

POSTMODERNISM: A NEW CULTURAL PROCESS

Manojkumar T. Mane, Research Scholar, Department of English, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Sub-Campus, Osmanabad, State-Maharashtra, India

Abstract:

The paper scrutinizes postmodernism's new cultural process. The shift from modernity to postmodernity brought profound transition in our cultural life. Postmodernism plays crucial role in the process imbedded in the formation of our culture. In fact it is the ingredient of our contemporary culture. Postmodernism celebrates pluralism over centeredness of modern philosophy. Such celebration turns as postmodern hallmark of cultural expression beyond communal, racial, regional and national boundaries. It leads us towards a new culture belong to not any community, race, region, religion or country but universal mankind. The transition brought by postmodernism in art, architecture, fiction, theatre and philosophy is caused for the formation of new culture. In the world of art postmodern art made processed new culture on the basis of the rejection of stylistic integrity of modern art. It presented stylistic diversity. Following univalence impulse, it goes for impurity against purity of modern art. In architecture, postmodernists reject modern ideal of univalence and their views of architecture as visible expression of absolute unity of art, science and industry. Rather they celebrate multivalence and see architecture is inherently symbolic. The tactic of juxtaposing the real and the fictitious distinguishes postmodern fiction from modern. Postmodern authors juxtapose two autonomous worlds as the fictitious and the real world. The characters in the postmodern fiction face the close encounter of their world they belong to and always get confused on what world they are from. In theatrical expression of culture postmodernism replaced aesthetics of presence with aesthetics of absence.

Keywords: *postmodernism, cultural process, philosophy, art, architecture, fiction, multivalence, univalence, modernism, stylistic diversity, juxtaposition, fictitious world, real world, realm of appearance, transience, performance, temporality, aesthetic of absence etc.*

It is the transition what we see in today's art, architecture, fiction, theatre and philosophy as an interference of postmodernism on the basis of continuation, extension or rather departure from modernism. The transition is integral part of the culture beyond race, path, region, country, language, community of human belong to all the corners of the world. It is known as a New Culture, Anything Goes Culture, Techno-Culture, World Culture or Universal Human Culture. in fact it is a processed culture by the postmodernism known with all these diverse terms. Since it is difficult to define postmodernism, it is also difficult to measure and locate the consequences of postmodernism. Culture is one of them. Today's culture is the outcome of the process in the form of postmodernism. Postmodernism has been contributing in the process of the formation of this culture universal human live in today. It is been in effect since the rejection of enlightenment of modernism came in effect as a consequence of application of postmodernism in all those factors and fields related directly and indirectly to human culture. Culture is identical aspect of particular community, region, race or a country. When we think at universal level we come across various cultures belong to human communities based on region, race, language and country. So the diversity in the cultures is natural feature. In such diversified phenomenon postmodernism advocates a culture beyond the diversity in the cultures. It offers a culture beyond all the factors those are caused for the diversity of the cultures. It has led the world and worldly cultures towards universal globalized single culture based on

the multicultural coalition. The move from modernism to postmodernism is the pathway in all the fields and factors those are directly involved in the formation of human culture. As per the requirements and the limitation of this research article lets us observe some of the factors active in the postmodern process of culture play as ingredients: art, architecture, fiction, theatre and philosophy.

Art

In the world of art it is remarkable to know that stylistic integrity is the great virtue of modernist artists. The base to render their art is 'pure'. Purity is one of the characteristics of modernist art. Modernism follows the univalence impulse. In contrast postmodernist art highlights stylistic diversity. It follows multivalence. It prefers not purity of modernism rather it chooses impurity. It embraces diversification on the way of departure from modernism. It is the transition brought by postmodernism. It celebrates plurality rather singularity experienced in modernist art. Postmodern artist apply diversity with very remarkable postmodern technique of Juxtaposition. As we study one of the crucial elements of composition i.e. collage. It is also focused by Jacques Derrida as the prime form of postmodern discourse. It takes the viewer into the process of the production of its meaning. Collage ensures viewer that the meaning it elicits is neither univocal nor fixed or stable. In fact it is inherent heterogeneity of collage that ensures the aspect of meaning. It makes reader or viewer to run for new meaning in the juxtaposition of images. One of the features of postmodernism i.e. pastiche plays very crucial role in such juxtaposing activity. In fact it is very effective bludgeon of postmodernism it uses in the process of the formation of culture. Here it is necessary to see the statement made by Howard Fox:

