



# Rai Technology University

ENGINEERING MINDS

## Historiography



**Subject: HISTORIOGRAPHY**

**Credits: 4**

## **SYLLABUS**

### **Understanding History**

History, Ideology and Society, Objectivity and Interpretation, Causation, Generalization

### **Pre-Modern Traditions**

Historiographical Traditions in Early India, Traditional Chinese Historiography, Greco-Roman Traditions, Local History, Medieval Historiography - Indo Persian, Medieval Historiography -Arabic and Persian, Medieval Historiography – Western

### **Approaches to History in Modern Times**

The Annales School, Classical Marxist Tradition, Positivist Tradition, Race in History, Gender in History, Postmodernist Intervention, Recent Marxist Approaches

### **Approaches and Themes in Indian Historiography-1**

The Cambridge School, Marxist Approach, Communalist Trends, Nationalist Approach, Colonial Historiography

### **Approaches and Themes in Indian Historiography-2**

Environment, Science and Technology, Religion and Culture, Caste, Tribe and Gender, Peasantry and Working Classes, Economic History, Subaltern Studies, History from Below

### **Suggested Reading:**

1. Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern : Ernst Breisach
2. Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge : Georg G. Iggers
3. Modern Historiography: An Introduction : Michael Bentley

# **PART 1. UNDERSTANDING HISTORY**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **GENERALISATION**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Introduction
- What is a generalization?
- Inevitability of generalization
- Objections to generalization
- Role of generalizations
- Sources of generalization
- How to improve one's capability to generalize
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand generalization
- Explain its inevitability and objections.
- Discuss the role and sources Generalizations.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Creation generalizations is a significant aspect of how historians in practice carry out their task, or, to quote Marc Bloch, how historians practice our trade. It is a very intricate and big subject and covers approximately all regions of a historian's craft. I will confine myself here to only a few of its characteristics:

- What is a generalization? All create it sometimes without knowing that one is doing it. What are the dissimilar stages of generalization?
- Why are generalizations inevitable? And why do some people substance to them?

- What is their role or use, what purpose do they serve in the historian's craft?
- From where do we get generalizations or what are the sources of generalization or how to learn to create them in a meaningful manner?
- How can we improve our capability to create generalizations?

## **WHAT IS A GENERALISATION?**

A generalization is a linkage of disparate or unrelated facts, in time or space, with each other. It is their grouping, their rational classification. Basically, a generalization is a connection or connection flanked by facts; it is an inference or, as Marc Bloch puts it, an explanatory connection flanked by phenomena. It is the result of the effort to give an explanation and causation, motivation and effect or impact. More widely, generalizations are the means through which historians understand their materials and attempt to give their understanding of facts to others. Analysis and interpretation of events, etc., is invariably done through generalizations. Generalization is involved as soon as we perform the two mainly elementary tasks: classify facts or data or phenomena and compare and contrast them, or seek out similarities and dissimilarities in the middle of them, and create any inference from them.

Therefore we create a generalization when we put our facts into a series one after another. For instance, when we mention the caste or religion of a leader we are creating a generalization. By connecting the caste and the leader or writer we are suggesting that his or her caste was a significant part of his or her personality and, so, his or her political or literary work. Or even the mention of his or her age. More comprehensively, a generalization occurs when we attempt to understand facts, or create connection flanked by data, objects, events, records of the past through concepts and convey them to others through concepts. Generalizations may be easy or intricate, of low stage or of high stage.

## **Low Stage**

A Low-stage generalization is made when we label an information or event, or classify it or periodise it. For instance, labeling sure facts as economic, or sure persons as belonging to a caste, region or religion or profession, or saying that sure events occurred in a scrupulous year or decade or century.

## **Middle Stage**

A middle stage generalization is made when a historian tries to discover interconnections in the middle of the dissimilar elements of the subject under revise; for instance, when we are learning a segment of the social reality of a time, space or subject bound character. In this case – for instance peasant movement in Punjab from 1929-1937 – the historian may at the mainly attempt to see the backward and forward linkages or connections but confining himself strictly to his subject matter. Themes such as class consciousness, interest groups, capitalism, colonialism, nationalism, and feudalism cannot be tested in a research work except through middle stage generalizations, such as relating to workers in Jamshedpur in the 1920s, growth of industrial capitalism in India in the 1930s, labour legislation in India in the 1930s.

## **Wide Generalizations or Systematizing or Schematizing Generalizations**

These are made when historians reach out to the main possible, important connections or threads that tie a society jointly. These historians attempt to revise all the economic, political, social, cultural, and ecological linkages of a society in a whole era. The historian tries to draw a nation-wide or society-wide or even world-wide picture of these linkages even when he is dealing with a narrow theme. Quite often, even when a historian is learning a narrow theme, wide generalizations *lie at the back of his mind*. For instance,

quite often when a European scholar studied a specific social or religious aspect of an Asian or African society, a wider Orientalist understanding of Asia or Africa lay at the back of his mind. Likewise, quite often when a British scholar studied – or even now studies – the economic history of an Asian country for a specific era, a wider understanding of colonialism lies at the back of his mind.

The widest form of wide generalizations is the revise of a social system, or stage of society or above all, the transition from one system to another. Some of the historians and sociologists who have undertaken such wide generalizations are:

- Karl Marx,
- Max Weber,
- Marc Bloch,
- Fernand Braudel,
- Eric Hobsbawm,
- Immanuel Wallerstein,

And in India:

- D.D.Kosambi,
- R.S.Sharma,
- Romila Thapar,
- Irfan Habib.

### **Metahistory**

Metahistory is often unhistorical, since it tries to impose a principle to organize history from outside history – this principle does not emerge from the concrete revise of history itself. Quite often a single cause or ‘philosophy of history’ is used to explain all historical development. Examples of this approach are: Hegel, Spengler, Toynbee, or recent writers on ‘The Conflict of Civilizations’.

Marxist or Weberian approaches are not examples of Metahistory, for they are theories for analyzing concrete history, society, politics, ideology, etc. The elements of these approaches can be tested by analyzing concrete history. These approaches can be right even if Marx's or Weber's own statements and analysis of concrete historical events, etc., are proved wrong. On the other hand, if Spengler's or Toynbee's analysis of any specific event is proved wrong, his whole theory or approach falls to the ground.

## **INEVITABILITY OF GENERALISATION**

Generalizations are inevitable. All create them or use them. Even when a historian thinks that he does not, he does. Generalizations are inherent in the very arrangement of languages. There exists one notion that the historian should gather the data of the past and arrange it in chronological sequence. Whereupon its meaning would emerge or reveal itself. In other languages, the historian's task is only to test the validity of data or to certify their authenticity, and not to interpret it, i.e., generalize in relation to it. The opposite view is that sources in themselves, on their own, cannot reveal their meaning, nor can a pile of notes, though meticulously composed, tell the historian what to write. The material has to be organized on the foundation of some rational principles, i.e., some principle of selection, of importance or significance, of relevance. Otherwise, the historian will be drowned by facts to be noted. All this is vital information for three reasons:

- Selection is necessary since facts are too several. Consequently, every historian selects. Question is how does he do it? Moreover, it is not even a question of selection of facts, for even that assumes that facts are lying before the historian, in a plate as it were. In reality, the historian has to search for them, and that assumes some principle of selection.
- Second, gathered facts have to be arranged and grouped. Both involve explanation and causation, motivation and impact. In other languages, analysis is vital to history as a discipline. In reality, except in a very limited sense, information becomes information only as a result of a generalization. a) For instance, a zamindar, or a peasant, or a slave, or

a capitalist looks like an information, but is the result of a generalization. It is only after having been analyzed and explained that it can serve as a datum for the historian. b) Or take census statistics. They seem like facts but in reality they are already the result of generalizations by the persons who decide the headings under which statistics are to be composed by the census worker. c) Or take statistical surveys of peasants. How do you determine their class or even caste? Who is a poor peasant? Who is an agricultural worker? Or, even, who is a landlord? Census till recent years produced a demand by several for classification as Brahmins and Rajputs. In U. P. there is a caste group which insists on being described Lodh Rajputs, but which also declares itself to be OBC in order to take advantage of reservations for backward castes. d) The very noting of information or grouping hides a generalization. To say Brahmin Tilak already involved a historical generalization. It involved the view that his being a Brahmin was significant for his politics. It involved a whole theory of motivation as to why people join and lead a movement or even why and how Indians act in politics. It even leads to the theory of Brahmin power of the Indian national movement. It is significant, in this respect, to note in which context is the caste brought in: political, social, cultural, or ritual. Kashmiri Nehru can refer to his love for Kashmir or imply that his being Kashmiri had some significance for his politics. Or take an instance from Medieval India. The British referred to medieval era as era of Muslim rule, implying the generalization that the religion of the ruler decides the nature of the rule. But they did not describe their own rule as Christian rule. On the other hand, describing the similar era as feudal or medieval implies a dissimilar generalization. We may take another, narrower instance. Emphasis in history on parliamentary speeches would imply that these were the chief determinants of politics and government policies. Recorded facts are, in any case, already the products of the generalization in the minds of persons who recorded them. This is also true of what and why sure statistics were gathered. Even today, the facts accounted by



newspapers are the result of the generalizing minds of the reporters, editors, and owners of newspapers.

- In any case, as soon as we go beyond names or dates or mere counting, generalizations approach in. Hence, without generalizations one can be a compiler. No intricate analysis or interpretation, or even narration is possible without generalization. Nor is it possible for a historian to delve deeper than surface phenomenon in understanding events and institutions without generalizations.
- But analysis and causation already involve, in turn, theories or principles of causation. To quote the philosopher Sydney Hook: ‘Every information which the historian establishes presupposes some theoretical construction.’ This has another positive consequence for historians. Even when no new facts are unearthed, two or more historians can work on the similar theme or subject. They can work on the similar material through fresh generalization. This is particularly significant for historians of the Ancient and Medieval periods. Even in the absence of new sources and material, fresh approaches and generalizations can produce fresh research.

## **OBJECTIONS TO GENERALISATION**

Some people substance to generalizations and raise three kinds of objections:

- The first objection is based on the notion that facts are to be differentiated from generalizations and that generalizations should flow out from facts. We have already answered this objection and pointed out that facts are often made facts through generalizations.
- It is said that every event is unique and possesses an individuality of its own. According to this view, society is atomistic and follows no uniformity. But, the information is that even uniqueness demands comparison. We cannot grasp the unique unless it is compared with some thing we know. Otherwise the unique is unknowable, even unthinkable. In any case, a historian is concerned with the relation

flanked by the unique and the common. For instance, Indian national revolution is unique but its uniqueness can be grasped only by comparing it with other recognized revolutions.

- Often the critics really target those generalizations which are a priori in character and are superimposed on historical reality. These critics are not wrong. Several put forward a generalization as an assertion and consider it proved when it has to be proved. Likewise, several generalizations are inadequately tested. Several are based on oversimplification of data and relationships and causation. Some generalizations are plainly stupid. For instance, the answer to the question: why revise Africa? Because it is there. Or that some other countries are undergoing military coups, so another country has also to. Or that because imperialism produced a comprador capitalist class, so every colonial country's capitalist class had to be comprador. Or that since other nationalist revolutions took to violence, so Indian national revolution also had to be violent. Or that since globalization led to underdevelopment in some countries, it necessity lead to the similar in all countries. All these objections apply to the unscientific and illogical character of some generalizations or are critiques of the manner in which they are arrived at.

In information, the real problem is dissimilar and may be delineated as follows:

- Generalizations should be made explicit so they can be openly debated.
- The main problem is the stage of a generalization and of type it is.
- The degree of validity or tentativeness or 'truth' of a generalization and what type of proof is used to validate it.
- One should revise how to create generalizations and learn how to improve one's capability to create interconnections which are better or more authentic and useful ones. In other languages, when we say that a scrupulous historian is a good historian, one means that he creates

better connection and generalizations separately from having technological ability and integrity as a historian.

## **ROLE OF GENERALISATIONS**

Separately from the function they perform that we have discussed earlier, generalizations have sure added *advantages* for the students of history:

- They serve as the organizing principles for his/her data therefore resolving a vital problem for the historian with a mass of untidy facts in his notes not knowing how to put them in some kind of order.
- They improve a historian's perception or broaden his gaze; they augment his skill to grasp an ever-rising region of reality and create more and more intricate interconnections.
- They enable the historian to draw inferences and set up chains of causation and consequence or effect. In other languages, they enable him to analyze, interpret, and explain his date. The five W's of a historian's craft are who or what, when, where, how and why. Direct facts can at the mainly enable us to answer who, when and where questions but not how and why questions. The latter require wider generalizations.
- More specifically, generalizations lead the historian to seem for new facts and sources. Quite often new sources can be properly grasped only through new generalizations. But very often the procedure is the other method approximately. In common, the search for new materials is motivated by new generalizations.
- Generalizations also enable the historian to set up new connections flanked by old, recognized facts. When we say that a historian has thrown new light on old facts, it invariably means that the historian has used new generalizations to understand the recognized facts.
- Generalizations help the historian to avoid empiricism or literalism - - that is taking the sources at their face value or literal meaning. Instead, he is led to set up their significance and relevance in his narrative. Take, for instance, D. N. Naoroji's statements on foreign

rule and the use of foreign capital in excess of his lifetime. Without the use of generalizations, the tendency would be to take his statements at face value and quote them one after other in a chronological order. Or, the historian can generalize concerning Naoroji's approach and then see how all of his statements fit in the generalization. May be the generalization has to be made more intricate; may be one has to create separate generalizations for dissimilar stages or phases in his thinking. Or may be the generalization has to be made that there are differences in his theory and practice. Or may be one has to say that there is common and continuous unsystematic and irregular thinking by him. Then one can create the generalization that Naoroji was confused and incoherent. The latter would, in any case, be the impression of the reader if literalism was followed. On the other hand, generalization would enable the historian to seem at dissimilar options in interpretation; his discussion would be put on a sounder footing. In Naoroji's case we may say that he was an admirer of British rule throughout the initial era and then became critical of British rule and began to consider it an impediment to economic growth and a cause of India's poverty. Likewise, we may point out that he initially favored the use of foreign capital and later, after 1873, started opposing its entry. We may also analyze the cause for his change of views. Here, we can see the advantages of the use of generalizations, for the mere recitation of Naoroji's opinions would not enable us to understand him or to analyze his economic thinking; it would only amount to compiling or summarizing his views.

- Generalizations enable a historian to constantly test what he is saying.
  - At the theoretical plane: As soon as one consciously classifies or categorizes or interrelate persons or events, that is, creates generalizations, one can oneself look at what their meaning or relevance is.
  - As soon as one has made a generalization, one starts looking for facts which may contradict it, or looking for the other face. Without a generalization one does not seem for facts

which might contradict one's views; in information, one may miss contrary facts even when they stare one in the face. This looking for contrary facts is vital to the historical discipline, though it is often ignored. To go back to Dadabhai Naoroji's instance, as soon as I have generalized in relation to his critique of British rule, I have to inquire the question: how does he reconcile this critique with his praise for British rule. Or does he not create an effort to do so? If I am merely compiling his statements, I need not seem for the contradiction or its explanation. Likewise, if I generalize in relation to his attitude to foreign capital, I start looking for contrary instances. If I am compiling, I need not. Another instance would be Gandhi's statements on the relation flanked by religion and politics. As soon as I generalize, I start looking for any opposite statements as also other statements which throw light on his statements.

- In information, quite often, others have already generalized on an issue or subject, the historian researching afresh on the issue can create an advance, in the main or often, only by testing the earlier generalizations with existing or fresh proof and therefore, constantly, revise or negate or confirm them. The historian's task is made easier if he creates his generalizations explicit beside with the generalizations he is testing.

To sum up: Generalizations guide us, they enable us to doubt facts as they appear or as they have been described by contemporaries or later writers; they suggest new possible understanding of old facts; they bring out fresh points and views for confirmation, refutation, further development, further qualification of existing views. Generalizations help describe a student of history's theme whether in the case of an essay, a tutorial, a research paper or a book. They enable him to take notes – whether from a book, or a primary source. In information, a student of history's essay or thesis has to be a series of generalizations to be tested, whether he puts them as statements or

questions. Generalizations also enable him to discover out which of his notes are important and relevant to the theme or subject matter of his research.

Generalizations also enable a researcher to react to what he is reading. He can do so only if he is generalizing while he is reading. Generalizations lead to debates in the middle of historians, otherwise the only reaction to each other's work in the middle of them would be to point out factual mistakes. Generalizations lead historians to pose issues for discussion and debate and to start procedures of fruitful discussion in the middle of them. Some would agree with the generalizations presented in another historian's work and discover new guides for research and thinking in them. Others would disagree and attempt to discover new and dissimilar explanations for the phenomenon under discussion and would seem for dissimilar proof for their point of view. Generalizations therefore promote search for fresh supporting or countervailing proof concerning them. We may talk about the case of a paper presented in a seminar. If it has no generalizations, it gives no ground for discussion. Participants can at the mainly refute or add to the facts presented in the paper. The absence of generalizations also explains the boring character of some of Indian historical writings. The reader does not have anything to react to them.

## **SOURCES OF GENERALISATION**

It should be realized in the very beginning that no common rule or average procedure exists for deriving generalizations. Though, many sources for the purpose do exist.

- A major source is the previous writings on any subject which often contain dissimilar generalizations.
- Another major source consists of other social sciences, for instance generalizations concerning individual behaviour and motivations, mass behaviour or behaviour of crowds, role of custom, role of family, caste outlook and behaviour; economic theory and history; functioning of political systems; social anthropology medieval history; linguistics; and so on. These sources of generalization are especially significant in view of this changed nature of historical discipline in India in the last

50 years or so. History is no longer seen merely in conditions of wars and diplomacy or from the point of view of the upper classes or ruling groups or males. It now pertains more to revise of society, economy, wider political movements, civilization, daily life, suppressed, dominated, and marginal groups, such as women, lower castes and tribal groups, ecology, medicine, sports, etc.

- Theories of history, society, civilization, and politics such as those of Marx, Weber, and Freud are another major source of generalization.
- Historians also derive generalizations from the revise of the present. For instance, movements of dalits and other anti-caste groups, and of the tribal people. Likewise popular discontent and opposition movements can throw up several generalizations pertaining to the Indian national movement.
- Several generalizations are derived from life:
  - General sense is a major source. In information several historians who do not accept the need for a conscious procedure of acquiring generalizations, use their general sense as their usual source of generalization.
  - Another usual source is historian's personal experience or life-experience. This experience is, of course, limited by several factors: region of one's action; excellence of one's life; one's status or location in life as also one's upbringing. One instance is the tendency of some historians to see political thrash about in the middle of groups, parties, and individuals in conditions of quarrels in the family or in a government or company office.
  - We also derive generalizations from active data collection, that is, from systematic analysis of the sources. Though, this does not so much help in acquiring of generalizations but the testing of generalizations. In other languages, one does not first gather or take notes and then generalize but rather constantly comment on proof of notes even while taking them. The point to be noted is that even while taking notes, the student, or scholar necessity is not passive recorder but should function with an active mind.

Therefore, the ability to create or generate generalizations is best acquired by having an active mind, doing everything one learns to create a correction the method a child does. A child asks even the mainly stupid-looking questions to create connections, several of which he may discard later. For instance, when meeting a new male person: who is this uncle? Why is he an uncle? Where is his wife? Why has he not brought his children? Why have you asked him to eat with us? Why do you address him as sir and not other uncles who visit us? Why do you serve him a drink and not other uncles? Why is he fair or dark or why has he got a beard and so on. A child's questions can open up so several characteristics of a society. A historian has to be like a curious child. Therefore if one reacts to the sources, etc., like a child and ask questions and generalize while reading and noting them, his thesis would start getting forward.

Therefore a generalization is basically a connection, which can approach to one's mind any time, especially when one's mind is full of the subject. Several possible connections or generalizations approach into one's mind when reading, taking notes, or thinking on the subject. Several of them would be given up later, but some will survive and form the foundation of one's research paper or thesis. They will be stuff of one's original contribution. They are what we mean when we say that an historian is original and he has something new to say.

## **HOW TO IMPROVE ONE'S CAPABILITY TO GENERALISE**

Or how does one acquire and improve the capability to grasp the underlying deeper connections and not rely on surface or superficial connections? This is perhaps a very much open region and the answers are both tentative and inadequate. The reader has enough scope for improvisation. To start with, the problem may be restated, so that it also gives a part answer. Having recognized the need for generalizations, this need should become a part of one's very approach or mind-set. One should acquire the habit of always looking out for relationships or linkage flanked by events and things



not only when researching but also in day-to-day life. In other languages, one should acquire a generalizing and conceptualizing mind.

- One should acquire and improve the capability to handle thoughts since all generalizations are grasped as thoughts. One should learn to handle thoughts, though poorly one may do so in the beginning. One should constantly conceptualize one's troubles in lay of mere narration. Even while narrating, one should see one's material as an illustration of the common, at though low a stage.
- One should learn to apply logical principles. Logical fallacies such as circular reasoning have to be avoided. Restatement of a question in a positive form is not an answer to it. For instance, to the question why does wood float in water, the answer that it has the excellence to float in water is not an answer; it is merely a positive form of the question. Likewise, the answer to the question why Akbar was a great ruler because he knew how to rule is no answer.
- Language is a historian's vital tool. One should use clear language in thinking or writing, even if it is easy. Obscurity in language does not symbolize clarity or depth of thought. Postmodernist and structuralism language are prime examples of such obscurity as C. Wright Mills has pointed out in the case of structuralism. They do injustice even to the insights that postmodernism and structuralism give. The latter two would survive and their contribution would acquire abiding character only when their parishioners learn to express themselves in simpler, easily graspable language.
- One should revise and look at in a systematic manner the things historians talk in relation to the.
- Refinement of concepts and generalizations is a perpetual procedure. Consequently, discussion approximately and in relation to the them with friends, colleagues, and lecturers is very significant. Conversation, in any case, is significant in the development and refinement of thoughts, for conversation cannot be accepted on without conceptualization. Two or more people cannot go on talking merely by

narrating facts to each other. For instance, even while discussing a film, people cannot go on citing instances of what an actor said or did. They necessarily argue approximately the excellence of the dialogue and its delivery, as also other characteristics of the acting in and direction of the film.

- One should acquire the excellence of critical receptivity to new thoughts. One does not have to accept new thoughts basically because they are new. But one should be willing to talk about them, look at them, argue in relation to them, and accept them if established useful or reject them, as the case may be.
- One should be familiar with prior generalizations in one's region of revise. One should develop the capability to utilize them after critical examination. Consequently, historiographic revise of past and current generation of historians is absolutely necessary. Quite often, we do not evolve or generate new generalizations, we improve on the earlier ones, sometimes even turning them upside down or rather right face up! This is what approximately all historians do. For instance, I started by testing A. R. Desai's generalization, in *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, that the Moderate nationalists represented the commercial bourgeoisie of India, and slowly evolved the generalization that they represented the emerging industrial bourgeoisie. Likewise, mainly Indian historians of the 19th and early 20th centuries began by examining the generalizations made by the earlier and modern British historians of India.
- Relative history, social sciences and natural and physical sciences are rich sources for generalizations. One can and should take leads or suggestions from them. Studies of national movements in China, or Indonesia or Algeria can, for instance, enable us to develop generalizations in relation to the national movement in India. There can, though, be no direct or one-to-one application from the revise of other countries or social sciences, etc. The latter should lie at the back of one's mind; they should give broad hypotheses to be tested and

possible connections for one's own materials; they should enable one to search for fresh proof for one's own theme of research.

- One should acquire better knowledge of the present; one should be in better touch with the present and, in information, should even participate in the creation of the present. The capability to understand the livelihood would certainly enable one to better understand the dead. There is a popular advice which parents provide to the children which is quite relevant in this respect: "You will understand us better when you become a parent." In information we daily borrow from the present to generalize in relation to the past. Hence, we should improve the excellence of our life-experience and what is described *general sense*, for often the truths of poor general sense can be very misleading. This is the case for such general examples of poor axioms or general sense as: there are two sides to a question. This is presently not true in several cases. For instance, in case of caste-oppression of the dalits, or oppression of women, or communalism or anti-Semitism, racialism, colonial oppression, and so on. If one's life-experience is narrow, one will have a tendency to view past events, movements, and persons too from a narrow or little-minded angle. For instance, one will see the cause for the anti-imperialism of a Surendranath Banerjee, or Dadabhai Naoroji or Gandhi to lie in personal frustration. Likewise, one may see questions of political power in conditions of family quarrels with which one is familiar, or of political prestige in conditions of personal insult, or of state policy in conditions of personal gratefulness or vengeance or betrayal, or of national budget in conditions of household or kitchen accounts. One should also develop the capability to see human beings in all their complexity. People can live at many stages; for instance, they can be very honest at one stage, and dishonest at another. There is the wrong tendency in the middle of several to link political statesmanship with personal virtuous life. It is possible for a political leader to be very humane in personal life and yet very cruel in political life. Another may not betray his wife but easily betray his colleagues or vice versa. Victorian moral outlook has

been the bane of several Indian historians of earlier generations. A historian necessity, so, expand the limits of his/her general sense. He/she necessity also lead a fuller life with a diversity of experiences and behaviors. A cloistered life invariably tends to limit a historian's vision. Since no one person can lead a life of multi-experiences, though hard he/she may attempt, one method to have a multi-layered understanding of life is through literature. A good historian has to be fond of fiction and poetry – even of detective and science fiction. I may sum up this aspect by saying that better excellence of understanding of life creates for better history and better history creates for better excellence of life.

- One's location in life certainly powers one's capability to generalize and understand the march of history. Is one, for instance, for change or for *status quo*? And if one is for change, what kind of change? For instance, does one consider in the caste system? Or in male superiority? This does not mean that one's location in life would *determine* one's historiographic location; but the nature of its power will be determined by the extent to which one is *aware* of the issue.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is a generalization? Discuss the various types of generalizations?
- Why are generalizations inevitable?
- How can you improve your capacity to generalize?

## CHAPTER 2

### CAUSATION

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- What is causality?
- Social sciences and causation
- Historians and causation
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand causality.
- Explain the relations between social sciences and causation.
- Explain the historians and causation.

#### WHAT IS CAUSALITY?

Even though the event is taken to be a unique scrupulous, historians nevertheless endeavor to explain its occurrence. The analysis of an event as a scrupulous does not undermine either the effectiveness of the offered explanation or its claim to symbolize the truth. Like other social scientists, historians offer a complete explanation of the phenomenon under consideration, and they do this by determining what caused that event to happen. Search for causes is therefore central to historical analysis. Up until the eighteenth century philosophers and historians commonly whispered that the cause necessity is an antecedent event - one that occurred prior to the event that is being explained; and that the antecedent event necessity is regularly associated with the effect. Though, following upon the work of John S. Mill, the cause is no longer recognized as an event that occurs before. Rather it is conceived as a condition or a set of circumstances that are always present when the event *E* occurs, and always absent when *E* does not happen

The cause, in other languages, is a condition that is both necessary and enough for bringing in relation to the given event *E*. It is said to be necessary because its absence implies the absence of the effect *E*, and it is enough because its attendance yields the given result *E*. If a revise shows that individuals with Vitamin A deficiency suffered from night-blindness, and in all those individuals where Vitamin A was present in enough measure, night blindness did not happen, then all else being the similar, we can say that deficiency of Vitamin A is the cause of night- blindness. We can designate Vitamin A as the cause because its absence meant night-blindness and its attendance meant the absence of the effect – namely, night-blindness.

Three points need to be emphasized here. First, the connection of necessity is significantly dissimilar from that of sufficiency. Second, the cause is measured to be a condition that is both necessary and enough; and third, constant conjunction is not an adequate indicator of a causal connection. If in a given instance cardiac arrest leads to the death of a person, we may say that heart failure was a condition that was *enough* for producing the effect – namely, the death of a person. Though to assert that cardiac arrest was a *necessary* condition for the death of the individual we need to illustrate that the absence of cardiac arrest would have meant absence of the effect - death. If death could have occurred due to some other condition – for instance, liver failure or hemorrhage, then cardiac arrest may have been a enough condition but it cannot be designated as a necessary condition for the occurrence of the event - death of the individual. Since the person could have died due to the attendance of other circumstances the absence of cardiac arrest would not have prevented the effect. Hence, it cannot be a condition that is necessary for the event under consideration. What is being suggested here is that the connection of necessity is dissimilar from that of sufficiency, and in philosophies of science the cause has been conceived as being both a necessary and a enough condition.

If the cause is a necessary and enough condition, it implies that it is regularly associated with the given effect. That is, it is always present when the effect *E* occurs, and always absent when the event *E* is absent. Constant conjunction is therefore an significant observable attribute of causation.

Further, the causal condition is approximately always antecedent to the effect. Though, this does not mean that a condition that is regularly observed before the event *E* takes place is the cause of the latter. Constant conjunction and spatial contiguity are characteristics of a cause-effect linkage but the cause cannot be recognized on this foundation alone. On a record, songs appear in a specific sequence. Though, the song that comes first is not the cause of the one that follows. Likewise, lightning may be regularly observed before we hear a thunder but this does not mean that it is the cause of the latter. It is possible that both lightning and thunder are the visible effects of an altogether dissimilar cause. What needs to be underscored here is that regular association is not by itself enough for claiming that the condition that is observed first is the cause of that which comes after. To illustrate that something is the cause of an event we need to illustrate that its absence would have implied the absence of the event being explained.

Likewise, listing events in the correct sequential order does not also give an explanation of an event. We may enumerate in the correct time-sequence all that happened on a scrupulous day but that may not offer an explanation of why *E* happened. For instance, easy listing of events that happened one-after-another may provide us no indication why the concerned person met with an accident or fell ill. We may learn how a scrupulous event occurred – e.g., the correct sequence in which things occurred when the accident took place but it cannot give an explanation as to why the accident occurred or why the person was fatally injured. Likewise, the historian may lay events that occurred from January 1947 to August 1947 in the proper time sequence, but these would not constitute an explanation of why the British left India in 1947. Once again, explanation or answering the question why requires something more than the mere sequencing of events one-after-the-other in the correct order. At the very least it requires that we illustrate that the attendance of a scrupulous condition, that may have approached before, acquiesced that effect and that the absence of that condition may have meant non-occurrence of that event. In brief, identifying the cause is not a matter of placing things one-after another. One needs to locate a condition that was necessary: that is, a condition without which the event may not have occurred.

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CAUSATION**

In the natural sciences researchers conduct controlled experiments to determine what the necessary is and enough condition. By controlling and manipulating one condition while all others remain exactly the similar they determine the impact that the condition has on the effect. If the elimination of condition *C* results in the absence of *E* while all else is the similar, then *C* is said to be the cause of *E*. In the social sciences it is not always possible, or even desirable, to conduct experiments under controlled circumstances. For instance, if we are analyzing the cause of communal violence that occurred in a given region, it is not possible to set up a controlled experiment. Since the event that is being explained has already occurred, the experiment cannot be mannered in its natural setting. The experiment can only be re-created in an artificial or laboratory condition and it is indeed questionable whether we should produce circumstances in which individuals inflict physical harm upon each other. In addition to it, there is the difficulty of finding exactly similar groups of individuals whose behaviour is replicable. Given all these thoughts, conducting controlled experiments poses innumerable troubles in the social sciences and researchers in these disciplines do not rely on this technique for arriving at causal explanations.

Social scientists identify causes by what John Stuart Mill described the Way of Agreement and the Way of Disagreement or Variation. The Way of Agreement draws an inventory of all those circumstances/circumstances that are present whenever the event *E* occurs. It identifies a condition that is invariably present in all instances where *E* has occurred. The way of Variation, on the other hand, searches for that condition in conditions of which the antecedent circumstances and the phenomenon differ. That is, a condition whose absence translates into the absence of that event. Social scientists combine these two ways to determine what caused *E* to happen. They pinpoint the cause by learning a number of positive and negative instances: instances where event of the kind *E* occurred and situations where *E* did not happen. If in all cases where *E* occurred condition *C* was always present and in all cases



where  $E$  did not happen condition  $C$  alone was absent, then  $C$  is regarded as the cause of  $E$ .

To take an instance: if the analysis shows that in all instances where factionalism lived Congress lost elections and in all those states where the party was free of factional politics, it won the support of the voters, then it can be said that factionalism was the cause of party losing elections. The causal condition is recognized here by learning contrast cases – contexts where Congress won elections and states where it lost. It is of course assumed that the states compared differed only in this one aspect and that all other prevailing circumstances were more or less the similar. If, for instance, factionalism is established in states where Congress has been losing successive elections or where opposition parties have been rising their vote percentage in excess of the years, then factionalism cannot be recognized as the cause. Alternately, if the states in which Congress won elections were marked by a high concentration of rural population and there is previously some proof that these are parts that have supported the Congress in the past, then again one cannot easily conclude that factionalism is the cause of winning elections. And, if the states in which it lost elections were also those that had witnessed a spate of communal violence, then again, the disparity in initial circumstances existing in the two types of states would prevent one from inferring that factionalism is the causal condition. The subsistence of one general condition – namely, factionalism within the party - in states where it lost elections and the absence of that one condition in states where it won is not in itself enough for claiming that factionalism is the cause of lost electoral support. The election may have been won and lost due to totally dissimilar causal circumstances. Hence, the crucial factor is that all other circumstances in the compared situations necessity be ~~at~~ par”. If the compared units differ in important compliments then it is not possible to infer with any degree of certainty what the causal condition is.

It follows from the discussion that in social sciences a cause is recognized by learning a number of situations that are similar in conditions of their antecedent circumstances but dissimilar with regard to the outcome or phenomenon that happen. Though, what happens when comparable contexts

are not accessible? What happens when we revise and attempt to explain events are unique? How do we then identify a cause? One option is to say that in all such cases there is no satisfactory method of identifying the causal condition. Indeed many philosophers have, on explanation of the distinctiveness of the substance and purpose of inquiry in history, argued that we abandon the search for causes. The natural sciences, they uphold, are generalizing sciences. They aim to discover law-like generalizations. History, by comparison, focuses on that which is unique to the case being analyzed. Further, natural sciences seek to gain knowledge with a view to enhancing technological manage. Causes are sought not only to explain why something happened but also to predict circumstances in which we might expect similar events to happen and what might be controlled – manipulated or altered – to ensure that the said event does not happen. History, on the other hand, seeks to *understand* why the event occurred. It tries to create sense of a phenomenon by identifying the meaning that it had in a given historically defined context. Since its aim is to enhance communication and interaction, it is permeated by a dissimilar knowledge interest and so relies on a dissimilar methodological orientation. In lay of identifying a condition that causes or produces a given effect it creates sense of the event by treating it as an expression of a specific world-view. It, in other languages, explores the link flanked by life, expression and a historical *weltanschauung* and understands rather than explains a given event.

Here it needs to be emphasized that determining the cause of an event that is unique, or a one-time occurrence, poses a serious challenge. Historians, who affirm the relevance and importance of causal form of inquiry, have met this challenge by redefining the thought of cause. In scrupulous they have attempted to dissociate explanation from prediction and argued that the cause refers to a condition that made the *crucial variation* in a given situation. While the cause was previously associated with the assertion, *‘whenever C also E’*, they claim that the recognized cause *C* only explains a given event *E* rather than all events of the kind *E*. In saying that the cause explains fully why a specific event occurred at a given time and lay, they suggest that historians

search for a condition that was necessary *under the circumstances*. They create, what might be described, singular causal assertions.

## **HISTORIANS AND CAUSATION**

In offering singular causal assertions historians separate explanations from predictions. They argue that a complete explanation does not entail accurate predictions. In information many philosophers of history uphold that explanation and prediction are two dissimilar types of behaviors, involving dissimilar types of proof and justifications. Prediction assumes regularity and recurrence of sequence. We can say that the sun will rise in the East tomorrow and the day after that only because we consider that the structure of the universe and the laws by which it is governed will continue to operate unchanged. It is the assumption that patterns and regularities observed today will recur and repeat themselves that allows us to predict the future course of events. Though, this assumption is irrelevant for stipulating causal connections. We can determine with reasonable accuracy what caused *E* to happen even when *E* is a one-time occurrence, or a unique scrupulous. In the absence of the presupposition that social reality will remain unaltered and existing patterns will recur we cannot claim that whenever *C* occurs, *E* will follow.

A distinction is here made flanked by explanation and prediction. In empiricist theories of science, explanation and prediction are inextricably connected jointly. Indeed one is measured to be a condition of the other. When it is said that *C* is the cause of the event *E*, it is simultaneously suggested that whenever *C* is present *E* will necessarily follow. And, *vice-versa* a successful prediction is measured to be an indicator of the accuracy of the explanation. Therefore, explanation and prediction are taken as two sides of the similar coin. In history, particularly, this proposed link flanked by explanation and prediction is questioned. Instead it is argued that causal inquiry and explanation is separate from the act of prediction. Complete explanation does not entail a successful prediction and *vice-versa* a successful prediction is no indication of the accuracy or the truth of the offered explanation. We may, on seeing dark clouds in the sky, predict accurately that there will be rainfall in

the after that twelve hours. But creation a successful prediction here does not provide us any explanation of why this event occurs. Likewise, on seeing red spots on the face of a child we may accurately predict that he is coming down with measles. But once again creation the correct prediction is no indication of the information that we have an adequate explanation of this occurrence. The act of prediction is therefore dissimilar from that of explanation, and historians may not offer predictions but they nevertheless can, and do, give complete explanation of why a scrupulous event occurred.

By de-linking explanation from prediction, historians not only challenge the common law model of explanation used by positivists, they redefine the concept of causation. In lay of conceiving the cause as a necessary and enough condition they see it as a condition that is *necessary under the circumstances*. The need to visualize the causal condition as one that is necessary under the circumstances is further reinforced by the realization that mainly historical events are in excess of-determined. That is, they are characterized by the attendance of more than one causal condition. Since each of these circumstances could have independently acquiesced the similar result, the analyst cannot specify a condition that was necessary in absolute conditions. All that can be said is that it was necessary under the circumstances.

Let me elucidate this further with the help of an illustration. If we know that rioting mobs are headed towards an assembly hall with the intention of burning the lay, and approximately the similar time lightning could strike the structure, thereby burning down the hall, then we cannot say which the necessary was and enough condition for the burning of the hall. The assembly hall could have been burnt by the violent crowd as well as by lightning. If the crowds had not planned on this action, the lightening would have burnt the hall and, *vice-versa*, even if lightening had not struck the structure the marauding crowds would have acquiesced the similar result. Therefore the absence of one condition would not have meant the absence of the effect – namely, burning down of the hall. In situations of this type, which are marked by the attendance of two or more circumstances each of which could have produced the similar result, we cannot identify the necessary moment. All we

can do is to say which condition intervened first. If lightning struck before the crowds could embark on their action we can say that it was the condition that was *necessary under the circumstances*.

Situations that historians analyze are, it is said, of a similar type. Being unique and mainly often in excess of-determined, the researcher can at best identify a condition that was necessary under the circumstances. For instance, based on existing understanding of the procedures of de-colonization and a survey of accessible documents, the historian may conclude that popular assertions against the Raj as well as adverse balance of payments were creation it very hard for the colonizing power to continue ruling in excess of India. A calculation of the British military and strategic interests in the region also favored the transfer of power to India. Since each of these circumstances pushed in the similar direction what might we identify as the cause of British leaving India, and more specifically, of British leaving India in August 1947? The historian seeks to answer this question by pinpointing a condition that made the *crucial variation* in the given conjuncture. Accessible documentary proof is drawn upon to assess which of these circumstances was perceived by the British as being mainly important, and which generated pressures of a type that made the management of the colony very hard, if not also unviable at that point.

In identifying the causal condition that was necessary under the circumstances proof is drawn from within the case. Comparisons are made with analogous situations before and perceptions and actions of dissimilar mediators are used to assess the relative significance of dissimilar existing circumstances. Objective circumstances and subjective reasons are therefore woven jointly to determine what made the crucial variation. Since mainly historical analysis draws upon purposes and actions of mediators as well as operating external circumstances it is sometimes said that historians explain a given event /phenomenon by describing how it happened. That is, they answer the *'Why'* interrogative by analyzing what happened and how it happened. Two points need to be made in this regard. First, as was mentioned earlier, merely placing events in a sequence does not give an explanation of an event. Telling a story with a beginning, middle, and end is so never enough. At the

very least the historian needs to identify the configuration of external material structures within which scrupulous actions are conceived and performed, and within which they yield a specific result. Second, and this is of the utmost importance, an exhaustive account of all possible circumstances and range of actions does not constitute a causal explanation. The latter requires that we determine a condition that was *necessary* at least under the circumstances.

The variation then flanked by easy story telling and causal analysis of a historical event is that the latter, unlike the former, focuses upon what made the crucial variation. It does not merely link the dissimilar moments jointly in a method that creates sense but goes a step further. It identifies a condition in the absence of which the event may not have occurred at the precise time that it did. In other languages, it locates a necessary moment. The necessary moment may be a single condition or a part of a intricate of circumstances. Analyzing the issue of transfer of power to India in 1947, a historian may argue that mutiny in the naval ratings made the crucial variation. That is, it was the causal condition – the necessary moment in the absence of which transfer of power may not have taken lay at that time. Alternately, the historian may argue that mutiny in the naval ranks was the necessary moment of a set of popular mobilizations and these collectively acquiesced the result – namely, transfer of power.

When historians endorse the latter path they describe the cause as an INUS condition. That is, the cause is measured to be a condition that is an *insufficient* but *necessary* moment of a intricate of circumstances that is *unnecessary* but *enough* for producing the given event. Let me explain it further. In identifying mutiny in naval ratings as the cause all that the historian is saying is that this condition made the crucial variation. Had it not been for this mutiny transfer of power may not have occurred in August 1947. Further, the mutiny in naval ratings acquiesced this effect in association with other popular assertions, such as, the Quit India movement and peasant rebellions. Collectively these constituted a intricate of minimal enough condition and in this intricate the mutiny in navy was the necessary moment. Though, this intricate of circumstances cannot be regarded as necessary for the event. Had this condition not prevailed, adverse balance of payments or calculation of

strategic interests may still have led to the British leaving India, albeit not in August of 1947. Consequently, popular mobilizations cannot be regarded to be a intricate that is necessary in absolute conditions. All we can say with confidence is that under the given circumstances it was enough to bring in relation to the that result. The mutiny was, in this method, a necessary moment of a intricate of circumstances that are collectively unnecessary. The similar event could have been produced by another set of circumstances but at this time the mutiny beside with other popular mobilizations was enough for producing the result – namely, transfer of power to India.

What bears some repetition here is that historians redefine the thought of causality. Instead of treating the cause as a necessary and enough condition they regard it as an INUS condition or a condition that is necessary under the circumstances. The thought of causality is conceptualized in this form because the events that they deal with are taken to be unique occurrences, constituted by a conjuncture that is specific to that context. And the context itself is characterized by the attendance of many circumstances each of which could produce the similar result though not in the similar method or at the similar time. The redefinition of cause does not though affect the explanatory potential of the inquiry. To put it in another method, even though the causal condition is seen as being necessary only under the circumstances, or in conjunction with other circumstances, nevertheless it explains fully what happened and why it happened. It does not allow us to predict what might happen in other similar circumstances with any degree of certainty but it does enable us to explain the event that occurred.

When the cause is defined as a necessary moment of a intricate of condition or as a condition that is necessary under the circumstances, it is assumed that the historian is only explaining why the event *E* occurred in this instance. The explanation is complete but it is offered *post-hoc* and no prediction follows necessarily from this explanation. To use an instance given by J.L.Aronson, ‘\_Suppose we had a gun that shot bullets through a force field at a screen, what is special in relation to the force field is that it is composed of force vectors that change with time in a totally randomized fashion’. In this situation we cannot predict in advance where the bullet might land, but once

the bullet creates it to the screen we can explain as to why it reached in that location. We can, after the event, look at the speed of the bullet, the angle at which the vectors necessarily have been when the bullet hit it, the location of the gun, friction and other intervening elements, and on the foundation of these explain why the bullet arrived at the point  $P$  on the screen. The offered explanation is complete in as distant as it gives a satisfactory answer to the 'why' interrogative but it cannot help us to predict where the after that bullet will arrive on the screen.

Historical explanations are often of a similar type. They explain fully what happened and why it happened but do not, by and by, predict. Laws may be implicit in the stipulated causal connections but the historian neither dredges up" these laws nor regards it as his task to do so. Historical accounts do not aim to discover common laws and the causal explanations they offer necessarily so be distinguished from predictions. The information that they do not seek to predict or pinpoint a set of laws and the initial circumstances under which they operate does not imply that they offer partial explanations. Contra what is argued in the "Covering Law model" used by Carl Hempel and other positivist philosophies of social science, historians explain totally what happened through singular causal assertions.

What needs also to be clarified here is that these singular causal assertions are separate from explanations involving reasons and purposes. Events that historians revise – e.g., rebellions, battles, treaties of peace, movements, revolts, etc. – are all outcomes of the actions of individuals and groups. In learning these events historians often create sense of what happened and why it happened by mapping the intentions and motivations of actors. They explain, for instance, the withdrawal of Non-cooperation movement in conditions of the intentions of its leaders – in this case, Gandhi. The reasons they accept are at times those that are avowed by the mediators themselves, or else, those that can be deduced from the purposes that are either avowed by them or purposes that may reasonably be attributed to the mediators. Whatever be the foundation of identifying the relevant cause what is important is that events are treated not merely as happenings in the external world, rather they are perceived as performances of scrupulous mediators that can be explained



by uncovering their reasons and motivations. Such cause-action explanations are regularly treated as being similar to causal explanations and reasons are often confused with causes. It appears that reasons explain by structure a link flanked by purposes/motivations and action presently as causal explanations link a cause with an effect. Though, even though beliefs and motives are often seen as producing a given event it is essential to keep in mind that reasons are not the "right type of causes".

In a causal explanation, causes are external circumstances operating in the physical world and the cause is connected to the effect contingently. Reasons, by comparison, are connected internally and the connection flanked by a cause and action is a logical one. For instance, when we explain why *A* murdered *B* by pointing to revenge as the motive for this action we suggest an intrinsic link flanked by the motive – cause – and the action – murder. We also assume that referring to revenge as the cause for murder does not require any further elucidation for the latter can follow from the former. While we may need proof to illustrate that murder was committed by the said person and that he could have had this motivation, the link flanked by motive and action requires no external corroboration.

