

Q. What was Mikhail Bakhtin's main concern about language? Explain how Bakhtin treats language.

Or

Analyse , after Mikhail Bakhtin, the concept of Polyphony, Dialogism and Heteroglossia in terms of language in writing.

Ans : Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the most important theorists of discourse in the twentieth century. He is sometimes termed the most important Soviet thinker in the social sciences. Sometimes associated with Russian formalism, Bakhtin operates somewhere between a structural and constructivist approach to discourse.

In his early philosophical work, Bakhtin insists that each Things don't exist 'in themselves', but only in their relations. As a literary analyst, Bakhtin emphasises the location of particular authors in the speech-genres they deploy, and in their spatial and temporal context. Bakhtin sees being as a 'unique and unified event'. Being is always 'event' or 'co-being', simultaneous with other beings. is unique and irreplaceable.

Bakhtin's Theory of Polyphony and Dialogism

Polyphony literally means multiple voices. Bakhtin does not place his own narrative voice between the character and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert. It is thus as if the books were written by multiple characters, not a single author's standpoint. Instead of a single objective world, held together by the author's voice, there is a plurality of consciousnesses, each with its own world. The reader does not see a single reality presented by the author, but rather, how reality appears to each character. Polyphony in literature is the consequence of a dialogic sense of truth. Dostoevsky's 'dialogical principle' is counterposed to the 'monologism'. In a monological novel for instance, characters exist solely to transmit the author's ideology, and the author represents only their own idea, not anyone else's. Dialogism in contrast recognises the multiplicity of perspectives and voices. It is also referred to as 'double-voiced' or 'multi-voiced'.

For Bakhtin, monological language is a corruption of an underlying dialogism. All signifying practices (i.e. use of language and symbols) have an ultimately dialogical aim. Human consciousness is not a unified entity, but rather, is always conflict-ridden between different consciousnesses. Indeed, a single consciousness separate from interaction with other consciousnesses is impossible.

The Concept of Heteroglossia :

Heteroglossia is an interesting and thoughtful literary term to discover and understand to get the taste of a novel. In "The Dialogical Imagination", Bakhtin extends his analysis of dialogism through the concept of heteroglossia. This analysis emphasises the combination of existing statements or speech-genres to construct a text. Each novel is constructed from a diversity of styles and voices, assembled into a structured artistic system which arranges difference in a particular way. Bakhtin did not think monoglossical dominance could last for long. It is doomed to be ruptured by a return of heteroglossia, as the dominant discourse is interrupted by other voices. Heteroglossia is basic, whereas monoglossia is an alienated form of it. Because language always ultimately orients to the other, it is primordially dialogical. There is ultimately no unified literary medium, but rather, a plenitude of local social languages.

In short, Bakhtin's writings, on a variety of subjects, inspired scholars working in a number of different traditions. Bakhtinian dialogism refers to a philosophy of language and a social theory that was developed by Bakhtin. These are linked and in constant dialogue through different means, language being just one. The relation between self and other is shaped by position. According to Bakhtin, life is dialogic and a shared event; living is participating in dialogue. Meaning comes about through dialogue at whatever level that dialogue takes place.

To sum up, Mikhail M. Bakhtin is increasingly being recognized as one of the major literary theorists of the twentieth century. He is perhaps best known for his radical philosophy of language, as well as his theory of the novel, underpinned by concepts such as "dialogism," "polyphony," and "carnival," themselves resting on the more fundamental concept of "heteroglossia".