“At root postmodern art is neither exclusionary nor reductive but synthetic, freely enlisting the full range of conditions, experiences, and knowledge beyond the object. Far from seeking a single and complete experience, the post-modern object strives toward an encyclopedic condition, allowing a myriad of access points, infinitude of interpretive responses.” (H. F., 1987:29-30)

It is crystal clear that the objective of postmodernism in application of such tactic is to bombard clashing meaning on the viewer to raise questions to lead plural sense of objective meaning. This tactic of postmodernism is being employed in both high and pop-culture context. MTV videos are the best examples of postmodern pastiche. On this attitude of postmodernists Stanley Grenz points out:

“The disjointed, unharmonious design of pastiche with its gaudy color schemes, discordant typography, and the like, has moved beyond the world of avant-garde art into the everyday realm of book jackets, magazine covers, and mass advertising.” (G.S., 1996: 26)

Merely Grabbing attraction by applying stylistic diversity is not only the goal of postmodernist artists. They possess an attitude to generate a desire to challenge the established power of modernity available in institution and traditions all over the world. They grab each and every opportunity to challenge the modernist views and its focus on the stylistic integrity of modern artists, what they target as the modernist angle of the individual artist. They reject singularity of works of art through various ways they seek as confiscation, repetition of existed images, accumulation, excerption, quotation. Modern fiction that forms subject remains their target always to attack. The best example of such postmodern critique is the work of Sherrie Levine, a photographic artist. One of her exhibition she exhibited some photographic arts those were rephotographed of well-known artistic photographs of Edward Weston and Walker Evans as her own. Yes, it was an act of plagiarism. It was simply art piracy and it should be charged accordingly. But it was not her motto to fool the viewers by plagiarizing art and earning name out of it rather to catch attention towards the distinction between original arts and its reproduction.

Architecture

Architecture is one of the factors those contribute in the formation of a culture. Up to 1970 architecture was under dominance of modernism. The modernists, special western architects have developed their own style in architecture which is known as International Style. It expresses modern ethos

in architecture. It has initiated a movement in architecture that has faith in human rationality and nurtures the hope to construct a human utopia. The base of their architecture is the principle of unity to follow modern utopianism. According to Frank Lloyd Wright-

“a building should be 'one great thing' instead of a 'quarrelling collection' of many little things” (W.F.L., 1970: 25)

He highlights modern edifice as an organic entity. In fact his views are leading in the establishment process of modern ethos in architecture. Accordingly it was just a criterion that each construction should express one unified meaning to contribute contemporary culture. It was an attempt to generate meaning on the basis of the principle of unity in architecture. There onwards modernists bound to the principle of unity to produce prime architectural characteristic. This principle of unity is known as univalence after its justification given by Charles Jencks. Construction of glass-and- steel boxes became universal pattern of modern architecture. It was widely accepted and even celebrated as one of the essential aspects of enlightenment in modernism. The device of repetition of a theme to rule contemporary world of construction was widely utilized under the way of simplicity of form by architects. In his *A Primer on Postmodernism*, Stanley Grenz exposes this modern attitude and the consequences held in the arena of architecture since it is the ground where postmodernism marked its first footprint.

“As it developed, the central stream of modern architecture became a universalizing movement. It promoted the program of industrialization and demoted the variety characteristic of local expression. As a consequence, the expansion of modern architecture often destroyed the existing urban fabric. It virtually decimated everything that stood in the way of bulldozer, the chief tool of the modern quest for progress” (G. S., 1996:22)

It was also served that some modern architects were not happy to limit and to subject to modern views and mold accordingly at their level of discipline. They follow their faith that architecture as a visible expression of a new unity of art, science and industry. Here it is necessary to consider the statement made by Walter Gropius as:

“Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.” (G. W., 1919:25)

