



Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar

School of Humanities & Languages

Department of English

Topic – ‘POSTMODERNISM’ AND ‘POSTSTRUCTURALISM’
Class- Ph.D (English)

By

Dr. Bimlesh k Singh
HOD, English.

1. POSTMODERNISM:

- The American Writer **ARNOLD TOYANBEE** coined the term.
- This term came into vogue in the Mid Twenties.
- It's an Umbrella term encompassing the unusual reversal of values and styles in the whole gamut of art, literature, science, humanities , music, architecture etc.
- Chronologically, the writers of the world writing after the **SECOND WORLD WAR** are said to be associated with it.
- Some of the prominent writers and philosophers who championed the trend of **POSTMODERNISM** are Lyotard, Derrida, Baudrillard, Foucault, David Lodge, Barthes, Eagleton, Bakhtin, G C Spivak, Julia Kristeva , to name the few.



2. POSTMODERNISM: MEANING AND DEFINITION:

- It refuses to acknowledge any 'Objective Reality'.
- Reality is a sort of 'Construct' of individual belief/opinion.
- Hence, Postmodern critics or writers deny any 'Absolute Reality' or 'Grand Finale'.
- So Postmodern critic like Charles Jencks seek to represent 'Reality' in terms of 'Symbols' and 'Complex' ideas.
- Postmodernism is marked by a tireless questioning of traditional / prescriptive / monological / unified / coherent / cohesive ways of thinking and looking at anything.
- Postmodernists celebrate the 'Montage' 'Crisis', 'Inconclusiveness', 'Slackening', 'Pastiche', 'Intertextuality', 'Hyperrealism', 'Distortion', 'Paranoia', 'Metafiction' etc.



3. POSTSTRUCTURALISM : MEANING & DEFINITION:

- Chronologically, it came into vogue after the Second World War.
- It's an Ontological and Epistemological Stance.
- Whereas 'Structuralism' upholds that the meaning can be found easily by reading the different structural aspects of the text, 'Poststructuralism' discard such an idea and find it difficult to find out the meaning out of the given structure.
- Poststructuralism presupposes the primacy of 'Writerly' Text, where readers have to bulldoz their critical sense and innovative genius to arrive at a meaning.



- That's why, Poststructuralists give precedence to readers over the writers as the former alone have the autonomy to give an authentic significance to the text.
- 'Structuralists' like Saussure believe that 'Signifiers' lead to 'Signified' but 'Poststructuralists' believe that all signifiers lead not to 'Signifieds' but merely to 'Signifiers'.
- Some of the prominent practitioners of Poststructuralism are Barthes, Bakhtin, Jakobson, Derrida, Stanley Fish, David Lodge, Baudrillard, Eagleton, Foucault, Showalter etc.



SOME QUOTES:

- It's a mark of any icon that it should be open to iconoclasm.....Charles Jencks.
- A sign to me is a one-liner, a symbol is very complex and my house is a series of symbols.....Charles Jencks.
- In 1979, Postmodernism lost its understanding of the meaning of ornament. It degenerated into Kitsch applique.....Charles Jencks.
- To pretend, I actually do the thing. I have therefore only presented to pretend.Derrida.
- Truth is not born, nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person; it's born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their Dialogic Interaction...Bakhtin.
- The sad thing about artificial intelligence is that it lacks artifice and therefore intelligence...Baudrillard.
- The Birth of the Readers must be at the cost of the Death of the AuthorRoland Barthes.



4. FREDERICK JAMIESON 'S " THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM": ABOUT THE AUTHOR:---

- American literary critic.
- a Marxist Philosopher.
- Well-known for his incisive analysis of 'Postmodernity and 'Capitalism'.
- Some famous observations by Jameson:
- It's easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.
- It's safest to grasp the concept of Postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.



