Transition from Modernity to Post-Modernity

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Abstract:
The era of enlightenment is known as “mother of modernity”. It has promoted human rationality, scientific development, and human supremacy and paves the way for the decline of religious understanding of the society. The rise of human rationality, materialization of industry, invention of printing press and rising trend of democratic principle, emerging market economy and technological development are characterised as modernity. The idea of modernity is first stage of human era where human beings were treated as supreme authority of their spheres. With modernity, the concept of nation/state emerged which has the credit to organise the world, promote the rights of the individuals and pay its emphasis on the construction of the democratic society; participatory politics and free individuals. But modernity is criticised by scholars like Perry Anderson, who argue that modernity has actually created another layer and made society absolute. It has inserted empirical documentation and rejected the persons’ observation, including local reality. With these critiques, post-modernity emerged which has questioned the foundation of modernity. It advocated for ‘bottom to approach’ unlike modernity. The main objective of this paper to analysed the main tenets of modernity and discuss the actual principle of post-modernity. This analytical paper concludes with the major critics of post-modernity by taking the author’s understanding about modernity and post-modernity.

Key words: Modernity, post-modernity, Nihilism, deconstruction, anti-foundationalism, human rationality, enlightenment, industry, religious understanding, absolute layer, normal structure, cultures.

Introduction:
The Idea of Modernity was introduced in Europe. It came in the 18th century and replaced the traditional structure of the European Society. It had theorised the Enlightenment and provided the open, democratic and individuals’ path of development to the society of Europe. It had brought human rationality in the socio-political and economical practices of the entire society. It had replaced the Traditionalism by scientific rationality. Later this political idea was called as modernity. The basic aim of this idea is to bring the scientific temperament in each and every aspect of human life. Second, it had paved the way of territorial state. Third, modernity has credit to develop the market economy, industry etc. But further this is criticised on the basis of its newer kinds of absolute and lifeless traditionalism, because in very short period of time it became so ruthless and inaccesive in terms of judging the human capacity. It set up the scientific norms for each and every aspect of humanity at each and every stage of human life. Mainly after the Second World War pundit Derrida and Francis came up as critical theorists of modernity and advocated for the contextual description for each and every human related issues. These post-modernist authors believe as Sudipto Kaviraj argued in his article “An Outline of a Revisionist theory of Modernity” that the idea of modernity and any system of society impacts on the different individuals differently. Therefore it needs to be an individual’s perspective rather than blanket perspective. In the last decade of 20th century and in the first decade of the 21st century, this unique idea of Post-modernity is criticised on the basis of destabilising principle of society, where authors argue that this post-modernity has created a nihilistic kind of condition in the society. Further they alleged that on the name of questioning these, Post-modernist thinkers delegitimize the actual, established and practicing norms of the society. In this short explanatory paper, we will make out the
definition of modernity and salient features of modernity. The second part would be gradual shift from modernity to post-modernity; along with this we would discuss the core tenets of post-modernity. At the third stage, my research paper aims to develop the initial critics of post-modernity and develop the vital arguments for a greater theoretical improvement and final part will be a robust conclusion by arguing that why modernity being a humanitarian project had failed? how the situational developments pave the way for post-modernity?

