

Modernism and the Role of Criticism

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ABSTRACT:

Criticism embellishes the literature. It puts off literature from mechanism and doesn't make it a machine which is proscribed by the outmoded principles. A poet or a writer is the foundation and dealer of thought revolution so that he doesn't live in the sphere of restrictions. On the other hand, he shatters these spheres and goes through them as he has the revolutionary emotions. A writer has to be tradition-liking instead of being modernist as conventionality and modernism lead a writer towards declination. A writer having exclusive and historic sense and knowledge can better know modernism. Critical sense is a scale that puts off a writer from replication and broadens the sphere of literature as criticism and critics have a deep indication on the on going events of the current scenario and play the role of a bridge between writer and society through scientific evolution, its impacts on life and the use of modernism. The paper also discusses that criticism has to adopt the futuristic approach as it assists literature to be acquainted with futuristic trends and conducts.

Life means to move forth and the process of evolution. It brings along new opportunities every day. If any body has got this quality in life to consider these new opportunities and to avail them whole heartedly there he can move forth in life.

New aptitudes and opportunities are the part of the changes which take place due to the social and economic conditions.

“The aptitude for literature also develops due to the changes in the social and economic conditions. When the changes take place in the

circumstances they open up new vistas of knowledge and the thinking also begins to change.

Life becomes aware of the novelty in things and literature is also affected and its every field is impressed by the novelty and opens a new gate way for it". (1)

In such conditions the value of criticism increases and its role becomes crucial for the guidance of literature and author on this strange and unknown path.

Before we discuss the role of criticism, let us first try to understand 'Modernism'.

"MODERNISM:- Actually it means the combination of the traditional, political and the social movements which started against religious extremism during the 17th and the 18th century". (2)

It was the time when the ideology of Aristotle gained supremacy in Europe and to rise against him was considered a sin.

Modernism also attacked this movement. "Before the advent of modernism Europe was ruled by orthodoxy and traditionalism, so this movement declared 'Middle Ages' as Dark Ages' It also targeted the religious extremism, traditionalism and their narrow mindedness, and tried to eradicate them.

The severe reaction against it reached the height of movement and this effort made people to rise against the religious and some of the religious concepts.

The basic ideological concepts of modernism can be found in the thinking and ideas of philosophies like Francis Bacon, Rene Decart, Thomas Hobbes etc. Their idea was that this world and the universe is knowable only through wisdom, experiment and observation". (3)

This concept did its level best to uproot imagination and spiritualism from all types of literary activity. The movement of modernism was founded upon, political, social and economic grounds, and literature also could not remain un-affected because it also supported those who were orthodox and traditional.

“So modernism was defined as enlightenment and humanism, which rejected the supremacy of one person and his traditions rather it accepted wisdom and scientific knowledge to be the criteria of action.

It believed in the hypothesis that it is the wisdom of man is the way to find truth”. (4)

The warfare between independent thought and traditionalism started and even criticism could not stay out of it, and could not remain indifferent, but kept on supporting one idea or another.

This type of modernism gave birth to the philosophy of Marcus which is based on wisdom and materialism and began to teach class difference in society, which looked upon literature through scientific ideas.

The movement of modernism shook the foundations of the positive traditions and gave rise to religious clashes.

“Modernism also promoted Nationalism and state ism. Through this type of thinking democracy came into being and many independent and democratic states came into existence in Europe and North America”. (5)

The moral values of this movement were based on the height of benefit. A thing beneficial for society was acceptable and a thing not beneficial for society was un-acceptable.

“Religious extremism created a terrible situation and in reaction against it the movement started which is called modernism.

The necessary action taken against religious extremism was later on called Post-Modernism”. (6)

According to the concepts in modernism ideology and principles carry no value. Life is only restricted to its problems and their solution.

We can well define criticism after keeping into consideration the historical background and the reasons for the beginning of modernism and Post-Modernism.

By keeping into consideration the exact definition of criticism, If we want to clarify what criticism actually means, we can very well say, that criticism serves as a bridge between the reader and author and between author and literature.

“It is the responsibility of criticism to maintain the traditions of language and literature and should give new ideas to the new generation and artists for their creative abilities”. (7)

If we look into the definition of creation. The birth in Eden is called the first creation. Though there is contradiction in it. If we want to create something new we need the elements for its creation.

A creator always gives importance to the fact that he is creating something new.

“Normally, it happens that the creative powers adopt new ways for creation and it is followed by criticism un-intentionally then, slowly it gets accustomed to it and it doesn't remain strange. In this way criticism, new ideas and new conditions go side by side with one another”. (8)

This is how criticism widens its scope of principles and so old norms are replaced by the new ones unknowingly.

If criticism does not do so, it hinders the progress of literature and becomes an obstacle and cannot give true and real guide line to literature.

“Criticism helps the new and modern concepts to become an active part of this general process of creation”. (9)

It helps, because it prevents literature from traditionalism which makes it static and stops the mechanical process.

In this way attitudes, practice, life, behavior and poetry can be called the mechanical process “Which is bounded and tied by rules and regulations like a machine in which all its parts are inter-linked. It is obvious that mechanical attitude develops lack of creative ability”. (10)

Now if a creator allows himself to become limited in activity like a machine in a specific sphere then it means that he has become limited and limitation is the death of creation. “The more liberal a poet is in his thinking and imagination the greater is his poetry.

