

THE impact of post-modernism on Pakistani culture is quite visible with almost all the cultural phenomena now moving towards post-modernism, including film, theatre and media.

In films, some productions can be called attempts in post-modernism such as *Beyond The Last Mountain* that was produced by Javed Jabbar way back in the 1970s. But the production could not capture the attention of the general public and bombed at the box-office. Although the attempt was bold and contained an element of modernity, the viewers were not mature enough to appreciate it.

In Urdu films, no production can be named as post-modern except a few that have been produced outside Pakistan and present a multicultural view of humanity. In theatre, some adaptations were staged by Ali Ahmed, a well-known writer and producer who presented translations of Samuel Becket's reputed play *Waiting for Godot* and Jean Paul Sartre's *Flies*. Ionesco's play, *The Chair*, was adapted by Riaz Firshori and produced and broadcast from Radio Pakistan. *Amedie And How To Get Rid Of It*, a post-modern play by Ionesco, was re-written by Khalid Ahmed and produced by the writer of this essay. It was put on air by Radio Pakistan.

Salim Ahmed also presented a play entitled *Mausam Aur Mohabbat* and another one that was an adaptation of *Hairy Ape* by O'Neil. Izhar Kazmi, a producer of modern sensibility and the then producer-director of the external service of Radio Pakistan made some bold experiments in the presentation of different programmes. He specially produced two post-modern plays entitled *Khwaab Holnak Hai* and *Six Characters In Search Of An Author*, an Italian masterpiece written by Louis Pirandello.

The drama was inspired by the post-modern theme and a successful production. Izhar Kazmi is one of the initiators of post-modernism in radio programmes. Such attempts were not fully successful due to the undeveloped taste of the audience, but it created an awareness of the post-modern era in film, theatre and media.

Local media has now started

Post-modernism in national media

BY ZAMIR ALI BADAIYUNI

Culture Dawn 27.10.02

showing global trends and programmes on current affairs, along with hourly news broadcast that have gained the appreciation of the audience. Both the radio and TV now broadcast global news, showing that Man's concerns are more international as compared to national or regional. The print media in Pakistan also made it a point to publish global news and matters of international concern.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre became the focus of all the nations and countries, including Pakistan. Radio and TV broadcast special programmes to condemn the act of sheer terrorism. Newspapers, literary and other journals published related articles on terrorism and violence and the responsibility of the world conscience. This post-modern trend in current affairs is highly significant.

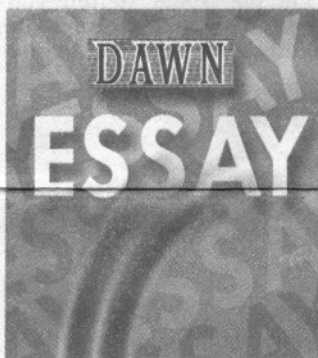
Man is not only concerned with his individual existence and the problems faced by him, but he has become an integral part of the entire scenario. Pakistan's reaction towards terrorism was a change in the cultural mentality of the people of this region. Nobody can remain in isolation, but a current awareness has taken over all the members of the world community. The slogan of internal affairs has become obsolete and our responsibility towards humanity is equally important and cannot be ignored.

In Pakistani media, global consciousness and its impact on our media shows trans-cultural and trans-regional commitments. Features, plays and discussion programmes were broadcast for the benefit of humanity. We are not only a separate nation, but a member of the world community.

Some actors in the Pakistani media have given their per-

formance a status of interpretation. According to the post-modern theory, performance is not an imitation of a character, but an interpretation of a character. They do not simply perform in plays but give an interpretation of human situation.

Dr Anwar Sajjad from Lahore is a playwright of post-modern trend. The performances of Usman Peerzada, Talat Hussain, Rahat Kazmi,



Abid Ali, Khalida Riyasat, Faryal Gohar, Samina Peerzada, Shafi Muhammad, Jamal Shah, Farooq Zamir, Shakeel, Marina Khan and many others have achieved the status of interpretation as well. They interpret different plays with their performance and this new concept of performance is known as the post-modern concept.

Hamlet has been performed in various countries by different producers. These performances are not merely performances but they have interpreted *Hamlet* in his conflicts in different styles. A critic of Shakespeare's plays and a performer interpret the theme of the play according to their understanding and the image of reality presented by Shakespeare.

Recently, Anwar Maqsood, a playwright and a performer, gives a suggestive and imaginative interpretation of real life. He is successful in his

attempt to present reality in an effective manner. Fatima Suraiya Bajia, Haseena Moin Hameed Kashmiri, Noor-ul Huda Shah, Ashfaq Ahmed, Intizar Hussain, Bano Qudsia, Aashar Azeem and Dr Tariq Aziz have contributed in this particular field and their plays and serials present new facts of life with a romantic touch.

Sabih Mohsin's play based on a hijacking is an attempt to present violence and terror in a dramatic and realistic manner. Modernization of the media, the FM broadcast and the digital recording system presents electronic post-modernity. Anwar Mehmood, the then Director General, PBC, tried to modernize PBC and its broadcast, but he wasn't successful due to some cultural stumbling blocks and lack of experience in the broadcasting world.

Saleem Gillani was not successful in introducing the hourly broadcast system in harmony with the demands of the age. We cannot discuss all the factors resulting in their failure here, but only one factor and that it was a premature step and due to the lack of training of the producers.

However, the independence of media is essential for adding global colour in broadcasting. The financial dependence of the electronic media is the main cause of failure in presenting post-modern values in the environment of Pakistan.

Film and theatre in Pakistan are not a developed art form. In theatre, only a few groups have emerged whose performance contains an element of modernity, such as the producers of Ajoka Theatre (Khalid Ahmad and Sheema Kirmani), the late Yasmin Ismail and Sohail and Shaiyenne Malik. Many others have also played a significant role in bringing new ideas to the theatrical world. But filmmaking in Pakistan isn't up to

rends lia

the mark. Most of the films produced in Pakistan are based on formula writing and routine production. No bold attempts have been made in this particular field of the performing arts. The electronic media is in a better position and gradually moving towards modern trends. Financial independence is essential for achieving an independent status. At present, the pace of progress is quite slow.

Advertising is the only field where significant progress has been made as compared to the other performing arts. Global trends in Pakistani media are not dominant, but we can't deny the awareness of their importance. But awareness is the first step towards the achievement of global status such as BBC, CNN, Voice of Germany and Radio France. This can be achieved by the joint efforts of directors, producers and performing artists.

The application of information technology is also essential for the development of media in Pakistan.

The introduction of an hourly news broadcast is a welcome step, but nothing has been done for the improvement of different programmes such as plays, serials and features. Trained producers and talented writers do not find sufficient attraction in programming. It is suggested that all the media heads play a key role in the modernization of various programmes.

The revival of the presentation section in radio will definitely improve the presentation of programming. Tariq Imam, DG PBC; Yousuf Baig Mirza, MD PTV and Anwar Mehmood, Chairman PBC and PTV need to take an initiative. Only then will our electronic media participate in the post-modern age.

However, things are getting better and it is expected that our electronic media will play a vital role in achieving global status. ■