Pre-modern society

Europe during 15th and 16th century was very backward and patriarchal in its original nature. The whole continent constituted a hierarchical society in the particular region, only the one percent to two percent Bishops and Clergies of total society were ruling on the 98% populace. Geoffrey Treasure argued in his book “the making of modern Europe 1648-1780” that this society was in a critical condition in terms of medical care, equality among humanity and less concern about children (Treasure, 2003). There was average life of men was 25 and most of the child died under the age of 5, because of natural calamities. According to Treasure (2003), the first clinic for the women was opened in 19th century. Even this book argued that the people of Europe were so religious and traditional in nature. They heavily opposed to the Protestants’ change. On the other hand, this book established the argument that there were handful people who promoted the newer kinds of change. Later they were called Protestants like John Kelvin and Martin Luther King “JUNIAR” these two authors rejected the supreme authority of Church and advocated rational individuals who would be able to make contact with god directly. Further Luther wrote that individuals are capable of managing his/her life and individuals have potential to create better condition for their life. Therefore people as individual entity should be free in every sense. Namely, in 16th century, lot of scholars like John Lock, Hobbes, Rousseau etc came in light with their leading and enlightened writings. They had projected that traditionalism is obstructivist root of the society, consequently they advocated for individual’s freedom. As Rousseau wrote in his book “the social contract” men are born free and everywhere is in chains (Rousseau, 1762). Locke wrote that life, liberty and property are inviolable and uncompromisable right of individuals. Further he calls it “Natural right of citizen” in other successive century; academics brought very good development in terms of destroying the feudal nature of the society. Adam Smith published his book “wealth of the nation 1775” and gave the convincing argument for the free market’s economy and less regulation of state. From this stage, the European society takes turn towards pure individualism. When Comte and Thiny, Montesquieu published their writings then the movement of the developmental society got accelerated. David Thomson explained some inevitable reasons of change in the European Society. In his seminal academic work “Europe Since napoleon: clearly pointed out that the rise of Liberal Ideology and its universal human values had played an important role in the dramatic change of European Society. For example freedom, Equality, Fraternity, Individual supremacy etc had led to several nodal changes in the world like American/Revolution in 1776, French Revolution in 1789 (Thomson, 1966). Further Thomson argued that in the last 17 century, the Protestants had gained a considerable position in the society and they had advocated for a greater and humanitarian change like Individuals are final authority after the god. Men and women are equal stake-holder of the society etc. Meanwhile, Auguste Comte came up with his fresh and innovative ideas that earlier the humanity was living under the helpless society, where the Church was supreme authority of whole humanity, but in present modern form of the society human beings are having controlling power to the social construction of entire arena of humanity. They have enough knowledge and tactics to control the societal change. Here Comte argued that individuals are supreme authority of society. Other European leading scholars like Hegel, Bentham and Jefferson took another round of academic development and persuasive argument for the individualistic mode of society. In terms of State-
Formation, The Treaty of Westphalia was concluded in 1648, which had paved the way for the territorial organisation of the state. Leading Geographer John Agnew termed it “TERRITORIAL TRAP” and characterised as new manifestation in the configuration of modern state. This territoriality gave the birth to several concepts in the discourse of politics, such as Nationalism, Social Divisions in the Political Society, newer kinds of territorial loyalty and finally the rise of modern state. This juxtaposition of the society led inherent newer development in the spheres of academics, which is later characterised as modernity.

The Idea of Modernity: modernity

The idea of modernity is the result of scientific development of European Society. Mainly Modernity came in the mid-way of Enlightenment. Some authors like Sudipto kaviraj argued that Modernity is the result of industrial development in Europe. Further he says that this Modernity has accelerated the process of State-construction, territorial recognition of state, an idea of nationalism and human rationality in the society. Kaviraj cited Stephen Hawking and wrote in his article “what is modernity 2004” that the idea of the present time is tangible reflection of past. According to this explanation modernity is visible, theoretical and best suited explanation of enlightenment. Moreover, Stuart Hall gave the essential features of modernity in his book “the understanding the modern society”

1: Scientific development: Science is indispensable feature of Modernity. It has given certainty, clarity and logical temperaments in the life of human beings. Before the 17th century, the European society was fully traditional and helpless in terms of own development. Further Comte argued that at first stage, men were helpless to control the situation of human life in the society. But later they could understand that the principle of human life must be “to know to predict and to predict to control” consequently the idea of Positivism came in practice with the scholars in their writings. This theory established that the measurement of human progress in certain fixed term is highest values of human beings. With same ideas, David Bekhom came and established the idea of “empiricist thinking” this understanding argues that the scientific measurement and countable measurement is tangible outcome and behavioural result of human beings. David Hume wrote that during enlightenment, Philosophers had no time to visit Church and other religious functions. the lack of time and scientific temperament led to the scientific and neutral development of socio-cultural aspect of society. Further he wrote that the strict behaviour of Catholics made boring life of Europeans.