Indeed the action is said to follow from the motive and having this motivation gives good cause for assuming that he could have performed this action. Likewise when we say that the loss of popular support was the cause for the decision to withdraw the strike an internal connection is stipulated flanked by the cause and the action. Further, the postulated connection rests upon the assumption of rational behaviour. It presupposes a background of beliefs that prompt the given action. For instance, the decision to withdraw the strike because it was losing support in the middle of the cadre assumes that the leadership measured it desirable to withdraw before the strike fizzles out; or that they preferred to call off the strike so that they do not lose the gained advantage. Such rational calculations of interests is an integral part of cause-action explanation but these thoughts are not, and necessarily not indeed be, measured as initial circumstances under which sure laws operate.

Cause-action explanations are teleological in nature. Here, the desired end-state that is to be realized through the action is also the motive or the

purpose. It so logically precedes the action. In a causal explanation, on the other hand, the effect is subsequent to the cause. That is, it comes after the causal condition and it follows it due to the attendance of sure conjunctive circumstances. Historians, in offering causal explanations seek to identify the set of circumstances that collectively yield a given effect; and within that collectivity they aim to pinpoint a condition that made the crucial variation. Such explanations are separate from explanations based on reasons as well as the covering law model used by the positivists. In addition, as was argued earlier on, these are explanations that tell us why a specific event occurred at a given time. They are, in other languages, singular causal statements that seek to explain and not predict future events. The relative neglect of prediction in these explanations though does not weaken these explanations nor does it render them inadequate. The offered explanations are complete and their truth can be debated by the society of historians on the foundation of accessible proof and documentation.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is causality? How is it used to explain an event or phenomenon?
- Discuss the different approaches of the natural scientists and the social scientists in seeking the causes of a phenomenon.
- Discuss the method followed in history for establishing the causality and explaining the occurrence of an event.

## CHAPTER 3

### OBJECTIVITY AND INTERPRETATION

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- What is objectivity?
- Development of the principle of objectivity
- Critiques of objectivity
- Historian's concern
- Possibility of objectivity
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand objectivity.
- Understand development of the principle of objectivity.
- Explain the interpretation

#### WHAT IS OBJECTIVITY?

Objectivity has been the founding principle of the historiographical custom in the West. Right since the days of Herodotus, the historians have whispered in the separation of the subject and the substance, in the distinction flanked by the knower and recognized and in the possibility to recover the past. Peter Novick, a critic of the principle of objectivity, has clearly defined it in the following languages:

- The principal elements of the ideal of [objectivity] are well recognized and can be briefly recapitulated. The assumptions on which it rests contain a commitment to the reality of the past, and to the truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation flanked by knower and recognized, flanked by information and value flanked by history and fiction. Historical facts are seen as prior to and self-governing of interpretation: the value of an interpretation is judged by how well it

accounts for the facts; if contradicted by the facts, it necessarily is abandoned. Truth is one, not perspectival. Whatever patterns exist in history are “established”, not “made”. Though successive generations of historians might, as their perspectives shifted, attribute dissimilar significance to the events in the past, the meaning of those events was unchanging.’

For this purpose, though, the historian has to be impartial and should not take sides. He/she should be able to suspend his/her personal beliefs and rely only on the truth of the evidences. In the languages of Peter Novick:

- “The objective historian’s role is that of a neutral, or disinterested, judge; it necessarily never degenerate into that of an advocate or, even worse, propagandist. The historian’s conclusions are expected to display the average judicial qualities of balance and evenhandedness. As with the judiciary, these qualities are guarded by the insulation of the historical profession from social pressures or political power, and by the individual historian avoiding partisanship or bias—not having any investment in arriving at one conclusion rather than another. Objectivity is held to be at grave risk when history is written for utilitarian purposes. One corollary of all this is that historians, as historians, necessarily purge themselves of external loyalties: the historian’s primary allegiance is to “the objective historical truth”, and to professional colleagues who share a commitment to cooperative, cumulative efforts to advance toward that goal.”

Thomas Haskell, a historian, has questioned this conflation of objectivity and neutrality. In his article “Objectivity is not Neutrality”, he has argued that objectivity and neutrality are two dissimilar things, even though in mainly of nineteenth-century historiography they were equated with each other. Now, “in the middle of the influential members of the historical profession the term has extensive since lost whatever connection it may once have had with passionlessness, indifference, and neutrality”. He cites the cases of historians, particularly, Eugene Genovese, the American historian on

slavery, whose history is objective, though not neutral. Haskell further clarifies his location:

- My conception of objectivity ... is compatible with strong political commitment. It pays no premium for standing in the middle of the road, and it recognizes that scholars are as passionate and as likely to be driven by interest as those they write in relation to the. It does not value even detachment as an end in itself, but only as an indispensable prelude or preparation for the attainment of higher stages of understanding ....<sup>6</sup>

We, so, now have two somewhat differing perceptions of objectivity, as distant as its relation with neutrality is concerned. Though, in other regions such as objectivity's location as the founding principle of the historical profession, its aloofness from propaganda and from wishful thinking, its reliance on proof and logic, and its requirement for a minimum stage of detachment are general to all its definitions.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLE OF OBJECTIVITY**

The belief that there is a reality of the past and it is possible to historically capture it has been engrained in the dominant custom of the Western historiography. The mainstream historiography in the Western world since the time of Herodotus maintained that the historical records referred to a real past and real human beings. The objectivist custom whispered in both the reality of the past as well as in the possibility of its mirror representation. It maintained that there was a correspondence flanked by the intentions and actions of the people and the historians should exert themselves to comprehend the mental world of the people in the past.

The development of contemporary science added a new dimension to this belief. It was now asserted that the ways used in the sciences could be applicable to several branches of human knowledge. The Positivists asserted this claim mainly strongly, even as it urbanized as a general belief in the nineteenth century. August Comte, the founder of Positivism, whispered that the inductive way used in the natural sciences needed to be applied to the

history as well as the humanities in common. He also claimed scientific status for the humanities. He thought that all societies operated through sure common laws which needed to be exposed. According to him, all societies historically passed through three stages of development. These stages were:

- The theological or fictitious stage, throughout which the human mind was in its infancy and the natural phenomena were explained as the results of divine or supernatural powers.
- The metaphysical or abstract stage is middle in the course of which the human mind passes through its adolescence. In this stage, the procedures of nature were explained as arising from occult powers.
- The Positive stage which witnessed the maturity of human mind and the perfection of human knowledge. Now there was no longer a search for the causes of the natural phenomena but a quest for the detection of their laws. Observation, reasoning, and experimentation were the means to achieve this knowledge. This was the scientific age which is the final stage in the development of human societies as well as human minds.

The followers of Comte, also recognized as the Positivists, time and again asserted the subsistence of universal laws applicable to all societies and all branches of human knowledge.

Though, it was another custom which laid the base of objectivist history in the nineteenth century. It was the custom starting with Niebuhr and Ranke in Germany. Although it was Niebuhr who first introduced the critical way in writing of history, it was Ranke who truly and elaborately laid the base of a genuinely objective historiography. He clearly distinguished history from literature and philosophy. By doing so, he attempted to rid it of an overdose of imagination and metaphysical speculation. For him, the historians' job was to investigate the past on its own conditions and to illustrate to the readers how it essentially was. It did not mean, though, that Ranke had a blind faith in the records. He, in information, wanted the historians to subject the sources to strict examination and seem for their internal consistency so as to determine whether they were genuine or later

additions. He wanted the historians to critically look at and verify all the sources before reposing their trust in them. But, once it was proved that the records were genuine and belonged to the age which the historian was learning, the historian may put complete faith in them. He described these records as primary sources and maintained that these sources would give the foundations for a true representation of the modern era. Therefore the historians should trust the archival records more than the printed ones which might be biased. He, though, whispered that it was possible to reconstruct the past and that objectivity was attainable.

This trend emphasized that the facts were in the records which the historians needed to discover. If the historians were impartial, followed a proper scientific way, and removed his / her personality from the procedure of investigation, it was possible to reconstruct the past from these facts. There was an enormous belief in the facts in the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries. It was thought that once all the facts were recognized, it was possible to write ultimate history which could not be superseded. As Lord Acton, the Regius Professor of History and the editor of the first edition of the *Cambridge Contemporary History*, said:

- Ultimate history we cannot have in this generation; but we can dispose of conventional history, and illustrate the point we have reached on the road from one to the other, now that all information is within reach, and every problem has become capable of solution.

This confidence in being able to get hold of all the sources and to write ultimate history, even though at a future date, was reflected in his belief to achieve complete objectivity which would transcend nationality, language, and religion. So, in his instructions to the contributors to the volumes of the *Cambridge Contemporary History*, he wrote:

- Contributors will understand that our Waterloo necessarily be one that satisfies French and English, German and Dutch alike; that nobody can tell, without examining the list of authors, where the Bishop of Oxford laid down the pen and whether Fairburn or Gasquet, Libermann or Harrison took it up.

This belief in possibility of uncovering all the sources and therefore writing 'ultimate history' was asserted in a very popular text book in historical way by French historians, Langlois and Seignobos:

- 'When all the documents are recognized, and have gone through the operations which fit them for use, the work of critical scholarship will be finished. In the case of some ancient periods, for which documents are unusual, we can now see that in generation or two it will be time to stop.'

The scientific status of history was forcefully asserted by J.B.Bury, Acton's successor to the Regius Chair at Cambridge. He whispered that although history 'may supply material for literary art or philosophical speculation, she is herself basically a science, no less and no more'. Even George Clark, in his common introduction to the second *Cambridge Contemporary History*, though he did not consider in the possibility of writing 'ultimate history', made a distinction flanked by the 'hard core of facts' and the 'nearby pulp of disputable interpretation'.

It is apparent that in such thinking interpretation had very little role to play. The writing of history was basically related to the documents. It did not matter who the historian was as extensive as verified documents for the era were accessible. In this view, as E.H.Carr put it:

- 'History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are accessible to historians in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish in the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever approach appeals to him.'

But even before the nineteenth century ended, such beliefs started to seem implausible. Application of some new techniques in archaeology and other regions uncovered ever-increasing information even in relation to the mainly ancient societies. Moreover, in the beginning of the twentieth century, historiography moved to other directions absent from political history which



the nineteenth-century historians specialized in. Social, economic, and cultural histories began to be written. The historians started to seem at already accessible documents from new perspectives and for dissimilar purposes. It was also pointed out that the works of even those historians, including Ranke, who whispered in complete objectivity and professed the use of 'primary sources' were full of rhetorical elements and were several times based on printed 'secondary sources'.

The Rankean custom was criticized in the twentieth century for being too naïve and being concerned with individual facts instead of the common patterns. Moreover, it was also criticized for being narrowly political and being concerned with elite individuals. The new trends in the historiography in the twentieth century focused on economy and society as opposed to the political and on general people as opposed to the elite. The mainly influential in the middle of these trends were the Marxist and the *Annales* schools of historiography. Though, they shared with the Rankean custom two fundamental themes. They whispered that history could be written scientifically and objectively and that there was a direction in which the history was moving continuously.

Though, the scientific and objectivist claims of historiography suffered somewhat flanked by the wars. The records and facts were blatantly manipulated by several national political establishments. The sustained tension led to partisan assertions both by several governments and respective intelligentsia. History-writing was also affected by this. After the Second World War, the Cold War also influenced the academia and prompted the intellectuals to take sides or, conversely, to hide their opinions to avoid repression. But mainly of functioning historians retained their faith in the possibility of achieving objectivity in history. The proponents of objectivity from Ranke in the 1820s to Robert Fogel in the 1970s whispered in the scientific status of history. They thought that if proper scientific ways of inquiry were used, it could be possible to get secure to what really happened in the past. It was also necessary for them to create a sharp division flanked by history and literature.

## **CRITIQUES OF OBJECTIVITY**

By the late twentieth century the confidence in the objectivity and scientificity of history faced increasingly radical challenges. Anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss denied that the contemporary western civilization, based on rationality and science, was in any method superior to the pre-contemporary, or even 'savage', societies so distant as successfully coping with life is concerned. At another stage, several historians and theorists of history began to think that history was closer to literature than to science. Moreover, the new linguistic theories starting with Saussure strongly professed that the role of language is not to refer to reality but to construct reality. Therefore the world which is conveyed to us through language is not the real world. Likewise, the historians' accounts of the past do not refer to the real past, but to the world imagined by the historians. History, so, is the story told by the historian. In the languages of Louis Mink, an American philosopher of history, 'Stories are not existed but told.' Mink further argued that life 'has no beginnings, middles, or ends'. Such sequences belong only to stories as well as to history. And, so, history is much like the story.

Although they are related in sure methods, there are broadly three rows of criticism on the notion of historical objectivity: constraints of proof and individual bias, cultural relativism and postmodern and linguistic turn.

### **Constraints of Proof and Individual Bias**

Ironically, it was Kant, the great German philosopher influenced by the thoughts of Enlightenment, who propounded the thoughts which were taken up by Dilthey, Croce, Collingwood, and Oakeshott for criticizing the philosophical quest that the human world could be comprehended in the similar method as the natural world. Kant's formulation that there was a separation flanked by the real world and the subject trying to create sense of it led to the thought that it was not possible to reconstruct the reality and that the correspondence theory of truth was not valid. This view was urbanized later to challenge the notion that history could be like science. It was, though, the

custom of philosophical thinking that followed Nietzsche which posed a more serious challenge to objectivist historiography.

Wilhelm Dilthey, a German philosopher, clearly demarcated flanked by scientific knowledge and cultural knowledge. In his book, entitled *Introduction to Historical Knowledge* and published in 1883, he differentiated flanked by science and history on the foundation of their dissimilar meadows of research, dissimilar experiences, and dissimilar attitudes of the researchers. According to him, while the scientist was external to the reality in nature, the historian was involved in the procedure of constructing reality. Therefore, unlike the scientist, the historian could not be presently an observer. It is, so, impossible to achieve objectivity in history-writing.

Benedetto Croce, the Italian historian and thinker, followed Dilthey in the belief that there is a fundamental distinction flanked by science and history. According to him, the past exists only through the mind of the historian. He declared that all history is modern history. It was, though, R.G, Collingwood, a British historian, and philosopher, who provided a detailed exposition of this row of criticism. In his posthumously published book, *The Thought of History*, Collingwood elaborated his thought of historical relativism. He whispered that the past basically as past is wholly unknowable. So, the history was not at all in relation to the real past but a creation of the historian. In his opinion, historical thinking means nothing else than interpreting all the accessible proof with the maximum degree of critical ability. It does not mean discovering what really happened... Each historian writes his / her own history which may or may not have things in general with others. He wrote:

- St Augustine looked at history from the point of view of the early Christian; Tillamont, from that of a seventeenth-century Frenchman; Gibbon, from that of an eighteenth-century Englishman; Mommsen from that of a nineteenth-century German. There is no point in asking which the right point of view was. Each was the only one possible for the man who adopted it.

History is, so, written by the people who are basically concerned in relation to the present. And there is nothing wrong with it. Collingwood thought that since the past in itself is nothing, the knowledge of the past in itself is not, and cannot be, the historian's goal. His goal, as the goal of a thinking being, is knowledge of the present; to that everything necessarily return, round that everything necessarily revolve.'

Therefore the present is, and should be, historian's only concern. And since all history is historian's thoughts in relation to the past, all history is the history of thought'. E.H.Carr approvingly summarizes some of these views. He says that the historians are products of their own times and their mental world are shaped by the thoughts and politics of their modern world. They are driven by modern concerns and their viewing of the past is through the lens of the present. It is, so, hard for them to be objective in the representation of the past. Their researches and presentations are always colored by their present concerns. Even the evidences they collect do not present the whole picture of the past because they are chosen according to their modern preoccupations and ideological bent. Moreover, even the records which the people in the past bequeathed to us are selective. In Carr's languages, Our picture has been pre-selected and predetermined for us, not so much by accident as by people who were consciously or unconsciously imbued with a scrupulous view and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving.' It is hard to rely upon the evidences and be complacent in relation to the facts because the facts of history never approach to us pure', since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder.' It is in this light that Carr concludes:

- No documents can tell us more than what the author of the document thought – what he thought had happened, what he thought ought to happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even only what he himself thought he thought.'

Therefore there are two stages at which the procedure of selection goes on: one by the modern recorder who decides what is worth recording and

second by the historian who further narrows the selection by deciding what is worth presenting. In this opinion, the past, so, is doubly constructed for us.

### **Cultural Relativism**

Inspired by the cultural anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, some of the recent historical thinkers have argued that the historians' accounts of the past are colored by the thoughts, concepts, and language of their own societies. This means that such narratives are necessarily influenced by the cultural prejudices and social preoccupations of the historians. Since dissimilar cultures perceive the world differently, the descriptions of a dissimilar society or of the past, which belongs to a dissimilar civilization, cannot be objective. These descriptions are culturally determined. Therefore a solar eclipse may be described variously by people belonging to dissimilar societies. Likewise, the death of a king may be attributed to evil spirits, illness, or conspiracy by his enemies. So, the history written by the historian is shaped by the concepts and beliefs of his / her own civilization. Paul A. Roth has argued in support of this belief that 'There is no warrant for maintaining that there is some static past world which diligent research in the archives ... uncovers.' He, so, suggests that it is significant to rid oneself of a notion of historical truth', because

- 'past events exist, qua events, only in conditions of some historically situated conception of them. The notion of a historical truth for events, that is, a perspective on happenings untainted by human perception and categorization, proves to be incoherent. There exists a world not of our own creation, but any subdivision of it into specific events is our doing, not nature's.'

Moreover, Geertz also derives from the new linguistic theories in his conception of civilization as an 'interworked system of construable signs'. In his opinion, civilization should be seen as 'an assemblage of texts' which are 'imaginative works built out of social materials'. Even society is 'organized in conditions of symbols ... whose meaning ... we necessarily grasp if we are to

understand that organisation and formulate its principles.' Therefore society and civilization become texts' whose meanings can be understood only through semiotic codes. He further emphasized the point in relation to the textual nature of society and civilization by asserting that the real is as imagined as the imaginary'. In such a theoretical framework, any notion of reality, and history, disappears. As Gabrielle Spiegel, an historian of medieval Europe, remarked:

- If the imaginary is real and the real imaginary and there are no epistemological grounds for distinguishing flanked by them, then it is impossible to make an explanatory hierarchy that establishes a causal connection flanked by history and literature, life and thought, matter and meaning.'

### **Linguistic and Postmodern Turn**

This custom offers the mainly radical critique of the possibility of retrieving truth from the past. It considers language, instead of reality, as constitutive of social meaning and human consciousness. It all started with Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, who propounded the theory of structural linguistics. His theories influenced several intellectual movements such as structuralism, semiotics, and post-structuralism. In his book, *Course in Common Linguistics*, posthumously published in 1916, Saussure radically questioned the referential function of language. According to him, language is a secure autonomous system and languages in any language refer to concepts and not to concrete things in the world. In other languages, the language does not refer to real things in the world. It is not a medium to communicate meaning of the world, and the connection flanked by the language and the world is arbitrary. Language, according to Saussure, makes meaning on its own and human thoughts are constituted by language.

Rolland Barthes, a renowned French linguist and thinker, accepted the arguments further. The history written by them is not in relation to the past but an inscription on the past pretending to be a likeness of it, a parade of

signifiers masquerading as a collection of facts'. According to Barthes, historians' account of the past basically refers to a number of concepts in relation to the past and not the reality of the past. He states that:

- Like any discourse with "realistic" claims, the discourse of history therefore believes it knows only a two-term semantic schema, referent and signifier.... In other languages, in "objective" history, the "real" is never anything but an unformulated signified, sheltered behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent. This situation defines what we might call the *reality effect*.

Therefore Barthes considers objectivity as the product of what might be described the referential illusion'. This illusion lies in the historians' belief that there is a past world to be exposed through meticulous research. In information, the past, which the historians refer to, is all their own creation. All the paraphernalia fashioned by the historical profession such as verbatim quotation, footnotes, references, etc. are façade to make a create-consider world which the readers may consider real. In information, Barthes says, these are the devices to produce the reality effect' which may persuade the readers to consider in the world created by the historian.

The mainly radical challenge to history-writing came from the theory of deconstruction urbanized by Jacques Derrida. It totally denied the possibility of human beings to comprehend reality outside the language-system of which they are a part. And the language does not refer to an external reality but is a self-contained system which has no connection to reality. Even the author has no role to play in determining the meaning of the text. Moreover, the language itself has no logical and coherent pattern. Derrida measured language as a system of arbitrary codification without any fixed meaning. Therefore the text contains many meanings which may be at variance with each other. Derrida states that a text

- is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other

differential traces. Therefore the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so distant.’

So, Derrida proposes the use of ‘deconstruction’ to reveal the hidden meanings in a text. Though, deconstruction ultimately does not bring out any meaning from the text. It only shows the incapacity of language to refer to any reality outside its own boundaries. In Derrida’s hard prose, this procedure is explained:

- ‘Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate attendance, of original perception.’

Gabrielle Spiegel, and historian of medieval era, critically puts Derrida’s location in slightly simpler language as follows:

- ‘Behind the language of the text stands only more language, more texts, in an infinite regress in which the attendance of the real and the material is always deferred, never attainable. According to deconstruction, we are confined within a “prison home of language” from which there is no exit....’

If the languages in the language cannot refer to any external reality, if the language has no fixed meaning and if the text contains infinite meanings, how it is possible to write history objectively. It is precisely this that the deconstructionists are trying to attack. As Richard Evans points out:

- ‘They imply that authors can no longer be regarded as having manage in excess of the meaning of what they write. In the infinite play of signification that constitutes language. The meaning of a text changes every time it is read. Meaning is put into it by the reader, and all meanings are in principle equally valid. In history, meaning cannot be establish in the past; it is merely put there, each time differently, and with equal validity, by dissimilar historians. There is no necessary or



constant relation flanked by the text of history and the texts of historians. The texts which survive from the past are as arbitrary in their signification as any other texts, and so too are texts which use them.’

Other historians have also expressed their apprehensions concerning dissolution of meaning. Therefore Lawrence Stone remarked that ‘If there is nothing outside the text, then history as we have recognized it collapses altogether, and information and fiction become indistinguishable from one another’. Gabrielle Spiegel also expressed her concern that ‘if texts – documents, literary works, whatever – do not transparently reflect reality, but only other texts, then historical revise can scarcely be distinguished from literary revise, and the “past” dissolves into literature’.

These apprehensions were not wide of the spot as was proved by the works of Louis Mink, a philosopher of history, and Hayden White, an American historian and theorist. Mink spoke in relation to the an internal contradiction in history-writing;

- ‘So we have a ... dilemma in relation to the historical narrative: as historical it claims to symbolize, through its form, part of the real complexity of the past, but as narrative it is a product of imaginative construction, which cannot defend its claim to truth by any accepted procedure of argumentation or authentication.’

Hayden White is more extreme in considering that the historical narrative cannot lay any claim to truth and it should be measured as a form of fiction. In several books and articles, White argues that there is no variation flanked by history and fiction. In his view, historical writings are ‘verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as establish and the shapes of which have more in general with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in sciences’. Closely allied with this is the postmodernist location which considers that contemporary historiography is too closely related to western imperialist expansion to be impartial. It has all beside justified the notion of the superiority of contemporary Europe in excess of

other peoples and cultures. So, its claims to objectivity and impartiality are suspect.

## **HISTORIAN'S CONCERN**

In the recent past several historians have started expressing concern in relation to the this total denial of the possibility of achieving objectivity. Lawrence Stone, a British-American historian, stated it clearly as follows:

- Throughout the last twenty-five years, the subject-matter of history – that is events and behaviour – and the problem – that is explanation of change in excess of time – have all been brought seriously into question, therefore throwing the profession, more especially in France and America, into a crisis of self-confidence in relation to the what it is doing and how it is doing it.

According to Stone, these threats to historical profession came from three dissimilar sources which were related – the theory of deconstruction urbanized by Jacques Derida, cultural anthropology enunciated by Clifford Geertz and the New Historicism. Another historian, Gabrielle Spiegel, is equally concerned in relation to the this development. She outlines the procedure therefore:

- ... the paradigms that have governed historical and literary revise since the nineteenth century no longer hold unquestioned sway. The confident, humanist belief that a rational, ~~o~~bjective” investigation of the past permits us to recover ~~a~~uthentic” meanings in the historical texts has approach under severe attack in postmodernist critical debate. At stake in this debate are a number of concepts traditionally deployed by historians in their attempts to understand the past: causality, change, authorial intent, stability of meaning, human agency, and social determination.

Based on this observation, she concludes that Looking at the current critical climate from the vantage point of a historian, the dominant impression one takes absent is that of the dissolution of history, of a flight from ~~r~~eality”

to language as the constitutive agent of human consciousness and the social manufacture of meaning.' These are not misplaced concerns. The postmodernists also think the similar method that their theories would lead to the withering of history. Keith Jenkins, a postmodern thinker, proclaims the demise of both the upper and lower case histories'. He says that history now appears to be presently one more foundationless, positioned expression in a world of foundationless, positioned expressions'. Even before that, Peter Novick, concluded his well-known book by stating that As a broad society of discourse, as a society of scholars united by general aims, general standards and general purposes, the discipline of history had ceased to exist'. Patrick Joyce, another adherent to this thought, proclaims the end of history' because social history is the child of modernity' which does not engage in the procedure of innocently naming the world but creating it in its own political and intellectual image'.

Even in the field of Indian history, this concern is now increasingly apparent. Several historians have reacted against the postmodernist tilt of the later subaltern studies. Prominent in the middle of such historians are Sumit Sarkar, Rosalind O'Hanlon, C.A. Bayly, Ranajit Das Gupta, and David Washbrook. They have questioned the shift towards culturalism in theme and relativism in approach in Indian studies. We will talk about these issues in detail in Unit 25. Here we will conclude this part by reiterating that the postmodernist intervention in historiography has unsettled the extensive-lasting notions as distant as the philosophy of history is concerned.

## **POSSIBILITY OF OBJECTIVITY**

Faced with such radical attacks on the possibility of objectivity, one wonders whether it is at all possible to achieve any measure or type of objectivity, whether it is possible to have any understanding of the past or of dissimilar societies and cultures. These critics have made us aware that a easy correspondence theory of truth is not quite reliable. Our knowledge of the world is mediated through our present concerns, ideological commitments, cultural environment, and intellectual atmosphere. The historians also accept that the sources are not unproblematic. They are suffused with stages of

subjectivity which are sometimes quite alarming. And, despite our critical evaluation, it is not always possible to do absent with the bias in our sources. Likewise, despite our conscious attempts, it is often hard to annul all culturally induced biases in our own thinking as historians. Mainly historians now recognize that it is not possible to get a full picture of the past. Sources are varied and their interpretations are innumerable. In such situation any claim to fully symbolize the past may well be a hollow claim.

Though, a total denial of the possibility of objectivity is to stretch the point to another extreme. The information that total objectivity is not possible does not mean that no objectivity is possible, that any quest for objectivity is useless. Even though it may not be possible to tell the whole truth of the past does not mean that even partial truth cannot be reclaimed. As Noel Carroll, one of the critics of the relativist location, has pointed out:

- In one sense, historical narratives are inventions, viz., in the sense that they are made by historians; but it is not clear that it follows from this that they are made-up.’

He further emphasizes this point by stating that:

- ... narratives are a form of representation, and, in that sense, they are invented, but that does not preclude their capability to give accurate information. Narratives can give accurate knowledge in relation to the past in conditions of the types of characteristics they track, namely, the ingredients of *courses of events*, which contain: background circumstances, causes and effects, as well as social context, the logic of situations, practical deliberations, and ensuing actions.’

Carroll criticizes Hayden White and others for believing that only a mirror-image of the past can satisfy the truth condition for a historical narrative. If it fails to give a picture image of the past, it will remain at the stage of fiction. So, either it is a mirror-image or it is a fiction; there is nothing in flanked by. Several historians have reacted against this view and have appealed for what Brian Fay has described a dialectical middle ground which preserves the insights of each Attitude and prunes each of its excesses’.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is objectivity? Discuss the historiographical traditions which take the principle of objectivity as their basis.
- Why are historians so concerned about the criticism leveled against the principle of objectivity? Do you think objectivity is possible to achieve in history-writing?
- Who were the earliest critics of objectivity in history? What are their arguments? Do you agree with them?

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORY, IDEOLOGY AND SOCIETY

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Ideology in history
- Meaning of ideology
- Some later writers
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of ideology.
- Explain the concept of ideology in history

#### IDEOLOGY IN HISTORY

History embraces past, present, and future. The future is yet to happen. It is real only in the sense of being what the interested people may envisage through their understanding of the past and the present. Such understanding of dissimilar persons and groups may be quite variable. Time past and time present are both perhaps present in time future. Any human society in historical procedure is not fully recognized on the proof alone of what has actually happened. It calls for a perception of what is yet to happen and remnants strange from what is already recognized. The ideological elements have their significant role in a historical explanation to commingle all those dimensions. An instance from ancient Greece may be taken to focus on the point in question. Thucydides, a citizen of Athens in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., wrote a history of *The Peloponnesian War*. The municipalities at war were Athens and Sparta. Athens was a democratic state heights and the municipality was full of slaves at the peak of her liberty and, from the 6th century B.C. onwards, had been passing through changes bearing on democratic advance, maritime extensions and naval power. In addition to expanding trade, maritime superiority led to the rise and growth of an

Athenian empire. All this could explanation for distant-reaching changes in the methods of Athenian life and thought. On the contrary, Sparta was subject to oligarchic rule and very conservative in its attitude to economic action and social design of livelihood, their sanctions, and prohibitions.

Though an Athenian, Thucydides was an anti-democrat and had little sympathy for the changes in Athens breaking absent from her old moorings. In many places of *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides made descriptions and comments which betrayed his oligarchic sympathies. Also the coverage of the subject as planned by him concluded with the defeat of Athens in 404 B.C. While such an end could be used to demonstrate the weaknesses of the democratic systems, the actual course of events in the subsequent year moved in a dissimilar direction. Even with their mainly diminished manpower, the Athenian democrats rallied back and defeated the oligarchic forces which were ruling Athens with the support of a Spartan garrison stationed in the municipality. No doubt the conflict of interests flanked by the democrats and the oligarchs had its links with variable economic interests. On the whole, though, the sway of scrupulous moral principles, the conflicting points of view evoked by dissimilar beliefs and cultural preferences had considerable power in the choice of sides in Greek history. This is where we do discover an element of ideological import in the history written by Thucydides.

The middle ages appear to be a handy label to denote the era dividing the Greco- Roman antiquity in Europe from its contemporary times. This stage of history was characterized by the feudal society and economy. The hierarchy of the feudal landlords, their dissimilar stages, the church with its clerical arrangements, and the toiling peasantry mostly bound to serfdom, required that the relatively lower strata would be obliged to render some specified service to the king, the noblesse, and the clergy. The typical shapes of division in the middle of the people according to their status and the legal lay were recognized as social estates the higher estates; the peasants, petty artisans and tradesmen belonging to the lower estates. The dominant form of social subsistence in the middle of the peasant workers was recognized as serfdom. For the allotment of land received from the lord, the serfs were subject to the compulsion of unpaid labour service on the lord's lands. Accordingly, the

arrangement was based on labour rent. The feudal system passed through many shapes of rent payment in excess of time. It had its own dynamic stage of expansion and improvements. Eventually, though, the rise of the bourgeoisie beside with the tendencies of more and more self-governing manufacture units coming to subsistence and expansion of trade led to the collapse of the feudal system. The role of peasant revolts was crucial in the procedure of abolition of feudalism.

The feudal order had its own ideology of self-defense and legitimating. A system of thoughts and beliefs did emerge to glorify the interests and actions of the ruling forces. For instance, the thought of chivalry associated with the feudal knights placed a big premium on their role as protectors of the weak and defenders of the Christian faith. No unbiased views and observations would though bear out the truth of such an estimate of medieval knights. Indeed, much of the content of medieval ideology was derived from a concept of God ordaining that the prime in excess of life and of human history is situated outside the world. It follows that human destinies are invariably determined by the will of God. For the believers in God as such, what really matters in history is not the transitory greatness of empires, but salvation or damnation in a world to approach. A meaningful aspect of this type of other-worldliness was noted by Karl Mannheim, 'As extensive as the clerically and feudally organized mediaeval order was able to locate its paradise outside of society, in some other-worldly sphere which transcended history and dulled its revolutionary edge, the thought of paradise was still an integral part of mediaeval society. Not until sure social groups embodied their wish-images into their actual conduct and tried to realize them, did these ideologies become utopian'.

In big parts of Europe, particularly in its western countries, the middle ages were superseded by the beginning and development of capitalism. It was a historical transition ranging in excess of four centuries which were distinguished by an unprecedented advance of science, and distant reaching technological-cum-organizational changes in material manufacture. As for the corresponding changes in human thought and values, we should take note of the religious movement of Reformation starting in Germany and the



Renaissance developing primarily in Italy and then in Elizabethan England. The rise of humanist civilization and a series of significant scientific discoveries accounted for the main characteristics of the Renaissance philosophical thought. Humanism placed a big premium on freedom of the individual, opposed religious asceticism and vindicated man's right to pleasure and satisfaction of earthly desires and necessities. Some of the mainly prominent humanists were Petrarch, Dante, Boccaccio, Leonardo da Vinci, Bruno, Copernicus, Shakespeare, and Francis Bacon. In the Renaissance sense, humanism conceived of God as approving all those views propagated from its location. The negative characteristic of this type of humanism was its aloofness from the working people and their issues of suffering and distress. Therefore in the class context, it could at best be an ideology of the nascent bourgeoisie of Europe in those days.

The religious *Reformation* had a similar bias. Pitted against the principles of Catholicism and the Papacy, it facilitated the emergence of secular, national states. Martin Luther, an eminent and also the earliest leader of the *Reformation*, denied that the church and the clergy could be mediators flanked by man and God. But he could neither be positive in his views on the positions helping the material interests of German burghers, nor support the thoughts of early burghers, nor promote the thoughts of early bourgeois humanism. Luther supported the ruling classes throughout the Peasant War is noteworthy, 'Luther has conquered slavery based on belief in god only, by substituting for it slavery based on conviction'.

The location of John Calvin was dissimilar. He held that in response to one's 'calling', the committed person could prove his worth for God's grace. No other means of salvation are accessible since, like Luther, Calvin also rules out the scope of clerical mediation flanked by man and God. It follows that the quantity and excellence of work in this world remnants the only route of human salvation. Asceticism in spending was measured to be an attribute that would aid saving and accumulation. This is how the Calvinist ethic of *Reformation* comes to fit in with the necessities of capitalism in history. Marx Weber, the well-recognized German sociologist, distinguished for his studies in the relation of Protestant ethic to capitalism, observed, 'Asceticism was in

turn influenced in its development and its character by the totality of social circumstances, especially economic. The contemporary man is, in common, even with the best will, unable to provide religious thoughts a significance for civilization and national character which they deserve. But it is, of course, not my aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of civilization and history'. The mainly significant aspect of such formulations in relation to the reciprocity flanked by economic religious and the extensive cultural spheres relates the ideological pulls and pushes of the participants in the procedure of history.

The rise of economic individualism and *laissez faire* accounted for a new balance of dealings flanked by religion, state, and civil society. The principal strength of a new leadership for the capitalist transition and its social goals obtained in the redemption of private property and its uses from the political and religious obligations of the feudal order and its ecclesiastical power wielded by the church. Therefore, beside with its economic prominence, the challenge of the bourgeoisie had to work itself through manifold stages of religious beliefs and attitudes, priorities of value judgment and numerous other characteristics of human social livelihood and civilization. All this would be incumbent on the nascent capitalist forces in the procedure of achieving their social hegemony.

The ideological contributions of the Renaissance and the Reformation have already been noted. What comes after that in European history's chronology of the transformation of society and thoughts is the Enlightenment, a major event of intellectual history beginning roughly after the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and ending with the French Revolution a century later. Diderot, Votaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Goethe, Schiller, and several other thinkers of abiding importance were in the middle of the followers of the philosophy of Enlightenment. They proceeded from the first assumption that enlightened individual consciousness would have a decisive role in the elimination of social wrongs and vices. Their aim was to spread thoughts of goodness, liberty, justice, and scientific knowledge. Despite their differences, the general points could be taken as a materialist view of human beings, relentless optimism in relation to the man's progress

through education and some utilitarian notions in relation to the society and ethics.

The linkage of the Enlightenment philosophies with the ethos of capitalism is revealed as we take explanation of their main principles of social life and organisation. Such general denominators of the Enlightenment thought are autonomy of individuals, freedom, the equality of all men, the universality of law, inviolability of contract, toleration and the right to private property. It is noteworthy that the aforesaid elements are essential for a system of market swap. The idealized social norms of the Enlightenment then imply an all-round accreditation of capitalism.

### **MEANING OF IDEOLOGY**

Almost certainly, the word 'ideology' was first used in France by rationalist philosophers to indicate what was then understood as the philosophy of the human mind. In English usage, ideology conveyed the meaning of the science of thoughts. The analytical emphasis on scientific social thoughts had an significant role in the promotion of the Enlightenment philosophies which mainly contributed to the creation of the French Revolution of 1789. This revolution faced numerous difficulties in achieving popular sovereignty. By the end of the following decade, there occurred the *coup d'etat* of Napoleon Bonaparte, who criticized the Enlightenment philosophers for diffusing metaphysics and a critical failure to adapt their socio-political thoughts 'to a knowledge of the human heart and the lessons of history'. Napoleon's attack imparted to ideology a sense of having unreal, impractical, and even fanatical tendencies.

Napoleon blamed the ideologues, for they misled the people by elevating them to a sovereignty which the similar people were incapable of application. He berated the principles of enlightenment as ideology. An element of rationalization becomes a characteristic of ideology. It is not rationalization in the sense of direct action to improve something, not in the sense of finding appropriate theoretical principles to explain some empirical observations. The ideologues' support for popular sovereignty necessity has been based on their views in relation to the people and their capability.

Napoleon's critique implies that the ideologues measured people more as what they would like them to be, and less as what those people were in actual reality. This is a type of rationalization influencing the habit of mind inclined to promote ideologies.

In an significant sense, Napoleon's emphasis on knowledge of the human heart and the lessons of history also had an ideological nuance opposed to the location of the Enlightenment thinkers. This is a case of disagreement flanked by democratic and undemocratic sanctions in relation to the nature of political power. Not that Napoleon's pleas for singular one-man power could justify itself on any historical criterion of universal excellence. He had to be a creature of pure and easy pragmatism. In some circumstances, pragmatism may serve as the method out of an immediate problem. But even pragmatism cannot rid itself of a rather mundane ideological dictum enjoining that nothing succeeds like successes. As we have already noted, every ideology grows either in support or in opposition to an existing social order, its economy, politics, and civilization. The variable patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs embedded in dissimilar ideologies can then have a vital power on the historical procedures of action, reaction, and change.

Let us note the two dissimilar senses in which the term ideology has been used in the development of human thought in relation to the history and society. It may mean a set of thoughts belonging to any scrupulous society. Such thoughts are likely to differ from one class to another, reflecting separate class interests, which can be antagonistic or conciliatory. This is how an ideology comes to have the label of being bourgeois or proletarian and so on and so forth. An ideology of a class cannot but have the tendency of justifying the scrupulous interests thereof. The usual manner of such justification consists in projecting that the promotion of scrupulous interests, under consideration, conforms to the common well being of the whole society.

The other usage of the term ideology is pejorative. It means a delusion born of false observation and inference, the sense in which Napoleon sharply criticized the ideologies of popular sovereignty. The critique implied a type of distinction flanked by knowledge based on sensible experience and ideology. In their early writings, criticizing the mode and content of Hegelian idealism,

Marx and Engels applied the term ideology in this sense. They had the similar critical approach while exposing the limitations of Ludwig Feuerbach's materialism. Marx's critiques of the Hegelian philosophies of the *State philosophical Manuscripts*. The emphasis was on the inversions of Hegel. For instance, the true connection of thought to being is that being is subject and thought the predicate; Hegel sets thought as the subject and being as the predicate.

The Hegelian inversions led to innumerable ambiguities and erratic conclusions. To cite a few of them, Hegel's apotheosis of an authoritarian absolute state did not fit in with his stated course of history as the progress towards consciousness of freedom. Further Hegel's thought of God creating man entails an inversion of the similar type. Ludwig Feuerbach, himself a radical Hegelian, rightly argued in his book *The Essence of Christianity* is own image, invoking the human ideals of knowledge, will and love endowed with infinite power. In connection with this theme, Marx analyzed the nature of religion, tracing its roots in the contradictions and sufferings of the real world: Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* the world of philosophy. His criticism then extends to the economic dealings obtaining in a capitalist society. This was Marx's first analysis of alienated labour and its severe contradictions in the domain of private capitalist property. Also, some important points were made on the motives of greed and envy working as serious obstacles to human redemption from the bondage of alienation.

Another significant text planned and prepared by Marx and Engels throughout 1845-46 was not published throughout their lifetime. It appeared for the first time in Moscow in 1932. In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* shed manuscript to *The German Ideology* in the following languages:

- We resolved to work out jointly the opposition of our view to the ideological view of German Philosophy, in information to settle accounts with our previous philosophical conscience. The resolve was accepted out in the form of criticism of post-Hegelian philosophy. The

manuscript, two big octavo volumes, had extensive reached its lay of publication in Westphalia when we received the news that altered circumstances did not allow of its being printed. We abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of the mice all the more willingly since we had achieved our main purpose – self-clarification.’

Marx and Engels started as radical Hegelians. This clarifies their move to settle accounts with our previous philosophical conscience’. Confirming their departure from Hegelian idealism, The German Ideology presents the first Marxian statement of historical development through dissimilar stages conditioned by the nexus of productive forces and manufacture dealings. Indeed, the focus of observation shifts from thoughts to practical human – sensuous action. Marx observed in his eighth thesis on Feuerbach, All social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries which urge theory into mysticism discover their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice’. He was also critical of all materialism incapable of understanding the substance as sensuous human action, as practice.

The term ideology appears in the very title of the book. The inversion that is involved relates to treating consciousness as prior to material reality. Marx holds that the critical human troubles are rooted in real social contradictions. It is utterly misleading to trace their origin in mistaken thoughts. The book’s preface had an amusing story from Marx to prove the point:

- Once upon a time an honest fellow had the thought that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the thought of gravity. If they were to knock this thought out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious thought, they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water. His whole life extensive he fought against the illusion of gravity, of whose harmful results all statistics brought him new and manifold proof. The honest fellow was the kind of new revolutionary philosophers in Germany.’

In the subsequent theoretical writings of Marx we discover little or no use of the term ideology. No doubt, the major books of this genre are *Grundrisse, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and analysis of the historical development of economic thought was contained in the three volumes of the *Theories of Surplus Value* which have their own significance and help us to assess the relativity of economic thought in reference to the dissimilar stages of capitalist development in Europe, especially that of England and France. Again, Marx expressed his reactions to several events happening in modern Europe and commented on the omissions and commissions affecting the strategies opposed to capitalism e.g., *A Critique of the Gotha Programme* of some Marxian thoughts in relation to the course of historical transition from capitalism to socialism, the distributive and executive troubles bearing upon the elementary and the advanced stages of socialism. The advanced stage ushers in the arrival of communism, which characteristics a classless society capable of fulfilling all the needs of each and every person, therefore ensuring complete and effective freedom for the whole people. As for the collapse of capitalism, Marx focuses on the rising contradictions flanked by capitalist private property, its tendencies of ever-rising accumulation beside with scientific advance of productive forces, and the insatiable urge of capital to maximize profits at the expense of the proletariat. It is through these antinomies of the procedure of capitalist expansion that the capital-labour manufacture relation becomes a fetter on the advance of productive forces. Marx sets forth the logic of socialist revolution as follows: 'The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of manufacture which has sprung up and flourished beside with, and under it. Centralization of the means of manufacture and socialization of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.'

We have noted already that the use of the word ideology is very unusual in Marx's later texts. Of the two senses of ideology, the strictly negative one had also been taken as synonymous with false consciousness in some writings of Engels. Even in its negative uses, ideology referred to

distortions with a view to veiling some contradictions in reality. While capitalism abounds in contradictions and brings severe distress to the exploited, the bourgeois ideology, in Marx's languages, presents the system as the 'very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule, Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham'. And so, the synonymy of ideology and false consciousness may be misleading without appropriate specification of the contraries which are being concealed.

Moreover, in his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* one should always be made flanked by the material transformation of the economic circumstances of manufacture which can be determined with the precision of natural science and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short ideological shapes in which men become conscious of this disagreement and fight it out'. Such ideological shapes neither express false consciousness, nor are they pure delusions. Marx is taking explanation of an whole cultural intricate and its manifold dimensions. Lenin made exactly the similar use of the term ideology and often specified the class that was associated with a system of thoughts. Antonio Gramsci, a leading Italian Marxist of the early twentieth century, often passage of Marx in order to strengthen his arguments in relation to the importance of the ideological dimensions of social hegemony.

The importance of ideological shapes in any social order can also be connected to Marx's conceptualization of the base and superstructure as a clue to our understanding the relation of a society's sphere of economic action to its manifestations of social livelihood in law, religion, arts, philosophy, and politics. Marx's point is that the sum total of manufacture dealings at the economic base constitutes the economic structure of society. This is the real foundations on which rises a legal and political structure and to which corresponds definite shapes of social consciousness and their expressions. The scrupulous metaphor of base and superstructure carries a suggestion of economic determinism. Marx, though, does not stress the necessity of any one-method relation of causality proceeding from the economic sphere to the domain of ideology marked by its creative diversity. There remnants scope for reciprocal power flanked by material and spiritual manufacture. The



superstructures of thoughts necessity not are conceived as a mere passive reflection of the state and shapes of material manufacture. Marx cites examples of legal and aesthetic manufacture not quite reducible to the corresponding stage of material manufacture, e.g. the survival of elements of Roman private law in the stage of capitalist manufacture; the heights attained by Greek art and literature amidst a rather undeveloped state of material productions.

