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Ethical Values In Postmodern Scenario

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Abstract:

Postmodernism is the extension on and continuation of modernism. Modernism is not dead but living through the spirit of post modernism. But, somehow we can identify or classify post-modernism from modernism on some grounds like “Modern having some tradition of past and reality lies under the surface and all types of ethical, moral truth and values are final and fix which cannot be challenged” but in post-modernism. “No reality lies under the surface; post-modernism is / was against totality of life, we don’t take absolute truth values and truths are time specific and contextual”. Spirit of post-modernism and this spirit of adding something new paves the way for Avant-gardism which firstly came in painting and than in literature headed by Ferdinand Mongin De Saussure, Jacques Derrida who deconstructed the centre of all existing theories, Jacques Lacan etc. It was intellectual revolution and it is another name of post-modernism. This was the age of psycho-analytical Theory of Sigmund Freud and Jung and ultimately, this modernity paves the way for post-modernism. When Charles Darwin came with his theory of Evolution, all theories, all principal, become evolutionary. Everything was being studied with the back ground of evolution and thus all realities became evolutionary. When Einstein came with his theory of relativity, than everything became relative, all theories and all principal of study and perception became relative.

Jurgan Hebermas rejected the idea of Final, fix, everlasting, universal reality or truth based on the belief in Meta-narrative or grand narrative and he projected the idea of temporal truth, individual truth, specific cultural truth and contextual truth and this truth is also provisional, not universal. The roots of literary modernism must be traced to the ideas of these philosophers, Darwin, Marx and Freud: the human being popularly conceived as a fallen angel, became after The Origin of the Species (1859) a cultured ape. The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901) and other really know more than the ostensible reasons for such an action.

To conclude, postmodernism can be understood as a conceptual strategy or a set of strategies to cope with present day realities and human condition. The term then assumes a broad category which tries to interpret, analyze or understand the often conflictual multi-dimensions of life, experience, knowledge.

Postmodernism is the extension on and continuation of modernism. Modernism is not dead but living through the spirit of post modernism. But, somehow we can identify or classify post-modernism from modernism on some grounds like “Modern having some tradition of past and reality lies under the surface and all types of ethical, moral truth and values are final and fix which cannot be challenged” but in post-modernism. “No reality lies under the surface; post-modernism is / was against totality of life, we don’t take absolute truth values and truths are time specific and contextual”. In other words in post-modernism all ethics, all values, all morals, all truths are temporary, contextual, individual experience specific and even spatial “Even empirical knowledge is not final truth, that is also temporal and in future new empirical study may come into existence” (Prof. B.S Yadav, Central University of Haryana), which is subjected to individual experience and experiment.

In respect of Media and Print can be understood post-modernism in the words of Assit. Professor Dr. Ritu Tomar Rathi (Central University of Haryana) when she says that “Post-modernism is something blending of Romanticism and Neo classics, so post-modernism was experiment with print media and electronic media”. In other words whatever is old-make it new or beautiful blinding of new culture fall of technology and of old traditional, and than something new will come and that is post-modernism.

Thus old may be bad, ugly but we should add something new and should create – new things and this belongs to the spirit of post-modernism and this spirit of adding something new paves the way for Avant-gardism which firstly came in painting and than in literature headed by Ferdinand Mongin De Saussure, Jacques Derrida who deconstructed the centre of all existing theories, Jacques Lacan etc. It was intellectual revolution and it is another name of post-modernism.

Modernity deals with conventions and culture. It establishes with new times in respect of conventions. Three important movements were prevailing in Arts, imagism, cubism and Dadaism and post-modernism was reaction against all kinds of ‘isms’ like imagism and dadaism etc. In case of poetry and literature, it is different from traditional poetry in terms of context, style, language, and theme.

Modern age was the age of war, disillusionment and different kinds of psychological disease caught the attention of literary cannons where disillusionment of life is projected as in the case of ‘waste land’ by T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden. So Modern poetry was in response to Romantic poetry in which imagination, fancy, beauty, Nature was worshiped and best example of this is the definition of

poetry by T.S. Eliot that poetry is not expression of personality but an escape from personality. This was the age of psycho-analytical Theory of Sigmund Freud and Jung and ultimately, this modernity paves the way for post-modernism.