2: Nationalism:

The modernity has credit to build up an idea of nationalism in Europe. In this process, modernity has created the territorial bases of nations instead of cultural and ethnic. Secondly it has pave the way for the further organisation of scattered masses. Benedict Anderson Called it “Imagine community” He wrote a book and named it “Imagine Community” where he proposes that nationalism is imagined by some people, because it had no primordial base like historical background, blood and ancestry relationship (Anderson, 2006). Hosbom defined “Nationalism” as predicted community where he writes that nationalism is not a natural phenomena but it is a predicted phenomena. Further Hasbom thinks that after getting existence, it provides share political culture, administrative affiliation and equal citizenship along with equal goal and treatment.

In the Europe, nationalism was emerged to organised the people and break the cultural affiliation amongst masses. It has impacted negatively as well. Like in case of Hungary, it became territorial state mainly after the First World War but later it has recognised cultural intimacy with Foreign Hungarians. This state led action created the border tension between Hungary and Czechoslovakia and some other neighbouring countries. Even this nationalism did not only created the tension among the states but it has obvious root of world wars like First World war 1914 to 1918,
Second World War 1939 to 1945. After these two world wide destruction and horrendous, authors like Ilykadari pointed out that “nationalism is ill mentality of the society and modern states” further he clarified that this territorial and modern nationalism has brought humanity in the destructive form. Therefore we should think out from this elite-project of mass organisation called State.

3: Human supremacy:
The enlightenment came in Europe in 16 and 17 century. It had prime concern to bring human reasoning in the life of human beings. Consequently this era of enlightenment characterised as “AGE OF HUMAN REASONS” even it challenged to orthodox norms and regulation of Church and clergies along with privilege social status of nobles. This mode of thinking and direction of society led to development of the modernity. Where we see tangible explanation and impact on the human life. The idea of modernity contains some humanistic principles like human beings are supreme, individuals are final responsible to their own life. This sense of modernity is called “Liberal Value of the West” secondly modernity helped to thesis writers who wanted to bring newer social system like Auguste Comte. He wanted to bring social and individual control over the social construction of society and socialisation of individuals, Consequently he proposed the idea of Positivism and established the principle of measurement of human progress in numbers. It was revolutionary development in the academics and in the spheres of social science.

4: Strong support to industry:
The era of modernity is defined by the industrial development. In my personal opinion, the growth of industry is physical growth of modernity because it shows the particular kinds of augmentation of the human life and mode of society. For example, the industrial society had created the formal relationship in the society and encourage the people to be punctual in their life. In the prima facia, Industrialisation was viewed as modernization. Consequently industrialisation took place at the large scale in Europe.

5: Free market and liberal economy:
The development of free-liberal economy is necessary consequence of industrial society which is highly advocated by modernity principles. David Thomson wrote in his book “Europe Since Napoleon” that the liberal values get popularity through modernity and modernity pave the way for the rapid growth of industry which had led to the development of free market economy (Thomson, 1966).

6: Democracy: Democracy as an ideology, advocates for the liberty of the people. It propose the equal society and equal treatment to all the people. In fact, the democracy is liberal value but modernity gave consent and make root clear for the further churning of democracy. Fundamentally modernity wants to bring equality in the society, in this process modernity advocates proposed individual recognition. Even they agreed that democracy is best form of government. Consequently, democracy became a form of government rather than remained an ideology.