## **SOME LATER WRITERS**

In our approach to the meaning of ideology, we have used the elements of Marxian thought in some details. The dynamics of history tend to be vitally influenced by the relative capacities of the conflicting classes to uphold their leadership in the sphere of social manufacture. We have noted that, for Marx, the disagreement flanked by the rising productive forces and the existing dealings of manufacture matures into a revolution that brings in relation to the a new society under a new class leadership. Marx's proof and proof of such a theory of historical change were by and big confined to the capitalist transition. The after that stage of history will coincide with the arrival of socialism. This will approach through the worldwide revolution waged by the proletariat against the capitalist order. Since the proletariat moves by stages towards a classless society, there will be no further need for ideological protection and deceptions in the interests of a dominant ruling class. This is the usual reply of the Marxists to the comment that as a protagonist of the proletariat and its class interests, the Marxian theory cannot but have its own ideological elements.

Again, the point in relation to the determination of consciousness by social being necessity not indicate a connection similar to what is meant by the statement that a fall in temperature turns water into ice. It is Marx's own statement that while the economic circumstances of manufacture may be ascertained with the precision of natural science, the ideological shapes are subject to all the complications of social consciousness trying to grapple with its nearby reality at dissimilar stages. Karl Mannheim, the German sociologist, wrote in his book *Ideology and Utopia* lation 1936, that ideologies are mental

fiction used to conceal the real nature of a scrupulous society. On the country, utopias are wishful dreams that inspire the opposition against vested interests. Therefore, Mannheim made a meaningful distinction flanked by pro and anti-*status quo* ideologies.

Class consciousness is an very significant element of Marx's theory of social change. George Luckacs, a notable Marxist thinker and activist, made several significant contributions in writing in excess of a big region of subjects ranging from aesthetics and literary criticism to philosophy, sociology, and politics. His book *History and Class Consciousness* the communist establishments of those days. Though, it had great power in excess of a big part of the radical non-conformist intelligentsia in several countries. Lukacs' analysis of class consciousness was separate for its critiques of 'economism' and 'scientism'. It emphasized that the proletarian revolution would not emerge merely from the economic contradictions of capitalism, not from any scientific laws of historical change without the constant consciousness and action of the working people. Moreover, in considering the revolutionary roles of workers' councils, Luckacs stressed the need for the proletarian practice of self-government through a conscious social agency.

Louis Althusser's interpretation of the Marxist, as accessible in his *Reading Capital*, focuses on 'mature' Marx with his framework of interlocking combinations of political, economic, ideological, and theoretical structures and practices which, in their totality, can approach to determine social forces and their actions. Althusser comprises ideology in the middle of the main instances of history as structured social formations. An ideology then contains the meaning of the dealings existed by men in a society. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemonic power as not merely dependent on coercion, but also 'directing' by the token of consent obtained from the governed, may endow an ideology with some new significance. Gramsci distinguished flanked by historically organic ideologies and those which were purely arbitrary. To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary, they 'organize' human masses, and make the terrain on which men move and acquire consciousness of their location and struggles. The organic ideologies

have a 'psychological' validity of considerable power on the procedures of history.

Ideologies are often inseparable from socio-political theories and their projects throughout the twentieth century. It is approximately impossible to conceive of a human society, which is without a supporting ideology and, on the other hand, which is entirely free from any critical questions in relation to the its goals and their achievements. This is where the path of history and the vision of history will continue to be involved in the rise and fall of ideologies.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What do you understand by the term 'ideology'? Discuss the various usages of the term.
- What role has the ideology played in influencing the course of history?

## **PART 2. PRE-MODERN TRADITION**

### **CHAPTER 5**

#### **GRECO-ROMAN TRADITIONS**

##### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- The contexts of history-writing
- The objectives of history-writing
- Defining and drawing on sources
- Style
- Understanding historical events and procedures
- Review questions

##### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Learn about some of the historians in ancient Greece and Rome and the historical works written by them.

##### **THE CONTEXTS OF HISTORY-WRITING**

The four historians we have selected for review are amongst the best-recognized in antiquity: Herodotus and Thucydides, who wrote in Greek, and existed in the 5th century BCE as BC while CE means General Era, also recognized as AD, and Livy and Tacitus, who existed throughout the Augustan era of the Roman empire and wrote in Latin. The 5th century BCE is often regarded as constituting a classical age in the history of Greece in common and Athens in scrupulous, while the Augustan era is viewed as marking the heyday of the Roman empire.

The works of these historians can be situated within these political and cultural contexts. Nonetheless, it is worth bearing in mind that there are no easy correlations flanked by these contexts and the specific shapes of historical investigation that appeared. We might expect that these histories were composed to justify, eulogize, or legitimate modern political changes.

While this expectation is not belied entirely, it is also apparent that Livy and Tacitus were highly critical of their contemporaries: these histories are not basically eulogistic but are marked by anxieties in relation to the present. Herodotus almost certainly existed flanked by c. 484-425 BCE. He was born in a Greek colony in Asia Minor, but traveled widely, through parts of West Asia, including Palestine and Babylon, North Africa, especially Egypt, through many islands in the Mediterranean Sea, and in mainland Greece. His writing is marked by a deep admiration for Athens, and in information, his work can be understood at least in part as being an effort to memorialize what he regarded as the historic victory of the Greeks in excess of the Persians, a contest that he visualized as one flanked by culture and barbarism.

Thucydides' association with Athens was even closer. He was an Athenian, and served as a common throughout the Peloponnesian war, a disagreement flanked by Athens and Sparta that lasted for in relation to the thirty years. This was a war in which mainly other Greek states were also embroiled, as supporters of one or the other. After his failure as a common, Thucydides was evidently exiled, and spent many years amongst the states that were hostile to Athens. His work reflects his rich experience in a diversity of methods. Herodotus and Thucydides were therefore products of what has often been projected as the classical age in the history of Greece in common and of Athens in scrupulous. We know from other sources that this was the age of philosophers such as Socrates, and of playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The works of the historians do not, though, directly reflect these cultural growths. What we discover instead is a preoccupation, especially in Thucydides, with militaristic behaviors. In information, if these histories are rich in detail, they are also marked by an very narrow focus. Indeed there are times when the present-day reader cannot help but wishing that these writers had devoted some of their considerable skills to a wider range of issues.

Livy and Tacitus were situated very closely within the contexts of empire. The Roman empire was a unique institution. It spanned parts of three continents, and lasted for almost five centuries. It was also extra ordinary for its ruling elite, membership of which was fairly flexible. Livy was a modern

of the mainly well-known imperial figure in Roman history, Augustus. Though, he was not part of the senatorial elite, nor was he directly associated with politics. Yet, it is perhaps not accidental that he chose to write a monumental history of Rome, which ran into 142 books. Unluckily, more than a hundred of these books were lost, and some survive only in summaries written by later authors. In its entirety, the work traced the history of Rome from its legendary origins to c. 9 BCE.

Tacitus was closely associated with imperial management, and a well-known orator. His *Annals* delineated the history of the Roman empire for in relation to the fifty years. The work begins with the end of the reign of Augustus, and symbolizes the concerns of the military/administrative elite, its preoccupations with questions of succession, and the role of the army in political affairs. What distinguishes his explanation is that, although he was an “insider”, he was often critical of imperial policies and intrigues. In other languages, his work suggests that the Roman elite were by no means a homogeneous entity. We can perhaps suggest then, that while the concerns of these early historians were obviously shaped by their modern milieu, the connections flanked by the context and the author was by no means easy or unilinear.

## **THE OBJECTIVES OF HISTORY-WRITING**

It is apparent that history writing was undertaken with self-conscious deliberation, and with explicitly stated objectives. These could contain preserving memories of what were regarded as great, spectacular, or basically significant events. Approximately inevitably, warfare and battles control the narrative. Yet, other goals are also explicitly and sometimes implicitly articulated. We discover, for instance, that Herodotus was concerned with providing a narrative that was full, motivating, even fascinating, and incorporated ethnographic accounts that often bordered on the realm of fantasy. His successors were usually more restrained, and, the Latin writers in scrupulous adopt a solemn, moral tone. This has been regarded as a characteristic of the Augustan age, where the ruler visualized his role in conditions of restoring pristine traditions, amongst other things. Mainly of the

writers state their objectives at the outset. For instance, Herodotus begins his work by declaring:

- These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due need of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feud.

To an extent, this initial assertion is justified by some of his concluding remarks: even while recording and celebrating the victories of the Greeks in common and the Athenians in scrupulous, he recognizes the heroism of the Persians as well as the Spartans. It is apparent that what was regarded as being worthy of demoralization was a great war and its outcome. In a sense, this perspective was shared by Thucydides, whose explanation begins as follows:

- Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war flanked by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it.

This focus on histories of warfare characterized the works of Livy and Tacitus as well. At one stage, this may not appear surprising, given that the expansion of the Roman empire was inevitably marked by warfare, which was duly memorialized. What is perhaps more unexpected is the tone of moral concern that distinguishes these accounts. While we customarily regard the Augustan age as the heyday of Roman imperialism, it is motivating that these modern writers voice a sense of discomfort, and even agony at what was perceived to be a state of decline. Livy's prefatory statement is illuminating:

- I invite the reader's attention to the much more serious consideration of the type of lives our ancestors existed, of who were the men and what the means, both in politics and war, by which Rome's power was first acquired and subsequently expanded. I would then have him trace the procedure of our moral decline, to watch first the sinking of the

foundations of morality as the old teaching was allowed to lapse, then the final collapse of the whole edifice, and the dark dawning of our contemporary day when we can neither endure our vices, nor face the remedies needed to cure them.

The preoccupation with military behaviors, in a somewhat dissimilar context, is apparent in the work of Tacitus as well. Yet, Tacitus was not basically attempting to valorize marital heroes: he was also, if not more concerned with offering a critique of the modern situation:

- My purpose is not to relate at length every motion, but only such as was conspicuous for excellence or notorious for infamy. This I regard as history's highest function, to let no worthy action be uncommemorated, and to hold out the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil languages and deeds.

He was also acutely conscious that what he documented might appear insignificant:

- Much of what I have related and shall have to relate, may perhaps, I am aware, appear petty trifles to record. But no one necessity compares my annals with the writings of those who have described Rome in old days. They told of great wars, of the storming of municipalities, of the defeat and capture of kings, or whenever they turned by preference to house affairs, they related, with a free scope for digression, the strafes of consuls with tribunes, land and corn-laws, and the struggles flanked by the commons and the aristocracy. My labors are circumscribed and inglorious; peace wholly unbroken or but slightly disturbed, dismal misery in the capital, an emperor careless in relation to the enlargement of the empire, such is my theme. Still it will not be useless to revise these at first sight trifling events out of which the movements of vast changes often take their rise.

Both Livy and Tacitus regarded their works as educative. The former argued:



- What chiefly creates the revise of history wholesome and profitable is this, that in history you have a record of the infinite diversity of human experiences plainly set out for all to see, and in that record you can discover for yourself and your country both examples and warnings.

And Tacitus, more despondent, wrote:

- So now, after a revolution, when Rome is nothing but the realm of a single despot, there necessity is good in cautiously noting and recording this era, for it is but few who have the foresight to distinguish right from wrong or what is sound from what is hurtful, while mainly men learn wisdom from the fortunes of others. Still, though this is instructive, it provides very little pleasure. Descriptions of countries, the several incidents of battles, glorious deaths of great generals, enchain and refresh a reader's mind. I have to present in succession prosecutions, faithless friendships, the ruin of innocence, the similar causes issuing in the similar results, and I am everywhere confronted by a wearisome monotony in my subject matter.

The dreary weight of the present deterred such historians from venturing into the realm of the fantastic. This was in stark contrast to the work of Herodotus who was evidently fascinated by what he measured to be extraordinary, and took great pains to record these elements, even when he realized that it could strain one's credulity. His accounts of India, which he never visited, are especially marked by elements of fantasy, as for instance in his story in relation to the gold-digging ants. Writers like Tacitus are distant more careful in their accounts of the fabulous. This is apparent, for instance, in his brief digression on the fabled phoenix:

- The bird described the phoenix, after a extensive succession of ages, appeared in Egypt and furnished the mainly learned men of that country and of Greece with abundant matter for the discussion of the marvelous phenomenon. It is my wish to create recognized all on which they agree with many things, questionable enough indeed, but not too absurd to be noticed. ....As to the number of years it lives,

there are several accounts. The common custom says five hundred years. Some uphold that it is seen at intervals of fourteen hundred and sixty one years....But all antiquity is of course obscure.

## **DEFINING AND DRAWING ON SOURCES**

The question of authorities or sources is something that is addressed both explicitly and implicitly in some of the works that we are considering. Eyewitness observations were valued, but other sources of information, derived from custom, religious centers, chronicles, interviews, and a range of documentary sources were tapped as well. The possibility of mutually conflicting versions was also recognized and strategies were evolved for resolving such situations. For instance, Herodotus, in discussing the history of the Persian ruler Cyrus states:

- And herein I shall follow those Persian authorities whose substance it appears to be not to magnify the exploits of Cyrus, but to relate the easy truth. I know besides three methods in which the story of Cyrus is told, all differing from my own narrative.

The archives and traditions clustering approximately shrines were obviously significant sources that were drawn upon. The classic instance of this is provided by the shrine of Delphi, whose oracle was invariably consulted by rulers and states before any major event, e.g., going to battle. Herodotus records many of the predictions of the oracle, often couched in ambiguous language. He also details the offerings sent to the shrine on the successful completion of an enterprise. Herodotus also gives the reader with first hand accounts, the result of his several travels. Here is his account of agriculture in Mesopotamia:

- Of all the countries that we know there is none which is so fruitful in grain. It creates no pretension indeed of rising the fig, the olive, the vine, or any other tree of the type; but in grain it is so fruitful as to yield commonly two hundred fold, and when the manufacture is the greatest, even three-hundred fold. The blade of the wheat plant and barley plant is often four fingers in breadth. As for the millet and the

sesame, I shall not say to what height they grow, though within my own knowledge; for I am not ignorant that what I have already written concerning the fruitfulness of Babylonia necessity appear incredible to those who have never visited the country.

First hand observation is also apparent in the vivid account of shapes of greeting practiced by the Persians:

- When they meet each other in the streets, you may know if the persons meeting are of equal rank by the following token: if they are, instead of speaking, they kiss each other on the lips. In the case where one is little inferior to the other, the kiss is given on the cheek; where the variation of rank is great, the inferior prostrates himself upon the ground.

Occasionally, Herodotus drew on folk traditions. For instance, he cites a extensive conversation flanked by Croesus, a king who was supposed to be incredibly wealthy, and Solon, one of the founding fathers of the Athenian constitution. Croesus, according to this story, is confident that he is the happiest person on earth, but Solon gently, but repeatedly demurs, saying that he could be declared to be the happiest only if his end were recognized. By this argument, only after his death could it be said that a man had existed a happy life. Thucydides deliberates distant more self-consciously on his sources and attitudes towards the past. He says:

- The method that mainly men deal with traditions, even traditions of their own country, is to receive them all alike as they are delivered, without applying any critical test whatever....So little pains do the vulgar take, accepting readily the first story that comes to hand.

In contrast, he considers his own procedure distant more rigorous:

- The conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I consider, safely be relied on..

A system of keeping annual records was evidently in subsistence in Rome for many centuries. These records, recognized as the *Annales Maximi*, were compiled and maintained by priests. They contained the names of magistrates who were appointed each year, and chronicled what were regarded as significant events. Separately from this, elite families had traditions of funerary orations, which were drawn on by later historians.

Perhaps because such traditions and the works of earlier historians such as Polybius could be drawn upon, Livy and Tacitus appear less overtly concerned in relation to their sources. In the case of Tacitus, we discover that his insider status vis-à-vis the ruling elite are virtually taken for granted. Nevertheless, there are occasional references to sources, both written and oral, which he drew on to reconstruct his detailed history of events, including battles, intrigues, senatorial proceedings, structure behaviors and populist events, that he painstakingly plotted through his *Annals*, a year by year explanation of the empire. And like Thucydides, he creates a point in relation to the sifting through rumors in relation to the intrigues and murders in the imperial family, explicitly denying what he considers to be particularly outrageous speculation:

- My substance .....is ....to request all into whose hands my work shall style, not to catch eagerly at wild and improbable rumors in preference to genuine history which has not been perverted into romance..

## **STYLE**

The authors under consideration evidently wrote for an elite, literate audience, although some of their compositions may have been disseminated orally as well. Virtually every sentence was cautiously crafted, with consummate ability that often survives even in translations. Thucydides appears to be mainly self-conscious in this respect. He assumes a tone of deliberate solemnity and warns the reader:

- Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggerations of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense.

This solemn tone was often combined with exemplary precision. Perhaps the mainly outstanding instance of this is provided by Thucydides' graphic account of the plague that hit Athens throughout the second year of the war. Here is how he delineated the symptoms:

- People in good health were all of a sudden attacked by violent heats in the head, and redness and inflammation in the eyes, the inward parts, such as the throat or tongue, becoming bloody and emitting an unnatural and fetid breath.

His depiction of the implications of the extensive-drawn disagreement is also incisive:

- In peace and prosperity, states and individuals have better sentiments, because they do not discover themselves confronted with imperious necessities; but war takes absent the easy supply of daily wants, and so proves a rough master, that brings mainly men's characters to a stage with their fortunes.

And yet, he incorporates speeches, characterized by Finley as *“the mainly motivating and seductive part”* of the text. It is intriguing to read what Thucydides himself declares in relation to these:

- With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from several quarters; it was in all cases hard to carry them word for word in one's memory, *so my habit has been to create the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the several occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the common sense of what was really said.*

An instance can perhaps serve to clarify how such speeches were used by the author. This excerpt is from a speech attributed to the Corinthians who apparently tried to win the support of the Spartans against the Athenians. Thucydides uses this opportunity to insert a eulogy of Athenian character:

- The Athenians are addicted to innovation, and their designs are characterized by swiftness alike in conception and execution; you have a genius for keeping what you have got, accompanied by a total want of invention, and when forced to act you never go distant enough. ...Further, there is promptitude on their face against procrastination on yours, they are never at house, and you are never from it: for they hope by their absence to extend their acquisitions, you fear by your advance to endanger what you have left behind.

Succinct descriptions spot the work of Livy as well. Here is an instance from his account of the disagreement flanked by the general people and the senators:

- Great was the panic in the municipality, and through mutual fear all was in suspense. The people left in the municipality dreaded the violence of the senators; the senators dreaded the people remaining in the municipality....

And Tacitus gives us with a graphic summary in his *Histories* when he proclaims

- I am entering on the history of a era rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors.

## **UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL EVENTS AND PROCEDURES**

The mainly apparent concern of these early historians was with providing a detailed narrative of what they regarded as central events. Rarely do they pause in their relentless sequencing of events to speculate on the whys. Events are cautiously situated in space and time, but beyond that, there is little obvious reflection on why a scrupulous course of events occurred. Yet, it is possible to discern the perspectives that shaped the narrative. On the one hand, beyond the immediate milieu and its political exigencies, the authors worked with a range of thoughts that were almost certainly shared by mainly literate

men of their times. These incorporated, in some instances, an acceptance of fate, which was often interwoven with an acceptance of the validity of omens as indices of future events. Others worked with a notion of an extensive term steady decline in human fortunes from a golden past. But, in yet other instances, we discover an implicit if not explicit recognition of the importance of the human agent. Occasionally, the framing arguments are provided by an acknowledgement of the fickleness of human fortune, a fairly commonplace sentiment. Consider, for instance, this statement of Herodotus:

- For the municipalities which were formerly great have mainly of them become insignificant; and such as are at present powerful, were weak in the olden time. I shall so discourse equally of both, influenced that human happiness never continues extensive in one stay.

Related to this is a belief in omens and signs. Herodotus declares categorically:

- It mostly happens that there is some warning when great misfortunes are in relation to the to befall a state or nation....

In information, omens and their implications are strewn crossways the pages of his narrative. We will cite presently one instance, a prodigy that was evidently seen by the troops of the Persian ruler Xerxes as he marched towards Greece.

- A mare brought forth a hare. Hereby it was shown plainly enough, that Xerxes would lead forth his host against Greece with mighty pomp and splendor, but, in order to reach again the spot from which he set out, would have to run for his life.

Other authors, such as Thucydides, noted spectacular occurrences without comment. For instance, he mentions the eruption of the volcanic Mount Etna, in Sicily, but creates no effort to correlate this with modern events. Divine wrath is also occasionally invoked. Livy for instance records how a man named Appius instructed public slaves to perform sure ritual functions. He adds:

- The result is wonderful to relate and should create people scrupulous of disturbing the recognized manners of religious solemnities: for though there were at that time twelve branches of the Potitian family, containing thirty grown up persons, yet they were every one, jointly with their offspring, cut off within the year; so that the name of the Potiti became extinct, while the censor Appius also was, by the unrelenting wrath of the gods, some years after deprived of his sight.

Yet, we would be mistaken to dismiss these authors as basically superstitious. The human agent, with all his/her failings and triumphs, is also duly acknowledged. Herodotus, for instance, recognized that the Athenian effort to resist the Persian invasion by creating a formidable fleet was critical. He argues that if the Athenians had opted for peace instead, the rest of Greece would have style under Persian manage sooner or later. He writes:

- If then a man should now say that the Athenians were the saviors of Greece, he would not exceed the truth. For they truly held the scales; and whichever face they espoused necessity have accepted the day....and so, after that to the gods, they repulsed the invader.

As motivating is Thucydides' assessment of the past. He argued that fertile lands were more open to invasion, that Attica I was free from invasions owing to the poverty of its soil, and that hence people from other states came here to seek refuge. At another stage, his explanation of the Peloponnesian war is both succinct and telling:

- The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally mainly kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon I, made war inevitable.

Tacitus rarely allows himself to move beyond the nitty-gritty of the chronicle to speculate on superior issues. On one of these unusual occasions he delineated the origins of legal systems from a state of pristine harmony:



- Mankind in the earliest age existed for a time without a single vicious impulse, without shame or guilt, and, consequently, without punishment and restraints.

Rewards were not needed when everything right was pursued on its own merits; and as men desired nothing against morality, they were debarred from nothing by fear. When though they began to throw off equality, and ambition and violence usurped the lay of self-manage and modesty, despotisms grew up and became perpetual in the middle of several nations. Some from the beginning, or when tired of kings, preferred codes of laws. And elsewhere he speculates on fate and its power on human fortunes

- Indeed, in the middle of the wisest of the ancients and in the middle of their disciples you will discover conflicting theories, several holding the conviction that heaven does not concern itself with the beginning or the end of our life; or, in short, with mankind at all; and that so sorrows are continually the lot of the good, happiness of the wicked; while others, on the contrary, consider that, though there is a harmony flanked by fate and events, yet it is not dependent on wandering stars, but on primary elements, and on a combination of natural causes. Still, they leave us the capability of choosing our life, maintaining that, the choice once made, there is a fixed sequence of events.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What were the aims of the historians discussed in this chapter for writing history?
- Write a note on the style adopted by these historians in their histories.

## CHAPTER 6

### TRADITIONAL CHINESE HISTORIOGRAPHY

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Background
- Development of the historiographical custom
- Historical theories
- Distinctive characteristics of traditional Chinese historiography
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- We will examine some of the main aspects of the great Chinese historiographical tradition. Specifically, we will look at the key factors that conditioned the writing of History in pre-modern China. We will also try to analyze the changes or developments in the historiographical tradition over time, and the main issues of debate among historians in imperial China. Lastly, we will examine some of the most distinctive characteristics of this tradition.

#### BACKGROUND

In this part we will talk about Confucianism which shaped the mental world of the Chinese scholars and helped them in formulating their thoughts in relation to the past. Mainly of these scholars were also officials who were part of the imperial state.

#### Confucianism

Confucianism is the name given to the teachings of Confucius, a 6th century B.C. scholar and petty official of the Chinese state of Lu, beside with their further elaboration by his followers in subsequent centuries. Hardly a

religion in the commonly accepted sense of the term, Confucianism nevertheless exercised the mainly profound power on the spiritual and intellectual custom of the Chinese people, and on their social and political behaviour. For several reasons which we shall now seem into, Confucianism exerted a particularly powerful power on the Chinese historiographical custom.

The prime importance attached to the revise and writing of History in the Chinese custom can to a great extent be attributed to sure key elements of Confucianism. These can be summed up as:

- Humanism
- Reverence for the past
- Emphasis on moral education
- Concern with order in all things

### ***Humanism***

History is all the revise of Man, of the affairs of human beings. In the Confucian world outlook, the central focus was not on God or some divine being, but on Man. How humans related to their fellow beings, how they ordered their affairs in this world, what values they inculcated in themselves and in others was the main concern of Confucius and his philosophy. A deep interest in human affairs naturally provided a firm base for interest in History.

### ***Reverence for the Past***

Even before Confucius, the Chinese had a custom of reverence for the past, as reflected in their practice of a form of ancestor worship from very early times. Though, Confucius gave a philosophical underpinning to this custom. Livelihood in a time of rising political anarchy and flux, Confucius looked on the ancient past as a golden age of order and well-being. He was influenced that in the past could be establish the models of moral, political and social behaviour that would help to end degeneration and chaos and to regenerate society.

### ***Emphasis on Moral Education***

According to Confucianism, the key thing that was needed to uphold harmony and well-being in the society as a whole was the subsistence of truly moral men. Although the dominant trend within Confucianism held that men were inherently good by nature, the real ‘men of virtue’ were expected to actively cultivate the right qualities in themselves through education. How to behave correctly under dissimilar circumstances, how to judge what was right or wrong, was to be learnt primarily through learning and drawing the proper lessons from the actions of men, past and present. Of the Five Classics regarded as essential for all educated men to master, it was no coincidence that two of them, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* were essentially works of History.

### ***Concern with Order***

The revision of History is concerned not only in common with the affairs of Man, but specifically with finding some order and meaning in the method human society has urbanized in excess of time. Those acquainted with the Chinese historiographical custom are usually struck with its passion for order and classification, as well as its attempts to understand cause and effect and to identify recurring patterns in excess of the course of human history. The Confucian concern with establishing and maintaining order in the present therefore also influenced the method the past was conceived.

### **The Imperial Bureaucratic State**

History in China was written by the scholars. There is nothing unusual in relation to that, but what was distinctive in relation to the traditional China was that the scholars were also officials. Even those historians who were not actually holding an official location at the time of writing their histories were either officials in retirement or aspiring officials, as the Sinologist Etienne Balasz once noted. It was Balasz who also tersely

characterized Chinese historiography as “written by officials for officials”. What this meant, in effect, was that History writing reflected the concerns of the imperial state which the scholar-official class served. One significant concern was to uphold the legitimacy of the Emperor and his ruling home or dynasty. The Confucian emphasis on ‘rule by virtue’ meant that it was not enough for an Emperor to base his right to rule on his de facto hold on power. No matter how an Emperor or dynasty came to power, they needed to justify their power at all times according to some well-recognized Confucian norms and conventions. Writing the history of previous dynasties or previous rulers in such a method as to enhance the prestige of the current ruler and his family, and to ensure their glory in succeeding ages, was so a major concern of the historian. The major works of History were usually either sponsored or commissioned by the rulers.

Despite this bias in favor of the current rulers, Chinese historiography, according to Balasz, “often evinced a degree of objectivity that was extraordinary in the circumstances.” The following anecdote recorded in a great 11th century historical work, the *Zizhi tongjian*, illustrates the extent to which official historiographers could, if they were determined, uphold their independence of judgment:

- “The [Tang dynasty] Emperor T’ai-tsung spoke to the Imperial Censor Ch’u Sui-liang, saying: “Since you, Sir, are in charge of the Diaries of Action and Repose [i.e. the edited notes of the emperor’s behaviors maintained by the court historians], may I see what you have written?” Sui-liang replied: “The historiographers record the languages and deeds of the ruler of men, noting down all that is good and bad, in hopes that the ruler will not dare to do evil. But it is unheard of that the ruler himself should see what is written.” The emperor said: “If I do something that is not good, do you then also record it?” Sui-liang replied: “My office is to wield the brush. How could I dare not record it?” The Gentleman of the Yellow Gate [one of the courtiers] Liu Chi added: “Even if Sui-liang failed to record it, everyone else in the empire would”; to which the emperor replied: “True.”

This passage also illustrates another concern of historians, and that was to teach both the rulers and the officials by providing them with information needed for fulfilling their responsibilities, and by drawing lessons from past experience. The very name of the historical work from which this passage has been extracted means “Comprehensive Mirror for the Aid of Government”. As the range of concerns of the State expanded in the later imperial era, so too did the range of matters measured worthy of the historian’s brush. That is why several of the later works of History were truly encyclopedic in size and scope.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CUSTOM**

We will now trace the development of the custom of history-writing in pre-contemporary China in excess of the centuries.

### **The Annals**

The Chinese word “*shi*”, which came to mean “history”, originally referred to the court scribes who recorded astronomical events or other matters measured significant to the rulers. The earliest form of historical writing consisted of brief chronological records of court events maintained by such scribes, which were recognized as “annals”. These date from the Eastern Zhou era. The earliest extant instance is from the state of Lu from where Confucius hailed. The approach of writing followed in the annals was very terse, with presently a bare mention of major events. For instance, in one scrupulous year, 715 BC, the only entry was a single character or word: “Pests”! Based on the annals, historians compiled the completed record of the reign era of individual rulers, recognized as the “Veritable Records”. Fairly uniformly maintained throughout much of China’s history, the Veritable Records are a valuable and reliable source of historical information.

### **The *Historical Records* of Sima Qian**

Undoubtedly the greatest historian of pre-contemporary China was Sima Qian, who wrote his path-breaking “*Historical Records*” in the era of

the Former Han Dynasty. Sima Qian was the first to write a comprehensive history of China from antiquity down to his own times, breaking out of the limitations of the annals format. What was more, he also recognized a format for historical works that was followed by historians down to contemporary times, which can be termed the “~~a~~nnals + monograph + biography” format.

In information, the *Historical Records* had a intricate 5-part structure, but the two key innovations that Sima Qian introduced was to have a part on topical essays or monographs, and one on biographies. The monograph part incorporated subjects like rituals and music, calendars, astrology and astronomy, rivers and canals, and ‘weights and events’. In later centuries, the emphasis in the monograph part slowly shifted absent from somewhat esoteric subjects like rites and rituals, astrology, etc., towards subjects with more practical relevance for officer’s transport, etc. Nevertheless, monographs shaped a key part of approximately every major work of History. Sima Qian also incorporated a part on biographies, covering not presently outstanding individuals, but also groups of people, like ‘honest officials’, ‘despotic officials’, ‘chaste widows’, etc. This is also the part in the historical works in which one can discover accounts of foreign peoples.

Not presently the structure, but the *methodology* used by Sima Qian was adopted by later historians in significant compliments. He began the practice of faithfully reproducing the text of the sources he relied on. And where there were many versions, even differing versions, of the similar subject or event, he reproduced them all, leaving it to the reader to decide on their relative reliability. He also broke absent from the rigid and formal annals approach of writing, and had a vivid approach of his own. One of the greatest tributes to him was paid by the after that great historian after him, Ban Gu, who said in relation to the Grand Historian:

- “He discourses without sounding wordy; he is easy without being rustic. His writing is direct and his facts sound. He does not falsify what is beautiful, nor does he conceal what is evil. So his may be termed a “~~t~~ue record”.”

## **Dynastic Histories**

One of the mainly impressive elements in the whole corpus of Chinese historical writing is the collection of 24 “Average Histories”. Each Average History was basically the history of one scrupulous dynasty and its times, *written by the succeeding dynasty*. The interest of a new dynasty in compiling the history of the preceding dynasty lay, as mentioned earlier, in the need to justify the legitimacy of its own accession to the Imperial Throne. But in the procedure was created a unique historical record of a people and a civilization, extra ordinary for the consistency and comprehensiveness of its coverage.

Although by custom and veneration, the *Historical Records* of Sima Qian are measured the first of the Average Histories, it was not the history of presently one dynasty. The first of the real dynastic histories was the creative work of the 1st century AD historian Ban Gu, beside with his father Ban Biao and his sister Ban Zhao. Ban Gu, livelihood in the Later Han era, sought to write the history of the Former Han dynasty, following essentially the similar format as Sima Qian with minor modifications. His was not initially an officially commissioned work. In information, he was arrested by the Xianzong Emperor when it was accounted that he was privately compiling a work of history! Though, after his enterprising sister interceded on his behalf and arranged for the Emperor to read the partially completed draft, the Emperor was influenced of the importance of the project and in information ordered Ban Gu to complete his work, which he did in excess of the after that 20 years. Later dynastic histories were mostly officially commissioned.

Following the downfall of the Han dynasty in the 3rd century A.D., the Empire many times broke up, and the row of succession to the Imperial Throne was not always clear. The motivating thing is that, even throughout these periods of disunion in China’s history, the custom of writing dynastic histories was maintained in the dissimilar kingdoms that competed with each other for power. That is why there are 24 recognized Average Histories, even though the number of dynasties that ruled in excess of a united Chinese Empire was distant less. Even after the Empire was finally overthrown in 1911, the succeeding Republican government sought to continue the custom of



the Average Histories, and had the history of the last work has usually not been recognized as one of the 24 Average Histories.

### **The Later Imperial Era**

After a gap of more than 350 years following the collapse of the great Han dynasty, China was reunified under the founding emperor of the Sui dynasty in 689 AD. Thereafter, except for a era of 50 years of warfare after the end of the Tang dynasty, the unity of the Chinese empire was maintained in a more or less unbroken fashion for almost one thousand years until the 20th century. This was to have its reflection on the custom of historiography in China. The major works of history were thereafter approximately consistently commissioned by the imperial rulers. They increasingly tended to be the work not of individual scholars, but of groups of historians organized under the imperial Bureau of Historiography. In information, they could be measured as official compilations of historical information. This was the era of the great encyclopedic histories, in which the histories of dissimilar institutions achieved a breadth and comprehensiveness that distant surpassed the treatment of these subjects in the monograph part of the Average Histories. The encyclopedic histories served the need of scholars and officials in an era in which the range and complexity of state action had greatly increased. The rising importance in this era of the competitive civil service examinations, as the main route to enter officialdom, also increased the usefulness to scholars of works that gathered all relevant information on a scrupulous subject in one lay.

Despite the ponderous and somewhat bureaucratic nature of much of the work on History in the later imperial era, the Tang and particularly the Song periods were also a era of intellectual inquiry in the field of historiography. Scholars and intellectuals sought to challenge some of the formalism and rigidity in history writing and to break new ground. The first work of critical historiography in China was that of the Tang dynasty scholar Liu Zhiji. He wrote a book, described basically *On History*, which directly

addressed the question of how history was and should be written. The great historian of the Song era, Sima Guang, squarely confronted the question of how to deal with the problem of divergence of proof when writing history. Although he did not directly challenge the dynastic history format, he supervised to break out of its limitations in writing his *Comprehensive Mirror for the Aid of Government*. This monumental work provided a chronological explanation of 1362 years of China's history, from 403 BC till 959 AD, and was one of the mainly profoundly influential works of history of the later imperial era. Other historians also directly questioned the usefulness of breaking up history into dynastic chunks, and even felt that Sima Guang had not gone distant enough in demanding it. They sought to fill the gaps by writing topical histories and institutional histories that did not observe the conventional periodisation based on dynasties.

Historians of the Song era, which saw a revival of the prestige of Confucianism after its partial eclipse throughout the heyday of Buddhism in China, were particularly concerned with understanding the underlying order of the past and with drawing the correct moral lessons from history. This was well articulated by Lu Ziqian, who wrote:

- –Mainly people, when they look at history, basically seem at periods of order and realize that they are ordered, periods of disorder and recognize their disorder, observe one information and know no more than that one information. But is this real observation of history? You should picture yourself actually in the situation, observe which things are profitable and which dangerous, and note the misfortunes and ills of the times. Shut the book and think for yourself. Imagine that you are facing these several facts and then decide what you think ought to be done. If you seem at history in this method, then your learning will augment and your intelligence improves. Then you will get real profit from your reading.”

After the Song era, we do not discover the similar breadth of intellectual inquiry in the middle of historians of imperial China. Nevertheless, the custom of assiduously and meticulously writing history and of compiling

and classifying historical works sustained. In scrupulous, the use of history and historical analogy to attempt and understand the troubles of the day and to arrive at the right solutions to these troubles remained a major preoccupation of Chinese scholars and intellectuals right till contemporary times.

## **HISTORICAL THEORIES**

The writing of history always involves some theoretical framework or the other. Even those historians who claim complete neutrality take recourse to common principles to organize their material. History-writing in pre-contemporary China was no exception. Here we will talk about some of the theoretical bases of traditional Chinese historiography.

### **Dynastic Cycle**

Traditional historiography was dominated by the concept of the dynastic cycle. According to Chinese custom, the first ruling family of China was the Xia, who was overthrown by the Shang, who was replaced in turn by the Zhou, and so on. As the Chinese saw it, the rise and fall of dynasties followed a clearly defined pattern. The dynastic cycle theory proved useful to traditional historians in two methods. Firstly, it allowed them to deal with their past in manageable chunks. Few dynasties lasted more than 300 years, while some lasted presently a few decades. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the dynastic cycle accorded well with the moral objectives of history writing. The rise and fall of dynasties was attributed to the personal moral qualities of the individual rulers. Invariably a dynasty's founding ruler or rulers were presented as men of great wisdom and skill, who put an end to disorder and laid the foundations for a era of common wellbeing. The last rulers were portrayed as weak and ineffective individuals, given to indulging themselves and letting the affairs of state slide into chaos. Hence, the founder of the *current* dynasty appeared in a positive light as someone who put an end to the chaos and degeneration. He was measured to have received the "Mandate of Heaven" to rule from his unworthy precursors. And so the cycle went on. It

was a not so subtle warning to rulers to be conscientious in their duties, and to follow accepted conventions and norms of statecraft, so as not to lose their ~~M~~Mandate of Heaven“ to some challenger.

According to Fairbank, the dynastic cycle proved to be ~~a~~ major block to the understanding of the fundamental dynamics of Chinese history”. In focusing on only short-term changes, it obscured the more fundamental and extensive-term changes that were taking lay in Chinese society. By emphasizing the repetitiveness of history, it obscured and denied the possibility of real change. It kept statesmen and scholars chained to the past, looking for clues to solving the dilemmas of the present in the ages gone by, because it was whispered that every current problem had some precedent in earlier epochs. This was to produce a crippling mind-set when China was confronted with spectacularly new and unprecedented troubles, particularly in the 19th century. At the similar time, Fairbank concedes, the dynastic cycle did have a type of limited usefulness, particularly in showing how, within the great dynastic periods, administrative and fiscal weakness repeatedly interacted with challenges from foreign peoples to make periods of crisis, upheaval, and foreign conquest.

### **‘Continuous History’**

The dynastic cycle framework had its critics even in traditional China. As mentioned earlier, particularly throughout the Tang and Song periods historians opposed its limitations, and sought to break out of it. Some like Sima Guang did not openly discard the dynastic framework, but the scope of his work transcended any one dynasty. Others like Zheng Qiao directly criticized the venerable historian Ban Gu for having started the procedure of writing dynastic histories, and openly espoused the notion of ~~e~~continuous history”. Yuan Shu inaugurated the way of taking up one topic and writing in relation to the it ~~f~~from beginning to end” without observing the limitations imposed by the dynastic framework. Ma Duanlin tried to strike a compromise by suggesting that while it could create sense to deal with political history in conditions of the dynastic framework, the similar could not be applied to the

history of institutions. “To understand the reasons for the gradual growth and relative importance of institutions in each era,” he wrote, “you necessarily create a comprehensive and relative revise of them from their beginnings to their ends and in this method attempt to grasp their development; otherwise you will encounter serious difficulties.” In common, one could say that later histories followed his approach, strictly following the dynastic principle in dealing with political growths, but adopting a more comprehensive treatment when it came to writing institutional history.

## **DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The Chinese historiographical custom contained both elements that were similar to other great traditions of writing history, as well as some characteristics that were quite unique and closely bound up with the distinctive characteristics of Chinese civilization as a whole. We can summarize the main characteristics of this custom as follows.

### **Official History**

Chinese historiography was predominantly official historiography. This implies many things. Firstly, it was written approximately exclusively by officials. Secondly, it was usually commissioned or sponsored by the rulers, particularly after the initial era. There were some exceptions to the rule. But “private history”, while it definitely lived and even enjoyed a sure respectability, never challenged the dominance of officially written history. Third, the content of historical writing mainly reflected the concerns of management, and more narrowly those of the ruling house and emperor. Fourth, the main sources on which history writing was based were official documents, to which the historians had relatively easy access since they themselves were officials. Sources so significant to historians in other societies, such as land deeds, private contracts, litigation records, etc., were rarely used by traditional Chinese historians.

## **Normative History**

Historiography was essentially normative, meaning that it was meant to serve as a guide to those who read it. We have already seen that the dynastic cycle pattern was meant to convey a message to later rulers in relation to the how they should rule. Though, the lessons were not presently for the emperors. Every conscientious official faced with any problem in his region, whether in relation to the how to deal with troublesome foreigners or how to organize grain transport or how to curb banditry or rebellion, was expected to seem into history to see how his precursors had dealt with such troubles. It was not presently information that was sought in the books of history, but models of conscientiousness, moral uprightness, and wisdom in the languages and deeds of former rulers and officials, that could educate and inspire the scholars and officials of the day. A clever official could also seek to justify his actions to his superiors or emperor by quoting precedent.

## **Average Format**

The main works of history followed a extraordinarily constant format. The dynastic histories and the “comprehensive histories” in excess of the centuries contained on the whole extraordinarily similar parts and sub-parts. This has made it easier for later historians and scholars to navigate through the maze of information contained in them. A historian today, for instance, doing research on a scrupulous era of China’s past or a scrupulous institution would be able to zero in on the relevant parts fairly quickly.

## **Objectivity and Integrity**

From the time of the Grand Historian Sima Qian, it has been measured the duty of the historian to record the facts as objectively as possible. This is one of the extra ordinary paradoxes of traditional Chinese historiography, considering that the emphasis on official history and normative history would

not be expected to support objectivity in historical writing. Nevertheless, no less authoritative a scholar than Charles Gardner has said that “an assumption of complete objectivity underlies the whole Chinese conception of historical writing.” The historian’s own individual personality and opinions were not meant to intrude into the material he was recording. Where the historian has seen fit to create his own, usually brief, comments, these are usually clearly demarcated from the rest of the text. In addition, the need to be true to his sources has meant that the very often the historian, rather than paraphrasing or rewriting something in his own languages, would instead faithfully reproduce verbatim the passages from the texts on which his work was based. Distant from being measured a form of plagiarism, this was measured to be the mainly natural and logical way of historical reconstruction. This way resulted in the distinctive “cut-and-paste” appearance of average Chinese historical works, which often appear to be careful compilations or arrangements of previous writings rather than original works. While the “cut-and-paste” format occasionally creates for tiresome and lengthy reading, it has one major advantage. Several works, particularly from the early era of China’s history, which are no longer extant, are still not totally lost to us because extensive parts are to be establish cited accurately in later, preserved, works of history.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- How did Confucianism influence the writing of history in ancient China?
- Discuss the development of historical writing in pre-modern China.
- Write a note on the theories involved in writing of history in pre-modern China.
- What were the distinctive features of traditional Chinese historiography?

## CHAPTER 7

### HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRADITIONS IN EARLY INDIA

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Earliest ‘histories’: the Vedic *Danastutis*
- Are the epics historical narratives?
- Puranic genealogies and what they tell us
- Courtly traditions: *Prasastis*
- Courtly traditions: *Charitas*
- A poet / historian: Kalhana and the *Rajtarangini*
- Other traditions of historical writing
- Dating systems
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the earliest ‘histories’: the Vedic *Danastutis*
- Understand the Puranic Genealogies and what they tell us
- Understand the courtly traditions
- Understand the dating systems

#### EARLIEST ‘HISTORIES’: THE VEDIC *DANASTUTIS*

If we understand histories as recording events that were regarded as important by those who chronicled them, some of the earliest examples of these approach from the *Rgveda*. These contain verses that were recognized as *danastutis*. These were composed by the recipients, who were priests, and usually mention the name of the donor. Here is a typical instance. These verses are from the second hymn of the eighth mandala or book of the *Rgveda*:

- Skilled is Yadu’s son in giving valuable wealth, he who is rich in herds of cattle.
- May he, Asanga’s son, Svanadratha, obtain all joy and happiness.



- Asanga, the son of Playoga, has surpassed others, by giving ten thousand.
- I have got ten bright colored oxen....

The recipient acknowledges the gifts he receives and prays for the well-being of the donor. Such acknowledgments or proclamations were a part of major rituals such as the *asvamedha* as well. As part of the ritual, the sacrificial horse was let loose to wander for a year. Throughout that era, a brahmana priest was expected to sing in relation to the generosity of the patron every morning, while a ksatriya was to sing in relation to the his war-like exploits every evening. It is likely that several of the stories that were later compiled in the epics and the Puranas urbanized out of such narrative practices.

It is perhaps worth reflecting on what would get recorded and why. Only what was regarded as positive or desirable from the point of view of the brahmana or the ksatriya would discover a lay in such eulogies. Other behaviors, or failures, would tend to be glossed in excess of or even obliterated from memory. We may also note that recalling the generosity and prowess of the patron was not meant to be a easy, objective recounting, but was in information meant to ensure that the patron would continue to live up to expectations. As such, these histories were related to a context of patronage.

## **ARE THE EPICS HISTORICAL NARRATIVES?**

Traditionally, the *Mahabharata* is recognized as an *itihasa* while the *Ramayana* is regarded as a *mahakavya*. Each of these texts has a extensive and complicated history. The kernel of the stories contained in the epics may date back to the early centuries of the 1st millennium BCE, but the texts were finally written down much later. As such, the texts have undergone alterations and additions in excess of many centuries. The Kurus and Pancalas in common are mentioned in later Vedic literature. While both these lineages were significant in the *Mahabharata*, references to specific personages mentioned in the epic are relatively sparse in the Vedic corpus. References to the locale of the *Ramayana*, Kosala and Videha, are even fewer, and, once

again, the principal characters of the epic hardly figure in later Vedic literature. Archaeological excavations and explorations indicate that sites such as Hastinapura and Indraprastha and Ayodhya were small, pre-urban settlements throughout this era.

