STUDY ON INDIA'S PUBLIC PROTEST: A POSTMODERNISM VIEW

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Abstract

Experimental tendencies in western architecture, the arts, and general cultural development are characterized by postmodernism. As a tool for social and political analysis, it draws attention to the transition from industrialization and class solidarity to increasingly fragmented and pluralistic information societies, where people become consumers instead of producers and individualism takes the place of allegiance to one's class, religion, or ethnicity. Conventional political ideologies are seen from this angle as meaningless "meta-narratives." Postmodernists contend that absolute and universal truths are intolerable and that there is no such thing as certainty. Thus, the significance of dialogue, debate, and democracy is emphasized. Postmodernism disapproves of definitive responses to nearly all queries. Even though postmodernism challenges prevailing narratives, it also provides a wealth of understanding into a wide range of social discourses.2.What is meant by postmodernism?

Keywords: Information Technology, Consumer, Postmodernism, Post-modernity, Modernism, Public Protest.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to understand postmodernism perspective behind recent public protest in India.

Methodology

The paper is based on the analytical study of secondary data taken from various published sources like,reports, newspapers, magazines, journals and the like.

Introduction

One can trace the postmodernist perspective while comprehending modernism. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw significant changes to western culture, which are referred to as the "modern" epoch. The structure of society had changed as a result of urbanization and industrialization. The convictions of

modernity are progress, reason, and total knowledge. These beliefs center on the notions that rational inquiry must direct the pursuit of knowledge and that intellectual growth is the means by which the world will advance. Thus, modern science and technology promote the notion that the pursuit of knowledge and improvements in technology will improve the world.

Rationalisation of culture is very much visible which we discussed as one of the key elements of modern thought. One can question that why bureaucracy is still prevalent today if it is an aspect of modern culture and theory suggests that we have passed through a postmodern era. This demonstrates one of the challenges of postmodernism. There is no distinct mark of the beginning of the postmodern era. There are multiple theories about the first postmodernist. Postmodernism is not a unified intellectual movement with a single goal. However, there are various different versions of postmodernism.

New Technological Paradigm

Information technology is an important factor in postmodern society. This technology plays an important role in transformation of society. Information processing is the fundamental activity for effectiveness and productivity of all processes of production, distribution, consumption and management. In India the population of aspirational middle class has been multiply and this section of society is well equipped with the instruments of information technology like android phone, iphone, internet, laptop, iPod etc. This class is also a big consumer market based society. E-business or e-marketing is buzzword now-a-days. In fact, a sizable number of people are using information technologies in urban and rural in India, what is important is that information processing has begun to operate in India and the Indian software developer and other resource person are going abroad or working for foreign companies and countries through outsourcing. Two elements have played a decisive part in bringing about social change in India; first, western science and technology, and secondly, social planning. The influence of technology has been apparent in diverse arias of social life.[3]

Emergence consumer society in India

The rise of consumerism in India an important factor related to postmodernism. The consumption behaviour has increased in India manifold. An upward mobility of a substantial number of populations in our society may be increasing the consumerist temptations. Considering all available evidences it could be said that so far consumption is concerned, Indian society has been transforming into a postmodern society.

 Is India falling within the net of cyber-people?

Postmodern society is the society of cyber-people. This is one of the striking features of postmodernity. This factor has been expressed in both cultural studies and scientific publications as well as in movies, computer games, comic books and science fiction novels. Although there are many different variations

on the ideas of technology-humanity union, the figure of the Cyber era and the current developments of the information superhighway have recently received a great deal of attention. Have Indians become cyber-people? The internet facilities have become popular not only in India's metropolitan cities, but in a modest way these have also reached to smaller cities and towns. It is a positive move towards the becoming of a postmodern society.

Social change: Rise of popular culture:

Since independence, there has been a visible improvement in the living standards of large numbers of people, who eat better, dress better, invest sizeable portions of their income in their education of their children, living better housing, and spend sizeable sums in buying consumer durables as refrigerator, TV set and VCRs.[4] It aesthetics is essentially eclectic. It is, however, technology unmatched in the power of self- augmentation, expansion and domination as it rides on the wings of the print and electronic media.

The emergence of popular culture in contemporary India indicates that the society is increasingly becoming postmodern. Even the villages are not unaffected by the expansion of popular culture. Weaker section experienced a revolution in their expectations. They began to develop their own dreams. The middle has class became over-ambitious. But, the functioning of state, particularly after the emergence of liberalization, privatization and globalization, created some short of puzzle among the people.

We can notice a sharp division between the cultural and existential ethnic movements. The conception of society as a single body socially unified in one single social 'whole' beneath in the postmodernist society of India, there is a rush to acquire material products and economic prosperity, goods and commodities including knowledge about body care, health nutrition and sex and subjectivities. But, at the same time, there is a simultaneous outburst of collectivises, sometimes violent in expression, making demands in defence of cultural symbols, lifestyles, language; and of subjectivist manifestations in defence of localized identities. The pluralist perspective therefore implies that representative government is the only way the democratic ideal can be realized in contemporary society. Pluralists have often been attacked for what many see as the narrow and restricted view of democracy. This involves social democracy whereby people directly participate in the decision making and management.[5]

The Postmodernism Perspective: The Changing Nature of Protest Movement in India

Postmodernism is a reaction to assumed certainty of scientific (objective) efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality.

Due to this, postmodernism is skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures,

traditions, or races, and rather focuses on the relative truths of each person.[6]

The basic tenet of modernity to guarantee individual freedom and liberate the individual from the external authority was reversed in paradoxical situation of liberating the individual on the basis of rationality on the one hand but at the same time subjugating the individual to the system compulsions which turns in to the perversion of rationality. The postmodernist consciousness is a strong reaction to this systematic compulsion After the economic liberalization since 1991, there have been a lot of changes in Indian society. Economic structure of our society has changed. The conventional closed market economy has changed to knowledge based competitive economy. The colonial economic structure has been withering away through economic reforms and things are becoming more market friendly. New service class has been added to the middle class. This service class has modern education and knows the use of new technology therefore their mind sate is rational and somewhat scientific too.

Now-a-days, consumer satisfaction has become single parameter of judging utility of a good. People want service and quality, quality based services are getting importance. There is a huge expansion in media technology. The rise of internet has led to a massive and unprecedented change in our society as well as media. The internet has dominance in other walks of lives too. Information revolution has demolished regional boundaries and paved the way for globalization. Various kinds of information are spreading through many kinds of source. Social media has transformed many things. People are very much vocal on various socio-economic issues and political and global challenges. Freedom of speech and expression has become very vital. It has given open challenge to main stream media too. In fact, it has changed our thought process.

The process of globalization is connecting Indian people across the globe. There is flow of information and ideas, money, and people moving across the world. Globalization has opened cultural boundaries. People want to know about what is happening across the world. Caste and religion based society is heading towardsbecoming cosmopolitan.

Politicians who do not want to look beyond their feudal and colonial ways of thinking are being rejected by the postmodern voters. The mind sate of Indian voter has changed. Contemporary Indian voter has outgrownthe power structure of democratically elected ruler and the ruled population. They do not want only basic requirements of the life but, they want world class facilities as well. They are preferring leaders who do not treat them merely as vote bank. They have desire to transform India from still psychologically feudal societyin to a developed society.

The year of 2011 was the year of public protest. There were huge demonstrations on the streets. First, a small coup occurred in the Tunisia, the regime change was the outcome, and the whole world saw a huge mass mobilization on the Tahrir Square. People came out in large numbers in the protest against old MahatirMoohamad's regime. Demonstration was quite peaceful. The loyal army had no option but

to respect the desire and sentiment of the people of Egypt. The protest in Egypt has been named as "Arab Spring". It was a spontaneous uprising that took every by surprise. After initial flip- flops, the West suggested that political transition "start now".[7] In this spring role of social media was unprecedented. It played the instrumental role in channelizing the people. The Occupy Wall Street movement was a major follow up. A protester who was a college student said "we are moving fast, without a hierarchical structure and lots of gears turning," and who travelled from Cleveland to New York to help."…Egos are clashing, but this is participatory democracy in a little park."[8]

Jan Lokpal Bill: Anti Corruption Movement by Anna Hazare, 2011

In India middle class and lower strata of society as well as capitalist want good governance and corruption free administration. Due to many shortcomings in UPA 2nd government and policy paralysis fade up the mind of the people. In the meantime, Team Anna took the opportunity to launch a movement in India. This movement, better known as the anti-corruption movement, was a series of demonstrations and protests across India for strong legislation to get rid of corruption. The movement gained momentum in April 2011, when a well-known anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare began a hunger strike at Jantar-Mantar in New Delhi. The main motive behind that movement was to denounce all kinds of corruption and getting mass support in favor of Janlokpal (Ombudsman). People came out in the support of Anna's movement for Janlokpal. At that time people learnt that Anna Hajare was sitting at Ramleela Ground for noble cause to root out corruption in public life. Anna Hazare explained how people had the power to force government. When he declared that in a democracy "people were the masters and the Ministers and other government representatives only their servants or the trustees of their money.[9] Yoga Guru Rama Dev also sat at dharnain New Delhi against black money. In all these movements citizen participation was spontaneous and voluntary. If we examine this movement in term of postmodernism perspective we find that the protest shows dissatisfaction of a section of society or some time it represents the will of the masses. Participators always want change in the contemporary system, Postmodernism is also change or be changed the world.

Before these movements use of social media has changed lifestyle of common man and social media is in a position to put pressure on main stream media, earlier common man did not get proper coverage in mediabut in the changed scenario people are very much vocal to express their views and ideas. Indian political system thinks in a very traditional way and people have moved from that traditional mind sate. People are thinking rationally to root out socio-economic discourse.

Nirbhaya Movement, 2012

In December 2012 Delhi saw one of the angry reactions from people across the country who were very clear on expressing that they have had enough. After the incident, thousands came out on streets to

protest in several parts of the country. The movement also created a stir in social media. Taking the movement into consideration, the government at the centre and various states announced several steps to ensure the safety of women. The Nirbhaya Movement can be defined as feminist revolution as a spontaneous response against a female medical student was violently gang-raped in the Capital city of India. A nation-wide movement received international attention. People came out on the street as well as on social media in sport of the movement spontaneously and compelled politicians for strong legislation and exemplary punishment to perpetrator. It was also a movement against the patriarchal perception of rape as a dishonour to the victim. It was a movement against deep rooted cultural acceptance of sexual violence against women. The social media played an important role in mobilizing the masses from all sections of society.

Pro-Jallikattu Protests, Tamil Nadu, 2017

During the protest of Jallikattu one thing was hunting that why the ancient sport of Jallikattu became an unexpected revolt and a reaction of identity politics that is crucial to Tamil Politics. The most important aspect of this movement was participation of youth as a celebration as Tamil Culture. The manifestation of the anger of Tamil people was unprecedented and nature of the movement was non political. The Occupy Marina Movement was both a protest and a cultural celebration. There has been an articulation by new generation of students who were non-violent, disciplined and unarmed volunteers managing spontaneous responses. This movement was a youth movement.

As the Supreme Court put a ban on the traditional bull-taming sport Jallikattu after years of complaints about animal cruelty by PETA, the ban was not accepted by the people of Tamil Nadu. The protestors said the sport is central to their cultural identity. Around 2, 00,000 people came out on the street near Chennai's Marina beach to show solidarity. On January 23, the Tamil Nadu Government legalised Jallikattu and passed a bill to amend the PCA (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act) 1960 Act

Conclusion

Many things have been revealed by the recent wave of nationwide protest in India:

First, the protesters took part in recent past in various protest marches, agitations, and demonstrations represent a new socio-economic and cultural mood that manifests itself in a new kind of way to show their anger, what we perceive in fast unto death, Jal Samadhi, Jalsatyagrah, sand sculptor, candle march and panting etc.

Second, many dimensions can be visible in protest movements which took place and they are not monolithic in nature. People are trying their individual ways of adding new things to get their particular protest movements get multifaceted.

Third, due to technological changes protest movements are getting new kinds of infrastructure which enable rapid mobilization of masses in a very short span of time from all parts of the states and country.

The reason is that people are getting information from various sources and sometime evaluating it too. It is possible that people are no more aloof but are individuals who have developed the feeling of responsibility towards the larger social goal. It is important to note that given the enhanced opportunity of visibility through social media, people can share their ideas in shaping society, which leads to the very relativist and pluralist idea of truth; a true mark of postmodern understanding.

Fourth, when we analyze contemporary protest movements, we find that different kinds of narrative have been emerging out. For instance, the question "Who is the leader?" is very important in modern period. People look up to the leader, authority or the father figure for direction and mostly following orders. However, what we found in Nirbhaya movement was that when this news came out in public domain people reacted spontaneously. Although students of JNU initiated agitation but by and large the movement was leaderless and people from all walks of life took part in it and showed that whole India want exemplary punishment for those who were involved in that heinous crime. In other words, the deconstruction of the hierarchical structure of the pre-modern era protest movement is visible. However, one may say that not all movements were without hierarchical structure or lacked strategic and tactical thinking behind them.

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