Definition and salient features of Post-modernity:
The Idea of Post-Modernity was presented as staunch opposition of Modernity Principles. It is natural and inevitable consequence of modernity. Professor Raban wrote that any kinds of departure from modernity can be defined as post-modernity. The chief exponent of post-modernity Jock Derida wrote that modernity has created various independent level and newer tradition of rationality and scientificness. He argues That absolute measurement of the human progress created the lifeless and mindless situation-condition for human beings. Terry Eagleton defines it in 1987 as “There is, perhaps, a degree of consensus that the typical postmodernist artefact is playful, self-ironizing and even schizoid; and that it reacts to the austere autonomy of high modernism by impudently embracing the language of commerce and the commodity.” (harvey 19994 page 7) further he wrote that Modernity came with an idea of “emancipatry
science” but it could not succeed in its ambition, consequently there was a popular demand from the side of philosophers and common masses to replace this newer lifeless, absolute and so called scientific tradition from the societal development. After this sociological growth Post-modernity came in existence. mainly, post-modernity is cultural oriented and advocates for the cultural autonomy along with that all the sections of society should be accepted as integral part of structure of society. all the cultural differences and distinct identities have right to decide their political future. With this understanding, Post-Modernists make opposition to territorial and modern nation state. They say that these political boundary are created arbitrarily. Therefore it need to be resettled. Secondly: the post-modernists are context specific. They follow the inductive mode of thinking and argued for the system from below. Further they criticised modernist principle of universality. They claimed that the universality will destroy the original nature of various cultures and actual features of native cultures. This context specific ideology believe in subjectivity and avoidance of judgement. Further we will discuss various features of post modernity.

The main tenets of post-modernity:
Post-modernity came in existence action as reaction of absolute modernisation. It presented by Jocque Derrida, Michel Foucault, and HaberMas. Post-modernity believes in the more depth study. Therefore, it is characterised as ‘anti-foundationalism’. In the subsequent discussion, the salient feature of post-modernity are analysed.

The principle of deconstruction:
This is leading principle of Post-modernity. This is given by Jacque Derida who is chief exponent of post-modernity. He writes that modernity has became a layer in the society. it determines the human progress in material sense no more than but the reality of society and actuality of native cultures are effective and practically dominant in the society. Therefore further he advocated for an idea of deconstruction. According to this idea, all the cultures have greater autonomy in terms of decision making. All the cultures and distinct an ideologies have own virtues and reality. Derida calls it greater democratisation of political society. but Some authors like Pauline Marrie Rosenau defines “deconstruction” as anti-democratic and leading instrument of anarchy. In my personal opinion, here post-modernity is seeming traditional because it does not want to disturb or change the status quo of cultural practices. In this process, they justifies the bad and absolute cultures like In Indian case, Khup-Panchayats are so cruel and brutal. This situation pose a question to post-modernity that how they will solve this social native and brutal practices of humanity.

Principle of subjectivity:
Post-modernity is cultural oriented ideology. It advocates for the cultural justice. In this process, it demands for cultural autonomy and makes argument for cultural boundaries on the place of territorial boundary. Authors like David Harvey cites Webber in his book and argued that Modernity has created the purposive and instrumental rationality in the society. it could not bring any tangible and noticeable change in the socio-cultural and economical arena rather than creation of “iron cage” for the human beings. Further Harvey writes that post modernity came to fill this gap and argues for the decentralisation of authority, assertion of cultural uniqueness, making more democratic. The principle of subjectivity follow the idea of diverse cultures.

Comparative evaluation:
Before concluding my argument, there are some relevant queries with regard to the theorisation of modernity and journey to post modernity. Like why the universality principle of modernity was turned down and pave the easy way for Post-modernity, along with this it is also discernable that why the principle of deconstruction is criticised? The second main bone of contention is that the idea of emancipator of modernity could not manage to rid itself from the previous traditional
social structure, with this arcane debate, it needs to be pointed out that to what extent Post-modernity has gave the space to common masses in their social cultural and economic life. Third is post-modernity sustainable as an ideology?