It is modern tendency in architecture gave birth to postmodern architecture as a response. Postmodernism replaced 'univalence' by its celebration of 'multivalence'. It goes against of modern views that construction of a building is for the reflection of a perfect unity. Rather postmodernists tried to explore and present incompatibilities of style, form and texture. There are several features of postmodern reaction that present the evident of the rejection of modern architecture. For example postmodern presents ornamentation instead of modernists' contempt of unessential superfluous. Postmodernist architects retain historical and traditional styles and techniques to eradicate modernist architects' rejection of traditionalist past by applying western design that was far from the relic of earlier eras. Postmodern goes on presenting every construction as an inherently symbolic expression of local contemporary culture. It justifies that all constructions and buildings including modern express a kind of language that signifies a culture. This angle of architecture which permits a structure to represent an imaginary world to convey a story was missed out by the modernist architects on their way of pure functionality. Postmodern points out that no any architectural wonders as The Taj Mahal, The Great Cathedrals those takes us in another realm of the world would have been possible in the attitude of modernists. Charles Moore rightly states as:

“A Building itself has the power, by having been built right or wrong or mute or noisy, to be what it wants to be, to say what it wants to say, which starts us looking at buildings for what they are saying rather than just accepting their pure existence in the Corbusian manner” (M.C., 1973: 243)

On the basis of repetition and a device what is called an addition of ornamentation post-moderns are trying restore and retain fictional element to architecture. Their pure motto is to reinstitute an attitude to create inventive places rather merely dealing with architecture that runs for pure utility. The claim and assertion of modernists to be universal and to go beyond history, past is challenged by postmodern architecture. Architecture as an articulation of a language of power is the modern view rather expression of reason or logic. According to Paolo Portoghesi

“Modern buildings derive their language from the industrial forms and materials of the modern era and the industrial system they served” (P.P., 1982:3)

It leads us towards a world based on science and technology, since it is a mere expression and exhibition of the experiments on the basis of science and technology. As R. Venturi rightly has rightly stated:

“Modern forms and materials give expression to the brave new world of science and technology” (V.R., 1977:135-36)

In short, we can see the postmodern wish to give up this language of power and explore new hybrid languages that incorporates the postmodern concepts of diversity and pluralism by moving away from dehumanizing uniformity of architecture that advocates a language of standardized mass production.

Fiction

Fiction is a crucial element in the process of cultural formation of a society. In terms of postmodernism it is very difficult to trace out its influence on literature. Of course there is continuous debate of critics to draw a line between postmodern fiction and its predecessors. The tactic of juxtaposing is a general style of postmodern fiction. As we observe that some have juxtaposed traditional forms and modern one to trace out ironic treatment. And other postmodern authors have juxtaposed real and fictitious. The postmodern literary device of juxtaposition is applied for the characters also. As we read that some of the postmodern authors com narrators highlights on factiousness of the characters along with their actions and their participation in history simultaneously in order to gain moral and emotional response as traditional realistic fiction achieves. Juxtaposition of real and fictitious by interjecting authors is also successful feature of postmodern fiction in order to discuss narrative problems and processes. The simply objective behind is to blur the distinction between real and fictional. It also helps to point out connectivity between author and fictional work. In such treatment is given to the fictional work is as a medium through which author expresses herself or himself and it is also clear that expression of author or his voice is no more separable from fictitious work. It is always noticed as even Stanley Grenz says:

“Postmodern fiction repeatedly juxtaposes two or more pure, autonomous worlds. When this occurs, the characters that inhabit the literature are often confused as to which world they are in and uncertain about how they should act in this close encounter.” (G. S., 1996: 29)

The purpose behind applying the tactic of juxtaposition in postmodern fiction is just anti- modernist. Modernist writers tend to handle complexity of meaning but stick to singular reality. Where else, postmodern writers make us to think about the coexistence of diverse realities and their interpenetration. Postmodern literature penetrates on contingency and temporality by rejecting modern views of universal truth. It raises its focus on temporality in order to stop reader to see the world from a vantage point out of the time. In this connection the remark of David Lodge is necessary to consider

“And need one say that the more nakedly the author appears to reveal himself in such texts, the more inescapable it becomes paradoxically, that the author as a voice is only a function of his own fiction, a rhetorical construct, not a privileged authority but an object of interpretation.” (L. D., 1992:194-95)

We find that even postmodern authors gain kinds of effect of language that breaks closed thought and raise a question or challenges to those entire literary canons those who are not agree with that any discourse is potential to present an account of real.

Spy novel is one of the typical form in postmodern fiction. It juxtaposes two different worlds. Mostly, it is just a domain of appearance, which seems to reflect the real but it is just an illusion. Working beneath and within such domain of appearance is another realm of appearance which is somewhat illegitimate but still it is authentic than real world. Juxtaposition of these two realms the story catches hold of reader in uncertainty continually. The operation within these two realms raises question such as is really any character appears to be? what is real and true?. such spy stories of postmodern make us to think that are we also living in between such two juxtaposed world?, the events and the people we come across in our life are truly one?

