

# Intertextuality and Dialogism in Narayan Surve's *Karl Marx*: A Marxist Perspective

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<p>Received on: 18 Jan 2025</p> <p>Revised on: 15 Feb 2025</p> <p>Accepted on: 19 Feb 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>).</p> <p><b>Keywords – Intertextuality, Marxism, Localisation, Dialogism &amp; Voice of Protest.</b></p>	<p><i>Julia Kristeva's concept of Intertextuality signifies the relations of texts through their references of ideas, wording and ideological resonances. This paper investigates the intertextual dimensions of Narayan Surve's poem Karl Marx, presenting how it integrates ideological, historical, cultural, and literary elements within the idea of class struggle. Through Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism theory and Marxist literary criticism, the study highlights how the poet Surve builds dialogue between past and present, representing the Marxist ideas in contemporary labour movements. The localisation of Karl Marx through oral traditions and cultural references shows how intertextuality functions as a vehicle for ideological and political solidarity. The poet Narayan Surve's depiction of Marx as an active presence breaks the linearity of historical texts, representing class consciousness through poetic expression. Additionally, the poem's reference to Goethe further embroils the relationship between art and revolution, signifying the role of literature in designing proletarian agency. By analysing these intertextual strategies, this paper argues that the poem Karl Marx exemplifies how poetry can be a medium for ideological resistance, linking historical materialism with lived experience.</i></p>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Intertextuality is a concept familiarised by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s in her book *Word, Dialogue and Novel*. Intertextuality signifies a text's connection to another, shaping the meaning through their relations, as Alfaro (1996) rightly pointed with the tune of Kristeva that "the text as a dynamic site in which relational process and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structure and products" (268). In addition to Bakhtin's dialogism concept, Kristeva (1980) argued that all texts breathe within a network of connection or relations, influenced by

previous texts and contributing to the making of future texts. This idea or perspective challenges the notion of a text as a self-centred entity, instead accentuating its position within a broader cultural, ideological and literary framework. Roland Barthes (1977) further extended this idea, adding that "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (p. 146). This interpretation transforms the author's intention to the reader's interpretation and creative level, in which meaning is created through the intertextual connection. As a result, reading becomes an act of

refiguring and rewriting the relation of texts to others.

Intertextuality is exhibited at various levels, from explicit citations, alliteration, simile, metaphor, and allusions to more subtle references through cultural, political, and ideological connections. For instance, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) reinterprets Homer's *Odyssey*, creating new meanings through modernist presentations (Eagleton, 1996). Similarly, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) demonstrates a collage of intertextual fragments through classical, religious, and literary sources to present the flavour of modernity (Culler, 2001). Postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon (1988) presents intertextuality's role in parody and pastiche, where texts are associated with previous texts through irony and critique. This is evident in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which relooks Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) from a postcolonial point of view, stimulating its Eurocentric and patriarchal dominance (Spivak, 1985). Similarly, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) contextualise *The Odyssey* by centring Penelope and the twelve maids, re-looking the male-centric portrayal. Despite its critical importance, some researchers argue that intertextuality can remove the originality of the text and just present it as a mere recombination of preexisting essence (Genette, 1997). However, this idea overlooks the creative and authentic transformation embedded in intertextual practices. As Harold Bloom (1973) posits in *The Anxiety of Influence*, original writers engage in a dialectical struggle with their literary predecessors, reconsidering influences to assert their authenticity and originality in the text.

An excellent example of intertextuality within Indian literature is Narayan Surve's *Karl Marx*, translated by Mustansir Dalvi, which merges historical, cultural, ideological, and literary elements into a prominent experience of class struggle. The poem presents Marx not as a distant theorist or a writer but as an active presence in workers' movements, strengthening the continued relevance of his idea of class. Through the character of Janakiakka, Marx's legacy is introduced in colloquial terms, localising his influence. The poem humorously depicts Marx's flawless discussions, reinforcing his role and involvement in shaping revolutionary thought. The climactic declaration- "Now, we are the protagonists of history",-echoes

Marxist ideology, affirming the position of the working class. The closing allusion to Goethe demonstrates the intersection of poetry and political thought, signifying the poet's role in accentuating the revolutionary spirit. Surve bridges the gap between past and present, theory and action through these intertextual elements, rendering Marx a comrade in struggles rather than just a distant historical theorist.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research paper employs a Marxist literary theory, incorporating intertextuality and Bakhtinian dialogism to interpret Surve's poem. Bakhtin's concept of dialogism discloses that texts connect in constant conversation with other texts, designing and shaping their meanings through intertextual relations. Kristeva's theory of intertextuality further supports this opinion, putting forward that meaning is created through the interaction of texts by the reader rather than authorial intention. Additionally, Marxist literary criticism, particularly Althusser's ideology concept and Gramsci's theory of organic intellectuals, analyse how *Karl Marx* integrates revolutionary thought within a poetic structure. By examining how Surve recontextualises Marxist ideas within an Indian labour movement, the paper presents the ideological function of intertextuality in literary discourse.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative textual analysis approach to analyse Surve's *Karl Marx* through a Marxist and intertextual lens. Primary textual analysis examines how the poem references cultural, ideological, historical, and literary sources, identifying intertextual strategies reinforcing class struggle. Secondary sources, like Kristeva's intertextuality and Bakhtinian dialogism, provide a critical framework to understand the poem's ideological function. This methodological approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of intertextuality as a tool for ideological critique in literature.