5. IMPORTANT BOOKS BY JAMESON:

- THE PRISON-HOUSE OF LANGUAGE
- POSTMODERNISM OR THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM
- THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS
- LATE MARXISM
- ALLEGORY AND IDEOLOGY
- SIGNATURES OF THE VISIBLE
- THE CULTURAL TURN
- MARXISM AND FORM
- ARCHEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE
- VALENCES OF THE DIALECTIC
- A SINGULAR MODERNITY



6. ABOUT THE TOPIC ' THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM':

- Herein, Frederic Jameson offers a critique of both ' Modernism 'and ' Postmodernism' from Marxist perspective.
- Quite naturally, he situates the concept of 'Modernity' and 'Postmodernity' in the socio-economic dynamics , rather than in epistemology or ethics or other phenomena.
- A Marxist philosopher as he is, he foregrounds his critical propositions to the historical processes, rather than any superhuman or metaphysical theories. His critical stance is , out and out, materialistic.
- Jameson deplors that the contemporary society has refused to think and react historically. This accounts for the growing loss of objectivity, authenticity and scientific wisdom in the current ideological trends. This is why, these ideologies fail to guide the humanity through any definitive solutions/formulae. The absence of historicity and objectivity has created an irremediable bog of frustration, chaos, uncertainty, dilemma and desperation for readers/viewers.

- Jameson relates his concept of 'Postmodernity' to the Capitalist ideology .
- He widens the horizons of 'Postmodernity' to incorporate the emerging world of non-verbal communications ---- visual arts, Mass media, Cyber and Digital media etc.
- Hence, Jameson probes deeply into the complex ways of exploring the techniques of ' Postmodernity'. He discusses the techniques of ' Pastiche', 'Reductionism', 'Recursivity' etc.
- He also draws our attention to observe how the ' Ordinary ' is being presented through the newly emerged art-forms. He studies the complex webs and designs of various art-forms of complicating the commonplace, the ordinary.




- At first, Jameson discusses 'Problem of Periodization' and argues that it's not correct to confine any ideology to a mere phase of history. So he regrets that it's not justified to locate 'Modernity' or 'Postmodernity' along the preconceived timelines of 'Periodization'.
- Jameson believes that 'Modernity' or 'Postmodernity' is rather concerned with a 'Cultural' logic than with the arbitrarily introduced periodicity.
- He explains 'Culture' as conditioned by socio-economic dynamics.
- Jameson opines that it's economic dynamics which basically determine the cultural and philosophical movements in society.
- Drawing upon ERNEST MANDEL, a German economist, Jameson establishes his standpoints.

- Referring to Ernest Mandel's philosophy, Jameson proceeds to explicate the interaction between Global capitalism and cultural production.
- Jameson appreciates Mandel's Model of categorizing the world on the basis of economic and political and cultural
- paradigms. He calls it INTER-STATE/REALIST PHASE, GLOBALIZING 'MODERNIST PHASE AND LATE CAPITALIST/POSTMODERN PHASE respectively.
- Jameson asserts that 'Postmodernism' has transcended the boundaries thereby bringing about identity crisis, paranoia and artificiality and brutality.
- He wishes to make us aware of the fact that although 'Postmodernism' has lost limits, yet an intelligent understanding of the term will ensure that the 'CULTURAL DOMINANT' is the underlying principle of Postmodernism. The so-called principle of Postmodernism which is generally associated with Capitalism and its hegemonic atrocities needed to be studied in terms of socioeconomic dynamics.



7. SOME SELECT TERMS:

- PASTICHE: A work of art/literature/music consisting of variety of styles.
 - RECURSIVITY: Signifies Non-linear or dynamic or cyclical nature of Qualitative Research.
 - MONTAGE: A cinematic technique in which a series of short shots are sequenced to liquefy the temporal, the spatial and factual details.
 - APORIA: A Dialogic device by which the speaker shows doubt or perplexity regarding a question (often pretended) and invites the audience to tell him how he should proceed. It may be in the form of a rhetorical question raised mostly in the beginning of a text.
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- WRITERLY TEXT: A oblique or vertical or dynamic reading of a text without any reference to the author or origin etc.
- METAPHYSICS OF PRESENCE : Derrida introduced this phrase to signify general tendency of readers or writers to approach a text with some preconceived notions in mind like 'Presence', 'Essence ', 'Origin ' and ignoring 'Absence ', 'Difference 'etc. which may help the interpreters better in the process of deconstruction of a text.

THANK YOU!