Comparatively science fiction is less postmodern type of fiction. No doubt it rejects modern quest, but it doesn't much interested to uncover timeless truth. It is effective in exploration of other relativities. It leads us towards other world or realities and brings the differences in our notice. It also presents some questions about our world. As: what is truth? What is the energy or force active at work? What are the possibilities in our life? And so on..

Theater

Theater is one more factor to contribute in the cultural process. It is quite active in postmodern scenario. It is very appropriate mode of postmodern expression of the rejection of modernism.

“The modernist movement saw a work of art as transcending time, as expressing timeless ideals. The postmodern ethos, in contrast, celebrates transience and transience is inherent in performance.” (B.M., 1977:03)

Post-moderns see our life as transient performance on the stage of the world. Transience and performance are two features as cultural medium to represent real world. Despite of such representation it is not well to say that every theatrical production is an expression of postmodern ethos. According to Steven Connor

“Many scholars date postmodern theater to the upsurge of performance art during the 1960. its roots lie further back, however, in the work of the French writer Antonin Artaud in the 1930s.” (C.S., 1989:134)

In the writing of Antonin Artaud we find invocation for contemporary dramatist about to be protester. In fact he stimulated the entire contemporary dramatist and made them to destroy what he sees as idolatry classical art.

“He advocated replacing the traditional stage and the production of theatrical masterpieces with a 'theater of cruelty'. He called for the abandonment of the older script- centered style and an exploration of the language intrinsic to theater, which includes light, color, movement, gesture and space. He adds transcending the distinctions between actors and observers and draws the audience into the dramatic experience.” (C.S., 1989:135)

Artaud dreamed the audience to confront the primal reality of life hidden behind social conventions. His dream came true in 1960s, when theorists went on rethinking on the nature of theatrical expression which was under the influence of the repressive power of traditional authorities they felt to eradicate such influence and make it free to perform. In his 'theater of Cruelty' he criticizes that the script or text itself is utilized to exercise repressive power. He also offers solution as the elimination of the script and treatment to each performance as immediate and unique. Once it is performed it has to disappear forever. Postmodern deals with the theory of performance which replaces 'aesthetics of presence' with 'aesthetic of absence'. It rejects the views that performance holds permanent truth. It only maintain the sense of presence as it evokes what is called an 'empty presence'

Philosophy

Philosophy contributes lot in the formation and in the act of nurturing culture. Postmodern advocates plurality, diversity since it holds the potentiality to hold double-coded meaning on various level of art or object. In postmodern culture Collage, is applied to bring together incompatible source of materials. Along with it another juxtaposing tactic is bricolage which is utilized to reconfigure traditional

objects in order to give ironical treatment through art. The eclecticism of in artists' work drawn from historical eras is prim reflection of postmodern art. Concerning diversity and plurality as key feature of postmodern philosophy are quit crucial to nurture multiple styles in culture. Charles Jencks point out that-

“Post-modernism is fundamentally the eclectic mixture of ay tradition with that of the immediate past; it is both the continuation of modernism and its transcendence. Its best works are characteristically doubly-coded and ironic, making a feature of the wide choice, conflict and discontinuity of traditions, because the heterogeneity most clearly captures our pluralism.” (J.C., 1989:07)

It is clear that due to eclecticism in the philosophy, postmodernism celebrates multiculturalism and an 'Anything Goes' attitude or a key ingredient to nurture traditionalism caused for origin to overall human universal culture. It is full of acceptability and adoptability with diversification at all the factors involved in the cultural process. In this context it is accepted to define postmodernism as a cultural process. Since, it has offered a new culture with the feature of plurality against unified singularity of modernism. It replaces integrity of culture with diversity of culture. Original cultural essence is preserved with its quality of multivalence. Mixture, fusion and pastiche are the tools remarkable utilized in the postmodernism in the process of the formation reproduction and reconfiguration of universal culture. May it is with technology, science and all kinds of advancement of enlightenment postmodernism plays its apt role as cultural process beyond community, race, religion, language, region and countries. Its juxtaposition of styles and the emphasis of diversity along with deemphasis of rationality are visible hallmark in postmodern society embedded with contemporary cultural expression.

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