## IV. ANALYSIS

Intertextuality signifies how texts exist in a network of references, reshaping and redesigning meaning

through interactions with past narratives. Within a Marxist theory, intertextuality is a tool to disclose ideological structures and reveal the continuity of class struggle (Eagleton, 1996). Surve's *Karl Marx* demonstrates this phenomenon by adding Marx's legacy to the contemporary labour protest, presenting the persistence of class conflict as outlined in *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels, 1848). Thus, the poem highlights personal experience with history, blending reality and ideology through intertextual references to Karl Marx and his philosophy.

Surve's poem does not only present Karl Marx as a mere theorist but as embodied in labour workers' struggles. The opening lines- "*Here is how I met Marx / during my very first strike*", signify the immediate collapse of temporal distance, making Marx an active participant in the movement rather than a historical figure and theorist. This shows the Marxist concept of historical materialism, where economic situations determine social structures (Marx, 1867). The speaker's phrase "first strike" awakens class consciousness, a crucial step in Marxist revolutionary praxis (Lukács, 1923).

The poem incorporates an oral storytelling tradition through the character of Janakiakka (a working-class woman), who introduces Marx in a manner that blends historical fact with the local idiom: "*D'you know him? / This here, is our own Markusbaba / born in Germany, / wrote sacksful of books / then met his end in England.*" By referring to Marx as *Markusbaba* (a term of reverence in Indian culture), the poet Surve indigenes his ideas, presenting how Marxist thought crosses geographical and cultural barriers. This localisation of Marx resembles Gramsci's (1971) theory of organic intellectuals-working-class thinkers who reinterpret revolutionary theory within their socio-political context. Blending historical reality (Marx's life and death) with familiar, colloquial storytelling reflects how ideas surpass time and place.

Throughout the poem, Surve highlights Marx as a dynamic figure and active participant in the contemporary struggle movement, strengthening intertextuality through conversations and engaging in dialogue. During a workers' protest, the poet describes Marx as interrupting his speech, which is evident in the lines: "*Marx pushed his way forward / and*

*said: I'll tell you / then shot his mouth off, going on and on.*" These lines employ humour to present Marx as an assertive and ever-relevant thinker. The interference shows the inescapable presence of class struggle, echoing Althusser's (1971) notion of ideology as an omnipresent force shaping consciousness. Further, the phrase "*shot his mouth off*" humorously humanises Marx, suggesting that his ideas remain forceful, urgent, relevant and directly applicable to contemporary issues.

In another instance, Marx reappears at a picket line, where the poet Surve declares: "*Now, we are the protagonists of history / and the subject of all accounts that will be written.*" By approving this statement, Marx affirms the poet's role in moulding history. This directly engages with Marx's assertion in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867), accentuating the proletariat as a driving force. By placing the proletariat workers at the centre of history, Surve reaffirms the agency of the proletariat, confronting the bourgeois historiography that traditionally marginalises labour movements (Thompson, 1963). Surve thus reinforces Marxist thought by presenting it as an ongoing, lived struggle rather than just a theory.

The poem concludes with an unexpected literary reference: "*Man, you do write poetry, d'you not? / Good, Good! / Y'know, I used to like Goethe. / Once.*" This intertextual reference to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a literary personality of German Romanticism. Marx's reference to Goethe invokes the intersection of art and revolution. Goethe, often associated with Romanticism, contrasts with Marx's materialist philosophy, yet his works critique feudal structures, showing early revolutionary sentiments. This moment signals the importance of cultural production in class struggle, aligning with Marxist aesthetics as discussed by Benjamin (1936), who argued that art should serve political consciousness. Marx's admiration for Goethe shows that revolutionary thought and poetic sensibility coexist, repositioning that ideological struggles are not devoid of artistic expression. Surve, a poet himself, aligns with this idea and reinforces that poetry and activism can intersect.

## V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings reveal that intertextuality in the poem operates through multiple dimensions. The poet Surve presents Marx as a living presence, actively engaging with workers' protest. The speaker's reference to meeting Marx during his "first strike" collapses temporal distance, aligning with Marx's theory that economic structures mould class consciousness. Through the figure of Janakiakka, Marx is introduced in a colloquial and culturally embedded manner. The term "Markusbaba" indigenises Marxist thought, making it accessible to the Indian working class. This aligns with Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals, who adapt revolutionary theories to their socio-political contexts.

Further, Surve's poetic dialogue with Marxist philosophy demonstrates intertextuality's role in representing revolutionary discourse. The poem's declaration-"Now, we are the protagonists of history", accentuates the working class's role in moulding historical narratives. This assertion echoes *The Communist Manifesto*, where Marx and Engels position the proletariat people as the driving force of historical transformation. Additionally, the reference to Goethe integrates literary tradition with revolutionary ideas and thoughts. Marx's engagement with Goethe shows that art and ideology are intertwined, refiguring Benjamin's argument that cultural production should serve political consciousness in society. These findings show how Surve's *Karl Marx* employs the technique of intertextuality not merely as a literary device but as a means of ideological intervention, transforming historical figures into active participants in contemporary protest movements.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Surve's *Karl Marx* is a deeply intertextual poem that weaves historical, ideological, and literary elements into a personal narrative. By localising Marx through oral tradition, depicting him as an ever-present figure, and engaging with historical materialism, the poet Surve creates a literary dialogue that bridges the gap between the past and present. The reference to Goethe further strengthens the poem's intertextual framework, which bridges history, labour

movements, and poetry. Through this technique, Surve transforms Marx from a distant theorist into a comrade in the fight for justice, making his ideas accessible to the proletariat class. Therefore, the poem exemplifies how Marxist intertextuality is a tool for ideological critique and proletarian solidarity.

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