The literal historicity of the events depicted in the epics is unlikely to be recognized. Nevertheless, the texts can and have been analyzed in conditions of the genre that they symbolize. Significantly, both epics contain genealogies. The *Mahabharata* contains the genealogies of the lunar lineage, while the *Ramayana* contains the genealogy of the solar lineage. Many ruling families in the early medieval era traced descent from these lineages. While the genealogies may not be literally true, they are significant for what they suggest in relation to the socio-political procedures.

## **PURANIC GENEALOGIES AND WHAT THEY TELL US**

By the middle of the 1st millennium CE, another category of literature, the Puranas, was written down. Like the epics, the antecedents of the Puranas can be traced back for many centuries. And as in the case of the *Mahabharata*, a social group recognized as the *sutas* evidently played a significant role in the composition, compilation, and transmission of at least some of the narratives that were incorporated in the Puranas. The *sutas* are often regarded as bards. They were significant in early states, so much so that they are listed amongst the “jewels” or principal supporters of the raja in the later Vedic texts. They were expected to act as messengers of the king, accompany him in battle, and uphold as well as narrate stories in relation to the his exploits. Though, *sutas* are also mentioned as low status people in the Dharmasastras such as the *Manusmrti*. This would suggest that at least some people in society, perhaps the brahmanas, were contesting the claims of the *sutas* to be both secure to the king and transmitters of royal lore. And when the epics and Puranas were finally written down, the authors were recognized as brahmanas rather than as *sutas*.

We discover two or three kinds of genealogies in the Puranas. The first comprises lineages of sages. Such lineages, which perhaps served as markers of legitimate transmission of knowledge, are established in some of the

Upanishads and Dharmasastras as well. The other genealogies are those of rulers. These in turn are divided into two categories, those that pre-date the onset of the *Kaliyuga* and those of rulers who are post- *Kaliyuga*. The first category, delineating the original solar and lunar lineages, comprises the heroes of the epics. In information, the war that constitutes the central event of the *Mahabharata* is recognized as marking the turning point in human history, and the beginning of an age of decline, i.e. the *Kaliyuga*. The genealogy of the second category of rulers, clearly lesser mortals, is marked by an motivating characteristic. All these genealogies, which in some cases run till in relation to the 5th century CE, are constructed in the future tense. For instance, a verse in relation to the Gupta rulers, who ruled in north India from c. 4th century CE, runs as follows:

- Kings born of the Gupta family will enjoy all these territories: viz. Prayaga on the Ganga, Saketa, and Magadha.

Why were these genealogies compiled, and why did they take such a curious form? There are no easy answers. It is likely that the final compilation was undertaken throughout the time of the Gupta rulers, as later rulers are usually not mentioned. Was the future tense adopted so as to suggest that these rulers were destined to rule, and was this then a possible strategy for legitimating? It is likely that this would have also created an illusion of stability and permanence that may have been valuable in a fluid political situation. What is motivating is that several of the rulers mentioned in the Puranic genealogies are recognized from other sources such as inscriptions and coins as well. At the similar time, not all rulers who are recognized from other sources discover lay in these genealogies. Clearly, traditions of recording the names of rulers as well as the duration of their reigns were widely prevalent, and were more or less systematized within the Puranic custom.

It has been suggested that genealogies become particularly significant throughout sure historical moments, when attempts are made to either contest or consolidate power. Invoking genealogies at such moments may become a means of asserting status, which may be especially significant when these claims are somewhat tenuous. Claims to stability, implicit in invoking lineage

identities, are also particularly important when there are major possessions that are accumulated and handed down from one generation to the after that. These possessions could contain land, and in the ultimate analysis, kingdoms. What is also significant is to focus on the principles of inclusion and exclusion that underlie genealogies. We can look at whether kinship is traced bilaterally or is matrilineal or matrilineal. We can also look at the positions assigned to elder and younger brothers in these texts. Therefore the genealogies often give information in relation to the type of kinship networks that were valorized. What is apparent then is that such genealogies need not be literally true. Nevertheless, insofar as they appeal to selected events and ancestors in the past, they allow us to speculate on the circumstances in which such strategies of drawing on or even constructing a mythical past may have been significant.

### **COURTLY TRADITIONS: *PRASASTIS***

Much of the literature we have been considering so distant was written in relatively easy Sanskrit verse. Although access to Sanskrit learning was limited, the Puranas and the epics contain provisions that suggest that these could and almost certainly were read out to all categories of people, including women and *sudras*, who were otherwise denied access to Sanskrit texts. In other languages, there were sure types of ‘\_histories’ that were meant to be accessible to all parts of society. These were not only meant to give an understanding in relation to the past, but were also almost certainly visualized as a means of disseminating information in relation to the social norms. In a sense, these agendas were complementary.

There were at the similar time, other categories of texts that were almost certainly meant for circulation amongst a more restricted, elite audience. These were associated with the royal court, and were usually written in ornate Sanskrit, with prolific use of similes, metaphors, and other strategies to render the text weighty. Examples of these texts are establish in *prasastis* or eulogistic inscriptions as well as in *caritas*. While some of the earliest examples of *prasastis* are in Prakrit, the best-recognized examples are in Sanskrit. Such inscriptions become particularly general from c. 4th century CE. These were often self-governing inscriptions, but could also be part of

votive inscriptions, commemorating the generosity of the royal donor. Perhaps amongst the best-recognized of such *prasastis* is Samudragupta's Prayaga prasasti, also recognized as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. It was composed by Harisena, who evidently was a skilled poet, separately from holding many offices. The inscription describes how the ruler was chosen by his father, his numerous exploits, and the strategies whereby he won the allegiance of rulers of distant lands, his heroic qualities, and his boundless scholarship. In short, the ruler is idealized as an all-rounder, someone who excelled in presently in relation to the everything. It is likely that some of the descriptions of the ruler's exploits are true. Nonetheless, the element of poetic exaggeration is also more than apparent. To cite presently one instance: the ruler's body was described as having become even more handsome as it was adorned with the wounds caused by axes, arrows, spikes, spears, darts, swords, clubs, javelins and other weapons. Such elaborate descriptions, couched in ornate Sanskrit, were almost certainly meant to impress the ruling elite. While the inscription was literally visible, its contents would almost certainly have been accessible only to a relatively limited audience.

Another well-known *prasasti* is that of Pulakesin II, the Calukya ruler of the 7th century CE. The poet who composed this scrupulous *prasasti*, Ravikirti, compared his skills to those of Kalidasa and Bharavi. Once again, we have an account of Pulakesin's accession to the throne, and his military exploits, which incorporated pushing back the modern ruler of north India, Harsa, when he attempted to cross the Vindhyas. Ravikirti's composition is part of a votive inscription that also records how the poet donated a home for a Jaina teacher.

### **COURTLY TRADITIONS: *CHARITAS***

Another genre of text associated primarily with the courts was the *charita*. These were meant to be accounts of the lives and achievements of great men.<sup>4</sup> Mainly of the surviving examples of *charitas* are in Sanskrit, and, like the *prasastis*, the approach of these compositions is very ornate. Given the length of these texts, it appears likely that these were composed entirely for elite consumption. Somewhat paradoxically, one of the earliest *charitas* that

survive is the *Buddhacharita*, composed by Asvaghosa. Although purporting to be the life of a world renouncer, the author dwells at length on the luxuries of courtly life, including elaborate descriptions of women. It is possible that this was meant to serve as a representation of life at the Kusana court. Perhaps the best-recognized of the *charita* genre is the *Harsacharita*, composed by Banabhatta. This is an explanation of the early years of Harsa's reign. Bana's composition contains some of the mainly intricate prose sentences in Sanskrit literature, cautiously crafted so as to lend an aura of exclusiveness to the ruler who was eulogized. The account of Harsa's feet is presently one instance of this approach:

- His feet were very red as if with wrath at insubordinate kings, and they shed a bright ruby light on the crowded crests of the prostrate monarchs, and caused a sunset of all the fierce luminaries of war and poured streams of honey from the flowers of the crest garlands of the local kings, and were never even for a moment unattended, as by the heads of slain enemies, by swarms of bees which fluttered bewildered by the sweet odor of the chaplets on the heads of all the feudal chiefs.....

The writers of *charitas* adopted other strategies as well. We discover that Sandhyakaranandin, a poet who eulogized the Pala ruler Rama Pala of eastern India, composed the *Ramacharita* in such a method that each verse could be interpreted as referring either to the life of the epic hero or to that of his patron. It is likely that both *prasastis* and *charitas* were especially valuable in situations where rulers were somewhat insecure. In the case of all the four rulers we have mentioned, it is apparent that their claims to the throne did not rest on primogeniture. In Samudragupta's case Harisena states that he was chosen by his father, ignoring the claims of rivals. Pulakesin was the nephew of his predecessor. Harsa succeeded to the throne on the sudden death of his elder brother, and claimed the kingdom of his deceased brother-in-law as well. Rama Pala, too, had no direct claim to the throne. It is possible that these elaborate texts were to some extent visualized as strategies for exalting rulers who might otherwise have been vulnerable.

## **A POET / HISTORIAN: KALHANA AND THE *RAJTARANGINI***

It is often said that the only truly historical work produced in ancient India was the *Rajatarangini*, or the river of kings, authored by Kalhana. The *Rajatarangini* is, at one stage, a history of Kashmir since its inception the land from primeval waters. It consists of eight books or *tarangas*, and is composed in verse.

The first three *tarangas* deal with the history of the region till the 7th century CE, *tarangas* 4 to 6 carry the story forward till the 11th century, while the last two *tarangas* deal with the 12th century. What is motivating is to see how the tone of the narrative changes: in the first part, the author, who was a brahmana, the son of a minister, and a learned Sanskrit scholar, paints a picture of what, from his point of view, was an ideal world, one in which sons succeeded fathers, and in which the brahmanical norms of Varna and gender hierarchies were strictly followed. Though, in the after that two parts, he documents in detail how these norms were violated. Amongst the “horrors” according to Kalhana is the phenomenon of women rulers. As is obvious, not all present-day readers will share Kalhana’s perspective, even as they might derive information from his writing. What creates Kalhana’s work unique is that he mentions at the outset the sources he consulted. These incorporated *sasanas* or royal proclamations pertaining to religious endowments, *prasastis* or eulogies, and the *sastras*:

- By the inspection of ordinances of former kings relating to religious foundations and grants, laudatory inscriptions, as well as written records, all wearisome error has been set at rest.

He also attempts to distinguish flanked by the plausible and the fantastic, and offers explanations for changes in fortune. These are, more often than not, in conditions of invoking fate, whose methods, according to the author, were mysterious. Kalhana is scathing in his critique of earlier writers, whose works, according to him, were full of errors and lacked approach. Unluckily, none of the works of his precursors have survived, so we have no means of assessing his claims. He himself set a precedent that was emulated

by later writers, who sustained his narrative down to the times of the sultans of Kashmir.

Kalhana regarded himself as a poet. Ideally, according to him, a poet was supposed to be endowed with divine insight, and was approximately as powerful as Prajapati, the god recognized as the creator within the brahmanical custom. He also envisaged his work as a didactic text, meant especially for the education of kings. There is an emphasis on trying to offer impartial judgments, and to cultivate a sense of detachment. As a poet, moreover, Kalhana functioned within the Sanskrit custom according to which every composition was expected to have a dominant *rasa*. The *rasa* he valorized was the *santa rasa*, although there are parts where the heroic tone dominates. There are also parts where the horrors of war and the destruction it leaves in its trail are graphically highlighted. Interestingly, although Kalhana was clearly secure to the court, he was not the court poet.

## **OTHER TRADITIONS OF HISTORICAL WRITING**

While mainly traditions of historical writing were related to kings, other traditions urbanized approximately religious institutions. These incorporated the Buddhist, Jaina, and brahmanical institutions. Of these, the early Buddhist custom is perhaps the best-recognized at present. Buddhist traditions record the convening of three Buddhist councils, where early Buddhist doctrines and teachings were recorded. Slowly, as the monastic order was consolidated, more systematic records were kept, and a system of chronology, marking years in conditions of the *mahaparinirvana* or the death of the Buddha, was evolved. Maintaining such records almost certainly became more significant as monasteries became rich institutions, getting endowments of villages, lands, and other goods, as well as cash, from benefactors including kings. Such chronicles were best preserved in Sri Lanka, where there was a secure bonding flanked by the state and the monasteries. This connection was documented in texts such as the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*.

## **DATING SYSTEMS**



Chronologies are crucial to history, and it is in this context that it is worth examining the diversities of dating systems that were used in early India. One of the earliest systems to be documented, and one that remained popular for many centuries, was the use of regional years. This was a system whereby kings took the first year when they began ruling as a starting point, counting years of their rule in conditions of this beginning. This was used by the Mauryan emperor Asoka, for instance. He used dates derived from the time of his *abhiseka*. We learn from his thirteenth major rock edict that he attacked Kalinga eight years after he had been installed as king.

In other instances, dynastic eras were urbanized. Perhaps the best-recognized instance of this is provided by the era of the Guptas. This was projected as beginning from c. 320 CE, the date assigned to the first significant Gupta ruler, Chandragupta I. Interestingly, the use of the era began with retrospective effect, from the time of Chandragupta II, in relation to the 80 years after the date from which it was supposed to begin. Clearly, it was only after they had consolidated their power that the Gupta rulers thought it fit to begin an era, pushing back the antiquity of their claims to power as distant back as possible. Other eras that have endured for in relation to the two millennia are the Vikrama era and the Saka era. Both of these eras were almost certainly of royal origin, but there is little or no consensus concerning who the kings in question were. The Vikrama era is particularly problematic from this point of view, as many kings in early India adopted the title of *vikramaditya*, and we have no means of determining which one amongst these initiated the era which is still in use. The Saka era may spot the beginning of the reign of Kaniska, arguably the mainly illustrious of the Kusana rulers. Though, it is worth remembering that the Kusanas and Sakas were dissimilar groups of Central Asian peoples. What is possible is that the term Saka was used as a generic term for foreigners, and an era that may have been begun by the Kusanas came to be recognized by this name.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- Discuss the tradition of Puranic genealogies.

- Write a note on the dating systems used by various dynasties in early India.
- Write notes on the following :
  - Vedic Danastutis
  - Charitas
  - Prasastis

## CHAPTER 8

### MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY – WESTERN

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Christian historiography
- Changing concept of time and historiography
- Historians and their works
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the Christian historiography.
- Understand the changing concept of time and historiography.
- Explain the medieval historians and their works

#### CHRISTIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The oldest Christian histories were universal histories written for the easy purpose of satisfying the demand to integrate Biblical history with exactness into an ancient chronology, involving a vast pre-Christian past and spread in excess of several eras. Modern political growths in Europe principally that of the formation of vast feudal lordships and monarchies also cast their shadows in excess of the writing of history. Historiography, therefore also became charged with the task of establishing a concurrence flanked by these several Christian and secular traditions. Therefore, Meister Eckhart, while locating Christ as the centre of salvation history also used the new formations of political power as his reference points. Otto of Freising composed his history of the world in 1146, usually described *The Two Municipalities*. Though he adopted a theological concept of history, he also concluded each book with a narrative of political change in history thereby indicating the transitoriness of the world. This fluid sense of chronological boundaries is also visible in the chronicles of the high Middle Ages. Here two chronological systems

dominated: the incarnation era and the registering of reigns and pontificates, and numerous chroniclers strove to set up a factual as well as a narrative unity of these elements. This resulted in a belief in the natural changeability and the ephemeral nature of history as such, because all earthly things were ruled by time. For the medieval chroniclers, historical change was primarily a cycle of growth and decay of regents and kingdoms.

The medieval concept of the past therefore was determined by an very peculiar, ambiguous, even paradoxical, mixture of belief in historical progression on the one hand and its immutability on the other, of an epochal change and at the similar time a stability of times and historical situations. In the final analysis, it lacked a sense of the truly historical characterization of the past. Though, owing to its emphasis on verifiability of the chronological arrangement, this understanding cannot be classified as being truly timeless, but in several methods it nevertheless lacked a sense of assigning a specific peculiarity to each passing epoch. The past was perceived as a development corresponding to the *saeculum*, the earthly time, with an unchanging character and essence. This engendered a widespread tendency to order historical events according to their respective time which was in no method seen as contradictory to the opposing tendency to detach the subject matter of the similar events from their chronological order. Concerning the medieval concept of the past, time was an essential part of earthly subsistence, yet at the similar time it was a symbol of the eternal world. Historiographical thinking was combined with the theological needs of history. Though, the information that change occurred was also undeniable. Even in the Bible the coming and going of three world-empires had been described, and, since St Augustine no one would deny the changes that had occurred or were going to happen in consequence of the advent of Christianity. Also, St Augustine had given a perfectly acceptable explanation for historical change. He had argued that only God had perfect ever-lasting stability, whereas change in the temporal world was the consequence of the very imperfection of human subsistence.

The Bible in the middle ages was seen not basically as a literal account of the unfolding of a Christian religion, but also as a chronicle of a succession of spiritual parts. The diverse texts of the Christian custom were unified in the

Bible, therefore giving it a coherent history in a historiographical frame of reference which was blended with a unified system of symbolisms, so uniting history with custom and representation. The acceptance of Catholicism strengthened this historical homogenization, for one of its core elements was its character of being a universal religion which had little space for the particularist rules, norms, and values of specific groups. The earliest Christian historical works were chronologies intended to link events from scripture with political events, and to make a universal history of humanity. Though the belief in the divine origin of the rulers militated against fundamental principles of Christian theological doctrine, the past was constituted by the narratives which were written down in the Holy Scriptures, and assigned no value to the particularistic traditions which were transmitted within political groups. Also, the Christian Church enforced the rule that believers in the Christian faith had to respect the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate source of both custom as well as justice. Church history therefore could now become universal history.

## **CHANGING CONCEPT OF TIME AND HISTORIOGRAPHY**

A conscious concept of time was an essential element in every historiographical work of the middle ages. From the deep interpenetration which lived flanked by theology and history in the middle ages, time became purely temporal they subsistence because it was directly linked with creation and the essence of having been created by the Creator. Therefore, it was situated in opposition to eternity, which, as God's time, was timeless and unmoving. This temporality of earthly time was described in the early twelfth century as a shadow of eternity; it has begun with the world and will end with the world. Such a clear separation flanked by God's time and temporal time was crucial in developing the notions of chronology, as a measurable sequence of the passage of time in history. Even more significant was the methodological connection— time was henceforth a necessary constitutive element of historiography. In the prologue of his chronicle, Hugh of Saint Victor named three scrupulous circumstances of historical facts: The knowledge of facts particularly depends on three characteristics: the persons by whom they have been done, the places times when they have been done.

To this can be added the notion of action. A typical medieval narrative was determined by these four elements. So lay, time, and history shaped not only the contents of medieval encyclopedias, but that some chronicles started with time tables or even with theoretical discussions on time. In medieval perception, chronicles were seen as *rerum gestarum* and, consequently, *series temporum*.

According to the modern perceptions, there were five specific reckonings of historical time which delimited the subject of history from other genres:

- By the choice of its facts, in the sense that any author had to choose those which were worth remembering, and this made historiography separate;
- By claiming to recollect the truth, it was distinguished from fiction;
- By its examination of the past and, especially, the origins, it was separated from the prophecies in relation to the future;
- By its intention to hand down the corpus of recognized facts of the past to posterity, it was constituted as historiography;
- By its specific manner of representation, the chronological order, it acquired its proper character.

It is important that this sense of time urbanized quite early in the west European traditions of history-writing. One of the principal moving spirits behind this novel reckoning of time and its historiographical significance was the Venerable Bede. Once again, the root of this shift lay in the attempts to historicize the Bible. Extraordinarily, Bede, who had used the word *chronica* as the title for his previous writings on the Biblical traditions, in 731 in entitling his work Ecclesiastical History of the English People, chose the conventional word *historia* in order to denote his synthetic method of commemorating the past. In doing so Bede was drawing from a pre-Christian custom, from Latin where the word *historia* had meant a secular explanation of the past compiled from a diversity of sources and describing events of the human world set separately from the divine world. Though, Bede expanded

the range of the meaning of *historia* by adding a single major qualifying attribute which was to be the cornerstone of medieval European historiography, namely, that his *historia* was to be an ecclesiastical one, therefore, integrating the explanation of the history of the Church into the universalism represented in Biblical traditions. This last purpose of history was always to be forefront in his mind, at least alongside the need to be accurate of which he was so conscious. Additionally, he became the first historian to use the AD, that is, from Christ's birth, chronology and in doing so set the average for historiographical time reckoning in Europe. This way was adapted into common use through the popularity of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the two works on chronology.

This also enabled him to date the change from Roman universal rule in excess of Britain to the establishment of local rulers through a chronology that was not tied to the Roman administrative institutions but focused on Christ. At a more fundamental stage, Bede tried to weigh the relative evidential value of the many sources accessible to him, thereby initiating a quiet methodological departure from the group-centered oral traditions of modern historical thinking. Orally transmitted traditions had retained their validity and authenticity without fundamental change by virtue of being handed down from generation to generation in particularist groups. In contrast, Bede, like the historians of late Antiquity, committed himself to the writing and publication of a text which he expected to be communicated through reading and copying and whose reception, by virtue of these communicative techniques, would no longer be confined to one particularist group.

## **HISTORIANS AND THEIR WORKS**

As in antiquity, the best medieval works were accounts of modern history by men who had participated in the events that they were describing. It is, though, very important that some of the writers that are prized mainly highly today survive in only very few manuscripts and were presumably not appreciated by mainly of their contemporaries. One such work was the *Historia Pontificalis* covering the era 1148- 52, of John of Salisbury, one of the mainly accomplished scholars of his age, who was writing in relation to

the era when he was in the papal service. In 12th-century Europe secular history writing appeared, shown in the work of Geoffroi de Villehardouin, and the chronicles of Jean sire de Joinville, Jean Froissart, and Philippe de Comines in successive centuries.

Another characteristic of medieval historical writing in Europe was that it seemed perennially poised at the crossroads flanked by eschatological aspirations of a universal Christendom and the objective circumstances of the real world. It was this disagreement which forced another extra ordinary modern chronicler, Bishop Otto of Freising, half brother to the then reigning King Conrad III, to present a rather gloomy narrative of human history from the expulsion from paradise up to his own times. The History of the Two Municipalities, sometimes also referred to as Chronica, provided an explanation of history in seven books, to which Otto added a speculative eighth book on the future of the Municipality of God when there would be no history. Otto completed his work in 1146, the year in which the abortive Second Crusade began and in which he, his nephew, and the future Emperor Frederick, as well as King Conrad, took part. Otto's narrative abounded with laments in relation to the volatility of empires which he felt to be rising throughout his own time. This feeling led Otto to consider that he and his contemporaries was livelihood at the end of times; with the end of the world as the mainly fundamental of all changes approaching. And although he credited human actors with some degree of freedom of promoting or resisting change, he insisted that transitoriness had been divinely ordained and was so an unalterable excellence of human subsistence. In this method, chronology itself became a means of demonstrating the changeability of the past and the circumstances of life in the present before the coming of the Municipality of God.

In this fashion, world history came to be recognized as a computable, finite, yet unstable entity under the manage of change in the historiographical traditions of medieval Europe. But, this view of world history soon came under stress. Two factors caused the stress: first, there was the manifestly continuous subsistence of the world despite the eschatological belief that the predicted end of the world was secure; and second, there was the reception in



the Occident, throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of the Aristotelian concept of time as an endless procedure. The first factor was enhanced by the use of the AD chronology itself, which helped to deal historiographically with the institutional discontinuities of the Roman Empire. Hence it was ultimately in disagreement with the eschatological belief in the finiteness of the subsistence of the world as an earthly municipality. The Aristotelian definition of time, came to be reintroduced in the Occident through the Arab translations of Aristotle's original works from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. According to the Aristotelian concept, time was regarded as the mover of all things, elevated above all other divine creations. In consequence of the spread of this concept of time, it became hard to conceive subsistence without time, even beyond Judgment Day. In other languages, if time was prior to everything else, subsistence became inconceivable outside of or beyond time and thinking in relation to the a world without change became subject to fairy tales and mere speculation.

Memory was an significant repository of historical traditions in medieval Europe. In this the cult of saints and the veneration of ancestors occupied a very significant lay. The earliest political groups in early medieval Europe emphasized custom in their commemoration of the past. In several of these political groups, rulers were involved in the procedure of passing on to future generations the inherited traditions which contained norms of behaviour as well as conventional group-related attitudes and perceptions. So oral narratives were and were whispered to contain records of the past, whose reliability and authenticity was to be confirmed by the social status of the person narrating them. So these traditions could transmit sanctioned rules, norms, and values which, in turn, authoritatively shaped the attitudes and perceptions of the group members. Slowly though, there was a shift towards the use of a wider diversity of sources.

This was visible in the works of Otto who sought to adapt to his own time the several chronological frameworks which he establishes in his sources. From the Bible, he took the chronology of the world ages for the early parts of his work; from Orosius he borrowed the chronology of the base of Rome and the arguments through which the coming into subsistence, spreading and

stability of the Christian religion could be connected with the Roman Empire. But it was from Bede that Otto received the thought of counting the years after the birth of Christ, so that he could continue his narrative beyond the fifth-century institutional crisis of the Roman Empire. As he himself wrote: 'in order to remove all occasions of doubt in relation to the those things I have written, either in your mind or in the minds of any others who listen to or read this history, I will create it my business to state briefly from what sources I have gained my information'. This attitude became extraordinarily diffused in the middle of historians. Unlike the historians of antiquity, the medieval writers had no inhibitions in relation to the extensively quoting from official documents. In England, legal and administrative records were used extensively by modern historians, like Roger of Hoveden, who made their chronicles into an anthology of official records, thinly linked by the authors' brief comments.

One major problem with medieval European historical writing was its perception of history as primarily as a chronological progression.. Historical changes were seen in political rise and decline or in change of ruler ship, perhaps complemented by spatial displacement of the centers of power, and historical events were installed in their precise temporal frame. But these changes were not estimated, interpreted, or explained according to their respective historical situations, as structural changes, changes in modern attitudes, or, even in the historical circumstances. Owing to a linear concept of time, the authors recognized an irretrievability of history, but they did not acknowledge a thorough alteration through the coming of new epochs. So, they totally lacked any sense of 'alternative pasts' or of the historical peculiarity of each epoch. The twelfth century, as a contemporary historian has remarked, the twelfth century was not basically concerned with 'the pastness of the past' but with 'its timeless edification'. The past and the present were therefore fused in one continuous narrative. One danger of concerning the past with the eyes of the present to such a degree easily was that of anachronism. For instance, Charlemagne was not only presented as a martial Frankish emperor but also as a knight and a crusader. In the explanation of Caesars' conquest of 'Germany' the Roman camps became

medieval castles, the legionaries were turned into knights, the magistrates into *ministerials*, and the Germanic peoples became Germans.

The unawareness of the meaning of anachronism helps to explain the strange wanderings of medieval annals and chronicles. If a religious society wanted to acquire a historical narrative, it copied some work that happened to be mainly readily accessible. A continuation might then be added at the manuscript's new abode, and, later on, this composite version might be copied and further altered by a succession of other writers. Hence there are at least six main versions of the annals recognized as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. They all derive from the annals kept down to 892 at Winchester, the West Saxon capital. The tendency to link the present time with the era of the Roman Empire and to emphasize a stability designates a feature characteristic of the concept of history in the high Middle Ages that appears to contradict the tendency to determine and record precise historic dates. On the one hand, the authors acknowledged and noted change and development, and they distinguished flanked by epochs or phases in history; on the other hand, their perceptions of the events were imbued with an astounding sense of timelessness that ignored a real variation in the epochal character insofar as this went beyond the political succession of power, reign, and kingdoms. On the contrary, it allowed events that were extensive past to be applied directly to the present.

Get in touch with Byzantines and Muslims broadened history writing by showing Westerners other points of view. Byzantine historians also extensively used the genre of writing history in the form of chronicles, although the greater unity of the Byzantine Empire and the persistence of a unified civilization gave a somewhat more literary excellence to the Byzantine works. Medieval Islamic historians such as al-Tabari and al-Masudi wrote histories of great scope, often employing sophisticated ways to separate information from fable. But by distant the greatest medieval Arabic historian was Ibn Khaldun, who created an early version of sociological history to explanation for the rise and decline of municipalities and civilizations. In the course of the fifteenth century, commemorating the past as the changing history of the world became more directly intertwined with the geographical,

specifically maritime, exploration of the world in the quest for the seaway to India or the hypothetical southern continent which was thought to connect Africa with Asia. The extending recognition by Europeans of the pluralism of continents on the surface of the earth made an oddity of the conventional medieval world picture and the medieval method of counting years and commemorating the past.

Though the bases of Western historiographical custom sustained to be classical antiquity and Christianity, the later Middle Ages received that deposit, transmitted it with a wider diversity of sources and in a strictly chronological frame. It also adapted it to wider powers which were touching the shores of Europe from outside. So the criticism which has sometimes been leveled that medieval historians showed little awareness of the procedure of historical change and that they were unable to imagine that any earlier age was considerably dissimilar from their own appears inappropriate.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss the changing concept of time during the middle ages in the West. How did it influence the writing of history?
- Write a note on Christian historiography.
- Write a note on some important historians and their works in medieval Europe.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY:**

#### **ARABIC AND PERSIAN**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- The early Arabic history writing
- Arabic historians of the later era
- Persian historiography

- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the early Arabic history Writing.
- Know the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Arabic and Persian historians.
- Explain the Persian historiography.

## **THE EARLY ARABIC HISTORY WRITING**

Though, the beginning of scientific historiography in Arabic may be traced to the second century of Islam and is associated with the life and behaviors of the Prophet. Before it, there was a memory bank to serve as a source of information. In other religious traditions the memory banks lived for thousands of years but in Islamic custom it was replaced by written sources after the end of the first century of Islam. No doubt, human brain has astonishing capacities to preserve information in relation to the past, yet the extensive passage of time could distort the information and events. This distortion or dissimilar version of the events and actions of individuals made the task of scholars hard. In view of this scholars tried their best to preclude that eventuality by several means of scrutiny.

### **Eighth and Ninth Century Historians**

A big corpus of historical literature was produced by the Muslim scholars in Arabic throughout the second century of Islam. Efforts were made to collect all oral traditions floating down the stream of time. The oral traditions were critically examined and incorporated after their veracity had been ascertained on the foundation of source criterion. As the writers were motivated by religious spirit to compile their works on the history of Prophet for the benefit and guidance of their contemporaries and the posterity, their works are valuable because the historical information contained therein was cautiously sifted, separating facts from popular legends and fiction. In other

languages, the historians took pains to separate historical jewels from dust and pebbles. Of the early historians, mention may be made of Ali bin Muhammad al-Madaini. He was a prolific writer, accounted to have composed hundreds of books. His works on the history of Caliphate and monographs on the history of Basra and Khurasan are of great importance. Though none of his works have survived the ravages of time, the passages quoted by other writers in their works testify to the importance of his pioneering efforts. By applying the sound ways of criticism, he gained fame for his work and it served as a source for the compilations of the succeeding era.

Inspired by Al-Madaini, Muhammad bin Omar al-Waqidi, Ibn Sad, and Ahmad bin Yahya Al-Balazuri composed significant works that left enduring impression which is discernible in the critical accuracy of historical information amongst the historians of the succeeding era. Al-Waqidi's history has been written in a plain narrative approach. His *Kitab al-Maghazi* provides a comprehensive explanation of the campaigns led by the Prophet. Ibn Sad utilized it in the preparation of his history of the Prophet but supplements it by incorporating the Prophet's edicts, letters, and copies of agreements that were accessible. As regards Ahmad bin Yahya Al-Balazuri, he brought to completion his celebrated history, entitled *Futuh al-Buldan*, sometime after 861 A.D. The revised version of the extant copy of *Fatuh al-Baldan* shows that before its completion, the compiler had prepared an earlier version which was more voluminous. Al-Balazuri appears to have incorporated all the information that he had composed from dissimilar sources. Later on, he revised it and deleted what he thought inauthentic and not corroborated by other historical facts gathered. So, his revised version became invaluable and was preserved by the posterity. Besides information in relation to the life and achievements of the Prophet and the significant events that took place throughout the times of the Caliphs, the Arab conquests of the non-Arab lands, including Iran, Makran and Sind provinces in India have been incorporated in this work. Like other Arab historians, he widens the scope of history by departing from pure political events and explanation of conquests. He also described the professions and socio-economic circumstances of people in the conquered territories. For instance, while describing northern Baluchistan, described

Kaikan in those days he writes that it was inhabited by a tribe of Turks who maintained horse breeding centers. He says that the horses bred by them were admired by Caliph Muaviyah as of excellent breed to serve as war horses.

### **Tenth Century Historians**

The classical custom recognized by historians reached its culmination in the celebrated history of Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari entitled *Tarikh al-Rasul wal-Muluk*. It needs to be pointed out that Al-Tabari was primarily a traditionalist, and in his history he aimed to supplement his commentary on the *Quran*, by presenting the historical custom of Islam with the similar fullness and critical approach as he had done in the earlier work. But against this weakness necessity is set the positive excellence of the rest, which by its power and comprehensiveness marked the secure of an epoch. He spared no efforts to verify the proof he accepted for inclusions in his work. No later compiler ever set himself to collect and investigate afresh the materials for the early history of Islam, but either abstracted them from his *Tarikh*, sometimes complemented from Al-Balazuri, or else began where he had left. It may also be added that Tabari's history is the first source to record the great appeal that the teachings of the Prophet had in the middle of the youth and the downtrodden people in the early days of Islam. He points out that the early companions of the Prophet, mainly of whom were looked down upon by Meccan aristocrats for their low social status became the leaders of Islamic revolution. Further, Tabari's *Tarikh* pointed out the ideological commitment to Islam and the ideological unity of the Muslim society crossways the lands although the political fragmentation had taken lay throughout his own times. In short, his *Taikh* is valuable in so distant as it registers the socio-religious changes brought in relation to the by Islam, such as the rationalization of religious and para-religious phenomenon, development of scientific curiosity and of a critical sense which entailed a new organisation of knowledge and mastery of the world imagination.

With Al-Masudi, a junior modern of Al-Tabari, a fresh intellectual element enters into Arabic historiography. Al-Masudi is, indeed, entitled to be reckoned amongst the major Arabic historians. He was not only a historian but also a geographer in his own right. His geographical information was gained chiefly by his wide travels. He was therefore able to add a new dimension to Arabic historiography by combining geography with history since human history exists in a definite environment. Al-Masudi describes the environment of a country with the history of its people in his work, *‘Muruj al-zahab’*. He recognizes the principles of scientific account and of correction and coordination of human action and physical facts. Though Al-Masudi regularly indulges in *‘Cosmographical’* theories borrowed from earlier works, his main contribution was the application of the results of his travels and personal observations to history and the recognition of cause and effect in related phenomenon — human and physical — through the relative revise of dissimilar parts of the recognized world. It is also worth pointing out that Al-Masudi is the precursor of Ibn Khaldun, the late fourteenth century Arab historian who is measured a philosopher of history and the father of contemporary sociology. Because Al-Masudi’s *Muruj al-Zabab* rests on sure theoretical foundations; its author reflected thoughtfully on the way and purpose of history. All this made early Arabic historiography rich both in content and excellence. It also led the scholars to recognize it as a science in its own right. With this recognition, history entered in a era of rapid expansion. From the third to the sixth century of Islamic era, a big number of historical works were written.

These incorporated the significant works on the history of dissimilar regions of the Islamic World. Each region had its own history compiled by a local historian. For instance, Abd al-Rahman bin Abd Allah Ibn Abd al-Hakam composed the history of Egypt and the Arab conquests in the West. It is noteworthy that in this work the explanation of conquests is based on the traditions, a mix of authentic and untrustworthy local ones. More sober and matter-of-information, almost certainly, were the local histories compiled throughout the third century of Islam. All of them appear to have been lost except for one volume on the history of Baghdad, compiled by Ibn Abi Tahir



Taufur. As for those which were produced after the third century, some of them have survived and contain much valuable material not accessible in the earlier common histories. This additional material is of great importance because it supplements a big amount of historical information. Another important development which necessarily be taken note of is that the 4th century of Islam onwards, the recording of political history passed mainly into the hands of officials and courtiers. This change affected form, context, and spirit of history writing. It was an easy task for such officials to compose a running chronicle rather than a critical analysis of the events and people associated with them. The sources from which they drew their information were mainly official documents and their own personal get in touch with the court and behaviors taking lay approximately them. It was inevitable that their presentation of events was to be influenced by their own bias and reflected narrow social, political, and religious outlook of their class. These historians appear to concentrate mainly on the behaviors of the ruler and the happenings at court. Though, the information provided by these authors with regard to the external political events of the age is usually more reliable notwithstanding their limitations. This is testified by the historical accounts of Egypt and of Andalusia written by Ubaid Allah bin Ahmad al-Musabbihi and Ibn Haiyan al-Qurtubi.

### **ARABIC HISTORIANS OF THE LATER ERA**

With the formation of a big number of local dynasties in all parts of the Islamic world a new trend in the form of dynastic history writing appeared. This trend more pronounced from 11th century onward supplements the traditional historiography which sustained throughout the era. This introduced a personal element in history writing as the rulers began to engage and patronize historians to write the history of their dynasty as per their wishes exaggerating their achievements. Now history became a work of artifice full of rhetoric and an involved approach replaced easy narrative. This approach was popularized by *Tarikh al-Yamini*, composed by Al-Utbi in writing the history of Subuktigin and Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. The writers of such accounts may not be guilty of deliberately distorting facts but their approach showing

servility and lack of any critical analysis places their work in the category of poor history. These works are in no case be regarded as representative of Islamic History of the classical era which had been patiently built up as a science by the early generations of Muslim scholars. One important point to be taken note of is that the subject matter of such historical writings, produced under the patronage of the Sultans is more political than politico-religious. The element of religion is brought in them only for a specific purpose as and when required. More often it discovers a lay only when the patronage extended by a Sultan to the *Ulama* is to be highlighted or when the Sultan's God fearing nature and religiosity are to be praised. This at times led to the growth of a historiography both in Arabic and Persian from the eleventh century to glorify the actions of Sultans for the cause of Islam.

It was at this unfavorable juncture that historical works began to be written in Persian. Before passing to talk about the nature of Persian historiography, a brief reference should be made to the histories of Abu Raihan al-Biruni and Izuddin Ibn al-Asir. Al-Biruni applied mathematical and astronomical science to the determination of chronology in his *Asar al-Baqia*, while Ibn al-Asir's history marks the re-emergence of the scholar-historian beside face the official historian. Ibn al-Asir's history, described *Al-Kamil* is extra ordinary for its compiler's effort to provide less static presentation of history, by means of grouping the events into episodes within an annalistic framework. The elegance and vivacity of his work acquired for it approximately immediate celebrity, and it became the average source for later compilers. It is also worth-mentioning that in his explanation of the ruling dynasties outside Arab lands, Ibn al-Asir incorporates popular tales which were devoid of historical foundation. Lastly, mention should be made of the world-famous historian, Ibn Khaldun. As a chronicler his work is sometimes disappointing. He is though, held in high esteem as a historical philosopher. His *Muqadima* is a treatise on the philosophy of history. It has been rendered in dissimilar contemporary languages for its importance. It is a pity that, in spite of the brilliant school of Egyptian historians in the following centuries and the vigorous farming of history in Ottoman Turkey in the 18th century, no historian was influenced by his philosophy. There is no indication that the

principles which he put forward were even studied, much less applied, by any of his successors.

As for the significance of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqadima*, the sociological characteristics of his historical theory, described therein are significant. The originality of his *Muqadima* is to be established in his objective analysis of the political, social, and economic factors underlying the establishment of political units and the development of the state. It may also be mentioned that the materials on which his analysis rests were derived partly from his own experience and partly also from historical sources relating to the history of Islam. The variation flanked by him and his precursors is that the latter begin from the global conception of human society, where as he begins from a dynamic conception of human association. His principles are not Theocentric, and his views on causality and natural law in history are in blunt opposition to the Muslim theological view. He treats religion as no more than one factor, though significant it may be. According to him, the law of the state may be derived from religion, but the state abstracts itself in practice from the whole compass of its validity and follows its own aims. The state exists for the protection of people and ensuring the order in the kingdom. It may also be added that he was not an irreligious man. He was a devout Muslim. Though, in propounding his theory, Ibn Khaldun tries to reconcile the ideal demands of the *Sharia* with the facts of history. He believes that economic development and prosperity can be achieved if the ordinance of the *Sharia* is observed. To him the caliphate in Islam was an ideal state. He discusses in detail the organisation associated with the caliphate. He explains in the course of discussion the gradual transformation of the caliphate into an ordinary kingship due to the force of *asabiya* throughout the later Umayyad era, the later Umayyad caliphs had their family members regain ascendancy in excess of the religious enthusiasm. In short it is his *Muqadima* that lifts him to the rank of a great philosopher of history.

## **PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

As regards the beginning of history writing in Persian language, it was prompted by the emergence of Persian-speaking intelligentsia, which was not

conversant with Arabic in the eastern part of the Islamic world. By the secure of the tenth century A.D., the non- Arab Muslims in Iran and Central Asia felt the need to produce literature on Islam and its history in Persian language for the enlightenment of people. It is noteworthy that several of the earliest works were translations and abridgments of Arabic classics, beginning with the translation of Tabari's *Tarikh* in 963 A.D. by the Samanid Wazir Abu Ali al-Balami. Few of the local and dynastic histories written in Persian have survived, and there is little to distinguish them from the modern Arabic works, produced under the patronage of kings. The surviving histories written in Persian by Abu said Gardezi and Abul Fazl Baihaqi are outstanding contribution to historical literature in Persian. Though Gardezi drew mainly from Al-Biruni's explanation of Hindus and their religion, yet we discover additional materials in his *Zain al-Akhbar* on the reign of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. The importance of Baihaqi's work appears from the information that it was based on original state documents and a diary which the author used to uphold.

It is also to be noted that the celebrated works, *Zainal-Akhbar* of Gardezi and *Tarikhi ale Subuktigin* of Baihaqi, were produced in the custom of Arabic writers on Islamic history. Neither Gardezi nor Baihaqi appear to have been influenced by the ancient Persian historiography wherein historical information and fiction were mixed up for the sake of literary embellishment. Though, the changes that took lay in polity and civilization under the impact of local Sultanates should not be lost sight of by the historians. Their historical writing does reflect on the innovations in Muslim polity, yet the emphasis therein illustrate that the compilers were serious enough to point out the virtues and evils of a reign. They were also very scrupulous in relation to the establishing the authenticity of an event before incorporating it in their respective works. Unlike the ancient Persian historians, their works are free from mythological elements or fiction. These works became models to inspire the extensive row of Indo-Persian historians. It may be added that of the many volumes of Baihaqi's *Tarikh*, only one, related to Sultan Masud's reign has survived. This surviving volume shows that the centralization by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna of political power sustained under his successors also.

That all the officers and soldiers were paid their salary and allowances in cash and revenue assignment in lieu of cash salary was not a regular practice. In information, the procedure of enhancing military profession was caused by the war-creation function of the monarchy.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss in brief the early tradition of Arabic historiography upto the 9th century.
- What are the unique features of history-writing in Arabic in the 10th century?
- Give a brief account of early tradition of history-writing in Persian. Did it follow the Arabic tradition?

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: INDO-PERSIAN**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Sultanate era
- Historiography under the Mughals
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Analyze the tradition of history writing during the Sultanate and Mughal periods.

#### **SULTANATE ERA**

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th Century. As distant as Delhi Sultanate is concerned we have a stability of accessible texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate to the court as officials while a few were self-governing scholars not associated with any official location. In common, the accessible histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events. It is unusual that one comes crossways any critical reference to the reigning Sultan. Even the approach is also usually eulogizing or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written. In mainly cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier era. We have referred to the constraints faced by several scholars while discussing individual works.

Separately from historical texts a number of other Persian works are accessible for the era. Abdu'r Razzaq's *Matla'us Sa'dain*, Tutsi's *Siyasatnama*, Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as- Shuja'at*, are a few significant ones. A few Arabic works are also accessible for the era. Ibn Battuta and Shihab-al Din al-Umari have provided excellent travel accounts. Here we will revise the historiography for the whole Sultanate era in separate subsections.

## **The Pioneers**

The pioneer in history-writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also recognized as Fakhr-i Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore throughout the later Ghaznavid era. In Lahore he compiled *Shajra-i-Ansab*, the book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Samammad Ghuri. The compiler wanted to present it to the sultan but the latter's assassination on his method from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as *Muqidimma* to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as *Sipahsalar* of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 upto his accession to the throne in

Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the base of an self-governing Sultanate in India. It opens with the account of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. Though, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir in relation to the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are motivating. Aibak set an instance that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's power were treated as friends.

No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogizing the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Beside with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also gives details of rituals that had symbolic significance. For instance, he is the first historian who informs us in relation to the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the whole population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. This ceremony, indeed, implied operational legitimacy for Sultan's claim to power. Equally significant is the proof in relation to the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land-grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others. The collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour were abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian Conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India. It was in view of its importance that in 1927, the English scholar, E. Denison Ross separated it from the manuscript of *Shajra-i Ansab* and published its critically edited text with his introduction under the title *Tarikh-i Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah*.

Another significant work compiled by Mudbbir is the *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. It is written in the

episodic form of historiography. It contains sections on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated significant events that occurred throughout the era. Mainly of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid era. The second significant history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir*. Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne. In Delhi, he set to compile the history of Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. Being a literary genius and a master of the conceits of Arabic and Persian poetry, Hasan Nizami creates abundant use of metaphors, similes, and rhetoric for the sake of literary ornamentation. The work abounds in unnecessary verbiage. Sans verbiage and unnecessary details, the historical material could be reduced to approximately half of the book's size without any loss of the content.

As for his approach, he begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went through in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the account of the second battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin Sam. Though, from the year 1192 upto 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes an extensive jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202 A.D. Almost certainly the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who appears to have stopped writing. Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important figure and was taking part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak. No mention has been made by the Compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the job of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, though, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to



the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information in relation to the every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his power. His account is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. For instance, when he refers to the Hindu Chiefs attending the Sultan's court, he basically states, "the carpet of the auspicious court became the Kissing lay of *Rais* of India". It contains no biographical details of the nobles, though several of them were the architects of the Sultanate. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* accessible in India and abroad approach to a secure with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch creation in the history of history-writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic era upto his own time, the year 1259 A.D., appears to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans of Firozkuh and Ghazna. He himself served under dissimilar Ghurid Princes and nobles before his migration to India. In 1227, he came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed the head of the *Firuzi Madrassa* in Uchh, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sind and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. He served as *Qazi* of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of *Madrassa-i Nasiri* in Delhi. Later on, he rose to the location of the Chief *Qazi* of the Sultanate throughout the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud.