Generally it is said that post-modernism is merely an extension of modernism but still there are certain points where you find post-modernism a distinct phenomenon. Post-modernism is the movement which cannot construct the absolute truth or final truth. "Reality may not be real. Hyper-reality may be there and that is more real than seeming reality" Assit. Profe. S. Kumar. (Dept. of English, Central University of Haryana)

When Charles Darwin came with his theory of Evolution, all theories, all principal, become evolutionary. Everything was being studied with the background of evolution and thus all realities became evolutionary. When Einstein came with his theory of relativity, than everything became relative, all theories and all principal of study and perception became relative and thus all kinds of reality took the spirit of relativity and this multiplicity of reality leads to contextual reality, temporal reality, individual reality, spatial reality and this plurality of reality is supported by the theory of Mini narratives with the rejection of Grand narrative or meta-narratives.

Jurgan Hebermas rejected the idea of Final, fix, everlasting, universal reality or truth based on the belief in Meta-narrative or grand narrative and he projected the idea of temporal truth, individual truth, specific cultural truth and contextual truth and this truth is also provisional, not universal, not final and such type of Mottled reality is expected in post-modern and that is why feminism is rejected and eco-feminism, cyber-feminism, homo-sexuality, lesbianism, queer theory, cyber-culture became prominent in post-modernism. Queer theory is celebrated by post-modernist as homo-sexuality and living in relationship and cyber-feminism is being celebrated. Neuron disease, psychological theory, disillusionment, anxiety, world-war are prominent characteristic of post-modernism.

Post-modernism is different from modernism because it doesn't go with any set of role, any set of law or any tradition of post in literature or poetry. Here, in post-modernism we can witness the existence of mortality reality means Juxtaposition of various kinds of reality in other words putting many kinds of reality together. It is a kind of configuration of various perspectives, various perception and various aspects of multifaceted motleyed reality and this prevailing situation leads to existence of various winds of 'isms' like post-feminism, cyber-feminism, lesbianism, eco-feminism and that why reality of cyber-feminism cannot be defined by eco-feminism because reality related to all ism's are different and contextual, temporal, spatial, cultural specific, community specific, language specific and even individual experience specific.

Post-modernism also brought cultural changes. There is question mark on joint family and single family came in existence. There is also question mark on institution of marriage the concept of live-in-relationship having no responsibility or equal responsibility and equal existence with equal importance and concept of Homosexuality, 'gay ism' and lesbianism transcending the boundaries of nature and traditional culture is a big question mark on the institution of marriage and this is also a characteristic of post-modernism in which motleyed reality is the "Copy of the Copy" and you don't know what is the original copy. In other words we don't know what is the original, what is the final truth or final reality. So, reality lost in the age of duplicity or reality lost in the age of "Copy of the copy".

For example if you want to enjoy the fiction written by Chetan Bhagat, than you have to go beyond the aesthetics of literature. We have to move out of the literature. This kind of inter-textuality is also a postmodernist phenomenon as multidisciplinary on which Hebermas emphasized.

Celebrating the differences of experiences, opinions, truths, and realities is one of major characteristics of post-modern age.

"Everything is equally important

And everything is equally unimportant."

You are guided by certain influences in context of culture, time, experiences and this is because of various versions of reality. In the same way reader response theory also presents various kinds of responses and interpretation and various kind of reality according to contextual experiences of the reader. So, reader responses theory is very important aspect of post-modernism. In the same way Hebermas also stressed on inter-disciplinary approach and said that any kind of empirical study should be based on the inter-disciplinary approach. He projected that all disciplines are inter-related that's why truth or essence or knowledge of the disciplines is also inter-related and because of this essential inter-relationship, we should break down the wall between displaces and we should try to search knowledge with inter-disciplinary approach.

Literary criticism can never be an exact science. Any attempt at a precise definition is bound to speak as much of the time when it is made as of the thing defined. Yet, it is always possible to identify certain distinctive features when a phenomenon assumes the nature of a movement, and attempt a provisional description of the movement. However, before we proceed further it is necessary to bear in mind the semantic differences between the words like 'contemporary' and 'modern'. The word, 'contemporary' is time based. It is a historic fact. We must however, admit that the word is quite flexible in the sense that by saying 'contemporary poetry' we can mean the poetry of the 90s or the poetry since the 70s, 60s or even since the beginning of the century. We have to define the limits of the contemporary when we discuss something as 'contemporary'. But everything that is contemporary is not necessarily modern. Modernity is a matter of sensibility. To be modern is to be aware of the contemporary scenario as changed by the growth of knowledge; a sensitive perception of the world in the present state of knowledge.

Let us look at the turn of the century philosophers: Bergson, James, Bradley, Nietzsche and Hulme. They are all concerned with the epistemological issue: the opposition between conceptual abstractions and immediate experience.

Theories attacked the 19th century positivistic certainties that objective truth either existed at all or could be ascertained through the application of reason and science. Post-modernism lay down new values new interpretations, new forms that create and sustain a self-authenticating existence.

The roots of literary modernism must be traced to the ideas of these philosophers. Darwin, Marx and Freud: the human being popularly conceived as a fallen angel, became after The Origin of the Species (1859) a cultured ape. In the popular conception of

history, before Marx, the individual effort could play a crucial part. After *Das Capital* (1867), it had to contend with the possibility that a great deal of it had been responding instead to economic imperatives. The popular conception of human action, before Freud, had been based upon a possibility of self-knowledge, of presence of mind, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and other really know more than the ostensible reasons for such an action. The broadest view of modernism is that unconsciously as well as consciously, technically as well as thematically, it encompasses not only comprehensions and accommodations, but also the initial apprehensions of this change. The modern sensibility is evinced in a disdainful disregard for authority, a feeling of urgency to break new ground, flirtation with anarchy, temptation to test out chaos and the demonic. It is further evident in a desire to remove all standards, to alter the very nature of language, reorganize our perceptions, and finally stress on the principle of change as an end in itself.

It is difficult to find a clear date for the beginning of the movement or movements known as modernism. The movements had been coming in waves along the London-Paris-New York axis for a long time in the 19th century. But we must have a tentative date in terms of a literary history. For Frank Kermode the nineties are the forerunners of modernism: Richard Hellman would prefer 1900. D.H. Lawrence claimed in *Kangaroo* (1923) that "It was in 1915 that the old world ended." Virginia Woolf insisted in "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" (1924) that "On or about December 1910 human nature changed..... All human relations shifted... those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature.

A close reading would possibly reveal that within the rubric of the movement of modernism there are distinct ups and downs. If the 1920s were dominated by radical modernism, the 1930s clearly registered a shift in emphasis.

Mention should also be made of Jacques Lacan's theory of the role of the mirror stage in a child's development, because of its numerous linguistic and philosophical implications. A child's first experience of seeing himself reflected in the mirror is a momentous experience. It makes him aware of his individual status and enables him to link himself up with the generic man, with other men. Lacan believes that this experience goes a long way in shaping the child's ego, and suggests that it is possibly as distorted as the reflection in the mirror. Applying this idea to literary criticism Lacan contends that there is a text lying just outside the individual's discursive power.

The seamless totality of the classical and the Christian worlds are lost to us. With the death of God the world is fragmented; the society is fragmented; the family is fragmented, and the process of fragmentation is an on-going process. In postmodernism that is reflected in the breaking of forms, use of montage and collage and mixing of genres in an unexpected manner. Since postmodern culture is essentially mass culture all canons are discredited. The traditional values are flouted; culture is decanonized.

Postmodernism insisted on the pleasure of the moment, monokronos hedonism, and looked for things easy to like. The pleasure principle of postmodernism has inevitably led to an endless mixing of genres and media and modes of aesthetic thinking and conceptual art: film and literature, avant-garde and mass culture, the tragic and the comic, the sublime and the ludicrous, interior monologue and magic realism. All kinds of stuff are lumped together into a form which trying to forge a new aesthetics that would correspond to the postmodern situation.

David Lodge had identified five narrative strategies, generally used in postmodern fiction: Contradiction, Permutation, Discontinuity, Randomness, and the Short Circuit to project the idea of postmodernism.

It is now time we considered some of the basic differences between modernisms is interested in pleasure. Modernism tried to capture reality through individual consciousness which was equivalent of life. Virginia Woolf saw life as a "semitransparent envelope", "a luminous halo". Eliot's objective correlative, Joyce's epiphany and the imagist doctrine offer glimpses of reality. For postmodernism "realism" is just an incoherent and deluding notion. Against the modernist struggle for wholeness and unity postmodernism posits a radical indeterminacy. For postmodernism the pattern, or the centre is only a wishful thinking; an imposition.