Modernity was theorised in the 18 century in Europe. At that time, it had aimed to develop the newer kinds of socio-cultural and rational system for the welfare and emancipation of common masses. In this process, modernity created the scientific structure and brought science and human rationality at the top of the social construction and making of society. Thus, it has brought a universal values of humanity like scientificness and rational in its nature. In this process, the modernists thinkers had ignored the distinct features and uniqueness of various cultures. In order to challenge this universality principle Post-modernists came in 1970s. These thinkers are cultural oriented and anti-modern territorial state’s boundaries. They have strong argument that this territorial demarketation is arbitrary and structurally contentious in its nature. Consequently, they have suggested so many regional organisations like European Union E.U. African Union (A.U.) etc. But the current literature like Santos argues that Post-Modernity could not do anything for the society, only it has destabilised the present system. Later it is called Nihilist understanding of society which has no principle except criticising to others. Another point to be discussed that after the replacement of older structure, why the Modernity could not manage to sustain in the realm of the academic? When we see the Modernist literatures like Kavraj writing, he suggests that it is universal principle that all the social, political and economical system have impacted differently on different people. Thus, there cannot be a universalistic principle and theory for entire population. But the modernity believes in the common and global values for the humanity. Rosenau pointed out that modernity comes as a challenging ideology to previous system, after a point of time, it itself became a layer of society and deciding norms of human life through its bureaucratic mode of thinking.

But when we pose same question on Post-modernity, then we find that this new ideology could not bring sustainable development in the society, because of this it is called anti-thesis of modernity not as thesis.

Conclusion:
After the robust debate on transition from modernity to post-modernity, there are some obvious conclusions like an idea of modernity was presented in Europe as emancipator politics. Second, the modernity has theorised the practice of enlightenment of Europe. Third, the credit of scientific development goes to the concept of modernity alone, because for the first time, the modernity had presented the strong and effective challenge to traditional pattern of the European society. Thus it is characterised as emancipator ideology. Fourth, it had created the situation where human rationality was highest form of societal norms and final authority to construct the future of the humanity. Fifth, the modernity had paved the way for modern territorial national-state with strong vision of absolute sovereignty. Even this ideology had created the territorial based nationalism which is the most effective vision of modern state. Later this Modernist ideology is criticised on the bases of absolute and newer comatose tradition. As Jacques Derida, Harvey and Rosenu wrote that modernity was brought for the emancipation of the people from the traditional mode of the society, but it got failed. Not only it is failed but it has created newer kinds of tradition. Which might be called “scientific tradition” which is challenged by Post-modernist later, Here all the growth and human progress will shaped into mathematic sense. Aftermath of the motionless modernity, Post-modernity came into practice. Initially, it has advocated that modernity has done injustice with different, unique and vigorous cultures. It has undermined the originality and actuality of native cultures. In this process they have made opposition to modern state nation. Further they presented the post-nationalist solutions like European Union. They call it post-
The modernist project and post-nationalist solution of wars and confrontation. The main principle of post-modernity are the principle of deconstruction and subjectivity. Second it believes in the context-specific agenda rather than holistic. Third it advocates for cultural autonomy instead of territorial autonomy. Fourth the idea of post-modernity has brought greater democratic political system, because it demands that political system must be from the below. But this idea is also criticised on the bases of unmanaged political ideology. David Harvey wrote that post-modernists are sceptical thinkers, they do not believe in any kinds of established political system. Further he blames that they always try to destabilise the system rather than giving them stability. Finally, in the end, we can argue that modernity was a progressive step in the history of human beings. It could fully succeed to challenge the European Feudal and Church oriented social structure. But the later period, the modernity itself became a absolute layer of society. Consequently it is replaced by new ideology called Post-modernism. These new advocates reminded that the society needs robust and deconstructed system. Further they agreed with an ideas of cultural autonomy with full fledged right of decision making. Finally we, as students argue that the development of modernity and transition to post-modernity is progressive direction of change. Even we should be pleased that this trend would continue in the era of post-modern age as well, because authors like David Harvey and Santos have criticised the Post-modernist thinking on the bases of inconsistent ideology and bringing instability to the system.

References: