

HISTORY AND THE CHALLENGE OF POSTMODERNISM

Special Lecture organised by Department of History, DHWU

27 July 2021

The Department of History of **Diamond Harbour Women's University** organized a special lecture on "**History and the challenge of postmodernism**" on 27th July 2021 on online mode. It was held for M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. coursework students. Professor **Rajkumar Chakravarty**, Associate Professor, Government General Degree College, Gopiballavpur II, Jhargram, delivered an extremely informative lecture on this topic. On this day, he discussed in detail what is postmodernism, what are the main points of the philosophers who believe in this doctrine, and what have they said in writing history, about all these aspects.

Postmodernism has emerged as an important political current in the contemporary philosophical scenario and offered a deep and far-reaching criticism of modernism. It has challenged all the traditional as well as modern categories of thoughts within which social theories have been discussed and evaluated. Postmodernism offers sophisticated criticism of rationalism; essentialism and universalism. In fact, postmodernism is a perspective through which a new trend or a new aspect of society is emerged within the terrain of philosophy. Postmodernism, as the 'post' preface implies, is something that follows modernism. Postmodernist educators believe that there is no absolute or universal truth, arguing that truth changes with the advent of new events and discoveries. This means that scientific events that are now taking historically on one side of the world have influenced political and social events that are now taking place on another. Postmodernist educators embrace and encourage cross-cultural dialogue and debates as necessary factor in the education process.

Postmodernism believes that the prevailing notion of truth is that which is implied through allusions, similes, idioms, etc., which do not approach the partial, full truth. Humans have created their own world of imaginary truths by creating language. Hence, postmodernism was encouraged to destroy all conventional systems and think of new construction. They dream of building a new world by removing everything from Kant's enlightened epochal theory or imperialist hegemony. According to them, historians writing history in modern times follow observational or empiricism, this history cannot find the truth. History, like literature, is a

branch of knowledge whose paradigm structures include hyperbole, simile and formalism. Everything is as familiar as literature. What is claimed to be history based on facts is a man-made history or narrative that can be reinterpreted like literature. What is called causation in history is actually fictional events or content. The historiography of postmodernism is very important because it covers everything in human culture. A central tenet of postmodern historiography is that historians claim to construct data-based history is an exaggeration. Historians cannot say how the past was, how the present is. One of the reasons for this is the language barrier, the meaning of language changes over time, new idioms and metaphors are imported. They obscure the truth in such a way that it is a duty to discover its nature. Postmodernists also question historical truth. They are interested in knowing what happened in history. Narrative history is the transaction between language and reality. Postmodernists are not opposed to the form of history, but they are aware of the limitations of the historicist. Their expectation for historians is that they will more consciously scrutinize the historical narrative. Traditional history will be judged from. The point of view of relativity.

Michel Foucault was a French philosopher who examined the theories of, and the relationship between, truth and power. Foucault established the presence of episteme in philosophy. Epistemes are the knowledge or understanding that contributes to a society at a particular time in history. He claimed that there is not one universal truth, but several truths result in a constant shift in the relationship of truth and power. As a result, power is not something that can be possessed, but something that can be implemented.

Rene Descartes questioned the efficacy of historical knowledge in his Discourse on Method. It has been argued that Descartes himself did not realize the extent of this revolutionary move. In shifting the debate from 'what is true' to 'of what can I be certain?', Descartes arguably shifted the authoritative guarantor of truth from God to humanity- while the traditional concept of 'truth' implies an external authority, 'certainty' instead relies on the judgment of the individual. It can be expected that the discussion of that day will fuel new researchers to work in new ways.