If a poet submits to everything and does not have a rebellious thinking then a good poem cannot be expected from him.

A poet should be a symbol and Icon of radical ideas rather than blindly imitating the hackneyed ideas”. (11)

Therefore these references I do not mean to say that literature should necessarily be rebellious against traditions. A kind of rebellion that bounds literature to follow the unknown paths, but the objective is that “poets sung many songs, but they did not have new thinking, it had repetition of a thought and an idea. We are not able to explore something

new; in them rather we harp upon the same stream of thought based on the songs of the Nightingale which is being sung for centuries.

We are trying to find old wine in a new bottle”. (12)

If few people call it tradition, this is not so rather it is practiced by those who do not have the contemporary consciously.

“Tradition actually is the consciousness of history which needs perception, not only of the past but also its presence.

Historical consciousness compels the writer to be aware not only of his own generation but also to be aware of the fact that the whole literature of Europe from the age of Homer and the literature of his particular country is still existent”. (13)

It is this historical perception which satiates contemporary knowledge and makes us realize that what are the reasons for the creation of such Classical Literature.

It is our association with the past literature that helps us to differentiate between classical and dead literature.

By keeping the continuity of the classical literature we can create novelty in the present day literature.

“If we do not keep in touch with the literature of the present day then we will also lose contact with the literature of the past”. (14)

If we create such literature in the name of modernism and post-modernism, which is not embedded in our soil and is not the true representative of the hopes and desires of the masses then it is totally alienated from our ideas, sentiments and thoughts living in a backward situation and representing the problems of elite class cannot be called modern literature, because backward societies have their specific problems and limited resources. They have their own mental level,

environment and attitudes, through which this consciousness is developed.

Each society differs intrinsically from the other in its geographical, climatic and environmental conditions and hence their priorities essentially differ “Literature is considered modern not in the sense of its scientific inventions bringing material progress but is modern in a sense that the new ideas keeping the connection with traditions have the capacity to enlighten the minds”. (15)

Contemporary knowledge is of great use in literature. If historical knowledge literature suffers a set back.

“Some are of the view that aim and objective is the focal point of poetry. However this type of poetry while conveying the message is usually deficient in imagination, aesthetics and sensitivity, which form an integral part of its classification”. (16)

Imagination is the key to literature in which the writer who is motivated by purity of thought tries to provoke sensation.

“A true artist while creating tries to encapture all those things which he has true faith in, but if it is done consciously then his integrity is at stake”. (17)

Now the question arises that if something is said consciously it becomes false. If literature claims that it creates awareness and consciousness its only motive, then why it is declared false.

If we keep into consideration the comments of T.S. Eliot in which he has stated about the usage and practice of something, there lies a difference between the practice of something done on the conscious level. The aim of practice is that it becomes the part of the author’s intuition and he is successful in cheating beauty and awareness because a

thing which becomes the part of the being it also becomes the part of creation un-consciously.

To accept something in literature on the conscious level it means that there is a capacity of contradiction between sub-conscious and the un-conscious.

If anybody adopts secularism consciously and is brought up in a religious society which affects his sub-conscious and un-conscious then the same affect of secularism hinders the progress of his being.

If a person is brought up in a secular society definitely there will be certain things regarding religion which he will accept on the conscious level but he will contradict on certain things un-consciously.

This idea fails in literature because if something is accepted on the conscious level but not put into practice automatically it is not a part of literature and it becomes a misfit.

T.S Eliot comments “Whatever I want to say is that modern literature has been marred because of paganism and it is unaware of the importance of the super-naturalism to naturalism, It is something to which I give priority”. (18)

The literature which has been created on the conscious level appears to be more artificial. Literature demands truthfulness. If it is devoid of truthfulness no matter how much logical it is it cannot provoke sensations.

“Modernism is not a conscious effort but every age is different from the past according to its priorities, needs and requirements”. (19)

Literature being a mirror to society does not have the unity.

Gopi Chander tells the reason that reason that the biggest tragedy of our time is the industrial revolution. A strange feeling has

developed, it is totally different from the common feeling. This type of feeling has given a new kind of awareness.

New poetry is indifferent and impartial. (20)

This indifferent attitude is the gift of industrialization and materialism. Though the present age has increased the knowledge but it has slain love and has immortalized affection. Life is meant for love. Keeping into consideration this fact we come to know that criticism is also affected by industrialization that is why it has also lost its real motive.

“Scientific progress has suppressed the social thought which ruled the world for centuries.

Is our past heritage will be with us in future?

This is the point from where the duty and responsibility of the begins, who links the present with the past”. (21)

In such conditions when we are growing fed-up with the past and hopeless about our future we need the positive role of criticism, which prevents literature from delinquency of thought and makes us more on the right path.

Criticism of today will have to play the role of a bridge between the reader and the author and will have to guide both. This role can only be played by criticism so that an author is neither completely traditional nor totally modern.

Traditionalism and modernism are two separate ways. Criticism must have futuristic approach and as well positive approach and like this future will be bright in the mechanical age.

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