It was throughout the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam upto his own time. In an effort to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history-writing. The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a

unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* and was brought to completion in 1259.

The last five parts are very significant from the point of view of history. In these we discover valuable information in relation to the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol irruption under Chingis Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best power on the ruling home of Ghur. His explanation of the rulers of Ghur is characterized by objectivity in approach. Likewise, the part devoted to the history of the Khwarizm shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not accessible in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes. Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information in relation to the victory of the Mongols in excess of the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim municipalities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade dealings with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had first hand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan. So, the last *tabaqa* of the work is measured by contemporary scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan.

The parts twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the parts he displays his skill to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the way of 'conveying intimation' on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle method or writing flanked by the rows. As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticized directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish's criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltutmish's rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan. Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of sure nobles. Praising Malik

Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Musalman, the noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj's sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage. Barani thought it presumptions to writing on the era sheltered in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*. He rather preferred to begin his explanation from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban.

### **The Fourteenth Century Historiography**

Several scholars appear to have written the 14th century histories of the Khalji and the Tughlaq Sultans. Ziauddin Barani mentions the official history of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's reign by Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi but it is now extant. Amir Khusrau also compiled the *Khazainul Futuh*, devoted to the achievements of Alauddin Khalji. Khusrau also composed five historical *masnavis* in each of which historical events are described. It may, though, be recalled that neither Ziauddin Barani nor contemporary scholar, Peter Hardy regards Khusrau as a historian. They consider Khusrau's works as literary pieces rather than a historical work. Of the surviving 14th century works, Isami's *Futuh us Salatin hahi* d Shams Siraj Afif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* are significant historical works. A few of these 14th century historical works need to be analyzed separately.

#### ***Isami's Narrative***

The *Futuh-us Salatin* of Isami is a versified history of the Muslim rulers of India. It begins with the explanation of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's reign and comes to a secure with that of the base of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan by Alauddin Bahaman Shah, a rebel against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, in 1350. Though much is not recognized in relation to the author, yet it may be added that his ancestors served the Delhi court since the time of Sultan Iltutmish. Ziauddin Barani comprises one of the Isami family in the list of the leading nobles of Sultan Balban. Isami, himself was brought up by his grandfather, Izuddin Isami, a retired noble. he was still in his teens when his

family was forcibly shifted to Daulatabad in 1327. His grandfather died on the method and the young Isami was filled with hatred against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq. The hostility towards Sultan Mohammad Tughluq is quite apparent in his explanation and needs to be treated with caution.

The early part of Isami's narrative is based on popular legends and oral traditions which had reached to him through the time. His explanation of the early Sultans of India is also based on popular tales with historical facts accessible to him through earlier works. But the details of historical events from the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji are much more authentic and can be of corroborative and supplementary importance. In this part Isami supplements the information contained in Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* in relation to the siege operations mannered by the military commanders of the Delhi Sultanate in dissimilar regions throughout the Khalji and the Tughluq era. Isami's account of the base of Daulatabad by Muhammad bin Tughluq as the second mainly significant municipality and his explanation of socio-economic growth of Delhi under Alauddin Khalji and other municipalities is graphic and insightful. Barani has precedence on Isami only in his analysis of cause and effect, linked with historical events.

### ***Ziauddin Barani's Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi***

Barani is, no doubt, the doyen of the Indo-Persian historians of medieval India. Born in an aristocratic family and associated with the royal court of Delhi for generations, he was obviously concerned with the fate of the Delhi Sultanate. He appears to have whispered that it was his duty to present through his *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* an intellectual composition for the enlightenment of the ruling elite of his times. Barani's *Tarikh* begins with the accession of Sultan Balban to the throne of Delhi in 1266 and comes to a secure with the explanation of first six years of Sultan Firuzshah Tughluq's reign, i.e. the year 1356. Barani's *Tarikh* is unique to the Persian history writing custom prevalent till his times. It is for the first time that he tries to analyze the cause and effect of the events and growths taking lay in polity and economy. In his explanation of the economic policies and events of Alauddin

Khalji he gives an analysis with causes and formulation of the policies and their impacts. Barani also elaborates the purpose of writing history in explicit conditions:

- The mean, the ignoble, the rude, the uncouth, the lowly, the base, the obscure, the vile, the destitute, the wretched, the low-born and the men of the marketplace, can have no connection or business with History; nor can its pursuit be their profession. The classes can derive no profit at all by learning the science of History, and it can be of no use to them at any time; for the science of History consists of greatness and the account of merits and virtues and glories of the great men of the Faith and State... The science of History is the special preserve of the nobles and the distinguished, the great men and the sons of great men.<sup>6</sup>

Barani also declares that the job of the historian is not only to eulogize the deeds and good works of the rulers but also to present to readers a critical explanation of the shortcomings and drawbacks of policies. Moreover, the scope of history is considerably widened by Barani with the inclusion of details in relation to the cultural role performed by intellectuals, scholars, poets, and saints. Barani's approach of history writing inspired the historians of the subsequent era, several of whom tried to follow his thoughts.

### **Late Fourteenth Century Histories**

Other major works of history from the second half of the 14th century are the anonymous *Sirat-i Firuzshahi*, *Futuh-i Firuzshahi*, composed by the Sultan Firuz Tughluq himself and Shams Siraf Aifif's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi*. The unusual manuscript copy of the *Sirat-i Firuzshahi*, accessible in the Khuda Bakhsh library, Patna, does not contain the name of its author. It reads as an official history of Firuz Shah's reign up to the years 1370-71. It contains, besides the details of military and hunting expeditions led by Sultan Firuzshah, motivating information in relation to the religious sects, sufis, ulema, socio-ethical matters, science, and technology such as astronomy, medicines,

pharmacology, etc. It is really a compendium of several-sided behaviors, accomplishments, and contribution made by the Sultan to the works of public utility. The construction of canals and water reservoirs, the base of the new municipalities with forts and repair of old monuments are described in detail. The *Futuh-i Firuzshahi* was originally an inscription fixed on the wall of the Jama Mosque of Firuzshah's capital. Later on, it was copied and preserved in the form of a book. Through this, the Sultan wanted to disseminate to common public in relation to the reforms and projects he undertook for public welfare.

Shams Siraj Afif, another historian of the era appears to have served the Sultan throughout the last years of Firuzshah's reign. He tells us that his great grand father, Malik Shihab Afif worked as revenue officer in the province of Dipalpur under Ghazi Malik throughout the reign of Ala-Uddin Khalji. His father and uncle supervised the management of Firuzshah's *karkhanas*. As Chaos and anarchy began to prevail after the death of Firuzshah himself to writing the history of the Sultanate from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah. He refers to several volumes of his works, each devoted to the reigns of the individual Sultans. Of these only one, devoted to the reign of Firuzshah has survived the ravages of time. It appears to have been completed after the sack of Delhi by Timur in 1398. This work of his is full of nostalgia and portrays Firuzshah as a saintly ruler whose attendance on the throne saved Delhi from every calamity. Because of this cause, he has written this volume in the form of *manaquib* like that of the spiritual biography of a saint. The name *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* has been given to it by the editors of the Text.

The book is divided into five *qism* each containing eighteen *muqaddimas* of unequal length. The last *qism* of the printed text comes to an end with the fifteenth chapter. The last three chapters appear to have been destroyed by the Mughal Emperors almost certainly because they contained vivid details of the sack of Delhi by Timur, the ancestor of Babur. This volume of Afif is significant for the information in relation to the socioeconomic life and prosperity that resulted from the state-policies followed by Firuzshah. The details in relation to the base of new urban centers, construction of canals, water reservoirs and the administrative reforms

are invaluable. Similarly, mention made by him of the agrarian reforms introduced by Firuzshah casts light on his interest in revenue matters. It may also be pointed out that Afif does not fail to mention the abuses and corruption that had crept in the management; and says that officials in every ministry became corrupt. In the *diwan-i arz* the officials took one *tanka* per horse as bribe from the horseman at the time of annual muster. He also gives us with hints in relation to the degeneration of the central army that was measured the best fighting force which could successfully defend the boundary against the Mongol invaders. On the whole it is, an significant source of information in relation to the life and civilization in the Sultanate of Delhi throughout the later half of the fourteenth century.

After the dissolution of the Delhi Sultanate, a number of local Sultanates and principalities arose. The capitals of these local Sultanates replaced Delhi as the main centre of learning and civilization. Delhi, which was reduced to the size of a town, was seized by Khizr Khan the founder of a new dynasty. Khizr Khan and his son and successor, Sultan Mubarkshah tried to rebuild the power of the Delhi Sultan but could not succeed. The latter was assassinated by his own nobles in the prime of his life. One of his officials Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, composed the history of the Sultanate and named it after the Sultan as *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi* in 1434. It begins with an explanation of Sultan Muizzuddin Mohammed bin Sam, who led the Ghurian conquest of India and the explanation closes with the accession of Mohammad Shah in 1434. The compiler appears to have drawn information from a number of histories written in India at dissimilar times. Some of the sources utilized by Yahya are now extant but bits of information on them survived through information composed and incorporated in the *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*. It enhances its importance. The historian of Akbar's reign utilized the *Tarikh* in the preparation of their volumes devoted to the history of the Delhi Sultanate.

## **The Fifteenth Century Histories**

In the fifteenth century a number of historical accounts were compiled in relation to the individual kingdoms and were dedicated to the local rulers. Shihab Hakim compiled the history of Malwa and named it after Sultan Mohammed Khalji as *Maasir-i Mahmudshah*. Abdul Husain Tuni, emigrant scholar from Iran who had settled in Ahmadabad wrote *Maasir-i Mahmudshahi* throughout the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah Begara. Both the works are extant. Another worth-mentioning history is the *Tarikh-i Muhammadi*, compiled by Muhammad Bihamad Khani, resident of Kalpi. It is written in the *Tabaqat* form beginning with the rise of Islam in Arabia. It is a summary of the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* and similar other works to cover history of Firuzshah and his successors. But his explanation of the rise of Kalpi as a centre of civilization and learning under the fostering care of its Sultans is original. He narrates the circumstances in which Mahmud Khan Turk founded the principality of Kalpi and assumed the title of Sultan after the return of Timur in 1398. The information in relation to the nature of connection flanked by the Sultans of Kalpi, Jaunpur, and Malwa is also of historical interest.

## **HISTORIOGRAPHY UNDER THE MUGHALS**

The mainly dominant characteristic of the historiography of the Mughal era is the custom of history writing by official chroniclers appointed by approximately all Mughal emperors till the reign of Aurengzeb. These chroniclers were appointed by the emperors and all official records were provided to them for the purpose. Another salient characteristic of the era is the autobiographical accounts written by emperors themselves. *Tuzuk-i Baburi* by Babur and *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* by Jahangir are significant works in this genre. Separately from the official works, which had obvious constraints, a number of self-governing works were written by self-governing scholars who give a critical appraisal of the policies and events of the era. In this part we have discussed the historiography of the era throughout the reigns of individual emperors.



## The Early Writings

Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur who invaded India and supplanted the Lodi rule by his own in 1526, was a prolific writer. He wrote both in his mother tongue Turkish and in Persian. His autobiography *Tuzuk-i Baburi*, written in Turkish is a literary masterpiece, containing the history of the decline and fall of the Timurid power in central Asia, his own biography, the account of life and civilization in India and the diary of events that took lay in the course of campaigns he led against his rivals in eastern India. Babur's explanation of central Asia and Khurasan is marked by objectivity. Though, his explanation on his dealings with the ruling elite in India lacks objectivity. This is obvious because of the hostility towards those against whom he was waging war. Babur wrote in anger against the Indian ruling elite. He calls the Indian nobles untrustworthy, although he himself had deceived them. The Afghans had invited him to help them in their thrash about against their own Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi thinking that he would go back after taking treasure. Babur is full of praise of India's possessions and the availability of skilled craftsmen and artisans in the towns and municipalities. 'For any work or any employment', says he, 'there is always a set ready, to whom the similar employment and trade have descended from father to son for ages'. Babur also mentions the list of *sarkars* with the annual revenue yields. Further, the account of towns and municipalities with their respective topography is motivating. The geographical details in his biography further enrich its importance. Moreover, the *Tuzuk-i Baburi* is not merely a political narration but is also measured as a naturalist's journal. His account of fauna and flora of the region he visited is graphic and insightful.

Babur's son and successor, Humayun was also interested in history. He commissioned a renowned scholar, Khawandmir, to compose the history of his reign. In compliance with the royal order, Khwandmir prepared a brief explanation of Humayun's reign from his accession upto the year 1535 and named it *Qanun-i Humayuni*. It sheds motivating light on Humayun's state

policy, particularly towards the Indian nobles and landed aristocracy. He refers to Humayun's efforts to win in excess of Indian chiefs to his face.

### **Akbar's Reign: Official Histories**

With the accession of Akbar to the throne, significant change took place in the concept of history writing and the class of history writers. Since the history of a dynasty served as a memorial to the dynasty, Akbar proposed to have a written history of the Muslim rulers from the death of the prophet upto his own time on the completion of the first millennium of Islam, i.e., a history of one thousand years, described *Tarikh-i Alfi*. For providing information in relation to the lives and times of Babar and Humayun, all the officials, the nobles and relatives were asked to write their reminiscences in book form. At Akbar's instance, Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of Babur, Bayazid Biyat and Jauhar Aftabchi put down their reminiscences in book form. Gulbadan Begum's memoirs entitled *Humayunnama* is an significant source as it sheds light on the lives and civilization of the royal *harem*. It is measured unique as it reflects a woman's perception of the events of the era. After Humayun's death, Bayazid Biyat served under Munim Khan Khani Khanan in Jaunpur and Bengal and was asked by Emperor Akbar to stay a watch on the governor and secretly inform the king in relation to the all growths. He has narrated the event of Humayun's life in Iran, Kabul, and Later in India. Mainly of these he himself had witnessed. His work is entitled *Tazkirat-i Humayun wa Akbar*. Jauhar Aftabchi who had served Humayun also furnishes useful information in relation to the Humayun's life and times in his *Tazkirat-ul Waqiat*. Like collections of reminiscences of Gulbadan Begum and Bayazid Biyat, his work also does not distinguish flanked by trivia and the historical facts. Nevertheless, all these works served as sources of information for the compilers of *Tarikh-i Alfi* and other histories of Akbar's reign including Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*.

Akbar constituted a board of seven scholars to compile *Taikh-i Alfi*. Each member of the board was assigned a era to write its history in

chronological order. As per this scheme the events are described year by year. Though, the accounts of sure Indian rulers have been compiled separately in dissimilar parts. This pattern has been followed in providing the history of Muhammad Tughluq, the Lodis, and fifteenth century local kingdoms emerging after the decline of Sultanate, Sher Shah Sur, Islam Shah, and Adil Shah Sur. Its concluding part is devoted to the reign of Akbar upto 1585. Not satisfied with the explanation of his reign in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, in 1589-1590, Akbar ordered Abul Fazl to compile the history of his reign, beginning with an explanation of Babur and Humayun. A bureau was recognized in which competent people were employed to assist Abul Fazl. The whole archival material was placed at the compiler's disposal. It may be stressed that Abul Fazl was selected for this task because he had recognized himself with Akbar's views and religious inclination. He portrays Akbar's own view in relation to the his status and role in history as conceived by emperor himself. Akbar was led by his courtiers to think of himself as the perfect representation of the spiritual profile of his age. He wanted to be remembered in history as the *Insan-i Kamil*, gifted by God with full knowledge of Divine Unity. So, in compiling the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl was able to approach up to his royal patron's expectations. He presents Akbar as cosmic man, entrusted by God with sway in excess of outward form and inner meaning, the exoteric and esoteric. His mission is said to liberate people from *taqlid*, lead them to truth, and make an atmosphere of concord, so that people following dissimilar sects could live in peace and harmony. He was shown as a light emanating from God."

Despite flattery, Abul Fazl was able to produce a history of Akbar's reign that is measured an significant contribution to Indo-Persian historiography. It was brought to completion after five revisions that involved strenuous labour of seven years, the completion of the work was indeed epoch creation. Abul Fazl did not consider that Indian history should concern itself only with the achievements of the Muslim rulers in India, nor did he attempt to set up any relation with the past of Islam. In his treatment of Akbar's military expeditions against the Rajputs, he emphasizes on the point that there was no justification for any chief, Hindu or Muslim not to join the imperial

confederation in view of the reconciliatory policy of Akbar. He feels that Akbar's state policy was calculated to bring unity, stability, and economic prosperity to the country. In information, Abul Fazl's secular interpretation of history gained ground throughout the subsequent century.

The *Akbarnama* and the *Ain-i Akbari* give exhaustive details of the events and policies introduced by Akbar till the year 1602. Though, Abul Fazl fails to mention or raise any issue which cast any aspersion on Akbar. It is true that the *Ain-i Akbari* abounds in economic details, but these details do not tell us anything in relation to the life and circumstances of the mass of peasantry or working class. The *Ain-i Akbari* contains statistical details which are valuable source for the revise of economic history with no parallel with any historical accounts prior to it or till the 18th century. But artisans or peasants are totally absent. The *Ain-i Akbari*, the third part of the *Akbarnama* is a unique compilation of the system of management and manage through the departments of government. It also contains an explanation of the religious and philosophical systems of the Hindus. Though, Abul Fazal's identification with Akbar's views and religious beliefs prevented him from presenting a picture in dissimilar hues, reflecting the currents and cross currents in society. Abul Fazl does not mention Shah Mansur or his successor Todarmal's contribution while dealing with revenue reforms and portrays Akbar as the genius who evolved key reforms including Ain-i Dahsala and revenue *dasturs*. The reader does not discover the spirit of Akbar's age in *Akbarnama* that was successfully depicted by Abdul Qadir Badauni or even Nizamuddin Ahmad.

### **Akbar's Reign: Non-official Histories**

Nizamuddin Ahmad and Abdul Qadir Badauni are two significant historians of the era. Motivated by the popularity of the discipline of history, both the scholars have written history of the Muslim rule in India and have also recorded achievements of men of learning in dissimilar meadows. Their works run into many volumes. Let us deal with each one separately.

Nizamuddin was the son of Khwaja Muqim Harawi, a noble of Babur and Humayun. A well-educated man, he was interested in the revise of history and literature. When he seems up the project of writing history of India in three volumes, he employed men like Masum Bhakkari to assist him and give information in relation to the dissimilar regions of the empire. A man who had gained experience in the government after having served on significant positions in the provinces and at court as well, he was able to create substantial contribution through his scholarly work. His first-volume deals with the history of the Muslim rulers of India upto the fall of the Lodi dynasty in 1526. The second volume contains the explanation of the Mughal rulers of India upto 1593. The third volume deals with the rise and fall of the local kingdoms in India. It is to the credit of Nizamuddin Ahmad that he mentions all the significant events that took lay throughout Akbar's reign including the controversial *Mahzar* which is omitted by Abul Fazl. Though, being the *mirbakshi* of the empire, he does not give any critical evaluation. Still, it helps us in filling the gap left by Abul Fazl not only on this issue but in many other regions. His work *Tabaqat-i Akbari* was regarded by all the later writers as an authentic work and they borrowed from it.

Abdul Qadir Badauni was also a keen student of history and literature. He tells us that from his student life, he spent hours in reading or writing history. He also learnt Sanskrit and classical Indian music beside with Islamic theology. Akbar employed him to translate *Muhabharat* from *Sanskrit* into Persian. The first volume of his history entitled *Muntakhabut Tawarikh* is related to the history of the Sultanate of Delhi. The second covers Akbar's reign while in the third volume we discover the biographical notes on the scholars, poets, and Sufi saints of Akbar's reign. His explanation is very readable bringing out the significant facts of the era. Brevity is the beauty of Badauni's approach. The first volume contains information culled from miscellaneous sources, several of which are not extant today. Moreover, Badauni possessed an analytical self-governing mind with dissimilar views than the official row. In information Badauni's objective was to present a frank explanation of his times. It is Badauni's second volume that needs to be studied beside with Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* to have a proper understanding of

Akbar's reign. Badauni does not gloss in excess of any uncomfortable question on Akbar's skill as an administrator. For instance, Badauni records the failure of the *karori* experience and the disaster it caused. Badauni is corroborated in essentials by Nizamuddin Ahmad also. Unlike Abul Fazl and even Nizamuddin Ahmad, Badauni's explanation of the religious discussions held in Akbar's *Ibadat Khana*, the origin of Akbar's differences with the Muslim orthodoxy that led to religious controversies is vivid depicting the currents and cross currents of thought. It certainly has precedence on *Akbarnama*, in a number of regions especially the controversial issues. It provides an impression to the readers that it is free from the official constraints, catches the realities of the time, and reflect the magnitude and intensity of conflicts of the era.

### **Histories Throughout Jahangir's Reign**

Akbar's son and successor Jahangir decided to write autobiographical history of his own reign in the traditions set by Babur. Besides, he persuaded other scholars also to write the history of his reign. He requested Shaikh Abdul Haque to add in his *Tarikh* the explanation of his reign also. But the Shaikh was too old to take up the work, yet his son Qazi Nurul Haque compiled the history, *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* and closed it with the explanation of Jahangir's reign. Like the *Tarikh* compiled by his father, Shaikh Abdul Haque, the *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* also narrates the history of the Muslim rulers of India. Another writer, who compiled the voluminous History of the Afghan tribes and the Afghan rulers, the Lodis and the Surs also incorporated a chapter on early ten years of Jahangir's reign. This *Tarikh-i Khan-i Jahani* was compiled by Nemat Allah Harawi under the patronage of Khan-i Jahan Lodi, the noble of Jahangir. As regards Jahangir's own memoirs *Tuzuki Jahangiri*, it is a major source for his reign.

The emperor wrote the Tuzuk himself upto the 17th regional year till his health permitted him. Later, he dictated it to his trusted officer, Mutamad Khan. It presents to a great extent the picture of Jahangir's reign. The principal events linked with rebellions, the role of the imperial officers, their

promotions and punishments as well as diplomatic dealings flanked by India and the foreign powers are described in a lucid approach. It contains a year-by-year narrative. Further, we discover insights into the civilization of the Mughal empire as well as Jahangir's aesthetic taste, learning and his interest in nature.

### **Histories Throughout Shahjahan's Reign**

Mutamad Khan set to write the history *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri* after Shahjahan's accession to the throne. His aim was to justify Shahjahan's rebellion against his father because Nur Jahan Begum wanted to harm him and clear the method for Shaharyar's accession to the throne. It is divided into three parts: the first part covers the history of Babur and Humayun, the second part contains the explanation of Akbar's reign while the third is devoted to Jahangir's reign. In the last part the first nineteen years are merely an abridgement of the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. The explanation of the last years of Jahangir's reign is approximately an eye witness explanation.

Like Mutamad Khan, Khwaja Kamgar Husaini also came from a family associated with the Mughal court. He served under Jahangir and Shahjahan both. In the preparation of his *Maasir-i Jahangiri*, he also drew on *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. His explanation from the 19th year of Jahangir's reign is his original work and is an significant source for the events that took lay throughout the last years of the reign. He started compiling his work in 1630. It may be pointed out that the compiler also complemented information in relation to the sure events that took lay before Jahangir's accession to the throne. For instance, he furnishes details in relation to the role played by prince Khusrau's supporters to secure the throne for him leaving Jahangir aside. No other historian supplies this information. he also portrays Jahangir as a naturalist, describing Jahangir's interest in fauna and flora, animal breeding, etc. In short, *Maasir-i Jahangiri* is one of the major histories on Jahangir's reign. Impressed with Abul Fazl's approach of prose writing and the richness of details in the *Akbarnama*, Shahjahan desired to have the history of his reign

compiled by a master of Persian prose. First he tried Mohammed Amin Qazvini and suggested him to write *Badshahnama*, i.e. the history of his reign on the rows of Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. Like Abul Fazl, Amin Qazvini was provided with assistants and given permission to have access to the royal library and the state archives for the collection of material. In nine years Qazvini was able to complete the first volume covering the first ten years of Shah Jahan's reign. It appears that he had planned to compile a separate volume on every decade but he was stopped from working on the project. Although the volume was rich in details, his approach was not liked by the emperor. According to Mohammed Saleh Kamboh, the author of the *Amal-i Saleh*, Qazvini was transferred to the intelligence bureau. Abdul Hamid Lahori, another Scholar was appointed as the official historian in his lay. Abdul Hamid was establish competent enough to emulate Abdul Fazl's Persian prose-approach. Saleh Kamboh says that Abdul Hamid was celebrated for the beauty of his approach. Like *Akbarnama*, the *Badshahnama* is also full of outbursts of laboured rhetoric.

Abdul Hamid's *Badshahnama* contains an explanation of twenty years of history of Shahjahan's reign. It is divided into two parts, each covering ten years of the reign. The events have been arranged chronologically year-wise. It also contains separate parts on the Princes, Princesses and the nobles of the empire. The latter have been listed in accordance with the descending order of their *mansabs* from 9000 to 500 horses. Lastly the author devotes a part on the leading *Sufi* saints, scholars, physicians and poets of the reign of Shahjahan. Owing to old age, Abdul Hamid Lahori was retired and his pupil Mohammad Waris was ordered by the emperor to continue the work. Waris's volume contains ten years explanation from the beginning of the twentieth year to the thirtieth year when Shahjahan had to abdicate the throne. Waris's *Badshahnama* bears resemblance to his teacher's *Badshahnama* both in approach and details.

Two other writers who produced histories of Shahjahan throughout the early years of Aurangzeb's reign were Sadiq Khan and Muhammad Saleh Kamboh. The former's work is recognized as *Badshahnama*, while the latter history is popularly described *Amal-i Saleh*. Both these works furnish



significant details in relation to the war of succession flanked by Shahjahan's sons and the last years of Shahjahan's life.

### **Histories Throughout Aurangzeb's Reign**

The emperor Aurangzeb also followed the custom of Akbar and Shahjahan. He appointed Muhammad Kazim the son of Muhammad Amin Qazvini to write the history of his reign. An order was also issued to the officers in charge of the royal records to create in excess of to the official historian all such state papers as were received from the news writers and other high functionaries pertaining to significant events. On the completion of the explanation of first ten years of the reign, its writing was stopped. The volume produced was described *Alamgir Nama* in prose, portraying the emperor as a special recipient of divine grace and endowed with super-natural powers. Disgusted with flattery and exaggeration, Aurangzeb banned history writing, saying that 'the farming of inward piety was preferable to the ostentatious display of his achievements'. The curtailment of state expenditure appears another cause for stopping the writing of chronicle.

Later on, Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, a trusted noble of Aurangzeb's son and successor, Bahadur Shah persuaded Saqi Mustaid Khan to compile the history of Aurangzeb's reign. Hence the compilation of the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* was brought to completion in 1711. This fills a wide gap in the official history of Aurangzeb's reign. Like *Akbarnama* of Abul Fazl and *Badshahnama* of Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Maasir-i Alamgiri* has been composed in the form of annals, each year has been marked off. Its approach is free from literary conceits, but the work reads like a arid list of official postings, promotions, armies deputed for the conquest of forts, etc. Though, the motivating bits of information are establish at places where the compiler creates observation and reflection on events and particularly biographical sketches. It may be pointed out that the explanation of first ten years of Aurangzeb's reign in the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* is a concise summary of Kazim's *Alamgirnama* but the explanation from the eleventh year onwards is based on his personal knowledge and the

state archives. It is, though, approximately devoid of details in relation to the social life and the deteriorating economic circumstances in the Empire. This was the last official history of the Mughal empire. Thereafter, Khafi Khan and other historians of the 18th century composed histories but their approach was partisan, each historian wrote according to his allegiance to some group of nobles at court.

Separately from these historical works a number of other works like *Maasir-ul Umara*, by Shahnawaz Khana collection of biographies of nobles, treatise on Management like *Diwan-i Pasand* of Rai Chhatar Mal; Amamullah Hussain's work *Ganj-I Badawurd Baharistan-i Ghaybi* of Mirzanathan history for the Mughal era.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss the important works of history written during the 14th century.
- Why is Ziauddin Barani considered as the most important historian of the Sultanate period?
- Compare the writings of Abul Fazl and Badauni on Akbar's reign.
- Write a brief note on the historical works during Jahangir's reign.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **LOCAL HISTORY**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Introduction
- Oral history
- Micro history
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discussed three different types of historiographical practice under the head of 'local history'. These are 'local history', 'oral history' and 'micro history'. All

## INTRODUCTION

Local history is usually described as 'a range of historical writings focusing on specific, geographically small regions, regularly produced by non-professional historians for a nonacademic audience'. In the western countries, particularly in Britain, France, and the United States, local histories were written in the 18th and early 19th centuries by the local elites. In the late 19th century, this procedure acquired momentum and many societies were shaped to undertake local studies. Under the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and migration, the local societies were destabilized and a crisis of identity appeared. This resulted in a desire in the middle of the local educated people to record their history at local and local stages. From the 1860s onwards, many history groups appeared which were interested in promoting the studies of their regions. Their works sheltered several characteristics of their past — 'from the history of local churches and parishes to reports on the detection of flint axe-heads in previously strange sites of archaeological importance'. Studies on genealogy and family history were some other regions of interest in local history. In the United States, the late 19th century was a particularly good era for local history. Under the patronage of the local elites interested in consolidating or raising their social status, these histories recorded the establishment of scrupulous regions, lists of early politicians and life-histories of local notables.

Local history started as amateur attempts to promote the locality and society as a matter of pride and even now such trends prevail and the term 'local history' continues to be connected with antiquarianism and amateur historiography. Though, since the 1930s, there was a sure professionalisation in this sector. Many books were written in the after that two decades which centered on localities but could be measured on par with any national history in conditions of professional attainment. A.H. Dodd's *Industrial Revolution in*

*North Wales economic Development of Crewe, 1780-1923 of the English Landscape e Industrial Revolution* unionized the writing of local history in Britain. Bjorn Hansen's *Osterlen* in France and Joseph Amato's works on the American Midwest further strengthened this trend towards professionalisation in local history.

This trend was given an academic form by the establishment of the first university department of local history in 1947 at Leicester in Britain. Academic local history there is still dominated by the perspective urbanized by what came to be recognized as the 'Leicester School'. H.P.R. Finberg, in a 'mission statement' in 1952, outlined the objectives of this 'School':

- 'The primary aim of the department, then, will be to foster, in our own minds and in the minds of any who seem to us for guidance, a reasoned conception of local history, such as will set a average of performance by which our own work and the work of others may be judged.'

Finberg and Hoskins, the two significant historians associated with the School, criticized the traditional local history on a number of points. According to George and Yanina Sheeran:

- 'Ideologically, Finberg and Hoskins were opposed to the elitist conservative approach which underpinned much traditional local history – that is, they criticized the emphasis on the fortunes of armigerous families and the neglect of the general man. Methodologically, they objected to the antiquarian, information-collecting custom, the lack of order and way, and the overdependence on documentary sources. Philosophically, they criticized the lack of "a central unifying theme", which would serve to distinguish local history as a discipline....'

To overcome these inadequacies in the traditional local history, Finberg suggested that job of the local historian should be 'to re-enact in his own mind, and to portray for his readers, the Origin, Growth, Decline and Fall of a Local Society'. Though, Finberg and Hoskins did not describe what constituted a 'Local Society'. They took its subsistence as self-apparent and its

size as ranging from small parishes to counties’. Their successor at Leicester, C. Phythian-Adams, in his book *Re-thinking English Local History* a shire county. The vital features of the Leicester School may be summarised as dogged empirical research and fieldwork, a concentration on the pre-industrial era, the celebration of the general man and the concept of society’.

- The local history in Asia and Africa is differently situated. Here the traditional form belongs mostly to oral custom. Royal lineages and achievements in battles form the vital staple of this custom. Parts of these histories were in written form also, but the oral form was the predominant mode of presentation. In India, *Bakhar*, *Raso*, and *Vamshavalis* were some of the methods in which the traditional local histories were presented. They are genealogies and chronicles narrating the family history of the ruling dynasties and commemorating the achievements of warriors in the battles. In African countries also this custom was sustained through myths and tales, through theatrical performances, and through more formal narratives. Axel Harneit-Sievers remarks in the introduction to the edited volume, *A Lay in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia* South Asia sure individuals, or groups are widely regarded as traditional specialists for the transmission of historical knowledge. There are more or less formalized methods of doing this: In one lay, it may presently be an elder in the village, usually recognized by the society as the mainly knowledgeable person on local history. In other places, specifically trained people like the *griots* in Mali act as professional historians, or even hold official legitimating as keepers of history and royal genealogies, like the *Isekhurhe* and *Ihogbe* title-holders at the Oba of Benin’s court in Nigeria.’

With the colonial power and the introduction of the western education system, new elites began to emerge in Asia and Africa. Their world-view was influenced by the western education. The establishment of the university system in the late 19th century in India and throughout the 1940s in Africa brought the historical knowledge within more formal academic purview.

Though, quite a lot of history-writing was still done by the people outside the university system. Local history was a particularly attractive field for the amateur and non-academic historians who felt interested in the past of their locality and society. Mainly of these historians were and are born and brought up in the localities and societies they write in relation to the and mainly of them are non-professional historians outside the formal academia. It is true that some of local histories are written within the universities. Though, mainly of it is written by people outside the universities.

Harneit-Sievers use the term new local histories for these writings. In comparison with the traditional local histories which were mostly oral, the new local histories are written and published. Moreover, they are attempts to rigor contexts by means of reference to the past – and as shapes which appropriate and adapt –contemporary” historiography to local needs and purposes. They are aimed at providing knowledge in relation to the locality and at rising local self-awareness. They also seek to accord prestige to the locality before the wider world and create its name recognized. The new local histories are not totally cut off from the custom. They use local oral and other primary sources and interact with the local societies to uphold the stability of custom. It is true that they hold the power of the written word as against the oral custom. Though, they are not antagonistic to the old histories and the societies concerned consider them as objects of local pride. The new local historians, on their part, regularly view their own undertakings not as a threat to –old” history, but rather as a mission to rescue it in view of vanishing historical knowledge caused by urbanization, the spread of formal education, or by war and displacement.

History has served as a tool all in excess of the world to imagine and construct a sense of society. The new local histories in Asia and Africa also endeavour to recreate a sense of identity for the localities and societies by referring to a general past. Within the boundaries of a nation-state, the local societies have become contemporary localities which are, in Arjun Appadurai's languages, parts of a intricate phenomenological excellence, constituted by a series of links flanked by the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts. The changing

atmosphere, inter-local migration, and extensive-alloofness communication have created a situation where the members of the local societies are no longer confined to a scrupulous locality either physically or emotionally. The new local histories attempt to take explanation of this changed environment and, as Harneit-Sievers points out:

- New local histories may do so by trying to reduce the complexity of a society's external interaction and embeddings, presenting the image of a "traditional", self-contained and homogeneous locality .... They may also stress historicity and change, and the importance of being part of superior contexts, as a matter of local pride and indicator of modernity. Several of them oscillate flanked by these extremes and combine both perspectives. The tension flanked by "the local" and the wider world is present – in more or less explicit shapes – in virtually every new local history.

The new local histories in Africa and Asia construct the locality in many methods: by referring to general ancestry, general civilization, ancient kingship, kinship relationships and religious, cultural, and political achievements. This method they attempt to portray the locality as a moral society that shares, or should share, a general value-system. This is done by an acceptable mixture of local traditions and contemporary academic historiography. The writing of the new local histories in Asia and Africa is mainly influenced by the western ways of research and presentation of material. These histories are chronological and there are big-level references to the sources. Moreover, they are usually conceived within an evolutionist perspective. The conceptualization is not in religious or mythological conditions, but in contemporary, secular conditions. Though, in conditions of content, they derive mainly from the traditional oral and written sources and their use of sources are usually uncritical. Although they sometimes adopt a linear sense of time as per the western model, they often contain in their narrative tales of origins and mythical and legendary heroes whose lives and actions cannot fit into any chronology and cannot be verified. Therefore while

the form of these histories may resemble the western concepts and ways, their content and narrative technique are based on local traditions.

The audience of these histories is both local and national or even wider. Since they are written and published and use the contemporary academic ways of presentation, their reach is beyond the locality. Still, they deal with the locality and its traditions. Moreover, these local histories are not easy academic texts. They also act as mediators in establishing local pride and providing a sense of society and local identity. The new local histories in Africa and Asia, so, operate at two stages – local and Trans local. Their writers are usually products of the contemporary education system and adopt the contemporary historical concepts and methodology which may be alien to the local society. At the similar time, their works derive from local traditions and directly participate in local discourse. Even as these histories challenge the traditional methods of on behalf of the past, they thrive on and do not necessarily replace the local traditions.

## **ORAL HISTORY**

- The boundaries of oral history are very porous. It crosses the rows flanked by the pre-contemporary and the contemporary periods, flanked by the pre-literate and literate cultures, flanked by the individual and the communal, and flanked by the subject and the writer. Therefore Ronald J. Grele, in his entry on ‘Oral History’ in Kelly Boyd *Oral Writing*, oral historians, or those who use the term ‘oral history’ in their writings, describe what it is they do, they mix genres with abandon. Sometimes what is being described is oral custom; at others life history, life review, or life course. For some oral historians the practice is the collection of interviews for archival purposes, to give a record for the future. For others it is the conduct of interviews for scrupulous publications or public history projects, and for still others it is a pathway to ‘society empowerment’. In addition the term ‘oral historian’ is applied with great looseness. Some argue that the oral historian is the person who conducts the interview, others that the oral historian is the person being interviewed – the narrator



who tells the history. Neither is there any agreement on what to call people being interviewed: they can be interviewees, narrators, subjects, respondents. In recent years oral history has become a noun, the thing itself is the thing being composed, rather than the action for interviewing for historical purposes. Indeed there is even debate in excess of whether oral historians basically collect oral histories, or make them.‘

- Such confusion separately, oral history in any form is unacceptable to the hardliners trained in the Rankean custom which places enormous premium on the ‘primary sources’. Anything else is the second best, and the oral testimony is, of course, the worst. To the literate civilization of the contemporary West, anything which is not written did not exist. Hence, Hegel declared in 1831 that Africa ‘is not historical part of the world’. As late as 1965, Hugh Trevor-Roper stated that Africa had no history. He said that ‘Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. At the present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa’. As for the value of the oral sources for writing history, A.J.P. Taylor firmly announced: ‘In this matter, I am an approximately total skeptic. Old men drooling in relation to their youth? No!’ Besides these extreme reactions, there are those who are doubtful towards this exercise because its form is imprecise, chronology is uncertain, the data are unsupported, and it can be practiced only at a very small level. Such derision has expectedly invited angry retort from the oral historians. Paul Thompson, one of the leading figures in oral history, writes in his well-known book, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* as much founded on feeling as on principle. The older generation of historians who hold the Chairs and the purse-strings are instinctively apprehensive in relation to the advent of a new way. It implies that they no longer command all the techniques of their profession. Hence the disparaging comments in relation to the young men tramping the streets with tape recorders.‘

Jan Vansina, another great oral historian who has worked in Africa, is equally assertive in relation to the importance of oral sources in history:

- Oral traditions have a part to play in the reconstruction of the past. The importance of this part varies according to lay and time. It is a part similar to that played by written sources because both are messages from the past to the present, and messages are key elements in historical reconstruction. But the connection is not one of the diva and her understudy in the opera: when the star cannot sing the understudy appears: when writing fails, custom comes on stage. This is wrong. Wherever oral traditions are extant they remain an indispensable source for reconstruction. They correct other perspectives presently as much as other perspectives correct it.

It is clear that the rows are drawn flanked by the mainstream history which relies approximately exclusively on written sources and the oral history which accords great significance to the oral sources for reconstruction of the past. It should, though, be recognized that oral history now is not basically concerned with enriching the archives by collecting interviews. Instead, it has matured into a branch of historiography which seeks to understand all shapes of subjective experiences. Popular beliefs, memory, myths, ideology, perceptions, and consciousness have all become legitimate grounds for exploration by oral historians. Oral history now hold great promise for being a new type of historiographical effort which is involved in not presently the creation of documents of the heretofore ignored populations but the methods in which those in the society become their own historians and present their history'.

Despite disparagement from the mainstream historians, the oral historians have broken new grounds and produced several works of great excellence. Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* priciest orientation of much of historiography and seeks to correct it. It is, moreover, concerned in relation to the presentation of history of those who have been neglected not only by the professional historiography but also in the written sources. Jan Vansina, in his *Oral Custom as History* can serve as rich sources

of historical proof. His another masterpiece, *Paths in the Rain-forest* of equatorial central Africa. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories* revise of the Italian workers and of people of many Appalachian societies in the United States, is a great contribution to oral history. David K. Dunway and Willa K. Baum oral history in several countries. Luisa Passerini's *Fascism in Popular Memory old Unionists Against Terror* ry ves ral sources effectively. Separately from these writings, the *International Journal of Oral History*, the *History Workshop Journal*, and some others have endeavored to make forum for oral history in several countries. There are many formal and informal oral history associations in Britain, America, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, and in several other countries. There have been many international stage seminars and conferences on oral history. From these growths it is clear that oral history has arrived on the international scene as an significant historiographical practice.

Though, there is a creative tension which oral history faces in its efforts to produce history which can equal the document-based history in richness. Even those advocating the use of oral sources concede that there are sure troubles involved in it. Therefore Eric Hobsbawm writes that mainly oral history today is personal memory, which is a extraordinarily slippery medium for preserving facts. The point is that memory is not so much a recording as a selective mechanism, and the selection is, within limits, constantly changing. He argues that the importance of such history is not presently to record facts but to understand the mentalities of people, to know what ordinary people keep in mind of big events as separate from what their betters think they should keep in mind, or what historians can set up as having happened; and insofar as they turn memory into myth, how such myths are shaped. Even though this suggestion is significant as it lifts oral history above the routine work of checking the reliability of the tapes of old ladies and gentlemen's reminiscences, it dampens the enthusiasm of oral historians to rival their traditional counterparts. It is true that oral history has now acquired an self-governing status insofar as it is no longer a recording action but a historiographical practice in its own right. It succeeds in those regions and situations which the conventional history has either ignored or where it has

failed. Nevertheless, it is conceded even by its practitioners that oral sources alone may not be enough for a knowledge of the past. In conclusion, we may quote in detail from Jan Vansina, one of the mainly distinguished oral historians:

- Where there is no writing, or approximately none, oral traditions necessarily bear the brunt of historical reconstruction. They will not do this as if they were written sources. Writing is a technological miracle. It creates utterances permanent while not losing any of their faithfulness, even though the situation of immediate intimate communication is lost. Hence, where writing is widely used, one expects very detailed and very diverse sources of information, which also allow for a very detailed reconstruction of the past. Historians who work with the written sources of the last few centuries in any of the major regions of literacy should not expect that reconstructions by oral materials will yield as full, detailed, and precise a reconstruction, barring only the very recent past. The limitations of oral custom necessarily are fully appreciated so that it will not approach as a disappointment that extensive periods of research yield a construction that is still not very detailed. What one does reconstruct from oral sources may well be of a lower order of reliability, when there are no self-governing sources to cross-check, and when structuring or chronological troubles complicate the issues.

## **MICROHISTORY**

Micro history has a curious connection with local history and oral history. It resembles local history as its subject matter is often confined to a locality. Moreover, its sources are local in origins and nature. The oral sources, folk tales and legends and local records, which are staple of local history, are also used extensively by the micro historians. But the resemblance ends here. M.M. Postan once distinguished flanked by 'microscopic' and 'microcosmic' studies. 'Microscopic' studies are those which remain confined to issues of local interests and significance, whereas 'microcosmic' studies are based on an rigorous research of small region situated within a superior

context. In this perspective, while a big part of local history belongs to the microscopic studies, the micro history approximately entirely belongs of the microcosmic diversity.

Carlo Ginzburg, one of the best-recognized historians recognized with micro history, traces the first use of this term to an American scholar, George R. Stewart. In his book, *Pickett's Charge: A Micro history of the Final Charge at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863*, published in 1959, Stewart uses the term. The book is centered on an event which lasted for only in relation to the twenty minutes. In 1968, Luis Gonzalez used the term micro history in the subtitle of his book which deals with the changes experienced in excess of four centuries by a tiny, forgotten village in Mexico. In information, as Gonzalez himself pointed out, the term was also used in 1960 by Fernand Braudel. But, for Braudel, it had a negative connotation and was synonymous with the history of events. The word appears in a novel by Raymond Queneau in 1965. This novel was translated into Italian by Italo Calvino in 1967. From this and from its use in Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table* ensively for sure type of historical practice. Giovanni Levi was the first Italian historian to extensively use this term.

Therefore micro history, as a conceivable historical practice, appeared throughout the 1970s and the 1980s in Italy. Although it had its variants in Germany in *Alltagsgeschichte* or the history of everyday life, and in France and the United States in the new cultural history, it is the Italian micro historians who set mainly of the agenda for writing this version of history. Carlo Ginzburg, Giovanni Levi, Carlo Poni, Edoardo Grendi, and Gianna Pomata are some of the Italian historians who made the word well-known through their writings. Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* Francesca itches' Sabbath wer: *The Story of an Exorcist* of this historiographical trend. The Italian journal *Quaderni Storici*, right since its base in 1966, has served as the channel for this trend in historiography. Though, micro history is part of a wider trend which comprises rigorous local and individual studies by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie in France, Hans Medick in Germany, and Robert Darnton and Natalie Zemon Davis in the US.

Micro history is a late contemporary, sometimes, postmodern, response to the troubles of contemporary historiography. The micro historians are critical of not only the Rankean paradigm, but also the macro historical paradigms urbanized by Marxism, the Annales School and even the old social history. The micro historians do not have an optimistic view in relation to the several benefits brought in relation to the by the contemporary technology. Therefore the objection to the macro historical discourse is not only methodological, but also ethical and political. The macro historical conception, they argue, praise the achievements of modernization, contemporary science and technology while ignoring the human cost; they also neglect the experiences of the 'little people' who has to bear the brunt of 'progress'. The micro historians describe their historiographical practice against approach of the analytical social science, met history of Marxism and the non-human grand history of the *Annales* School, particularly Braudel.

