POSTMODERNISM: CONSENSUS THROUGH DISSENTION

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Postmodernism, which took shape between the two world wars at the initial stage, was a Euro-American phenomenon. But in the course of time it has become a wider term to mean everything everywhere. In today's world the term postmodernism can be used to refer not just to art and culture but more comprehensively to aspects of modern society. Bab Hassan finds the term highly baffling. He says: Like other categorical terms- say post structuralism, or modernism or romanticism for that matter- postmodernism suffers from a certain semantic instability. There is no clear consensus about it's meaning among scholars. ...some critics mean by postmodernism what others call avant-gardism or even neo avant-gardism while still others would call the same phenomenon modernism. Postmodernism is typically used in a wider sense than any other term. It refers to general human condition or society at large as much as to art or culture. Thus becomes clear that it is impossible to confine the meaning of the term under any one particular criterion. This paper attempts to examine Lyotard's definition of postmodernism. Lyotard defines postmodernism as" incredulity towards metanarratives". To understand postmodernism better, the term metanarratives should be understood clearly. Human discourse can be classified in to two kinds: 1) Literary discourse and 2) Scientific discourse. Scientific discourse deals with scientific facts explaining things with proofs and evidences. But literary discourse is based on beliefs. For example, regarding the creation o the universe every religion has its own beliefs. These beliefs are passed from one generation to another in the form of scriptures. These kinds of beliefs in the course of time have become metanarratives. In popular usage the term is typically applied to ideological system such as Marxism or religious outlooks such as Christianity, Hinduism or Islam. In Lyotard's view the day of such all embracing totalizing systems of beliefs has passed. In today's worlds man has to derive meaning from little narratives or micro narratives from local justifications: The narrative function is losing its function, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, it great goal, it is being dispersed in the clouds of narrative language elements- narrative but also denotative, prescriptive and so on. The religious scriptures and the concept of God, social and philosophical theories such Marxism or any other theory or philosophy which claims that it has a panacea of the miseries of mankind is questioned by postmodernism. Postmodernism proclaims the collapse of these metanarratives. The postmodern man has nothing to hold and he is living in the postmodern world in a helpless condition. The so-called universal foundations such a morals, justice, truth, etc., have collapse. Man is unwilling to believe them, He is having a decentered consciousness, the Idiotic Theories which he believed so far have failed to offer him any solution. But at the same time postmodernism never refuses tl accept the existence of truth, justice, morals, etc. But laments that there is no any foundation to form all these; There are no rules, morals and laws suitable for all periods and for all people. Hence the incredulity towards metanarratives. If this is the condition, what is the solution by postmodernism and what is the message of it? For such questions postmodernism offers no solution. Its answer is that there is no way –that is the way and there is no message-that is the message. Since it is not a metanarrative it is not going to provide any way or solution. But it points the inadequacy of existing metanarratives and it also goes to the extent of ridiculing at them, In short, postmodernism is not trying to construct a new building but it finds faults in an already constructed building. Besides the incredulity towards metanarratives, postmodernism also proclaims that all the existing theories morals and ideals are constructed. It refutes the foundation and universal rules. Thus postmodernism also becomes anti-fundamentalist. While announcing its incredulity towards metanarratives, postmodernism advocates little narratives and micro narratives. A little narrative can be said to be a part of a grand or metanarrative. It deals with the differences within a metanarrative, For example, if we assume Christianity as a metanarrative, a discourse in a small church in a small town may be considered as a little narrative, thus little narratives are related to metanarratives, even little narratives are power centered and authoritative, therefore, postmodernism , which questions the power structure, proposals micro narratives. In the postmodern world there is no room for metanarratives or little narratives, the postmodern world is filled with fragments of micro narratives, A micro narrative is a discourse about the lives and beliefs of beggars, thieves, prostitutes, highwaymen, and outcastes, But just because a discourse deals with these elements one should not conclude that it is opposing power/authority. It depends on the essence of the discourse. Postmodernism finds only anarchy in today's world. It considers order and rules as violence. A decision taken by a majority has to be accepted by the minority even if they oppose it. It is a kind of invisible violence prevailing in the society. Any decision made by the majority is violence over the minority; this violence is given the name to consensus. Therefore, consensus is nothing but the voice of power. Postmodernism raises its voice against consensus and proposeds dissention; in the postmodern world it is impossible to attain a universal consensus. Consensus could occur only among like- minded people who form groups. Therefore consensus is possible only within groups, thus the acceptance of dissention is the mark of true non-violence. Consensuses can be reached only by accepting that there is dissention.

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The Indian Review of World Literature in English, Vol. 2 No.1 – January, 2006