partly for assimilation and partly for rejection. The author probes into Eliot's historical sense to bring to the fore his intra-poetic relationships, particularly with the prominent Victorian poet Tennyson and the way these influences were integral to his development as a poet, critic and artist. His changing responses to his precursor made him a strong (in Bloomian sense) and major 'Twentieth Century English Poet'.

The paper, "Transforming through Dialogue in Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*" by Rinson George and John Joseph Kennedy, investigates the importance and relevance of dialogue in interpersonal relationship and argues that the authentic interpersonal relationship is essentially dialogic and transforming. The importance and the transforming effects of dialogue are explored through an analysis of Bernard Malamud's novel *The Assistant*. An attempt is made to understand the relationship between philosophy and literature while, at the same time, an interrogation is made to analyse the role of dialogue in philosophy and literature. For this, it makes use of the philosophy of dialogue proposed by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. The analysis shows that dialogue acts as a medium through which human beings interact and it has the potential to transform people. The results of this study clearly emphasize the possibility of using dialogue as a tool for transformation in day-to-day life.

"Crucible of Cultural Encounters: Paradigms of Conflict in Selected Parsi and Anglo-Indian English Novels of the 1980s" by Sonia Chacko examines how the problem of cultural hybridity in the Indian context is explored by the Parsi and Anglo-Indian English novelists of the 1980s. It is found that in the absence of dialogue, understanding and acceptance of cross-cultural differences, conflicts and disharmony prevail for the minorities, both in India and abroad, where they are in diaspora. Holding a mirror up to their unique communities, these writers enter into a dialogue with the readers too, inspiring them to revise some of the long-held notions about these people who were hitherto seen as the 'other' and call for their integration into mainstream society, while retaining their special flavour.

Literature, thus, makes use of dialogue to inform and inspire the society; it reflects the way we live and challenges the reader to be agents of change. They serve to analyse the society critically and suggest creative ways nurturing harmony of life. These papers were first presented in conferences *Journal of Dharma* organised in Thrissur, Goa and Bangalore with Universities and Colleges in India and the support of Globethics.net India. With sentiments of gratitude to all the collaborators may I present to the readers these "Literary Perspectives and Projects" on "Being Human Dialogically."

Jose Nandhikkara, Editor-in-Chief