The micro historians trace the origins of this trend to the crisis of macro history in the 1970s. There was an rising disenchantment with grand narratives and the social scientific studies based on quantitative data not because these approaches were inherently wrong but because they did not capture the reality at the micro stage. According to the micro historians, the effort should be 'to open history to peoples who would be left out by other ways' and 'to elucidate historical causation on the stage of small groups where mainly of life takes lay'. Giovanni Levi, one of the founders of this trend, points out that it is now usually accepted that 'the 1970s and 1980s were approximately universally years of crisis for the prevailing optimistic belief that the world would be rapidly and radically transformed beside revolutionary rows'. Moreover, 'several of the hopes and mythologies which had previously guided a major part of the cultural debate, including the realm of historiography, were proving to be not so much invalid as inadequate in the face of the unpredictable consequences of political events and social realities – events and realities which were very distant from conforming to the optimistic models proposed by the great Marxist or functionalist systems'. This crisis also entailed conceptual and methodological failure to comprehend the reality at the ground day-to-day stage. Levi states that the 'conceptual tools with

which social scientists of all persuasions interpreted current or past change was weighed down by a burden of inherited positivism. Forecasts of social behaviour were proving to be demonstrably erroneous and this failure of existing systems and paradigms required not so much the construction of a new common social theory as a complete revision of existing apparatus of research'.

Micro history was one response to this comprehensive crisis. It was a groundbreaking and radical response and it took the historiography absent from its focus on the big structures, big procedures, and vast comparisons'. Instead, it concentrated on the small units in society. It was severely critical of the big quantitative studies and macro level discourses because it distorted the reality at small stage. It focused on the small units and on the lives of the individuals livelihood within those units. It was felt that this would lead to better understanding of reality at small stage. As Giovanni Levi put it: The unifying principle of all micro historical research is the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved.' Though, according to Levi, it was not at the theoretical stage that its significance should be seen. Micro history is essentially a historiographical practice whereas its theoretical references are varied and, in a sense, eclectic'. It was a historiographical experiment which has no body of recognized orthodoxy to draw on'.

There were several other reactions to this crisis. One of them was, in the languages of Levi, the resort to a desperate relativism, neo-idealism, or even the return to a philosophy riddled with irrationality'. Though, Levi whispered that the historical research is not a purely rhetorical and aesthetic action'. He firmly takes the face of historians and social scientists who consider that there is a reality outside the texts and it is possible to comprehend it. Therefore the micro historian is not basically concerned with the interpretation of meanings but rather with defining the ambiguities of the symbolic world, the plurality of possible interpretations of it, and the thrash about which takes lay in excess of symbolic as much as in excess of material possessions'. Therefore, for Levi, micro history is poised delicately flanked by the approach of the analytical social sciences and the postmodernist relativism

- Micro history therefore had a very specific site within the so-described new history. It was not basically a question of correcting those characteristics of academic historiography which no longer appeared to function. It was more significant to refute relativism, irrationalism, and the reduction of the historian's work to a purely rhetorical action which interprets texts and not events themselves.'

Carlo Ginzburg supports Levi against the relativist positions, including the one warmly espoused by Ankersmit that reduce historiography to a textual dimension, depriving it of any cognitive value'. The adherents of micro history in Italy had started as Marxists and, in keeping with their Marxist past, they retain three elements of the Marxist theory of history. They consider:

- That social and economic inequality exists in all societies;
- That civilization is not totally autonomous, but is associated with economic forces; and
- That history is nearer to social sciences than to poetry and is, so, based on facts and requires rigorous analysis. Moreover, the subject matter the historians deal with is real.

Therefore micro history, although recognizing that all phases through which research unfolds are constructed and not given', is categorized, according to Ginzburg, by an explicit rejection of the skeptical implications so mainly present in European and American historiography of the 1980s and early 1990s'. It is defined by its insistence on context, exactly the opposite of the in accessible contemplation of the fragmentary advocated by Ankersmit'. It focuses on what Edoardo Grendi, one of its ideologues, described the exceptional normal'. Methodologically, as Levi points out, it is characterized as a practice based on the reduction of the level of observation, on a microscopic analysis and an rigorous revise of the documentary material'. He further emphasizes that For micro history the reduction of level is an analytical procedure, which may be applied anywhere independently of the dimensions of the substance analyzed'. The micro historians consider that it is



only at the small stage that the real nature of several values and beliefs held by people may be revealed. Roger Chartier, commenting on Ginzburg's well-known book, *The Cheese and the Worms*, captures this aspect of micro history clearly:

- It is this reduced level, and almost certainly on this level alone, that we can understand, without deterministic reduction, the relationships flanked by systems of beliefs, of values and symbols on the one hand, and social affiliations on the other.'

The revise of the small level is also undertaken by the cultural anthropologists, led by Clifford Geertz, whose way of thick account discovers resonance in some of the works of these historians. Though, there are several points of differences flanked by the two. Firstly, the micro historians accord more importance to theory than what Geertz and his followers do. Secondly, they are not willing to go distant in the direction of relativism. And, lastly, they criticize a homogeneous conception of civilization in the works of Geertz. As Levi says:

- It appears to me that one of the main differences of perspective flanked by micro history and interpretive anthropology is that the latter sees a homogeneous meaning in public signs and symbols whereas micro history seeks to describe and measure them with reference to the multiplicity of social symbols they produce.'

Levi summarizes the vital characteristics of micro history: the reduction of level, the debate in relation to the rationality, the small clue as scientific paradigm, the role of the scrupulous, the attention to reception and narrative, a specific definition of context and the rejection of relativism'.

But micro historians should not be viewed as a monolithic bloc even in Italy. There are wide differences flanked by them. On the one hand, there is Levi who is theoretically much closer to the analytical history and believes that history is a social science, and not a work of art. On the other hand, Gianna Pomata believes that there is a dazzling prospect of a history that would be thoroughly up to the mainly rigorous standards of the craft while

also matching, in conditions of vitality and intensity of vision, the work of art'. Carlo Ginzburg stands somewhere in the middle. On the whole, it may be said, as Georg G. Iggers points out, that micro history has never been able to escape the framework of superior structures and transformations in which history takes lay'. Though, it can be said in defense of the micro historians that it is a conscious choice and not some theoretical slip. Mainly of them have chosen to criticize the methodology of macro history; but, at the similar time, they have thoroughly rejected the relativism associated with the linguistic turn, postmodernism, and cultural relativism.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is local history? Discuss the differences between the old style of local history and the new one.
- Do you think that oral history can come under the category of proper history? Give your answer with example.
- What are the points of similarities and differences between micro history on the one hand, and local and oral histories on the other?

## **PART 3. APPROACHES TO HISTORY IN MODERN TIMES**

### **CHAPTER 12**

#### **POSITIVIST TRADITION**

##### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Auguste comte and the positivist philosophy
- Empiricist tradition

- Rankean tradition
- Positivist/empiricist view of history
- Critiques
- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss all the trends separately as well as their combined impact on the writing of history.

## **AUGUSTE COMTE AND THE POSITIVIST PHILOSOPHY**

Auguste Comte, a French thinker, enunciated the Positivist Philosophy. He followed the Enlightenment tradition which whispered in universalism. The Enlightenment thinkers whispered that what was applicable to one society was valid for all the others. They, so, thought that it was possible to formulate universal laws which would be valid for the whole world. Comte also favored this universal principle and was opposed to individualism which the Romanticists were preaching. Comte was a disciple of Henri Saint-Simon, a utopian socialist, from 1814 to 1824. Separately from Saint-Simon, the other powers on him were those of John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. All these powers went into the creation of his own system of philosophy. The main books he published were titled: *The Course of Positive Philosophy* and *The Course of Positive Politics*. It is in the first book, published in six volumes from 1830 to 1842, that he elaborated his theoretical model in relation to the history.

According to Comte, there was a successive progression of all conceptions and knowledge through three stages. These stages are in chronological sequence: the Theological or fictitious; the Metaphysical or abstract; and the scientific or Positive'. Of these three stages the first one is the primary stage through which the human mind necessarily passes. The second stage is middle, and the third stage is the final and the fixed and definite state' of human understanding. Comte also sees a parallel flanked by

this development of thought in history and the development of an individual from childhood to adulthood. According to him, the first two stages were now past while the third stage, that is, the Positive stage, was emergent. Comte measured that the Positive stage was dominated by science and industry. In this age the scientists have replaced the theologians and the priests, and the industrialists, including traders, managers and financiers, have replaced the warriors. Comte whispered in the absolute primacy of science. In the Positive stage, there is a search for the laws of several phenomena. Reasoning and observation, Comte said, are the means of this knowledge. Ultimately, all in accessible phenomena and events are to be related to sure common laws. For Comte, the Positivist system would attain perfection if it could symbolize all phenomena as scrupulous characteristics of a single common information; such as gravitation, for instance.

Positivism, so, upheld that knowledge could be generated through observation. In this respect, Positivism had very secure resemblance to the Empiricist tradition which emphasized the role of sense experience. Therefore observation and experience were measured as the mainly significant and essential function. Facts were the outcome of this procedure. Though, at its mainly fundamental stage, the Positivist philosophy was not concerned with individual facts. They, instead, whispered in common laws. These laws were to be derived through the way of induction, that is, by first determining the facts through observation and experience and then derive laws through commonness in the middle of them. For Positivists, so, common laws are only colligation of facts derived from sense experience. Therefore, facts are determined by sense experience and then tested by experiments which ultimately lead to the formation of common laws. These common laws, like those in the sciences, would be related to the vital laws of human development. Once exposed, these laws could be used to predict and vary the patterns of development in society. In such a scheme, individual facts, or humans for that matter, were of no consequence. Comte, so, looked down upon the historians as mere collectors of facts which were of no relevance to him once common laws were recognized. There were three major presuppositions in Comte's system of philosophy:

- He envisaged that the industrial society, which Western Europe had pioneered, was the model of the future society all in excess of the world.
- He whispered that scientific thinking, which he described the positivist philosophy, was applicable both for the sciences and for the society. Moreover, he thought that this thinking, and by implication the positivist philosophy, would soon become prevalent in the whole world, in all societies.
- Comte whispered that the human nature was the similar everywhere. It was, so, possible to apply the common laws of development, exposed by him, to all societies.

Some of these thoughts were general in Comte's age. The belief that the age of religion was in excess of and the age of science and industry had arrived was shared by several. Comte's main thoughts derived from two sources – principle of determinism establish in thoughts of Montesquieu, a French political philosopher, and the thought of inevitable progress through sure stages propounded by Condorcet, another French philosopher. Therefore Comte's central thesis can be stated in Raymond Aron's languages as follows;

- Social phenomena are subject to strict determinism which operates in the form of an inevitable development of human societies – an development which is itself governed by the progress of the human mind.'

Armed with this principle, Comte strove to discover in the human world a vital pattern which would explain everything. Therefore, for him, a final result of all our historical analysis' would be the rational co-ordination of the fundamental sequence of the several events of human history according to a single design'. The Positivist way, as envisaged by Comte, would consist in the observation of facts and data, their verification through experimentation which would finally lead to the establishment of common laws. This way was to be applied in the sciences as well as in humanities such as sociology, history, etc. And, as in the sciences, the individual had not much role in

determining the procedure of development. Therefore, for the historians, Comte's way could have following implications:

- History, like sciences, is subject to sure common laws which could explain the procedure of human development.
- Human mind progresses through sure stages which are inevitable for all societies and cultures.
- Individuals cannot change the course of history.
- The inductive way, which Comte whispered was applicable in sciences, consisting of observation of facts, experimentation and then formulation of common laws, should be applied in the writing of history as well.

## **EMPIRICIST TRADITION**

The word 'empiricism' derives from the Greek word 'empeiria' which means 'experience'. In philosophy, it means that all knowledge is based on experience and experience alone is the justification of all knowledge in the world. According to the Empiricists, the knowledge acquired through tradition, speculation, theoretical reasoning, or imagination is not the proper form of knowledge. So, the bodies of knowledge derived from religious systems, metaphysical speculations, moral preaching and art and literature are not verifiable and so not reliable. The Empiricists consider that the only legitimate form of knowledge is that whose truth can be verified. Both the Empiricists and the Positivists uphold that only the observable world which is perceptible can give the source of genuine knowledge. They contain texts as the physical objects which can form part of the knowledge. They reject the metaphysical, unobservable, and unverifiable manners of knowledge. Empiricism has a extensive history. In western philosophical tradition, the earliest Empiricists were the Greek sophists who made the concrete things the focus of their enquiries. They did not rely on speculations as did several of other Greek philosophers. Aristotle is also sometimes measured as the founder of the Empiricist tradition, but he may equally be claimed by other traditions opposed to Empiricism. In medieval Europe, Thomas Aquinas whispered in

the primacy of senses as the source of knowledge. He said that there is nothing in the intellect that is not first in the senses‘.

In Britain, there lived a very strong Empiricist tradition. In the 16th century, Francis Bacon whispered that an accurate picture of the world could be derived only through the collection of observed data. He tried to base philosophical enquiries on scientific grounds. In the 17th century, John Locke was the leading Empiricist philosopher. The other significant Empiricist philosophers in Britain were George Berkeley, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill. The theories of Empiricism hold that our senses act as mirrors for the things and events in the world. It is on the foundation of those impressions that we understand the world and set up connections flanked by things and events. The world in all its particulars corresponds to how we describe it in language. Therefore when we say potato, it exactly denotes a scrupulous material thing in nature. Empiricism can be said to have generated the following thoughts:

- The real world as we experience is made of concrete things and events and their properties and relationships.
- Individual experience can be inaccessible from each other and from its substance and from the location of its subject. Therefore an experience can be described without reference to the person who experienced it or the circumstances which generated it. In relation to the practice of history, it means that the facts can be separated from the individuals or groups or societies that produced them, and from the researchers who have supposedly uncovered them.
- The person who experiences a scrupulous substance should be like a clean slate that is influenced only by the substance he/she experiences. His/her earlier experiences and ideological orientation are not significant. In conditions of history-writing, it means that the historian or the collector of facts should be influenced only by those facts that he /she has composed and not by previously held ideology or beliefs.
- The nature of the world can be derived only through inductive generalization. All such generalizations, though, should be verified through experiments and can be displaced or corrected by further or dissimilar experiences.

- All knowledge consists of facts derived through experiences and experiences alone. So, any claimed knowledge of transcendental world or any metaphysical speculations have no foundation in reality.

The historians, according to the Empiricists, should repose their trust in the evidences in relation to the past that are presented for us by the contemporaries through their sense impressions and if historians seem at these sources closely, they can present a true picture of the past.

## **RANKEAN TRADITION**

Leopold von Ranke, the nineteenth-century German historian, is usually measured as the founding father of the Empirical historiography. It was with him that a totally new tradition of history-writing started which is still the predominant mode of historiography today. It is true that before Ranke, Edward Gibbon had recognized the contemporary historical scholarship with his monumental book, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published flanked by 1776 and 1788. He based his book on accessible sources and evidences. Though, his work, beside with those of others, such as Voltaire, Hume, etc., who wrote historical pieces in the 18th century, was seriously wanting in several compliments. These deficiencies were mostly due to the nature of historical research in the 18th-century Europe. Those troubles may be listed as follows:

- The first was their concern for establishing the universal principles of human and social behaviour. Moreover, they could not analyze the patterns of change and development in society and polity. Except Gibbon, mainly of the 18th-century historians were not seriously concerned with providing empirical details. There was also a lack of critical acumen in the middle of several of the practitioners of history with regard to their sources. Mainly of them relied totally on the sources and took their accuracy and truth for granted.
- There was also the problem of the non-availability of primary sources and documents. Mainly of the archives were not open to the scholars.



Moreover, mainly of the rulers practiced censorship and did not allow publication of books and accounts which did not agree with their views. In addition, the Catholic Church was still powerful and was able to enforce its own censorship prohibiting the books critical of the Church.

- Another associated problem was the lack of formal teaching of history at the university stage. Because of this, the historians often worked as individuals and never as a team. This led to an absence of mutual checks and informed criticism.

By the early 19th century, mostly due to the French Revolution and several political reforms introduced in its wake. This great revolution changed several thoughts and concepts in relation to the human nature and society. Now people started to think in relation to the change and development in social and individual behaviour. Sources and documents were now more cautiously and critically evaluated before deciding on their veracity. The Danish scholar Barthold Georg Niebuhr is usually measured as the pioneer of this new critical way and the source-based historical research. He used the advanced way of linguistic studies and textual analysis for the revise of the sources and writing of his book, *History of Rome*, which was published in 1811-12. Niebuhr had worked in Prussia since 1806 and was appointed in the recently founded University of Berlin. In his lectures on Roman history, he critically examined the sources, especially the work of the classical writer Livy. For this, he used the mainly advanced philological ways and exposed many weaknesses in Livy's work. Niebuhr thought that such way would bring out the bias in the modern sources and would enable the historians to present true state of things. He whispered that "In laying down the pen, we necessity be able to say in the sight of God, I have not knowingly nor without earnest investigation written anything which is not true."

Although Niebuhr was a crucial figure in developing way of history-writing, it was Ranke who necessity be credited with the beginning of the contemporary historiography. In 1824, he published his first book, *The History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations*. In the Preface of the book, as the statement

of his purpose, he wrote the passage which became the foremost justification of empirical historiography:

- To history has been assigned the task of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of the future ages. To such lofty functions this work does not aspire. Its aim is merely to illustrate how it really was.'

The Rankean approach to history-writing can be summarised as follows:

- Ranke whispered that the past should be understood in its own conditions and not those of the present. The attitudes and behaviour of the people of the past ages should be discerned by the incisive review of that scrupulous era and should not be viewed by the parameters of the historian's own age. In Ranke's opinion, the historian should avoid the present-centric concerns while learning the past and should attempt to understand what issues were significant to the people of the age he/she was learning. This thought of Ranke and the Empirical school introduced the notion of historicity. It meant that past has its own nature which was dissimilar from the present. It is the duty of the historian to uncover the spirit of a scrupulous age.
- Ranke was an Empiricist who whispered that the knowledge is derived only through the sense experience. And the knowledge of the past can approach from the sources which are the objective embodiments of the experiences of the people of that scrupulous era. Therefore the historian should rely only on the material accessible in the sources. The historian should not take recourse to imagination or intuition. Any statement to be made in relation to the past should discover reference in the middle of the sources.
- But Ranke was also critical towards the sources and did not have blind faith in them. He knew that all sources were not of equal value. He, so, advocated the hierarchy of the sources. He gave priority to the sources which were modern with the events. These are recognized as the primary sources. In the middle of these, the records produced by the

participants or direct observers should be given preference to those written by others in the similar era. Then there are the other sources produced by people later on. These are recognized as the secondary sources and should be accorded lesser credence than the primary sources while learning the events. Therefore the precise dating of all sources became a matter of prime concern.

- Ranke also emphasized the importance of providing references. This method all the assertions and statements could be supported by giving full details of sources from which they were derived. Here he further refined and elaborated the technique already followed by Gibbon and other historians before him. This practice was significant because it provided the opportunity to cross-check the evidences cited by the historians. This would lead to corrections and modifications of the views and interpretations of historians.
- Ranke differentiated flanked by facts and interpretations. He emphasized on the primacy of facts which were supported by the evidences based on the sources. The historians' job is to first set up facts and then interpret them. Therefore, in Ranke's opinion, the historian should not seem into the sources to confirm his/her hypotheses, but, instead, build his/her hypotheses on the foundation of the facts establish in the sources.

Ranke's own output was enormous. He wrote many multi-volume books, the best recognized in the middle of them are: *The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, *The Popes of Rome, their Church, and State, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* and *History of Reformation in Germany*. Through his books Ranke tried to set the instance for the future historians. Ranke and his followers not only recognized the methodology for professional history but also helped in developing the institutions to support it. Ranke started graduate seminars in the University of Berlin in 1833 where young researchers were systematically trained. It created a group of scholars in Germany in the 1840s who were devoted and who were involved in writing professional history. Even before that, in 1823, the

Prussian government had started the publication of *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* which strove to publish all significant sources for German medieval history for the historians. By now, more than 360 volumes have appeared.

Ranke conceptualized history as a rigorous science which should abstain from metaphysical speculations and value judgments. He further emphasized that the historians necessity put the sources to philological criticism in order to determine their veracity. In contrast to the Comtean positivism, Ranke stressed the uniqueness of the events and not their universality. For him, it was significant to seem for the exact details and not for the common laws. By 1848, all German-speaking universities had adopted the Rankean way for writing history. And after 1870, in mainly European countries, the United States and Japan, the Rankean model was adopted for historical studies. Journals began to be published in many languages to promote scientific history. Therefore the journal *Historische Zeitschrift* began publication in German in 1859. It was a trend-setter. It was followed by *Revue Historique* in French in 1876, *Rivista Storica Italiana* in Italian in 1884, the *English Historical Review* in 1886, the *American Historical Review* in 1895 and many similar journals in several languages and countries.

## **POSITIVIST/EMPIRICIST VIEW OF HISTORY**

Despite their differences, what all these traditions shared became crucial for the development of historiography. Firstly, they all maintained that history was a science and similar ways of research and investigation might be applied in both regions. Secondly, history dealt with reality and facts which lived outside and self-governing of the perception of the historians. Thirdly, history moved in more or less linear sequence in which events followed the earlier ones in linear chronological time.

Some of the hard-core Positivist historians were Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges and Hippolyte Taine in France and Henry Thomas Buckle in England. Coulanges asserted that what could not be perceived did not exist. Hippolyte Taine, in his book *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, attempted to explain history as *'geometry of forces'*. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation in England*, tried to explain English history in conditions of such

factors such as climate, geography, and innate psychology. The contribution of such historians to the mainstream historical tradition has been rather limited. It is the Rankean and Empiricist traditions which have proved crucial to the development of historiography. Theodor Mommsen, the great German historian was a follower of Ranke. He became well-known for his classic Roman History written in 3 volumes. This book was a prime instance of his meticulous scholarship. He wrote in relation to the history of Roman republic from its inception to its fall by numismatic, philological, and epigraphic sources. His other writings were Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian, and the Roman Public Law and he edited the Corpus of Latin Inscriptions.

Lord Acton was another major figure in this tradition. His mainly lasting contribution was the editorship of the first edition of the Cambridge Contemporary History. Acton whispered that in close to future when all the facts would be accessible it was possible to write ‘ultimate history’. He instructed the contributors to volume to ‘meet the demand for completeness and certainty’. He wrote to them:

- ‘Contributors will understand that our Waterloo necessity be one that satisfies French and English, German and Dutch alike; that nobody can tell, without examining the list of authors, where the Bishop of Oxford laid down the pen and whether Fairburn or Gasquet, Libermann or Harrison took it up.’

J.B.Bury was another significant English historian in this tradition. He also firmly whispered in the scientific status of history and exhorted the historians to be accurate, erudite, and exact in their search and presentation of facts. He maintained that although history may give material for writing literature or philosophy, it was dissimilar from both these because it was a science. He wrote several significant historical works including the *History of Greece* and *A History of the Later Roman Empire*. This view of history was summarised by an immensely influential textbook entitled *Introduction to the Revise of History* written by C.V. Langlois and Charles Seignobos, published in 1898. The authors declared that the objective of history-writing was ‘not to

please, nor to provide practical maxims of conduct, nor to arouse emotions, but knowledge pure and easy'.

Even though there were several critics of this view, this tradition dominated in the 19th century and even in the 20th century mainly of the professional history followed this trend. Mainly historians consider in its central premises that facts have a separate and self-governing subsistence and that mainly of our knowledge of the physical world ultimately derives from sense impressions.

## **CRITIQUES**

There has been widespread criticism of the positivist and empiricist views of history. Right since the Rankean era there have been historians who criticized this trend of history-writing. Johan Gustav Droysen, professor of History at Berlin from 1859 to 1884, described the objective approach of Ranke as the objectivity of a eunuch'. The work of Jacob Burckhardt, Professor of History at Basle from 1845, provided an alternative approach to that of Ranke. He was a disciple of Ranke, but reacted against his way of history-writing and followed the approach of Augustin Thierry and Jules Michelet. Thierry and Michelet criticized the straightforward empiricism and gave rise to thoughts which are associated with the school of historical romanticism'. This trend of historiography stressed the points which the Rankean and Positivist schools had rejected. The historians associated with this trend emphasized the importance of historian's intervention in the writing of history.

They whispered that the historian should be passionate and committed rather than detached. They also emphasized the moral face of history-writing in opposition to rational approach. The local and the scrupulous were given more importance as against universal and common. The history of the society as a whole was emphasized as against the approach which gave prominence to the leaders. As Thierry said that his aim in writing history was to envisage the destiny of peoples and not of sure well-known men, to present the adventures of social life and not those of the individual'. This school whispered in the importance of literary skills in the writing of history and stressed that history

was as much art as it was science. They criticized empiricism for its cult of sources and its emphasis on neutral interpretation. They, in its lay, stressed the role of sentiments and feelings in history-writing. Although there were several historians even before 1914 who seriously questioned the possibility of a scientific, neutral and value-free history, the events of the First World War and their aftermath severely jolted the belief that historical accounts could be produced which would satisfy persons of all nationalities. In information, the historians of several countries wrote histories which contradicted the ones written by those in other countries. They interpreted events which justified their respective nations. Even though there were exceptions to this rule, the overall tendency was to write nationalist histories rather than scientific histories. In information, the nationalist histories were flaunted as scientific histories. The Rankean and Positivist ideals of producing scientific and objective history came under severe strain.

The Positivists whispered in the ways and truths of the natural sciences. They wanted to apply these ways to the revise of society as well. Hence, they designated these disciplines as social sciences. They whispered that, by the use of inductive ways, it was possible to predict in relation to the future of society as in the natural sciences. But in the 20th century, the nature of the natural sciences also changed at theoretical stage. Albert Einstein's Common Theory of Relativity, propounded in 1913, changed the very nature of research in natural sciences. The thinking in relation to the history was also influenced by these growths. The Positivist certainty and Rankean objectivity now seemed a thing of the past. Several thinkers now emphasized the relativistic nature of history. Wilhelm Dilthey in Germany, Benedetto Croce in Italy and R.G. Collingwood in England were in the middle of the more influential thinkers in this regard. Croce declared that All history is modern history which meant that history is written always in the light of the present concern and is shaped by the ideological tool accessible to the historian in his/her own era. The American historian, Carl Becker, denied the subsistence of facts at all by saying that the facts of history do not exist for any historian till he makes them. Collingwood went even further by provocatively stating that all history is the history of thought. What these thinkers were demanding

was the usual distinction flanked by information and interpretation which mainly of the pre-First World War historians were prone to do.

Their views received wide acceptance in the middle of historians. The role of the historian now acquired vast prominence, as the role of sources had early on. The work of interpretation was always measured the prerogative of the historian. But now even the decision in relation to the what should be measured as facts was thought to be the privilege of the historian. As E.H.Carr states that the necessity to set up these vital facts rests not on any excellence of the facts themselves, but on a *a priori* decision of the historian. The facts no longer spoke for themselves, as was the case with the empiricists; they now have to be made to speak in the diction of the historian. To quote E.H.Carr again:

- The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to provide the floor, and in what order or context.... a information is like a sack — it won't stand up till you've put something in it.

E.H.Carr presents these views as the Collingwood view of history. He himself adopts a more careful approach which provides equal weight age to facts and historians. Mainly of the working historians usually adopt this approach.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What are the differences and similarities between Positivism and Empiricism?
- Who was Leopold von Ranke? Discuss his views on history.
- Discuss the positive and negative points of Rankean view of history.

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **CLASSICAL MARXIST TRADITION**



## **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Utopia and science
- Marx's developing thoughts
- Marx and modern history
- Classical Marxism and its tradition
- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the establishment of this tradition by looking at the works of Karl Marx himself apart from some others immediately following that tradition.

## **UTOPIA AND SCIENCE**

The socialist ideal has a longer tradition than what we have from Marx and Engels. The bourgeois revolutions in history had often aligned a mass following of working peasants and laborers who looked beyond the abolition of feudal order to a transformation not limited by the capitalist seizure of power and property. To cite one or two examples, we may keep in mind the role of John Lilburne and his followers in the English Revolution of 1647. They were recognized as the Levelers consisting of small Yeoman farmers, shopkeepers, the less wealthy tradesmen, artisans and apprentices who stood for equality beside with the plea for a broad-based democracy. Another group known as 'Diggers' and led by Gerrard Winstanley struggled not for political rights alone and were unrelenting in their demand for general ownership of land. Again, throughout the French Revolution of 1789, there was the instance of Babouvism led by Gracchus Babeuf as an effort to reach a republic of equals for improving the condition of the working people.

Indeed, the goal of general land ownership featured as an ideal in the programmes of peasant uprisings even throughout the feudal era of Europe's history. The great peasant war was led by Thomas Müntzer who urged the rebels to set up

–God’s Kingdom” on earth, meaning thereby a classless society free of private projects and without any government. Thomas More wrote a book by the name *Utopia* in 1516 throughout the reign of Henry VIII in England. Perhaps, till the end of the eighteenth century, it remained the mainly significant writing on socialist thought. The Greek word ‘Utopia’ means non-existent or no lay. More chose this to emphasize a still unattained social ideal thriving on communism, universal education, and religious tolerance. While the image of an ideal human society had been well presented in More’s narrative, the methods, and means of realizing such an ideal were left, in the main, to the working of a noble prince. Utopia is then unhistorical and could happen only as a miracle. Therefore, the very word ‘Utopia’ acquired the meaning of an imaginary society which was never attainable.

Beside with the development of capitalism, utopian socialist thoughts rising in opposition appeared in several shapes and complexities. In the middle of such thinkers were Saint –Simon, Fourier, Proudhon of France, Sismondi, a German Swiss of French descent, who was familiar with the economic circumstances in England, Italy and France, Robert Owen of England, Wilhelm Weitling of Germany. Despite their differences, a general socialist bias was apparent in the emphasis on the need for a social approach as distinguished from the pursuit of individual self-interest to achieve social well-being. Further, mainly of them shared some type of distrust in politics and favored dissimilar alternatives to ensure presently and proper management of human affairs.

Their thoughts in relation to the nature of institutions for the conduct of such management were dissimilar. The Fourierists and the Owenites thought of covering the earth with a network of local societies, while the followers of Saint-Simon propagated for the transformation of nation-states into big productive corporations where scientists and technological experts should have effective power to do things for the widest social benefit. Wilhelm Weitling was a very popular figure in the middle of German exiles in places like London, Paris and Brussels. No less important was his power in excess of German workers in their own land. He wrote a booklet by name *Mankind as it is and as it ought to be*. Weitling had no trust in intellectuals and depended, in

the main, on poor-friendly homilies and adventurist anti-statism for his thoughts of achieving socialism. Weitling had a preacher's approach and his addresses to mass meetings were in quasi-religious conditions. Approximately 1845-46, when their manuscript of *The German Ideology* had been nearing completion, Marx and Engels took initiative for setting up a Communist Correspondence Committee to act as the coordinator of several communist theories and practices which were then being apparent in the European capitals. At a time when Marx was occupied in his understanding of history as passing through stages related to the interaction of productive forces and manufacture dealings, the other expressions of socialist thought like that of Weitling would appear to be very puerile formulations of an ignorant mind. Their differences were sharply manifest at a meeting in Marx's Brussels residence where he stayed with his family throughout 1846-47.

P.V. Annenkov, a Russian tourist, who was present at the meeting on Marx's invitation, gave an explanation of its proceedings. In his opening statement, Engels emphasized the need for a general doctrine to act as a banner for all those devoted to improving the condition of the working people. It was especially necessary for those who lacked the time and opportunity to revise theory. Engels was yet to complete his argument when Marx asked Weitling, 'Tell us, Weitling, you have made such a noise in Germany with your preaching: on what grounds do you justify your action and what do you intend to base it on in the future?' Weitling spoke for an extensive time, repeating and correcting himself and arriving with difficulty at his conclusions. He tried to create clear that his aim was not to make new economic theories but to adopt those that were mainly appropriate, as experience in France had shown, to open the eyes of their workers to the horrors of their condition and all the injustices which it had become the motto of the rulers and societies to inflict on them, and to teach them never to consider in any promises of the latter, but to rely only upon themselves, and to organize in democratic and communist associations. McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, Macmillan, London.

Marx checked Weitling from speaking further and sarcastically commented that 'in Germany, to appeal to the workers without a rigorous

scientific thought and without positive doctrine had the similar value as an empty and dishonest game at playing preacher, with someone supposed to be an inspired prophet on the one face and only asses listening to him with mouths agape allowed on the other.' Pointing to Annenkov, Marx said that in the Russian motherland of their guest, a country not yet entirely free from barbarism, some people could still be establish to care for saintly' observations like that of Weitling. But, In a civilized country like Germany.... People could do nothing up to now except to create noise, cause harmful outbreaks, and ruin the very cause they had espoused.' Here is a telling instance of Marx's vehement emphasis on assimilation of socialist thought with what can be recognized as scientific understanding of history and society connected to their laws of movement and change. For Marx, unlike his utopian precursors and also some contemporaries, socialism was not a morality play in which the virtues of love, kindness, and fraternity have to prevail in excess of the vices of greed, graft and use. Since the onset of the Renaissance in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, the growth of scientific knowledge and experiments had cumulatively added to human uses of nature and its objects for the expansion and improvements of social manufacture. In Marx's own world, science had already furnished the technological bases of the industrial revolution in west Europe. But the outlook for human consciousness and social dealings was still subject to pre-scientific constraints.

On the other face the ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality, though of immense importance for the demolition of the old order, were yet to satisfy the criterion of being really absorbed in the creation of a society and state. The experience of the French Revolution could not fully uphold the theories and ideals of the Enlightenment philosophers. Nor did the Reign of Terror under the radical Jacobin leadership augur well for the base of popular sovereignty. Moreover, the transition from feudalism to capitalism and its economic climax in an Industrial Revolution brought in relation to the gross inequities and dehumanisation as they were manifest in the new form of capital-labour connection.

An acute and intense awareness of those troubles was expressed in Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* It was written in Paris

where Marx was then livelihood, exiled for his radical views and political location from Germany, his own homeland. The *Paris Manuscripts* was his first discourse linking up philosophical thoughts and ideals with an explicit presentation of the economic aspect of social being. It contains Marx's first analysis of alienated labour under capitalist use. Subsequently, beside with Engels, Marx was committed to a search for the laws of historical movement and changes. Some such detection was essential for placing the socialist ideal on a scientific foundation. We know how strongly the point was emphasized by Marx in his argument with Weitling. We should sift and explain the principal thoughts of the subsequent texts by Marx and Engels to have an understanding of classical Marxism.

## **MARX'S DEVELOPING THOUGHTS**

The century spanning the years 1760-1860 is recognized as the era of industrial revolution in England. It was distinguished by distant-reaching cumulative changes in the technological bases of manufacture and marked a peak point of Britain's capitalist transformation. The pace of capitalist development mainly varied flanked by the countries of Europe. To cite a few examples, the course of change was rapid in Holland and even more radical than that of England; while the French monarchy faced its doom in 1789, capitalist economic growth and political order did not approach to have a sustainable pattern before the last quarter of the 19th century; prior to the unification of German territories in 1871, the course of capitalism in that land was subject to numerous obstacles and eventually its bourgeois transformation was mixed up with feudal residues and political autocracy, an experience which Marx described in his preface to the first volume of *Capital*.

- Alongside of contemporary evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated manners of manufacture, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the livelihood, but from the dead, *Le mort saisit le vif!* ‘

Born in 1818 in Trier, a prominent town in the Rhine province of Prussia, Karl Marx grew up amidst practically the last stage of capitalist transition in Europe. In the previous part of this revise, we have taken note of the several socialist thoughts and perspectives invoking mass support for the bourgeois thrash about to supersede the feudal order, and later shaping into good several doctrines to defend the working people against the onslaught of capitalism in power. Beside with the triumph and consolidation of capital's wealth and power in any country, its laboring people were inevitably ousted from any holding of their own means of manufacture and had to seek their survival as wage-labour of capitalist entrepreneurs / employers.

While elaborating the nature and circumstances of capital and labour in his *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx indicated three characteristics of labour's alienation, viz. duct of his work, y itself, and Considering the date of the *Paris Manuscripts*, it appears that Marx did not consider the effects of capital-labour manufacture relation *Paris Manuscripts*, only in conditions of the sphere of manufacture. He pointed to its envelopment of the whole framework of capitalist social connection another. Therefore, capitalism brings in relation to the a type of alienation that violates the very nature of man as a species- being. For Marx, all this had to be comprehended not merely as an image of capitalist evils. He was bent on arriving at a theoretical understanding which would clarify the reality of capitalism as a historical stage subject to its own contradictions. Such contradictions have to be appropriately resolved for any transition to socialism.

The historical course towards socialism would depend on discerning the nature of those contradictions and their bearing upon the negation of capitalism. There arises the need for a theory which can explanation for the experience of history passing through its several stages in conditions of the relative weights of the actors and the factors influencing the pace, pattern and content of the changes. Our knowledge of how the present has appeared out of its past should enable us to recognize the incumbencies of acting for the future in an unceasing historical procedure. The truth of such knowledge can be constantly verified in reference to the ever-rising proof of men and women in society, their class positions and behaviors. Moreover, such knowledge can

often gain in precision with more and more inputs from practical social experience. History is no self-governing metaphysical entity. It is purposeful action of human beings. They create history on a creative understanding of circumstances nearby them in real social life.

We have presently noted the broad purport of Marx's view of history. It helps us to see the relevance of Marx's emphasis on scientific knowledge in his argument with Weitling. He places a big premium on the common character, universality, necessity, and objective truth – all this measured to be attributes of scientific knowledge – in the pursuit of historical reality. Before entering into further details of the Marxian theory, we may note the major powers of Europe's intellectual tradition ally of the Hegelian system, materialism of the Enlightenment philosophers, English classical political economy and the several versions of utopian socialism as already noted in the previous part of this revise, which had their roles in the development of Marx's thought. Indeed, several of the components of Marx's theory can be best understood in the light of his acceptance/rejection of the thoughts articulated by his precursors/contemporaries in relation to the Europe's capitalist transition and the subsequent agenda of moving towards socialism.

Throughout his student days at the Bonn and Berlin universities, particularly at the latter, Marx was mainly influenced by the way and range of Hegelian philosophy. He joined the 'Young Hegelians' whose interpretation of Hegelian philosophy and criticism of Christian thought presented a type of bourgeois democratic thought and political interest. Friedrich Engels met Marx in 1844 and they became life-extensive friends and collaborators. Both of them were critical of the idealist philosophical location of 'Young Hegelians' and emphasized the need for investigating material social dealings at the roots of the spiritual life of society. Earlier, Ludwig Feuerbach had pointed to the idealist weakness of the 'Young Hegelian' location. In his significant book *The Essence of Christianity*, insulation in 1841, the formulation of human beings creating god in their own image was a important step forward in materialist prevalence in excess of idealist thought.

*The Holy Family or the Critique of Critical Critique s*, launched a piercing attack on philosophical idealism. The 'Young Hegelians' were

facetiously named the 'Holy Family'. The book upheld the location of the Enlightenment philosophers for their emphasis on empirical test of truth. At the similar time, the dialectical way was rigorously applied to arrive at an adequate thought of changing social dealings and also that of recognizing the proletariat as the gravedigger of capitalism. Capitalist private property necessarily makes its own antagonist in the proletariat. And as private property grows, the proletariat develops as its negation, a dehumanized force becoming the precondition of a synthesis to do absent with both capital and wage labour in opposition to each other.

*The German Ideology* was the after that joint work of Marx and Engels. Though written in 1845, the book could not be published in their lifetime. It appeared for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1932. In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* as an effort to settle accounts with their previous philosophical conscience. In addition to their critique of idealism, Marx and Engels exposed the contemplative nature of Feuerbach's materialism which failed to consider really existing active men as they live and work in the midst of any scrupulous socio-economic formation. *The German Ideology* provided for the first time the thoughts of historical stages in relation to class thrash about and social consciousness to help our comprehension of movements in history.

Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* was establish in his notebook and was first published as an appendix to Engel's *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* *The German Ideology* when the latter had been released as a book. Altogether we have eleven theses commenting, step by step, on the limitations of idealism and earlier versions of materialism for not properly understanding the type of dialectical interaction flanked by human social beings and their nearby circumstances. The location of idealism is caught up in abstractions without appropriate cognizance of the realities of human social livelihood. On the other hand, earlier materialism could regard human beings only as creatures of their circumstances, failing to recognize the role of human sensuous action in the creation of circumstances. Marx's location was memorably expressed in his eleventh thesis, which was as well the last aphorism of the series, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the



world in several methods; the point though is to *change* it.' We have already mentioned the Communist Correspondence Committee set up by Marx and Engels in 1845-46. Such committees started work in other places like London and Paris. A preliminary conference of those committees held in the summer of 1847 in London took the decision to unite in a body. A second meeting held in November-December, in London, named the united body as the Communist League and commissioned Karl Marx to prepare a manifesto of the Communist Party. It would then be published by the League.

The *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels from the two names on its title page. Later, Engels pointed out that the vital thought belonged solely and exclusively to Marx and the actual writing was done by Marx. It has four parts. The first part,, provides a history of society as a succession of class societies and thrash about. The laws of social development are manifest in the replacement of one mode of manufacture by another. The second part,, turns on the super session of capitalism in the thrash about flanked by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat led by the communists. The communists differ from other working class groups. But they are not opposed to such groups. The communists are distinguished for their being international and fully conscious of the role of the proletarian movement. Rejecting the bourgeois objections to communism, this chapter provides an outline of the events to be adopted by the victorious proletariat after seizing power and mentions and need and relevance of the dictatorship of the proletariats. The third chapter,, contains an extended criticism of the doctrines of socialism. The reactionary, bourgeois kinds are merely examples of feudal atavism and bourgeois and petty bourgeois manoeuvres masquerading behind some pretensions of socialism. Some utopian socialists may be sincere in their moral sentiments and disapproval of capitalism. But they are misleading in their search for a method out of the realities of capitalist use. The forth chapter, the several opposition parties sets forth the communist tactics in their dealing with the several opposition parties. This would certainly depend on the location of a party in regard to the stage of development of its scrupulous country and society. The Manifesto concluded with the slogan- Working men of all countries, unite!' The distinction of Marx's thought is clear from the contrast

in the tenor of this slogan from that of the motto—All men are brother—used by Fraternal Democrats, and earlier international society including Chartists and European political exiles in London.

Marx wrote *The Poverty of Philosophy* against Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a French political figure, philosopher, sociologist, and economist, who measured the history of society as the thrash about of thoughts and whispered in achieving presently exchanges flanked by capitalist commodity producers through the device of an ideal organisation. The book gave a definite impression of Marx's unrelenting effort to have a fuller understanding of the capitalist mode of manufacture. He was occupied in looking for a theoretical result that would combine the structural observations of classical political economy with dialectical comprehension of a society changing under the pressure of its contradictions in the procedure of history. In the middle of several other assignments and responsibilities including the day-to-day work of the Communist League to organize the working people of Europe, Marx never neglected his project for the critique of political economy. He could see its necessity for bearing out the rationale for scientific socialism. This is where the seven notebooks written by Marx in 1857-58, now recognized as *Grundrisse* omy — first English edition in Pelican Marx Library, Harmondsworth, England, in 1973, trs. Martin Nicolaus — bring out the valuable point that the question of historical transition from capitalism to socialism can be answered in all fitness by formulating Ricardo's thoughts of political economy with Hegelian language and Hegel's thoughts of historical movement with Ricardian language. obin Blackburn ed. *Ideology in Social Science*. In his analysis of capitalist economic development Ricardo exposed the disharmonious tendencies in the procedures. But for him, capitalism was an immutable natural system, which could not be changed under any circumstances. On the other hand, Hegelian dialectics had a dynamic view of society, but could not discern the real core of contradiction in the material life of society. Marx combined Hegelian dialectics with his critical revise of political economy and arrived at an understanding of historical super session of capitalism by socialism. For Marx, such a fusion of economic and philosophical thoughts started with the *Paris Manuscripts* of 1844. In

*Grundrisse*, it reached the point of articulating that the politico-economic interpretation of capitalism is fulfilled in the proletarian praxis of revolutionary transformation.

In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of his creative theoretical comprehension of historical movement and social change. It was not very extensive, but immensely important, as the following excerpt will bear out:

- My investigation led to the result that legal dealings such as shapes of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-described common development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material circumstances of life, the sum total of which Hegel, following the instance of the Englishmen and Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, combines under the name of “civil society”, that though the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy.....The common result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as a guiding thread for my studies, can be briefly formulated as follows: In the social manufacture of their life, men enter into definite dealings that are indispensable and self-governing of their will; these dealings of manufacture correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of manufacture. The sum total of these dealings of manufacture constitutes the economic structure of society – the real base, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite shapes of social consciousness. The mode of manufacture of material life determines the social, political and intellectual life procedure in common. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a sure stage of their development, the material productive forces in society approach in disagreement with the existing dealings of manufacture, or – what is but a legal expression for the similar thing – with the property dealings within which they have been at work before. From shapes of development of the productive forces these dealings turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With

the change of the economic base the whole immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made flanked by the material transformation of economic circumstances of manufacture, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological shapes in which men become conscious of this disagreement and fight it out. Presently as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a era of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness necessity be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing disagreement flanked by the social productive forces and the dealings of manufacture. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been urbanized; and, new higher dealings of manufacture never appear before the material circumstances of their subsistence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. So, mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always discover that the task itself arises only when the material circumstances necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the procedure of formation. In broad outlines, we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the contemporary bourgeois manners of manufacture as so several progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois dealings of manufacture are the last antagonistic form of the social procedure of manufacture – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from individuals; at the similar time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society make the material circumstances for the solution of that antagonism.‘

Following the point of arrival in his articulation of historical materialism, Marx’s immediate concern was to interpret the contradiction of the capitalist social formation. No doubt, the veracity of a new theory of social

change is closely connected to the proof of the present as history. The economics of the capitalist mode of manufacture is the subject matter of Marx's *Capital*, which Marx measured to be his lifework. Its first volume was published in 1867; the second and the third volumes were posthumously published in 1885 and 1894 respectively, under the editorial supervision of Engels. The first volume provides us a logical elaboration of capital-labour connection at a stage of abstraction and in analytical shapes that can best crystallize the mainly important structural feature and dynamic tendencies of the capitalist system. The second and the third volumes deal with the realities of capitalism on a much lesser stage of abstraction and in conditions of concrete things and happenings. Their regions are circulation of capital and then the procedure of capitalist manufacture as a whole. The *Theories of Surplus Value* Capital turned upon the historical substantiation of Marx's theory in the light of other earlier and modern writings on Political Economy.