One way to understand the contrastive features of modernism and postmodernism is with the help of a table:

Modernism	Postmodernism
Form	Antiform / disjunctive / open
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Art Object	Process
Distance	Participation
Creation / Synthesis	Deconstruction / Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Determinacy	Indeterminacy

Table 1

Postmodernism is a vexing term and so are postmodern, post-modernist and post modernity. It refers to a complex set of anti-modernist artistic strategies which emerged in the 1950s, and developed momentum in the course of the 1960s. The term became problematic right from the beginning.

For many American literary critics in the 1960s and early 1970s, postmodernism is a move away from narrative, from representation. It is a move towards radical aesthetic autonomy, towards pure formalism. Postmodernism is either a radicalization of the self-reflective moment within modernism, a turning away from narrative and representation, or an explicit return away from narrative and representation, or an explicit return to narrative and representation. The attempt to transcend modernism follows two main strategies:

The first is to question modernism's premises and its procedure from within the realm of art. Those who break more radically with modernism attack art and seek to undermine the idea of art itself; art as institution, its self-sufficiency and autonomy is a self-imposed exile.

At a second level, postmodernism has been defined as the 'attitude' of the 1960s counterculture or as 'new sensibility' of the 1960s social and artistic avant-garde. This new sensibility is eclectic, radically democratic. In the course of the 1970s, postmodernism was gradually drawn into a poststructuralist orbit. Post structuralism can be understood as any of various theories or methods of analysis, including deconstruction and some psychoanalytic theories that deny the validity of structuralism's method of binary opposition and maintain that meaning and intellectual categories are shifting and unstable. Initially, postmodernism was associated with the deconstructionist practices that took their inspiration from the post structuralism of Barthes and Derrida.

There are two moments within this poststructuralist postmodernism. The first belongs to the later 1970s, and the early 1980s. It derives from Barthes and Derrida. It is linguistically textual in its orientation. This Derridean deconstructionist postmodernism largely limited itself to texts and intertexts. It believed that attacking representation was in itself an important political act. It was content to celebrate the so-called death of the subject and thus of the author. It did not realize that it had paradoxically made questions of subjectivity and authorship all the more relevant.

In the later 1970s, a broad complex of deconstructionist / post-structuralist practices became firmly associated with postmodernism. Postmodernism, thus, means and has meant different things to different people at different conceptual levels, rising from humble literary critical origins in the 1950s to a level of global conceptualization in the 1980s. The common denominator is a crisis in representation; a deeply felt loss of faith in the ability to represent the real, in the widest sense. Transcendent truth seems forever out of reach.

Postmodernism is both utopian and dystopian at the same time in its approach to knowledge. Only a ripple of the 1950s, postmodernism turned in the course of the 1980s into a tidal wave. Postmodernism has been an unstable concept. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2000) defines the term: postmodernism is of or relating to art, architecture, or literature that reacts against earlier modernist principles, as by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices of extremes. In 1981, Andreas Huyssen very perceptively spoke of "the temporal imagination of postmodernism. Postmodernism presents insoluble contradictions and paradoxes.

Jean-Francois Lyotard is only poststructuralist who played a major role in theorizing the postmodern. The debate on postmodernism has its origins in American literary and cultural criticism. For approaching postmodernism, it is important to discuss Jurgen Habermas. He offers a close account of modernity and modernism and what suffers from a left-liberal perspective. Habermas thought that the Enlightenment (the emancipatory project of modernity) must not be abandoned.

This "computerization of society" (67) will affect the nature of our knowledge. Lyotard predicts that "the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language". Knowledge has become "an informational commodity". Lyotard's point of departure is the demise of what he terms 'meta-narratives: "simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards meta-narratives. Those meta-narratives or 'grand' narratives are, broadly speaking, the supposedly transcendent and universal truths that support and strengthen western civilization and the function to give that civilization objective legitimation. Lyotard suggests that these meta-narratives have been replaced by a great number of 'language games'.

Lyotard knows that practically all meta-narratives have since long been unmasked as fictions. But modern science has successfully managed to safeguard its aura of transcendence. It has done so, Lyotard argues, by privileging the language game of 'denotation' to the exclusion of all others. But, science, too, can only find legitimation through narrative:

Scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative, kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is not knowledge at all. (29)

Postmodern knowledge is now being viewed as a postmodern science. It sees itself as a language game and finds its legitimation in its own avant-gardism strategies.

To conclude, postmodernism can be understood as a conceptual strategy or a set of strategies to cope with present day realities and human condition. The term then assumes a broad category which tries to interpret, analyze or understand the often conflictual multi-dimensions of life, experience, knowledge.

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