Marx points to the source of profits in a competitive capitalist economy. The value of a commodity is determined by socially necessary labour time necessary to produce it. Labour power is a commodity as well as exchanged for wages. The value of labour power is equal to the value of what is needed for the survival and maintenance of a worker and his family. The peculiarity of labour power as a commodity is that it can make more value than what is paid in wages as its value. This variation flanked by the values produced by labour power and its wages is surplus value. Surplus value accrues to the capitalist employer and here lies the source of profits. Superior and superior accumulation out of these profits is the main aim of capitalist manufacture. More and more accumulation results in the advance of productive forces and increased productivity. It also leads to centralization of capital. In Marx's languages, 'one capitalist always kills several'. Several capitalists are knocked out by the working of competition. All this is associated with cumulative augment of misery, oppression, slavery and degradation. The circumstances become rife for the revolt of the working class. The advance of productive forces can no longer be compatible with the insatiable urge of capital to maximize profits at the expense of the proletariat. The tendencies towards a falling rate of profit and also that of overproductions

produced appear as symptoms of capitalist crisis. The issues relating to profit rate and overproduction are analyzed in some details in the third volume of *Capital*.

## **MARX AND MODERN HISTORY**

Marx was not merely a theoretical philosopher. He was occupied in the base of the Communist League in 1847 and then in writing the *Communist Manifesto* and influential member of the International Working Men's Association recognized in 1864. Approximately the 1850s, the countries of Europe were in dissimilar stages of reaching the capitalist system, indicated by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*. In his numerous appraisals of such historical situations, Marx put emphasis on the relative strength and weakness of a country's bourgeoisie. There were circumstances in which he had described upon the working people to help in the attainment of a bourgeois democratic revolution, since that would take a society nearer to the socialist transition. Marx also encountered historical situations where the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class was not yet prepared to seize political command. The intricate plurality of classes in such circumstances was the subject of Marx's incisive analysis in his essay on 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' – the instance of French history when Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I, assumed the location of an emperor as Napoleon III after his *coup d'etat* in 1851.

Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune in 1871 is significant in several respect. A big number of manual workers were in the middle of its elected members. Mainly of them were also members of the International. It was not a revolution that would fit in with the Marxian theory of historical change actuated by the advance of productive forces outpacing some existing manufacture dealings in a society. Still Marx underlined its significance and highly appreciated its democratic and decent red exercise of political power.

Marx's comments on not-European countries were for the mainly part influenced by his thoughts on Europe's historical experience of passing from feudalism to capitalism and then, as Marx saw it, to socialism achieved by a class-conscious proletarian revolution. His thoughts in relation to the Asiatic

mode of manufacture were mainly derived from ideologues of British empire. They were often emphatic in their portrayal of India as a static, barbaric society whose only means of redemption obtained in submission to the 'civilizing' rule of imperial Britain. Marx measured that the forced inception of capitalism in India would act as an unconscious tool of history for bringing the country up to the path of its capitalist transformation. Despite all the sordid consequences of all this, the circumstances would open up the perspective of a socialist transformation in the subject country. Its probability necessity has a necessary connection with socialist transformation of the ruling country. For China also Marx wrote of the need for the assertion of western culture by force. In the last decade of his life, Marx appeared to go for newer investigations, perhaps with a view to further probing into the issues of non-European countries and their paths of social change in history. We shall approach to that point at a later stage of this presentation.

As regards America, Marx interpreted the civil war as a thrash about flanked by two social systems – slavery versus free labour. All his support was for the north and betrayed no concern for the popular element in the resistance of the southern small holders. No doubt, the favorable attitude of the English ruling classes towards the southern slave owners and efforts to cast the similar ideological power on their own workers as well had influenced Marx's location in the matter.

## **CLASSICAL MARXISM AND ITS TRADITION**

By now, we should have shaped an thought of the content of Marx's thought. Admittedly, it has been a summary presentation avoiding some complexities of the theory and practice of Marxism, which have been a part of the historical experience in excess of almost two centuries. For our present purpose classical Marxism consists of thoughts received directly from the writings of Marx and Engels. The point of any divergence flanked by Marx and Engels are set aside for the present. It is well-recognized that Marx and Engels worked in secure collaboration for a extensive era and often occupied in jointly writing such significant texts like *The Communist Manifesto*. Let us create a point by point resume of the content of classical Marxism. Marx

adopted the logic of Hegelian dialectics as his way for understanding the dynamics of social change and transformation in history. He did not go by Hegel's philosophy of idealism. Marx held that in the connection of being and thought, the former is the subject and the latter the predicate. Hegel inverted this relation to its opposite, setting thought as the subject and being its predicate. The materialist philosophical location taken by Marx was though dissimilar in a very significant sense from the mechanistic materialism of the Enlightenment and other earlier kinds. It focused on the reality of mind and consciousness and did not consider human action as being a passive product of material circumstances.

Economic structure and action are to be understood in conditions of its circumstances, productive forces and manufacture dealings. The circumstances of manufacture are set by a society's geographical site, its climate and demographic characteristics like the size and composition of its population. Productive forces comprise apparatus, machinery, technology and skills. Manufacture dealings refer to the nature of property in a scrupulous society and its shapes of social subsistence of labour which, in their interaction, conduct what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce, thereby deciding upon the items and quantities of manufacture, technology deployed, and the sharing of final output. All this goes to constitute the economic structure of a society, its mode of manufacture. Marx measured the legal, religious, aesthetic, philosophic and other ideological elements as being rooted in the economic structure of society. So are the state and the political disposition of a society. Class disagreement is a general characteristic of all social stages indicated by Marx in regard to the history of Europe. Such stages are ancient slavery, the feudal order and capitalism. Class conflicts and struggles result from the social division flanked by those who own the means of manufacture and those who do not. There is the key to the contradictions within a mode of manufacture and for that matter the thrust for changes from one mode to another.

A mode of manufacture can be sustained as extensive as its dealings of manufacture are compatible with the advance of corresponding productive forces. In course of time, a mode of manufacture may reach the stage when



further advance of productive forces is no longer workable within the existing dealings of manufacture. Therefore, the property systems allied with the scrupulous pattern of manufacture dealings and enjoying the legal sanction of the state in power, become a fetter on the growth of productive forces. This, in Marx's languages, marks the beginning of an epoch of social revolution whereby a new class, which can act as the protagonist of newer manufacture force, comes to achieve its social hegemony and political command. Equally posed against any utopian leap or shoddy conformism, Marx put some decisive emphasis on the sufficiency of material circumstances for the transformation of a socio-economic order:

- No order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have urbanized, and new, higher dealings of manufacture never appear before the material circumstances of their subsistence have matured, in the womb of the old society itself.

In Marx's comprehension, the revolutionary triumph of the proletariat leads to the beginning of a classless society free from alienation of man from man. As a propertyless class brings in relation to the abolition of capitalism, society no longer harbors private property of any type. The root cause of alienation is removed. The success of the proletarian revolution liberates all men/women from alienation and absence of real freedom. As already noted, this revise has taken the theories, thoughts and comments establish in the works of Marx and Engels as classical Marxism. It marks a departure from the usual sense of the word Marxist to comprise thoughts and practices supposedly derived from the thoughts of Marx. The thoughts which can be directly establish in the works of Marx and Engels are then earmarked as Marxian. Such a distinction was apparent even throughout Marx's own lifetime. We may recall what Engels wrote to Bernstein, a leading figure in the German Social Democratic Party, in a letter of 3 November, 1882, The self-styled "Marxism" in France is certainly a quite special product to such an extent that Marx said to Lafarge "This much is sure, I am not a Marxist."

There are cause for our present decision to treat only the body of thought urbanized by Marx and Engels as classical Marxism. It should better

enable us to discern the subsequent powers of a tradition set forth by classical Marxism with its combination of historical materialism and proletarian class thrash about for abolition of capitalism. On explanation of the very ways of classical Marxism, it could never endorse an absolute submission to the set of all its original propositions in their entirety. We necessity be ready to face the hard information that a sound inference and direction valid for one scrupulous historical context, may lose its veracity in a dissimilar situation, although in both cases, the phenomena of class thrash about, capitalist contradiction and the need for cohesive oppositional move towards socialism remain quite pertinent. Let us then seem at some directions of classical Marxism, as we have indicated its location, and the issues coming up throughout the late nineteenth and the whole twentieth centuries, in respect of policies and praxis of socialist movement alit revolution, the maturity of circumstances for a socialist revolution, the type of party necessary for the movement of the proletariat, nature and working of imperialism.

In the wake of the defeat of the Paris communards in 1871, the workers movement in Europe was subject to confusing pushes and pulls from a number of ultra-left sects and anarchists. This was the background of the move to shift the headquarters of the International to New York. It was eventually dissolved in 1876. The statement concerning the dissolution contained, in the middle of other comments, the following remark, Let us provide our fellow workers in Europe a little time to strengthen their national affairs, and they will surely be in a location to remove the barriers flanked by themselves and the workingmen of other parts the world. Throughout the era flanked by 1848 and 1876, there were several twists and turns of the European history. All said and done, the main characteristic of this complicated procedure appeared in several instances of consolidation of capitalist power, in some countries even by forging alliance with feudal elements, against the forces of toilers' revolt having the perspective of moving to the goal of socialism.

Marx died in 1883. Six years later the Second International opened in Paris in July 1889. Bringing jointly 391 delegates from 20 countries, it was still then the main international gathering in the world labour history. Approximately as a parallel event, there was another international labour

conference in Paris at the similar time. This was a gathering of those trade unionists and legal Marxists who whispered in achieving socialism through some alteration of the bourgeois legal framework. Any coalescence of such forces was opposed by Engels, even though there were proposals for such a merger in both the conferences. In any case, the merger was effected in 1891 at the Brussels conference. Following the historical twists and turns we have already mentioned, the growth of capitalism resulted in rising number of wage laborers in more and more countries of Europe. Similar trends were seen in North America and later by the end of the century in Japan. Correlatively, a big expansion of the trade union movement occurred throughout the capitalist countries. Moreover, in the more advanced capitalist countries, especially in Britain, the rise in productivity and also the gains appropriated from imperialist use prompted a new type of maneuver in the middle of the bourgeoisie to differentiate a part of the workers from the rest of the proletariat through payment of higher wages and some other concession. Reflecting on this tendency, Engels wrote in a letter of 7th October, 1858 to Marx, “.....the English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois.....For a nation which exploits the whole world, this is of course to a sure extent justifiable.”

The *Communist Manifesto* declared the path of realizing its aim by a forcible overthrow of the whole obsolete social order. Armed thrash about may not be a necessary element of forcible overthrow. Marx held the view that in countries like Britain and Holland where the working people constituted the majority of the population and capitalist transformation was associated with the inception of democracy, the attainment of universal adult franchise might give a enough measure for having political power to achieve socialism. In the *Principles of Communism*, Engels commented that the abolition of private property by peaceful ways is very desirable. Communists always avoid conspiratorial ways. Though, if the oppressed proletariat is goaded into a revolution, communists will immediately rush to their support. In his preface to the 1895 edition of Marx’s *Class Struggles in France*, Engels remarked that the new techniques of military operations put up superior obstacles to the methods of barricade fighting in the traditional manner of people’s

revolutionary action. This was a note of caution against adventurist actions, and not an advice to abjure armed insurgency in all circumstances. But in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, Engels' formulation was time and again used by a part of the leadership in support of gradual, peaceful, and parliamentary tactics for achieving socialist objectives.

Eduard Bernstein was a leading proponent of peaceful ways. He rejected the classical Marxist location concerning armed revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Also, Bernstein disagreed with the classical Marxist views on industrial concentration, inevitability of economic crises and rising working class misery. He was inclined to upholding the cause of socialism on ethical grounds. As a social democratic member of the Reichstag, he voted against war credits throughout the First world war and described for peace resolution. Another significant leader of the German Social Democratic Party and a leading figure of the Second International was Karl Kautsky, whose understanding of historical materialism was cast beside the rows of a natural evolutionary scheme of things analogous to Darwin's theory of biological development and natural selection. Accordingly, he whispered that capitalism would collapse for its own inability to create efficient use of the rising productive forces. The rationale and feasibility of a proletarian revolution was so ruled out, since by its decrees and violence no dictatorship of the proletariat could prevail in excess of the objective economic laws. Bernstein and Kautsky, though having differences in the middle of themselves, were branded as revisionists, implying their alleged departure from classical Marxist location of class thrash about and revolution.

Kautsky viewed the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia as an event not in keeping with classical Marxism. This was linked with the antecedent circumstances of insufficient capitalist development in Russia. Kautsky raised the point emphasized by historical materialism as regards the maturing of economic circumstances enough for the collapse of a mode of manufacture all the productive forces for which there is room in it have urbanized.' Vladimir Ilych Lenin, on his part, had analyzed the development of capitalism in Russia in a well-documented analysis. He did not deny its backwardness. Indeed, the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie was in the middle of the factors

eventually obliging the Bolshevik seizure of state power. Expressed in easy languages, though perhaps a little bizarre, the bourgeoisie appeared to be incapable of defending their own location against Tsarist autocracy, thereby creation it incumbent on the leadership of the proletariat to thrust for socialist command of the state. As Lenin observed,

- It has been Russia's lot very plainly to witness, and mainly keenly and painfully to experience one of the abruptest of abrupt twists of history as it turns from imperialism towards the Communist revolution. In the space of a few day we destroyed one of the oldest, mainly powerful, barbarous and brutal monarchies. In the space of a few months we passed through a number of stages, stages of compromise with the bourgeoisie and stages of shaking off petty-bourgeois illusions, for which other countries have required decades'.

Lenin mentions Russian imperialism in the foregoing excerpt. A very significant characteristic of capitalism was analyzed by Lenin in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* rx indicated the inevitable direction of competitive capitalism towards more and more centralization of capital and emergence of monopolies. This was the procedure which, Marx argued, would swell the masses of the proletariat and bring in relation to the doom of capitalism. Such a classical Marxist location was extended by Lenin to the detection of links flanked by monopoly capitalism and imperialism bent on international division and power of the world. The subordinate territories are the targets for export of capital to create use of cheap labour and raw materials. The first world war was an imperialist war of such aspirations and conflicts. Indeed, Tsarist Russia and its not so urbanized capitalism was the weakest link in this imperialist nexus. Lenin cited this factor as one of the reasons for hastening the course of Russian revolution in 1917 to the socialist super session of capitalism. It was likely to contribute to the international collapse of capitalism in the face of a world revolution.

Kautsky's analysis of imperialism was dissimilar. He argues that the imperialist era is free from conflicts flanked by the advanced capitalist countries. There would be disagreement only flanked by the advanced and the

underdeveloped countries of the world. The procedure of use of the underdeveloped countries was not necessarily through capital exports from the imperial rich to the colonial poor and surplus appropriation in an economic context of cheaper labour and raw materials. It could happen as well through the conditions of swap flanked by the commodities of the more or less capital rigorous manufacture. Indeed, after the Second World War, the components of Kautsky's analysis have in a method influenced the formulations of the *dependency theory* focusing on the imperialist power in excess of backward countries and that in a historical context where the United States stood supreme in the middle of the capitalist nations of the world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the final decade of the last century, the scope of such supremacy has been even more strengthened and, at any rate, there are no historical laws either in classical Marxism or its later development to obstruct the co-subsistence of profits from both manufacture and circulation on an international level.

Marx and Engels stressed the need for organizing a political party without which the working class cannot act as a class<sup>6</sup>. Throughout the years of the Communist League and the First International they were mostly occupied in the presentation and clarification of the Marxist perspective of history, class thrash about and abolition of capitalism. The Second International had the experience of national Social Democratic Parties coming to operate in the dissimilar capitalist countries of Europe.

Before entering into some details of the principles in question concerning the era of the Second International, it should be noted that the Paris Commune, though short-existed, was a major event happening throughout the stage of the First International. In its events of decent red, democratic treatment, the Paris Commune was estimated by Marx as setting a sound instance of the methods and means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. There lies the question of mediation by the party of the proletariat both in its leading the revolution to victory and then in its revolutionary governance. Despite their several critical differences, Lenin and Kautsky agreed on the point that political consciousness had to be brought to the proletariat from outside. It would not mechanically follow from their economic hardship and thrash

about, which was limited to the scope of trade union consciousness. Earlier, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels referred to the role of bourgeois ideologists who had achieved a theoretical understanding of the historical movement as a whole. They would have the role of endowing the working class with revolutionary consciousness. No doubt such a procedure of structure up consciousness adds to the complication of mediation and of the type of party which could fulfill the commitment.

Considering the condition of illegality and autocracy then prevailing in many countries of Europe, especially in Russia, Lenin thought it proper to build a narrow, hierarchically organized party of professional revolutionaries. After the Russian Revolution of 1905, he favored broadening the organisation into a mass party, but with strict provisions for democratic centralism. The division flanked by Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in Russia started on the issue of centralism. Leon Trotsky did not support centralism. Rosa Luxemburg of the German Social Democratic Party was against Lenin's thought of tightly centralized vanguard party. She strove to uphold the workers' own initiative and self-action and had immense faith in the capability of the working class to learn from its own experience.

The experience of the communist movement all in excess of the world through the twentieth century, of its triumphs and failures, of Lenin's own apprehensions at his death bed in relation to the bureaucratic excesses within the party, and finally of the collapse of Soviet Communism in the last decade of the last century, cannot but raise questions concerning the appropriate principles of organisation for the party of the proletariat. It should be relevant to note that the historical role attributed by classical Marxism to the proletariat was assigned by an invisible intelligentsia, by an intelligentsia that never made an appearance in its own theory, and whose subsistence and nature are so, never systematically, recognized even to itself. or *Sociology*. Classical Marxism conceived of capitalism as a world system with all its nexuses of trade, capital exports and imperialist power. In real history, the conquest of capital, its universal role, results in a differential impact on pre-capitalist structures. The differences are manifest in several kinds of amalgam of capitalist and pre-capitalist manners of manufacture. Such formations create

room for capitalist surplus extraction, even though the former productive systems and power institutions remain mainly unchanged. In those circumstances, classical Marxist location concerning the sequence of stages has to reckon with newer possibilities of historical transition.

It is no longer enough to move from feudalism to capitalism. Indeed, no such movement can have much meaning in conditions of progress when capitalism and pre-capitalism are historically interlocked in their manners of use and power. Marx and Engels did not lack in their clarification of historical conjunctures characterized by a compounding of the old and the new in the emergent complexes of use and power. This situation has appeared time and again in the countries outside Western Europe and North America. It may well happen that the course of bourgeois democratic revolution cannot be pushed ahead by a weak and timid bourgeoisie. The task then falls to the proletariat and they have to proceed immediately from abolition of the feudal order to a thrash about aimed at eliminating the bourgeoisie. Such a revolutionary reality was named as ‘permanent revolution’ and the thought was presented by Trotsky. The expression was first used by Marx and Engels in their Address of the Common Council to the Communist League in 1850.

We have not yet given any clue to what happened to the expected solidarity of the international working class revolution against capitalism. After 1917 this vital action parameter of Marx’s theoretical scheme of history has never articulated in any historical change of decisive significance for transition to socialism. The Bolshevik leaders whispered that the October revolution in Russia would open an era of international proletarian revolution. Defeated in the world war of four years duration, crisis-torn Germany was expected to be the first in the middle of the advanced capitalist countries to go for its socialist revolution. The facts of history were dissimilar. Bolshevik Russia had to bear the burden of structure socialism in one country, an agenda which could receive little help from the classical Marxist tradition. The twentieth century witnessed another major socialist transition in China where the peasantry acted as the principal motive force of revolution. Its course of development after the communist seizure of power presents several questions that have no direct answer in classical Marxist tradition. The instances of



Cuba, Chile, and Vietnam are also in the nature of exceptions to the classical Marxist views on the historical perspective of sociopolitical transformation.

Significantly, in the last decade of his life, Marx was involved in some critical revise of the pre-capitalist village communes in Russia. This was in response to questions put to him by Russian Narodnik leaders like Vera Zasulich, Danielson and others concerning the potential of those communes to act as mass agencies for socialist transformation, even though the country had no maturity in capitalist development and growth of the proletariat. Marx made it clear that his theoretical location in *Capital* was valid only for the experience of western Europe especially that of Britain's capitalist development, and it would be utterly wrong to apply those formulations for understanding situations in a dissimilar context. As for the realization of socialist potential of Russian communes, Marx emphasized the need for abolition of Tsarist monarchy and on the probability of being correlated to socialist revolutions in countries of west Europe. Marx distinguished the two historical tendencies inherent in the communes, viz. the private ownership principle eroding the communes and the communal principle rendering viability to the commune and creation it appropriate for socialist transformation. Marx elaborated these thoughts in three drafts of a letter to Vera Zasulich. Throughout 1880-82, Marx took to learning a big amount of literature on pre-capitalist communal land ownership. It appears that Marx read in them an index that contemporary man was not without an archaic communal component, which comprises a democratic and equalitarian formation, in his social being.' *nological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, Lawrence Krader.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- Discuss the differences between pre-Marxist socialist thought and Marxism.
- Write a note on the historical and other ideas of Marx's immediate successors.
- How did Marx's ideas develop over time? Discuss with examples.

- What is your evaluation of Marxist theory of history?

## CHAPTER 14

### THE ANNALES SCHOOL

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Social and intellectual context
- Base of the *Annales*
- New trends in historiography
- Contribution of the *Annales* school
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Learn about the context of Annales emergence, its contributions to history-writing, and the various new historiographical trends it gave rise to.

#### SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

The decade of the 1920s witnessed two paradoxical growths in France: The First World War had ended and its formal conclusion had occurred at Versailles, close to Paris, under the Presidentship of the French Prime Minister, Clemenceau. Symbolically therefore it was the victory of France in excess of its traditional rival Germany, much more than the communal victory of the rest of Europe. The great French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet, had done the mainly renowned of his works, *Les Nymphaes*, the Water Lilies, as a bouquet of flowers presented to France after the victory, and a special museum structure, *L'Orangerie*, was built in the heart of Paris to display them. There was so an aura of celebration in the French air. The air, though, was also

beginning to illustrate traces of gloom in the latter part of the decade with the specter of the Great Depression slowly extending its shadows in excess of it; the Depression was soon to overwhelm societies and economies approximately the world, the more so the ones that had mainly to lose. France was in the middle of them.

There was therefore a palpable restiveness approximately, a puzzle that perplexed everyone: How could it be possible that a nation, which had vanquished an old and powerful enemy so recently, could stare helplessly before a debilitating circumstance? This was an entirely new situation, which posed an encompassing question and waited for a new and encompassing answer. Old answers would by their nature be inadequate. New answers demanded new perspectives and new methodologies. If history was to contribute to this quest, it necessity first renew itself by self-questioning. This was the social context of the discipline's self-renewal, marked by the founding of the journal *Annales d'histoire economique et sociale*. There was besides an intellectual context. The Nineteenth Century had witnessed the birth of many new disciplines, notably social and cultural anthropology, human geography and psychology. Young and energetic as these were, their practitioners looked at the old discipline of history skeptically. Durkeheimian sociology in scrupulous was expansive and ambitious, claiming the capability of a totalizing explanation, explaining, in other languages, the whole spectrum of societal dynamics. Human geography too was not distant from extending similar claims, focusing on social, cultural and institutional shapes of organisation.

History came in for a degree of derision for its exclusive concern with the event – the unique, short term, the immediate and transient. This was how history was studied then: focusing on change of a reign or a dynasty, wars, battles, administrative events. As John Seeley had put it pithily: History is past politics and politics is present history. No extensive term dynamics interested historians. What then was the point of learning history if all it explained was how one ruler replaced another and how one battle added or deleted a little bit of land from the territory ruled by him? The event was like the surf in the ocean, ephemeral and so insignificant; the real movement in

the ocean was invisible to the naked eye, below the surface. This, the anthropologists and the geographers felt, was ignored by the historians.

A second question was the use of historical sources. Archives had acquired a sanctity for the historians that became approximately a moral precept. All statements made by them necessity be traced back to some or the other empirical proof stored in dusty archival files. Anything short of it failed to constitute facts, so sacred for the historian. Even as late as the 1970s, historian Jacques Leonard questioned the legitimacy of philosopher Michel Foucault's intervention in the troubles of history by threateningly demanding if he had ever soiled his hands in the dust of archival files and Foucault responded by creation fun of the sanctity of archival dust. The historian accepted as true whatever was on the surface of the documentary proof; that the document itself was a cultural construct, a highly subjective construct never bothered the historian. The objective reality lay hidden in the very extensive drawn formation of human behaviour, their habits, value systems, and their responses to situations in life. All these were shaped at the subconscious stage within the family, the society, the neighborhood. None of these was either the result of, or recorded in written documents, nor was any of it obvious. These subtleties were missed out in the discipline of history in its preoccupation with the event, the immediate and the obvious. A sort of vision of Social Science was emerging from which history was excluded.

## **BASE OF THE ANNALES**

The lambasting of history left two friends, young historians in a distant absent corner of the French academia, Strasbourg, very restless. Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre were unhappy with the type of history they had learnt and were forced to teach; they were sensitive to the insights the younger disciplines could give. They were dissatisfied that disciplines that were such secure kin should be at war with each other and each had erected impermeable boundaries approximately itself. In January of 1929 they launched a new journal, *Annales d'histoire economique et sociale*. Initially, the journal focused on issues of modern concerns to seek to understand the genesis of the

emerging crisis; as time passed, it turned increasingly to medieval and early contemporary history, the ones practiced by Bloch and Febvre.

In the all too brief Editorial in the journal's inaugural issue, the editors movingly emphasized the necessity and the benefits of what later came to be described interdisciplinary research, even as one remained firmly grounded in one's own discipline. Of course, nothing would be better than if each one, absorbed in his own legitimate specialization, assiduously tilling his own patch of land, made at the similar time the effort to understand the work of his neighbor. But the separating walls are often so high that they block our view. And yet, what a host of valuable thoughts on way and interpretation of facts, what insights into civilization and advances in intuition would germinate through more frequent intellectual interaction amongst all these dissimilar groups! On this depends the future of economic history, as also the right knowledge of facts which shall tomorrow constitute all history.

All history was what *Annales* was keen to constitute, in lay of partial history; this will also be the true history. True history was not being counterpoised here to false history but to any form of partial history. All history and true history would comprise an ever expansive domain for the discipline; no part of the past and no aspect of it were beyond its purview. Space was therefore being created for meeting the challenge of other disciplines as well as incorporating their insights.

Consequently, newer themes opened up for the historian's exploration. Marc Bloch himself created a comprehensive and grand structure in his revise of feudalism by looking at all its characteristics in one book of two volumes, *The Feudal Society*, 1936. He spent a considerable time livelihood in the French countryside in order to sensitize himself to the remnants of that society, whether as abandoned agricultural meadows or as cultural attitudes and values. Lucien Febvre on the other hand was more keen to explore the region of emotions and beliefs. His book, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: the Religion of Rabelais* François Rabelais, critical of Christianity to the point of unbelief. The character was though a point of entry for Febvre's revises of religion in all its myriad characteristics in the context of society in the sixteenth century. His celebrated essay, Sensibility and

History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past' was a watershed in extending history's concerns into new domains. Indeed it starts with the assertion: Sensibility and history – a new subject: I know of no book that deals with it. I do not even know whether the several troubles which it involves have anywhere been set forth. And yet, please forgive a poor historian for uttering the artist's cry, and yet what a fine subject it is!' In some methods the essay was to set the tone for what was later to be explored on a very big level by *Annales* historians, i.e. the history of *mentalités*, mentalities.

History was therefore beginning to become part of the Social Sciences. In 1903 François Simiand had visualised Social Science in the singular and history outside it, though he had also shown the method for it to enter the arena of social science in his essay, methode historique et science sociale':

- If the revise of human facts wishes to set up itself as a positivist science, it necessity turn absent from the singular facts and address itself to recurring facts, that is set aside the accidental for the regular, eliminate the individual for the social.'

It was an invitation to historians to learn from Economics, Sociology, Anthropology and Geography to focus on what was then conceived of as the laws' of social movement and change which are inherent in the common rather than the scrupulous. The essay was reproduced in the *Annales* in 1960 by Fernand Braudel for the benefit of young historians to enable them to gauge the aloofness traveled in half a century and to comprehend better the dialogue flanked by History and the Social Sciences which remnants the objective and the raison d'être of our journal.'

The first responses to the invitation to revise the extensive-term regularities were a merger flanked by Economics and History and the emergence of economic history as an autonomous discipline. Ernest Labrousse's work, *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution* end of the Ancient Regime and the beginning of the Revolution, 1944 and Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* World in the Age of Philip II, 1949, both sought out the extensive term trends in history that would help

us understand, and to an extent predict, social and economic change. Unlike in the sphere of industrial economy, where overproduction leads to economic crisis, in agriculture underproduction of food granules lies at the base of a crisis situation which then spreads to other sectors of economy and society, was Labrousse's conclusion. Braudel on the other hand had studied the very slow change in the ecology approximately the Mediterranean and the extensive term and extensive aloofness impact of intercontinental trade. Braudel's interest in these themes remained abiding, though through his later works he constantly kept extending their frontiers. The three volume revise under the common title, *Culture and Capitalism* and the titles of individual volumes, *The Structures of Everyday Life*, *The Wheels of Commerce* and *The Perspectives of the World* both continues with his earlier concerns and incorporates new ones, such as the history of the diet, into them. One branching out from the extensive-term history was the history of the climate, which spans many centuries. Emmanuel Leroy Ladurie was in the middle of the early historians of the 60s who introduced this new theme into European historiography.

A new territory was being explored here, the territory of extensive-term history of the economy and its ramifications in society. The new problematic also demanded new visions of history, new sources and new ways of investigation. Economic changes were not left to common impressions: they had to be based upon quantitative data, a new concept, further buttressed by the coming of computers in the 1960s. Of sources too, Lucien Febvre had reacted to the assertion of Fustel de Coulanges in another context, 'History is written through the use of texts', by declaring: 'texts, certainly, but all types of texts... and not texts alone...' Marc Bloch existed in the French countryside in the mode of an anthropologist to get insights into the working of the feudal system.

Fernand Braudel had taken seriously the criticism of the historians' preoccupation with the 'event', the immediate and so with the single, unidimensional conception of Time. His own studies took him a extensive aloofness absent from the immediate. He was so able to conceptualize dissimilar rhythms of historical time in dissimilar problematic contexts. In an

influential essay, History and the Social Sciences: the *Longue Durée*, 1958, Braudel earmarked three temporal rhythms: the *extensive term*, or the structure, which moves ever so slowly as in writing the history of ecology and social and economic systems, such as capitalism; the *conjunctures*, which give the way for mapping the history of medium term change such as inter-decennial change in patterns of extensive aloofness trade; and the *event*, the immediate.

## **NEW TRENDS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

Three offshoots of these new ventures were the history of mentalities, the history of groups at society's margins and relative history. Lucien Febvre had already embarked upon the territory of mentalities in his essay on Sensibility and History. Marc Bloch himself had explored the theme of royal thaumaturgy in *Le rois thaumaturges* in 1924, the healing powers of kings, translated into English as *The Royal Touch*, 1973. The early explorations had ignited enough interest and the revise of mentalities began to grow considerably. Michel Vovelle extended the quantitative way to the examination of testamentary wills preserved in church records to map the changing attitudes towards death in medieval and early contemporary France. Jacques Le Goff looked at how attitudes towards Time were changing in the Middle Ages in his highly celebrated essay, Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages. Church's time was cosmic, immeasurable, extending from the Creation of the Universe to the Day of Judgment; merchant's transactions on the other hand required Time that was precise, measured to the day and was a commodity open to sale through commercial transactions. The disagreement flanked by the two was a major social disagreement in the Middle Ages in Europe. Le Goff is a towering figure in the *Annaliste* historiographical custom, extending its boundaries distant into the field of the history of mentalities.

So too was Georges Duby until his death in 1996. Beginning with the history of land and labour in the medieval European context, *dieval West* Duby went into the revise of marriage, family and women, the Cathedrals and the revise of medieval imagination, especially the values that guided the



working of the medieval society. Philippe Ariès loved to call himself ‘an amateur’ historian, for even as he was a practicing historian, he was yet outside the profession. He was the initiator of some major new themes in history. He constituted the notion of death and the attitude towards children as veritable subjects of historical investigation. He brought the history of the family centre stage, with the issues of sexuality, the household and interpersonal relationships at the core. His works, *Centuries of Childhood*, 1962, traced the history of the recognition of childhood and its separate needs, for the child had hitherto been treated merely as a young adult; and *The Hour of Our Death*, 1981, dwelt upon the perceptions of death. These were major interventions in redefining social history. The renowned Cambridge group on the history of the family led by Peter Laslett and Jack Goody in the 1970s and 80s followed up these breakthroughs and published some astoundingly innovative research works: Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, eds., *Household and Family in Past Time*, 1972; Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations*, 1977; Richard Wall, J.Robin and P.Laslett, eds., *Family Shapes in Historic Europe*, 1982; Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, 1983.

Three sets of recent collaborative endeavors have taken the history of mentalities further: Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, common eds., *A History of Private Life*, 5 vols., Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, common eds., *The History of Women*, 4 vols., and Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, common eds., *A History of Young People*, 2 vols. A big portion of each of these works dwells upon mentalities. G. Vigarello followed up the theme of mentalities in his delightful book, *The Concepts of Cleanliness*, Cambridge, 1988, while Jean-Claude Schmitt had edited a special issue of the journal *History and Anthropology* on the theme of gestures in 1984. The groups at society’s margins had been a point of attraction for the historian for extensive; what was lacking until the 1960s and 70s was a conception of marginality and its connection with mainstream society. The marginal’s were not merely those who were poor, without means; they were the ones livelihood not only at the mainstream society’s territorial margins – at the borders of the village, in hermitages or hideouts in the forests or the hills etc. – but whose norms of life

were at variance with the mainstream norms whether perforce or by choice: The beggars, the lunatics, hermits, thieves and robbers. It was Michel Foucault, the philosopher, who set the parameters of this problematic especially in his *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and Culture*. The revise of marginality, he argued, was significant because it was the other of the mainstream; the revise is an entry point into mapping the contours of the mainstream itself. Foucault introduced the central concept of the relation of power in the revise of social phenomena. The creation of marginality was an emphatic expression of the relation of power in that the elite values at the mainstream determined the notion of marginality. Whoever does not conform to those values gets excluded into the margins as prisoners or lunatics or whatever. The birth of Psychiatry for him was the chief expression of the creation of marginality as a relation of social power.

In setting up this perspective, Foucault was questioning a fundamental assumption of the discipline of history, i.e. that the facts recovered from the archives possessed an unassailable objectivity. For Foucault facts were culturally constructed: they expressed a relation of power. The objectivity of history was then at one go relatives. This was a serious challenge to *Annales* as much as to positivist history. Some of the *Annalistes* incorporated Foucauldian insights into their revise of marginality. The Polish historian Bronisław Geremek's major work, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, originally published in Polish in 1971, in French in 1976, and in English in 1987 was written under Foucault's power.

The relative history framework was implicit in the *Annales* vision from the inception. Relative history was not quite an invention of *Annales* historiography as Marc Bloch had emphasized in his well-known essay, A Contribution Towards a Relative History of European Societies steed on dissimilarities underneath apparent similarities flanked by two phenomena or situations. A comparison flanked by these two would highlight the salient characteristics of each and so become a very useful tool for developing each one's profile. Though, the revise of phenomena such as feudalism or capitalism as a big, comprehensive theme itself creates it relative inasmuch as

their conceptualization could only result from a relative revise of their vast and varied structures.

## **CONTRIBUTION OF THE *ANNALES* SCHOOL**

Any assumption that *Annales* historiography has since its inception in excess of seven decades ago has proceeded beside a straight row and a single strand, without much difference and without much inner disagreement and contradiction, would clearly be quite mistaken. Indeed, the many alterations in the titling of the journal throughout its life are pointers to both its innate tensions and its dynamism. Even as the term *Annales* gave the journal a permanent identity, its original subtitle, *histoire économique et sociale* gave method to *economies, sociétés, civilisations* and lately to *Histoire et sciences sociales*. Some of the major tensions arose from the *Annales*' own project. In some significant methods *Annales* historiography was on one hand opposed to the legacy of Positivism as well as Marxism and on the other inherited this legacy. Positivism as well as Marxism envisioned a dichotomy flanked by an objective truth in history and a subjective perception of it by the historians. Positivism predicated the unveiling of the objective truth upon scientific rationality: the objective truth is embedded in historical records; through the employment of cause the historians will be able to uncover it bit by bit and this will bridge the gap flanked by the observer, the historian, and the observed, the objective reality. Marxism reached the similar end through the prism of class thrash about. All history can be explained therefore.

*Annales* historiography too dreamt of some day capturing total history', which will be true history'. But the telling variation flanked by them was that if Positivism rested all historical explanation on scientific cause and Marxism on class thrash about, in *Annales* historiography there was no such permanent structuring of historical explanation. That is, not all historical phenomena or episodes or movements were in the last instance' brought down to either economic base or politics or psychology or whatever. It rather preferred to revise moving conjunctures, each phenomenon, episode or movement with its own causal hierarchy. Yet, though muted, the very vision

of the skill to compose a total and a true history some day was not without the underpinnings of Positivist and Marxist assumption of objective reality.

Indeed, the *Annalistes*, with their professed antipathy towards teleology, have nevertheless shown an astonishing, if implicit, extensive term hierarchisation of historical explanation. The early works in this genre mostly pertain to what might be situated broadly in the region of socio-economic history, barring of course Lucien Febvre's precocious explorations in the history of sensibilities and unbelief etc. Once the 'base' had been laid, the 'superstructure' of the history of mentalities followed in its wake. Nothing evokes this implicit structuring more forcefully than the assertion of one of the mainly celebrated practitioners of *Annales* historiography, Georges Duby that he had turned to the revise of marriage, women, the family etc. of medieval Europe, *since* he had already recognized his grasp in excess of its economy, manufacture procedure, sharing and so forth.

*Annales* historiography has remained somewhat ambivalent too with regard to a problem it had itself raised, that of history's ties with chronology. If it planned to transcend the temporal bounds in its search of a true history, it implied rethinking on the conception of time and chronology: History dealt with time, for sure, but was not, and should not be, led on the leash by chronology. Indeed, if chronology was artificial, time itself was fluid. Fernand Braudel's conceptualization of differing rhythms of historical time and Jacques Le Goff's demonstration of time as culturally constructed and so relative as well dynamic, rather than absolute and fixed, constituted major landmarks in redefining the dual connection of the discipline of history to time and chronology. Inherent in the conception of 'total history' or 'history in its entirety' was a suspicion of the sanctity of strict chronological divides flanked by antiquity, medieval and contemporary, for several of the themes are hard to tie down to these divides. The rhythm of change in mentalities, social values or family structures transgresses virtually any temporal boundaries set approximately it. Implied in the investigation of these themes was the assumption that the historian needs to rise above the terror of proof, especially archival proof and depend upon imagination and anthropological insights, much as Marc Bloch had done. Yet, mainly practitioners of this genre of

historiography have adhered rather tightly to the chronological boundaries set by their proof. Nothing expresses this tension more evocatively than the title of Fernand Braudel's major book *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. On one hand, Braudel seeks to cover a vast canvas of history in the two volumes; on the other, the temporal boundaries are tightly set 'in the Age of Philip II'. The dictat of proof exercises as much terror for them as it did for their precursors in the nineteenth century and keeps them forcefully on chronology's leash, their ambition under considerable restraint.

Nevertheless, the explorations that could be encapsulated within what has virtually become an umbrella term, the *Annales* historiography, have opened to the historian's craft vistas that allow the discipline an all-encompassing domain. At the heart of its concerns are human beings with all their life's tensions, struggles, their ambiguities, indecisions, conflicting and competing emotions, thoughts, experiences and mentalities; the revise of the structures of life is subordinated here to the revise of human beings rather than as self-contained, impersonal phenomena, as the subject of revise themselves to which human beings relate merely as programmed actors. The expanse of the domain itself, and the complexities of explorations of its ever-rising dimensions, should ensure the relegation of any teleological project deep into the background, whether or not the *Annalistes* have confronted it with deliberation.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- Discuss the context which led to the establishment of the *Annales* School.
- Who are considered as the founders of this School of historiography? Discuss their works.
- What are the thematic innovations made by the historians of the *Annales* School over the years? Discuss with examples

## CHAPTER 15

### RECENT MARXIST APPROACHES

#### STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Classical Marxist custom
- Rise of western Marxism
- Trends in Marxist historiography in the west
- Some significant Marxist historians in the west
- Review questions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Endeavour to familiarize you with their manifold achievements.
- Explain the writings of the British Marxist historians whose influence on the Indian historians is most marked.
- Deal with some other western Marxist historians who have been crucial for providing a new direction to the Marxist historiography.

#### CLASSICAL MARXIST CUSTOM

One thing that necessarily be emphasized at the outset that the Marxist custom of history writing is an extensive and diverse custom. It has dominated the historiography in several parts of the world and has been a very important attendance in the rest. Mainly significant historians in the twentieth century have in some method or other been influenced by the Marxist theories of history. As one significant commentator, S.H.Rigby, has pointed out that to effort a comprehensive survey of Marxist historiography is hard because it would virtually amount to writing a history of the world.' In addition, it also needs to be noted that Marxist historiography does not symbolize a monolithic, homogeneous and orthodox location. Marxist historians have often disagreed with each other. Moreover, they have worked on several

characteristics of history. The cumulative writings of Marx and Engels recognized the doctrine of historical materialism which challenged the idealist philosophies of several types. At the stage of history-writing, it moved the focus absent from individuals to classes, from high-stage politics to economy and mass politics, from diplomats to revolutionaries and from stray causation to mode of manufacture and social formation. This theoretical revolution profoundly affected the course of history-writing.

So distant as Marxist theory of history was concerned, S.H.Rigby has tried to illustrate that Marx and Engels, the founders of historical materialism, passed through three dissimilar conceptions of history. In the early stage, under Hegel's power, they perceived history in anthropogenetic conditions. It means that historical movement is visualised as the overarching, dialectical progression through which humanity comes to its full self-realization, passing through a necessary negative stage of self-alienation and social atomization before achieving a fully human, free and rational society. Later on, throughout the mid-1840s, in works such as *The Holy Family* and *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels adopted a pharmacological approach, where the needs of the individuals and groups become more significant. Finally, in the later works such as the Preface to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *Capital* and *Anti-Duhring*, a nomological framework was urbanized, where the human agency was not measured significant. Instead, the human history was seen as analogous to a natural procedure taking lay in accordance with inner hidden laws which it is the task of the historian to uncover.

Louis Althusser also distinguishes flanked by the Young Marx, whose outlook was Hegelian and humanist, and Mature Marx who thought in structural conditions. It was this later Marx which Althusser whispered to be correct and from whom the Marxist theory of history and society may be derived. G.A.Cohen, in a major revise of Marxist theory of history, has argued that according to this, the productive forces are the prime movers of society. The productive forces consist of means of manufacture and raw materials for manufacture and labour procedure. Manufacture dealings, on their part, determine access to the society's means of manufacture and decide the

redistribution of society's wealth. The forces of manufacture and the dealings of manufacture jointly constitute the mode of manufacture.

From the several texts of Marx and Engels, a three-tier model of society may be discerned which is based on productive forces, dealings of manufacture and political and ideological superstructure. In this scheme, the productive forces determine the nature of social dealings of manufacture which, in turn, determine the political, ideological and legal superstructure. The productive forces stay developing and when they develop beyond a point, the dealings of manufacture become fetters on them. In such situation, the dealings of manufacture are burst asunder and new dealings of manufacture are organized to accommodate the urbanized productive forces. The superstructure is also accordingly organized. In this schema, the whole human history was divided into a few manners of manufacture – primitive communism, Asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist. The future society would provide rise to socialist and, ultimately, the communist manners of manufacture. The crucial arguments in this regard have been provided by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* and in the Preface to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. In the later work, Marx stated:

- In the social manufacture of their subsistence, men inevitably enter into definite relationships, which are self-governing of their will, namely dealings of manufacture. The totality of dealings of manufacture constitutes the economic structure of society, the real base, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite shapes of social consciousness. The mode of manufacture of material life circumstances the procedure of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men which determines their subsistence but their social subsistence which determines their consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

The Marxist theorists and historians immediately following Marx and Engels took up this row of arguments in their theoretical and historical works. For Marxists such as Kautsky, Plekhanov, Lenin, Bukharin, Stalin and Trotsky, this interpretation of history remained the authentic part of Marxism.



Several books were written to explain the Marxist theory of history. Franz Mehring wrote *On Historical Materialism* in 1893; Georgy Plekhanov wrote *The Development of the Monist Conception of History* in 1895; Antonio Labriola wrote *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History* in 1896; and Karl Kautsky wrote *The Materialist Conception of History* published in 1927. These books were planned to provide the Marxist view of history a final form. They usually upheld the primacy of the productive forces in determining the nature of manufacture dealings and hence of society as a whole. Marx's statements like 'the hand mill provides you society with the feudal lord, the steam mill society with the industrial capitalist' were often quoted.

Moreover, in the middle of the early Marxists the revise of economy and mode of manufacture acquired paramount importance. Several books were written on economic circumstances and development of capitalism into imperialism. Karl Kautsky wrote a book titled *Agrarian Question* in 1899 which explored changes in European and American agriculture. In the similar year, V.I.Lenin wrote his well-known book, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. In 1910, Rudolf Hilferding published *Finance Capital* which explored the changing nature of capitalism and its growth into monopolies, centralization, trade wars and aggressive expansion. Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital and World Economy in, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Though, both Marx and Engels offered an alternative view of history where social dealings of manufacture were more significant and decisive in changing the course of history. In information, when the productive forces deterministic interpretations started becoming conventional, Engels tried to vary it. In 1890, in a letter to Ernst Bloch, Engels stated what he and Marx had thought in relation to the their theory:

- 'Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the information that the younger writers lay more stress on the economic face than is due to it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the lay or opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to approach into their rights.'

He further elaborated:

- According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the manufacture and reproduction in real life. More than that neither Marx nor I have ever asserted.... The economic situation is the foundation, but the several elements of the superstructure – political shapes of class thrash about and its consequences, constitution recognized by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc. – shapes of law – and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious thoughts ... also exercise their power upon the course of the historical struggles and in several cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless hosts of accidents,.. the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary ... We create our history, but in the first lay under very definite presuppositions not circumstances. In the middle of these the economic ones are finally decisive.

Marx had already measured property dealings as decisive in determining the nature of manufacture. In *Grundrisse*, he criticizes the bourgeois economists for considering manufacture without taking into explanation the nature of property, that is, the social dealings of manufacture. He argues that:

- All manufacture is appropriation of nature on the part of the individual within and through a specific form of society. In this sense it is a tautology to say that property is a pre-condition of manufacture.... That there can be no manufacture and hence no society where some form of property does not exist is a tautology.

He further states that the real beginnings of manufacture necessity be sought in individuals producing in society, hence socially determined manufacture. Therefore the dealings of productions are the crucial factors

which describe the several manners of manufacture. Marx states in *Capital* that

- what distinguishes the several economic formations of society – the distinction flanked by a society based on slave labour and a society based on wage labour – is the form in which surplus labour is in each case extorted from the immediate producer, the worker.

The historical writings of Marx and Engels, such as Class Struggle about in France 'aparte' and The Peasant War in Germany also provided theoretical underpinnings for this interpretation. We see, so, that two theories of history can be derived from the works of Marx and Engels. In one, the productive forces are paramount and they determine the course of history and the social dealings are a product of material manufacture. Though, in another theory, it is the social dealings of manufacture which play a determining role. It is this second version of classical Marxist theory that appealed to much of the later Marxist historians in Europe.

Another contentious issue in the Marxist theory of history is the definition of base and superstructure and their interrelationship. Traditionally, the base has been defined as being shaped by the society's dealings of manufacture which are basically determined by the economic structure. On this stands the superstructure which consists of laws, politics and ideology. This notion of base and superstructure has generated a lot of debate in the middle of the Marxists as well as the non-Marxists. The debates have mainly centered on two regions – which elements are incorporated in each and whether there is a permanent causal hierarchy flanked by them. Within the orthodox Marxist custom it is usually accepted that it is the social dealings of manufacture which cause the superstructure. Though, several of the later Marxists have rejected this notion of one-method determination. For instance, Louis Althusser considers society as an organic hierarchized whole instead of dividing it flanked by base and superstructure. According to Althusser's structuralist interpretation of Marx, the society is depicted as a intricate structural unity. The social formation is constituted by a sure form of complexity, the unity of a structural whole containing what can be described

stages or instances which are separate and ~~relatively~~ autonomous”, and co-exist within this intricate structural unity, articulated with one another according to specific determinations’. Therefore the economic factors – forces and dealings of manufacture – do not determine the society in a easy, straight manner. All the stages have their own courses of development. Likewise, other Marxists have interpreted this differently from what was once thought as the orthodox location. The Marxist social historians usually tend to offer a more intricate notion of society than the one which neatly divides society flanked by base and superstructure in which the former determines the latter.

## **RISE OF WESTERN MARXISM**

Approximately all the significant Marxist thinkers till the First World were involved in revolutionary practice in some method or the other. A big part of their theoretical manufacture was so related to this reality. The failure of the revolution in advanced West European countries and its success in backward Russia posed new questions to Marxist theory. The renewed consolidation of capitalism and separation of revolutionary Soviet Union and the desperate thrash about to save socialism in one country witnessed several adjustments in revolutionary theory and practice which the classical Marxism could not explain. Moreover, the chauvinistic role played by the Social Democratic parties in the West and the consequent disintegration of the Second International questioned the universality of proletarian solidarity. All these growths led to a schism flanked by Marxist theory and revolutionary practice in the West. Perry Anderson, in an significant revise, states that It was in this altered universe that revolutionary theory completed the mutation which produced what can today retrospectively be described ~~Western~~ Marxism”<sup>4</sup>. He has outlined the major features of Western Marxism. According to him,

- The first and mainly fundamental of its features has been the structural divorce of this Marxism from political practice. The organic unity of theory and practice realized in the classical generation of Marxists before the First World War, who performed an inseparably politico-intellectual function within their respective parties in Eastern

and Central Europe, was to be increasingly severed in the half-century from 1918 to 1968, in Western Europe.’

Even though some of these Western intellectuals had been members of and in significant positions in the newly-shaped Communist parties, their theories were shaped in more or less in accessible circumstances. The three significant Marxist intellectuals in the 1920s, George Lukacs, Karl Korsch and Antonio Gramsci were major political leaders in the Communist parties of their respective countries. Though, mainly of their works was written either in prison or in exile.

This has its positive results as well. Now theory could be urbanized in relative immunity from everyday political contingencies. A renewed interest in philosophy was one of the outcomes. The crucial catalytic factor was belated publication of the mainly significant early work of Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, also recognized as *Paris Manuscripts of 1844*, in 1932 in Moscow. The Western Marxism became predominantly concerned with the characteristics of superstructure. In this, civilization, particularly art and literature, became prime region of revise. Lukacs devoted mainly of his intellectual energies to literary criticism, Adorno to music, Walter Benjamin to art and literature. This change saw its first manifestation in Germany. The establishment of the Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt, more famously recognized as the Frankfurt School, in 1923 started the trend of academicisation of Marxism. The mainly significant thinkers attached to it in excess of the era were Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno and Jurgen Habermas. The other significant Marxist thinkers whose thoughts had great power on manufacture of knowledge were George Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Korsch, Jean Paul Sartre, and Louis Althusser. In the middle of these Gramsci had the greatest impact on the writing of history. His theory of hegemony created an altogether new conceptual tool in Marxist discourse. It sought to explain the sustained ascendancy of the capitalist system through its network of cultural institutions such as newspapers, schools, churches and political parties. Now we will deal with the major trends of Marxist history-writing in the West.

## **TRENDS IN MARXIST HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE WEST**

Marxist historians in France, Britain, Italy, Germany and America began to rethink the earlier base-superstructure model imputed to Marxism, both by the Marxists and their critics. These historians radically broke away from that interpretation of Marxism which gave primacy to productive forces in a deterministic and teleological framework. Instead, they sought to develop a more integrative approach. Their historical work testified this. We will separately talk about these historians and their works in the after that part. In this part we will deal with the major trends which the works of these historians brought forth. Later Marxist historians establish it hard to accept the primacy of productive forces and therefore laid more emphasis on the role of class struggle in determining the social structure. Moreover, they also questioned the dichotomy of base and superstructure and the determining role of the former.

In information, they establish support for their view in the works of Marx and Engels which led in two directions. In the abstract analysis the primacy of productive forces and a teleological development were recognized. But when analyzing the concrete events, a more intricate explanatory structure was evolved where the struggle about flanked by classes became the prime mover. Several Marxist historians took this up and professed that class struggle about was the prime motor of change. For instance, in his analysis of the decline of Roman Empire, F.W. Walbank argued, in his *The Decline of Roman Empire in the West* productive forces from Greek to Roman times. The cause for this was that the dealings of manufacture based on slavery demotivated both the slaves and the slave-owners for seeking any type of technological innovations. It led to a situation where a top-heavy political tools without corresponding development of productive forces failed to survive. Likewise, Robert Brenner and Eugene Genovese locate the roots of social and political decline in the prevalent dealings of manufacture and slavery in nineteenth-century America rather than in the contradictions flanked by developing productive forces and stagnant dealings of manufacture.

Although the later Marxist historians still saw the tendency of productive forces to expand, particularly under capitalism, they rejected it as a universal law equally applicable to pre-capitalist manners of manufacture. In the context of pre-capitalist societies, Perry Anderson has argued that ‘forces of manufacture typically stall and recede within the existing dealings of manufacture.... The dealings of manufacture usually change *prior* to the forces of manufacture in the epoch of transition and not vice versa’. Though, these historians usually uphold that the crisis and change in any society was primarily due to its internal dynamics rather than caused by any external impact. Therefore feudalism declined because of its own internal contradictions rather than due to revival of trade. Likewise, the cause for the decline of the Roman Empire was its internal weakness and not the barbarian invasions. Therefore Marxist historians, writing in epochal conditions, have tended to categorise several societies on the foundation of their typical dealings of manufacture rather than in conditions of productive forces. Moreover, there are disagreements in excess of subsistence of several manners of manufacture. For instance, the concept of the ‘Asiatic’ mode of manufacture is not accepted by mainly Marxist historians. Likewise, the slave mode of manufacture was not established to be applicable to several societies, including India. In information, some historians have argued that even in ancient Greek and Roman societies, slaves did not form the majority of producers and the use of chattel slavery was limited to sure regions and sure periods. Therefore, it cannot be said that the ancient world can be consistently characterized as slave mode of manufacture.

Despite these disagreements, the Marxist historians consider that all manners of manufacture after the hunting-gathering stage are characterized by appropriation of surplus labour of the producers by the dominant classes. This vital information generates class thrash about which is also the prime motor of social, economic and political changes. Even in those societies which appear relatively free of explicit lower-class actions, class-thrash about is present and the apparently consensual rules and practices evolve through vocal or silent negotiations. Although the Marxist historians have been concerned in relation to the several periods of history and dissimilar facets of social structures, the

rise and growth of labour movement under capitalism has attracted much attention. The visibility and collectivity of labour and its revolutionary potential in advanced capitalist countries have interested these historians. They have also written against the tendency of the elite historians to ascribe all positive growths in society and politics to dominant classes and to condemn the lower classes for their backwardness. The Marxist historians have emphasized that the lower classes should not be measured reactionary and their role in the creation of social and political values necessarily be brought out. Therefore Rodney Hilton stressed that the medieval peasantry should be given its due for the development of thoughts of equality and freedom. George Rude has criticized those who consider the urban rioters as irrational mobs. Instead, he pointed out, the bulk of the protesters came from respectable laboring professions whose actions were rational. Likewise, E.P. Thompson, in his well-known essay 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' of food rioters in England whose actions were 'a highly intricate form of direct political action, disciplined and with clear objectives'. In his earlier classic *The Creation of the English Working Class* defense of the mass action:

- 'I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity. Their crafts and traditions may have been backward-looking. Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they existed through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in conditions of their own experience; and if they were casualties of history, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties.'

This defense of the lost radical causes is to be established in Christopher Hill as well. Hill saw the mid-17th century English Revolution as an assertion by the emergent bourgeoisie. This, according to him, ushered in the rise of contemporary society in England. Though, there was another, lower class,



element in the upheavals, one that did not succeed. Hill urges to consider it more favorably:

- We can, perhaps, extend a little gratitude to all those nameless radicals who foresaw and worked for – not our contemporary world – but something distant nobler, something yet to be achieved – the upside down world.’

In keeping with their belief in the subsistence of class-disagreement in societies and the role of class-thrash about as the prime mover of change, the Marxist historians have explained several revolutions in these conditions. Therefore Lefevbre, Soboul and Rude have analyzed the French Revolution in conditions of the leadership provided by emergent bourgeoisie. Likewise, Christopher Hill has interpreted the English Civil War as caused by the aspiration of rising English bourgeoisie. Rodney Hilton sought to illustrate that even throughout the medieval society there was an intense class-thrash about going on flanked by the lords and the peasants. The Marxist historians also view the state as a class state’, that is, the state of the ruling class. This situation, in their opinion, has sustained since the day the state was first shaped. It served the interests of the dominant classes and has been used to stay the lower classes in subordination. Hilton, Hill, Anderson, Miliband, Therborn all adopted this view. E.P.Thompson, though, somewhat differs in his views and puts forward the thought that the law should be seen differently. Although it ultimately served the interests of the ruling classes, it had to appear neutral. This appearance of neutrality may sometimes be used by the lower classes for their own agitations.

The Marxist historians usually see ideology and religion as serving the interests of the ruling classes. But they do not see such a connection mechanically. Therefore although the religions like Protestantism ultimately served the interests of rising capitalists, it should also be seen as a system of thought for which men were willing to kill and be killed’. But, in the final analysis, Hill argues, to understand Puritanism we necessity understand the needs, hopes, fears and aspirations of the godly artisans, yeomen, gentlemen and ministers and their wives, who gave their support to its doctrines.... It

seemed to point the method to heaven because it helped them to live on earth.’

Their main contributions may be summarised as follows:

- Criticism of economic determinism and the base-superstructure model of traditional Marxism.
- Development of Marxism as a theory of class determination.
- Emphasis on the history of and from the viewpoint of the oppressed people, on experience and agency of the subordinated classes as two significant categories to understand the dynamics of their actions.
- Eschewing the neutrality of the traditional historians in favor of taking sides without relinquishing objectivity.

## **SOME SIGNIFICANT MARXIST HISTORIANS IN THE WEST**

In this part we will talk about the individual contributions made by some significant Marxist historians in the West whose writings provided new orientation not only to Marxist historical theory and practice but to historiography in common.

### **Georges Lefebvre**

Lefebvre, a French historian, was crucial in the development of Marxist social history. He is best recognized for his work on the French Revolution. His book, *The Coming of the French Revolution* provided a common synthesis of the views which argued that the Revolution was a bourgeois one and was caused by the opposition of the French nobility to reforms in 1787-88. Lefebvre’s main contribution, though, is in his insightful studies of the French peasantry. He related the Revolution to the peasantry and argued that it was basically a peasant revolution. In his quantitative revise of the French peasantry, *The Peasants of Northern France throughout the French Revolution* true of the peasant society and economy and the peasant mentality presently before the Revolution. After a thorough revise of archival material relating to feudal dues, taxation, sale of church lands, changes in religious practices and Terror records, Lefebvre outlined the differentiation within the peasant society and peasants’ response to the appeal of Revolution. This revise

was followed by his great work on the peasant fear and hysteria throughout 1789 resulting from an imagined aristocratic conspiracy, *The Great Fear of 1789* in the *Annales* School, as is apparent in his articles 'Revolutionary Crowds' and 'The Murder of Count of Dampierre' *Revolution*, 1954, where he used storytelling to explore the mentalities of the peasants. Therefore, Lefebvre's contribution ranges from quantitative history to psychological and sociological characteristics of peasant's subsistence to history of mentalities.

### **Maurice Dobb**

Dobb was not a social historian. He was basically an economic historian, but one who, in the languages of Harvey J. Kaye, 'pushed economic history beyond economics. In information, he was quite consciously seeking to shift the focus of revise in economic history and development absent from a narrow economism to a broader politico-economic perspective'. Dobb's emphasis on the politico-economic and on the class-struggle as a determining factor is important in deciding the course which Marxist social history would take in Britain.

Dobb, in his classic work, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* of capitalism. He criticised Henri Pirenne for considering external factors, like the rise of commerce in medieval times, as crucial to the decline of feudalism. Dobb argued, on the contrary, that it is in the internal structure of a scrupulous society where the dynamics of change necessarily be situated. Moreover, Dobb insisted that feudalism, as any other social system, should be defined in conditions of its social dealings of manufacture.

### **George Rude**

Rude was one of the mainly significant Marxist historians who pioneered the history from below. The major region of his research was the French Revolution and the popular participation in it. In books like *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, *Revolutionary Europe: 1783-1815* he discussed in detail the nature of the Revolution and the participation of ordinary people in it. He argued that the general people who took part in the riots should not be

measured as irrational mobs, but as thinking men who had scrupulous aims in mind.

### **Albert Soboul**

Soboul was a French historian who has significantly contributed to the debates in excess of the nature of, and reasons for, the French Revolution. Although he rejected any easy explanation of the Revolution as directly caused by the bourgeoisie, he accepted its overall bourgeois character. In his book, *The French Revolution*, Soboul adhered to the traditional Marxist location of characterizing it as a bourgeois revolution, despite criticism of this view by Alfred Cobban in 1955. Though, Soboul's mainly significant contribution to social history consisted in his revise of the Parisian *sans-culottes*. It was these people who took the Revolution to its radical conclusion. Soboul was one of the pioneers who comprehensively studied the composition and role of these people. He also wrote in relation to the French peasantry and their role in the Revolution.

### **Rodney Hilton**

Hilton is measured as one of the greatest historians of medieval Europe. His work has immensely enriched our understanding of the peasantry of medieval Europe. In his significant book, *A Medieval Society* necessity is defined in class conditions, as a society consisting of feudal lords and subordinate peasants. Since the peasants' surplus produce was appropriated by the lords, there was always an element of class tension in this connection. Therefore, according to Hilton, feudalism was a society not only divided in class conditions but also one in which there lived a continuous class thrash about. This row of enquiry was further advanced in his *Bond Men Made Free* al peasants had been able to collectively resist the rising use by the lords. And it was this class thrash about which was the main cause for social change in medieval societies.

Hilton emphasized the active role of peasantry in the socio-economic changes. The whole range of his work contrasts with those of some non-

Marxist historians who consider the changes as result of abstract economic and demographic laws; it also revises the traditional Marxist notion in relation to the passivity of the peasantry.

### **Christopher Hill**

Hill is *the* historian of seventeenth-century England. Mainly of his writings centered on the English Revolution of the seventeenth century. *Economic Troubles of the Church Century of Revolution sh Revolution y England* and *Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century England* g with the subject. His main thesis was that the English Revolution of the mid-17th century was a bourgeois revolution and had led to the development of capitalism. He differed from those explanations of the Revolution which interpreted it in conditions of thrash about for religious and constitutional liberty. Hill, instead, argued that the Revolution should be basically seen in class conditions which led to the success of the bourgeois revolution and was crucial in shaping England's historical development and heritage. He, though, detected a revolution within the revolution, a radical upheaval of thoughts which sought to turn the world upside down.

Hill's significant contribution is to explore the social foundation of thoughts. Although he measured thoughts as very important in the historical procedure, he emphasized that it was the context which gave rise to such thoughts. He pointed out in the Introduction of the *Intellectual Origins of The English Revolution*:

- Thoughts were all-significant for the individuals whom they impelled into action; but the historians necessity attach equal importance to the circumstances which gave these thoughts their chance. Revolutions are not made without thoughts, but they are not made by intellectuals. Steam is essential to driving a railway engine; but neither a locomotive not a permanent method can be built out of steam....
- It appears to me that any body of thought which plays a major part in history – Luther's, Rousseau's, Marx's own – takes on because it

meets the needs of important groups in the society in which it comes into prominence...‘

### **E.J.Hobsbawm**

Hobsbawm is in the middle of the greatest historians of the contemporary age. The volume and range of his historical writing are immense and they cover peasant history, labour history and world history. On the one hand, he has written on the origins of capitalism and imperialism in *Industry and Empire* Nationalism since 1780; on the other hand, he has extensively sheltered the history of ordinary people in such works as *Primitive Rebels*, *Captain Swing*, *Bandits*. In the field of world history, Hobsbawm has written four volumes of intricate but lucid total history‘ – *The Age of Revolution* of *Extremes* one of the pioneers of social history in England after 1945. His writings gave a new turn to histories of popular civilization, labour, crime and protest. He was one of the mainly widely recognized and influential of the Marxist historians in the world. Thompson’s best-recognized book, *The Creation of the English Working Class* instantly acquired the status of a classic after publication in 1963. It heralded a new labour history which rejected the notion of the working class as passive recipient of the industrial and economic changes. Thompson also argued against the traditional Marxist notion of class as an economic category, as something which can be defined approximately mathematically – so several men who stand in a sure relation to the means of manufacture‘. Instead, he sought to analyze class as an active procedure, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning.‘ Thompson asserted that the working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own creation.‘ In his opinion, class should be seen as a historical procedure and not as a static category:

- By class I understand a historical phenomenon .... I do not see class as a structure‘, nor even as a category‘, but as something which in information happens in human relationships.‘

This dynamic conception of class revolutionized the practice of social history not only in the middle of Marxists but in the middle of others as well. Besides this, Thompson's work in other regions such as the moral economy of urban food rioters and his emphasis to see history from the point of view of general people have also given new orientation to social history.

### **Eugene D. Genovese**

Genovese, an significant figure in America's New Left, appeared as America's mainly significant social historian throughout the 1960s and 1970s. His reinterpretation of the slave economy and society in nineteenth-century America became very influential and controversial. His major works contain *The Political Economy of Slavery, The World the Slaveholders Made e Slaves Made* 1979. He described the South American slave society pre-bourgeois and pre-contemporary. Despite being Cruel, unjust, exploitative, oppressive, Genovese argued that it was a historically unique type of paternalist society in which the slavery bound the two peoples jointly in bitter antagonism while creating an organic connection so intricate and ambivalent that neither could express the simplest human feelings without reference to the other'. On the practice of history, Genovese maintained that the historian should be able to take sides while being objective:

- ...what we stand for is the realization that all historical writing and teaching – all cultural work – is unavoidably political intervention, but that ideologically motivated history is bad history and ultimately reactionary politics.

### **Robert Brenner**

Brenner is one of the mainly significant of Marxist historians in the West. He shot into fame by attacking the population-based theories in relation to the decline of feudalism in Europe. In his articles, Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe development: A

Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism' focused on demography and on trade and urbanization as prime causes for decline of feudalism in Europe. His intervention started an intense debate in relation to the decline of feudalism and origins of capitalism. Brenner replied to the criticism in another article, 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism', published in 1982. Brenner argued that it was the class-structure and relative balance of class forces which were the determining factors of changes. Therefore it was the strength of the Western European peasantry which made it capable to resist the onslaught by the landlords. On the other hand, in Eastern Europe, the peasant societies were unable to counter seigniorial pressure. Brenner therefore emphasized the primacy of class struggle as the motor of change in a given society.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is Western Marxism? Who are the important thinkers identified with it?
- Discuss the various trends in the classical Marxist interpretation of history. Which aspect of it appeals to the Western Marxist social historians?
- What are the main trends in the Marxist historiography in the West? Discuss with reference to some of the important Marxist historians.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **POSTMODERNIST INTERVENTION**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- The modernist custom
- What is postmodernism?
- Ideologues of postmodernism
- Postmodernism and history-writing



- Critique of postmodernism
- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain modernist tradition.
- Understand the postmodernism.
- Explain ideologues of postmodernism
- Understand postmodernism and history-writing

## **THE MODERNIST CUSTOM**

The procedure of modernity began in the European countries approximately the time of Renaissance. Its centre lay in the origins and growth of contemporary sciences which recognized a quest for certainty, truth, exactitude, common principles and universal laws. Its ultimate philosophical justification was achieved in the works of philosophers like Descartes, Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu and Diderot, the German philosophers such as Kant and Hegel and several other philosophers and thinkers. Modernity was said to herald the end of the Middle Ages or Feudalism in Europe, and usher in an era where Cause reigned supreme. The philosophers of modernity from Descartes to the post-Enlightenment thinkers to Marx and Weber denounced the medieval values, faiths and beliefs. Although some of them, like Marx, were critical of modernity, they upheld mainly of its values and norms. Alain Touraine, a French sociologist, has stated that the dominant conception of modernity was that of a sharp break from the past:

- The mainly powerful Western conception of modernity, and the one which has had the mainly profound effects, asserted above all that rationalization required the destruction of so-described traditional social bonds, feelings, customs, and beliefs, and that the agent of modernization was neither a scrupulous category or social class, but

cause itself.... The West... existed and conceived modernity as a *revolution*.’

The social sciences, including history, were integrally related to the creation of this modernity. Great thinkers like Hobbes, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Adam Smith, Bacon were both products and producers of this modernity. Their theories were used for legitimizing and maintaining centralized, bureaucratic states, creating new institutions, and molding society and economy in new methods. Modernity may be said to consist of several values and beliefs which incorporated:

- Faith in the usefulness and correctness of contemporary science and technology;
- Belief in Enlightenment principles that the society should follow the path of Cause and that myth and religion should have no role in shaping social values;
- Belief in a linear, progressive and transparent course of human history;
- More reliance on universal principles in comparison to particularity;
- Faith in the autonomous, self-conscious individual who is master of his destiny;
- Belief that contemporary science and Cause would conquer nature and provide rise to affluence, freedom and a life free from fear of mortality.

Separately from new philosophical principles, modernity also generated powerful material forces which gave rise to contemporary industries, capitalism, and an entirely new set of social dealings in Europe by the nineteenth century. This new industrial society was marked by urbanization, bureaucratization, individualism, commodification, rationalization and secularization. By the mid-nineteenth century, the procedure of modernity had approximately totally eliminated the economy, society and polity of the Middle Ages in Western Europe and North America. Instead, it had given rise to a totally new economic, social and political order.

As the modernity generated unprecedented progress, it also created enormous sufferings. The peasantry, workers and artisans were all forced to go through terrible misery in the procedure of being modernized. Even more sufferings were due for the colonial territories in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia where the colonizing Europeans eliminated the local people, occupied their lands and drained the economy for their own benefits. This imperialist drive led to the death of millions in colonial territories, enormous distortion in their cultures and traditions, and terrible burden on their possessions.

## **WHAT IS POSTMODERNISM?**

Postmodernism and post modernity are sometimes used interchangeably. In information, both conditions denote dissimilar, though related meanings. While post modernity has been used to characterize the economic and social circumstances of subsistence in modern urbanized societies, postmodernism denotes the philosophy which has now arisen after and in opposition to the philosophy of modernity. In the following sub-parts, we will talk about the concepts of post modernity, the history of the term postmodernism and finally the vital concepts relating to postmodernism.

### **Post Modernity**

It has been a belief in the middle of some, particularly the postmodernists that we have passed beyond modernity and the age we are now livelihood in is a postmodern one. Keith Jenkins, one of the postmodern theorists of history, declares that

- Today we live within the common condition of *post modernity*. We do not have a choice in relation to the this. For post modernity is not an ~~ideology~~” or a location we can choose to subscribe to or not; post modernity is precisely our condition: it is our fate.

Frederic Jameson, a benevolent critic of postmodernism, also thinks that postmodernism is a cultural procedure initiated by a radical change in the

nature of capitalism. In a well-known book, he has characterized postmodernism as the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'. Basing in this belief in relation to the emergence of a new society, many thinkers have argued that this has led to a change in our knowledge-system. Therefore Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French thinker who popularized the term 'postmodernism', states that 'the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is recognized as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is recognized as postmodern age'. In by the term post modernity, the emphasis is basically on the social and the economic. It implies the exhaustion of modernity and stresses the rise of new information and communication technologies leading to globalization and the enormous growth of consumerism. The theorists of this transformation have claimed that presently as in the past the agrarian societies based on land were replaced by industrial societies based on manufacturing, in the similar method, the industrial societies are now being replaced by a postindustrial world in which the service sector is now the mainly prominent.

It was Daniel Bell who, in his book *The Coming of Postindustrial Society*, seriously wrote in relation to the arrival of a new type of society on behalf of a break from the earlier industrial society. In his view, the old-approach 'factory worker' is now replaced by the new service-sector professional. Simultaneously, the old-approach machines are now replaced by new information and communication technologies. The Fordist assembly row is now a thing of the past and there is a decentralization of manufacture and manufacturing. Moreover, now there is a greater flexibility in management and employment.

### **History of the Term**

The term 'postmodern' has a extensive past and it has been used in several contexts. But its use, as the term itself designates, has mostly been in the sense of surpassing the contemporary. As early as 1870, an English painter, J.W.Chapman used the term 'postmodern' for the paintings which were supposedly more contemporary than the French impressionist paintings.

Later, in 1917, Rudolf Pannwitz applied the term for the nihilistic tendencies in European civilization. In the post-Second World War era, Arnold Toynbee, in his monumental book, *A Revision of History*, used the term to illustrate a transformation in European society and civilization from approximately 1875. He described this 'Postmodern Age' as a break from the earlier Contemporary Age which followed the Middle Ages. In his view, this stage of Western history could be characterized by revolutions, wars and socio-political upheavals. This Postmodern Age, in his opinion, was marked by collapse of rationalism, stability and Enlightenment values which had characterized the Contemporary Age until 1875. In the United States, the thought of a postmodern era has been articulated since the 1950s. The historian Bernard Rosenberg, the economist Peter Drucker and the sociologist C. Wright Mills defined the thought of postmodern in their own methods. While Rosenberg connected it with the emergence of a mass society, Drucker recognized it with the postindustrial society; according to Mills, the postmodern age is leading to restriction of freedom and a robot like society.

From the 1970s onwards, though, the term has been in constant use to criticize and attack the legacy of modernity. The French theorists, followed by the American ones, have been on the forefront in this regard. They have formulated theories which have heralded the new postmodern philosophy that has spread to several parts of the world.

### **Main Concepts**

Very much like the theories of modernity, there is no unified theory of postmodernism. If anything, the situation is even more diffuse and chaotic. The range is vast and it covers the whole spectrum from mild critique of modernity to total nihilism. But, although postmodernism derives its definitions from several sources, the one general thread running through them is the critique of modernity. The major ideologues whose works constitute the corpus from which postmodernism is formulated are Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Guattari, White, and Rorty. Their works posed

a major challenge to the narratives of modernity and their theories attacked the vital foundations of knowledge created by modernity with Cause at its centre. The targets of their criticism have been capitalism, historicism, humanism, scientism, and rationalism which constituted the contemporary world. Postmodernism questioned the claims of the Enlightenment philosophers for universal knowledge. It also criticised the search for foundations of knowledge. Modernity gave rise to grand narratives, that is, overarching theories purporting to explain each and everything within its compass. Postmodernism rejects the very thought of such grand narratives and attacks the all-encompassing, overarching ideologies.

Secondly, postmodernism debunks the claims of the science to achieve truth. Postmodernism takes nothing as absolute and leans towards relativism, sometimes total relativism. It, moreover, rejects the claims of human and social sciences for on behalf of the facts and the world. In the opinion of the postmodern theorists, there is no truth which is beyond or prior to linguistic intervention; it is language which constructs the reality and the world for the humans. It is, so, futile to search for truth beyond language which, in turn, is conditioned by the individual and local cultures.

Thirdly, postmodernism also attacks the modernist organisation of world and knowledge in binaries. According to the postmodernists, the modernist custom tried to arrange knowledge approximately sure major binaries in which science was the core general element – science vs. rhetoric, science vs. literature, science vs. narrative. Here science represented the true knowledge while the other face of the binary belonged to imagination and false consciousness. It also generated other sets of binaries. Information vs. fiction, truth vs. imagination, science vs. magic, masculine vs. feminine, etc. are the binary oppositions conventionalized by the theorists of modernity. In these binaries, the second term approximately always occupies an inferior location. Postmodernism challenges this knowledge based on binaries and instead emphasizes on multiplicities, diversities and differences. The western concept of post modernity has been outlined by Steve Seidman as follows:

- As we move towards the end of the second millenium we in the west are entering a postmodern cultural terrain. This is a civilization in

which knowledge becomes knowledge's, identities are understood as fractured, plural, and porous, and society and politics is without a fixed center.'

David Harvey, in his book *The Condition of Post modernity* of modernism and postmodernism which are opposed to each other. These are listed in the table 16.1 below.

**Table 16.1 Features of Modernism and Post-modernism**

Modernism	Postmodernism
Elitism, closure, authoritarianism and social engineering	Popular consumerism, flexibility, choice, openness, opportunity
High culture and tradition, profundity	Popular culture and the commodification of leisure and culture, "irreverent pastiche", "contrived depthlessness"
Austerity and discipline	Playfulness, "laid back" hedonism
Fixed meanings, centres, absolute laws and truths	Relativity, indeterminacy, contingency, fragments of being, decentring, life (or "petite") histories
Holism	Individualism
Planning	Experimentation, pragmatism
Homogeneity	Heterogeneity
Signified	Signifier
Certainty, unitary structures, e.g., class and systems, synthesis, externality (i.e., reality "out there")	Scepticism, deconstruction, discursive reality

## IDEOLOGUES OF POSTMODERNISM

In this part we will talk about the philosophers and thinkers who gave form to the thought of postmodernism. This will contain the earlier philosophers, whose thoughts have influenced the more recent thinkers, as well as those whose works have grounded the thought of postmodernism since the 1960s.

## **Precursors**

The critique of modernity is approximately as old as modernity itself. As modernity achieved its full philosophical expression in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophies, their challengers also came to the fore approximately the similar time. When Voltaire was laying the foundations of the Enlightenment which stood against custom, and was advocating the supremacy of Cause, Rousseau spoke for cultural primitivism and the natural order. A little later the Romantics also stood against Enlightenment's emphasis on rationalism, scientism, universalism and totality. Instead, they defended the archaic, the traditional, the natural, the individual and the exotic. Their rebellion against modernity led the Romantics like Herder, the Grimm brothers, and several others to search for traditional folk cultures. Though, the single mainly significant thinker who approximately anticipated post modernity was Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher. Nietzsche agreed with the Romantics in their critique of modernity, but he differed with them so distant as the solution was concerned. The Romantic search for peace in nature, custom and religion did not appeal to Nietzsche. He said that the contemporary man had become too rooted in knowledge and freedom to return to nature and custom. It was, so, futile to entertain a Romantic alternative of return to nature.

The main thoughts of Nietzsche with which the postmodernists identify are related to his severe attack on principles of modernity – Cause, scientism, truth, meaning and universality. Nietzsche severely criticised the custom of western rationalism beginning with Plato and its claim to truth. In his opinion, this whole claim to possess truth is nothing but a desire for power and power. He whispered that human history is not, and should not be, meaningful, purposeful and predictable. He asserted that uncertainty was the hallmark of human condition. He also proclaimed the death of God and demise of religion and said that morality and truth were impossible to achieve.

Another thinker in this custom was Martin Heidegger, another German philosopher. He is measured to be one of the mainly significant thinkers of the 20th century. He was an anti-historicist and denied the conception of history



as science and rejected its view of progress. He was also hostile to cause, science and technology. He whispered that contemporary technology has reduced the humans to absolute slavery. In his mainly significant book, *Being and Time*, Heidegger undertook an enquiry into Being by combining the Existentialist and Phenomenological approaches. According to him, the crisis of modernity lies in the replacement of God by man as the centre of the universe. According to him, the whole western philosophical custom since the time of Socrates was metaphysical. Here Heidegger inverts the usual meaning of 'metaphysics' of senses'. In his opinion, the western rationalist custom denies the possibility of a world beyond the concrete world perceived through senses. He whispered that there was nihilism in the modern thought which originated in Socratic rationalism. It has been the usually accepted view that science and technology was opposed to metaphysics, in that while metaphysics dealt with the world beyond our natural senses, science and technology were concerned with things in the concrete world. But in Heidegger's unique definition, contemporary technology was measured as the highest manifestation of metaphysics because it can predict, manipulate and change the world.

Both Nietzsche and Heidegger radically question the modernist custom and prepare the ground for philosophical postmodernism. They criticize the unlimited competition and desire for dominance which modernity produced and illustrate that there is a strong possibility that the relentless drive for modernity could be tyrannical, dehumanizing and nihilistic. Though, what the postmodernists do not pay enough attention to or ignore are the hierarchical and elitist attitudes of both these thinkers. Beside with other things, Nietzsche condemned the egalitarianism of Enlightenment thought and abhorred the mass-based democratic societies of his time. He whispered that democratic Europe was the 'involuntary breeding ground for tyrants'. He hoped for a European aristocracy which would heed the advice of the philosophers. Likewise, Heidegger supported Hitler and the Nazis and was himself a member of the Nazi party.

## **Ideologues of Postmodernism**

There are several thinkers associated with postmodernism. Though, in this part, we will take up the thoughts of only some of the mainly significant thinkers for discussion.

### ***Michel Foucault***

Foucault, a French philosopher, was a intricate thinker whose thoughts encompass several themes and multiple thoughts. Nevertheless, he is measured a postmodern thinker because of his trenchant criticism of the Enlightenment thoughts and modernity. His writings had and have still sustained to exert tremendous power in humanities and social sciences. His work is regularly referred to in disciplines such as history, cultural studies, philosophy, sociology, literary theory and education. He is well-known for his critiques of several social institutions which he considered the products of European modernity. Institutions and disciplines such as psychiatry, medicine and prisons invited his trenchant criticism. Separately from his works on these, he is also renowned for his common theories concerning power and the relation flanked by power and knowledge, as well as his thoughts concerning ‘discourse’ in relation to the history of Western thought. In later life he also worked on the history of sexuality. Foucault expressed his thoughts through a series of significant books – *Madness and Culture* *archeology of Knowledge* *of the Prison* *oucault’s* writings are mostly set in historical contexts, but he discourages the notion of totality and stability in history. Instead, he promotes the thought of discontinuity. Therefore, for him, history is not continuous and unifocal, nor can there be any universalisation of history. Foucault’s thoughts in relation to the history and society progresses from the concept of archaeology to that of genealogy. But throughout his works, he stresses the thought of variation. Moreover, he rejects the Enlightenment thought that the rule of Cause can be equated with emancipation and progress. He says that instead of serving as an emancipatory force, the knowledge centers on power and helps in creating new shapes of power in contemporary times. He

therefore criticizes the attempts to separate knowledge and power and emphasizes that the pursuit of knowledge, particularly in contemporary times, is indissolubly associated with pursuit of power and quest for power. In brief, his thoughts can be stated as follows:

- The history or the society is not unifocal but is decent red;
- The discourses constitute the subject; the subject is not the originator of discourses. The discourses instead originate from institutional practices;
- Knowledge is not neutral but is intricately linked with manners of power and power.

### ***Jacques Derrida***

Derrida, another French philosopher, has proved crucial to the development of the postmodern theory, particularly the 'linguistic turn'. The vital contribution of Derrida to the development of the poststructuralist and postmodernist theories is his theory of deconstruction. It views all written texts as product of intricate cultural procedures. Moreover, these texts can only be defined in relation to other texts and conventions of writing. According to Derrida, the human knowledge is limited to texts; there is nothing outside the texts. Reality is constituted by language. It does not, though, mean that there is no world outside of language. But it does mean that the world we know is accessible to us only through language. It is language which constitutes our world and, so, language precedes reality. The knowledge of reality is not beyond language and its rules of subsistence. Another point related to deconstruction is the thought of variation which states that the meaning of anything is ascertained only through variation from other things. Any text is conceivable only in relation of variation to other texts. In this sense, variation precedes the subsistence of things.

Another point is in relation to the unity of opposites, because without unity, there are no opposites. Unity and opposition alternate with each other. Deconstruction emphasizes on the instability and multiplicity of meanings. There is no fixed meaning of anything and no single reading of a text.

### ***Jean-Francois Lyotard***

Lyotard is the main thinker who made the word postmodern well-known. His book, *The Postmodern Condition*, published in French in 1979 and in English in 1984, made the term popular. He defined the term in the following method: ‘Simplifying to the extreme, I describe *postmodern* as incredulity towards met narratives’. These met narratives are grand narratives such as ‘the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth’. Lyotard expresses doubt towards all these. In his opinion, theories and discourses of all types are ‘concealed narratives’, that is, close to-fictional accounts, despite their claims for universal validity. He criticizes the modernist theories which tend to totalize and universalize thoughts which are basically contemporary European products. He also rejects the foundationalism which bases all knowledge on secure theoretical foundations. He attacks the met theories, articulated through what he calls the masculinist met language, which support the power of several sorts – of one class in excess of another, of men in excess of women, of majority in excess of minority. Instead, he advocates the thoughts of variation and plurality, of radical uncertainty, and possibility of alternatives.

### ***Jean Baudrillard***

Baudrillard, another French thinker, is also closely recognized with postmodernism and symbolizes a particularly extreme form of it. His thoughts have been highly influential in the world of media and arts. He stresses that we are now a part of the postmodern world. He distinguishes modernity and post modernity on many counts:

- Contemporary society was based on manufacture while postmodern society is based on consumption;
- Contemporary society was marked by swap of commodities, whereas symbolic swap is the hallmark of the postmodern society;

- In contemporary society representation was primary where thoughts symbolize reality and truth, but in postmodern society, the simulation takes precedence where there is no reality and where the meanings dissolve.

The three phenomena which, in Baudrillard's opinion, make the postmodern condition are simulation, hyper-reality and implosion. In the new era of information and communication technologies, the media images replace the real things. These simulations increasingly become so powerful that they set the ideal for the social life. The media simulations of reality, video games, Disneyland, etc, supply more intense experiences to the consumers than the mundane everyday life. This, so, becomes the universe of hyper-reality where the distinctions flanked by the real and the unreal are eliminated. In information, these media images become more real than reality itself. Therefore, the whole situation becomes inverted. Baudrillard also defines the postmodern world as one of implosion where the traditional boundaries of classes, groups and genders are collapsing. This postmodern world has no meaning, no rhyme and no cause. There is no anchor and no hope. It is a world of nihilism.

### ***Hayden White***

White, an American historian, is measured an significant postmodern thinker, particularly, in the field of history. His book, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, published in 1973, has been hailed by several as signifying a break in the philosophy of history. It was supposed to herald a 'linguistic turn' in the writing of history. Now, it was said, instead of asking 'how does history resemble science?' one might inquire 'how does history resemble fiction?' White argues that the past is presented to us merely in the form of several disjointed chronicles. It is the historian who makes out of it a meaningful story. It is not possible to discover in the historical events a coherent narrative. At the mainly, they offer elements of a story. It is now the historian who prepares a coherent narrative out of the

accessible set of records by suppressing some events, while highlighting some others. This procedure becomes manifest by the information that the similar set of events may be construed as tragic, ironic or comic depending upon the political or other predilections of the historians. It, so, becomes clear, according to White, that history is not a scientific exercise, but a literary one and the historical narratives are not scientific treatise but verbal fictions‘.

White says that in writing of history all the techniques of novel-writing are employed. Selection of events, characterization, change of tone and point of view are the techniques general to both the writing of novels and history. In history-writing, as in the creation of novels, imagination plays a great role. It is only through imagination that the historian creates sense of the past events and weaves some of them into a credible story.

### ***F.R. Ankersmit***

Ankersmit is a philosopher of history in the Netherlands. His views on history are outlined in his books which contain *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language of History and Fall of Metaphor* generalization in history. According to him, the generalizations in relation to the past do not refer to anything real, but are concepts constructed by historians for the purpose of writing history:

- For instance conditions like ~~Renaissance~~”, ~~Enlightenment~~”, ~~early contemporary European capitalism~~” or the ~~decline of the Church~~” are in information names given to the ~~images~~” or ~~pictures~~” of the past proposed by historians attempting to approach to grips with the past.‘

Likewise, he says, that concepts such as ~~intellectual movement~~” ... ~~social group~~”... do not form part of the past itself and ... do not even refer to actual historical phenomena or characteristics of such phenomena‘. He, so, asserts that generalizations do not express any truths on the nature of reality; they only reflect regularities in how we have actually *decided* to conceptualize reality‘. He further argues that the historian’s language makes an opacity which creates the knowledge of the past even more hard:

- The historical narrative is a intricate linguistic structure specially built for the purpose of showing part of the past. In other languages, the historian's language is not a transparent, passive medium through which we can see the past as we do perceive what is written in a letter through the glass paperweight lying on top of it.... We do not see past through the historian's language, but from the vantage point suggested by it.

Ankersmit, so, proposes that historical writing should be measured as representational painting, which is separate from the thing it symbolizes.

## **POSTMODERNISM AND HISTORY-WRITING**

Postmodernism offers a fundamental critique of the conventional mode of history-writing. Sometimes the critique becomes so radical that it approximately becomes anti-history. The main ingredient of history-writing, such as facts, sources, documents, archival records, etc., all approach under severe scrutiny under the microscope of postmodernist vision. The certainty and stability attached to historical writing are thoroughly debunked, the inner working of historiography is put under scanner and its proclaimed nearness to truth is attacked. The history-writing itself is historicized, and its rootedness in the western civilization is highlighted by the postmodern thinkers. Postmodernism rejects the objectivist custom of history writing starting with Ranke which strove to recover the past as it actually was. It has attacked history both in its grander versions as well as in its relatively modest versions. It challenges the proclaimed objectivity and neutrality of the historians and claims that the procedure of interpretation transforms the past in radically dissimilar methods. Postmodernism questions the very foundation of conventional historiography by locating its origins in the contemporary Europe's encounter with the other. It began with the European Renaissance which prompted the Europeans to discover other lands and people. In this quest the history served as a tool for posing the contemporary western self in opposition to the other whose history was supposed to be presently beginning as a result of its encounter with Europe. Therefore the practice of history was

employed not presently to revise the past but to fashion it in conditions of the criteria set by contemporary Europe. History, so, evolved a western quest for power in excess of the colonized territories and its desire to appropriate their pasts.

There are basically two kinds of history in conventional sense. One is the grand narrative of history which visualizes that the human society is moving in a sure direction, towards an ultimate goal – global capitalist society or a global communist one. There is another, more modest version of history which claims to rely only on facts and to eschew any ideological orientation. It claims neutrality and objectivity for itself and is the mainly accepted version of history writing. This is also recognized as the ‘lower case history’ which is ‘realist, objectivist, documentaries and liberal-pluralist’. At the centre of professional history writing is the notion of objectivity, of facts, of being able to symbolize reality, to recover the past. Historical facts are seen to exist self-governing of and prior to interpretation. Historian’s job is therefore said to be able to discover the truth, to be neutral and dispassionate.

Postmodernism rejects all these notions. It not only attacks the attribution of any essence to the past, but also criticizes the attempts to revise the past for ‘its own sake’. Both versions of history writing are measured as ideological and situated in scrupulous cultural formation. Both types of history is said to be ‘presently theories in relation to the past’, without any claim to symbolize the truth. Both are the products of western modernity and symbolize the methods in which it ‘conceptualized the past’. According to postmodernism, there is no historical truth but what the historians create it out to be, no facts except what the historians interpret, no representable past except what the historians construct. In postmodernist view, the history can be accepted as genuine knowledge only if it sheds its claims to truth and hence to power, and accepts its fragmentary character. The only history possible is micro history. The ambiguities and gaps in historical narration are inherent and essential to it and should be retained. All quests for stability, coherence and consistency should be dropped. It should be accepted that all documents and facts are nothing but texts and are ideologically constructed.



There are even more extreme views within postmodernism with regard to historiography. Keith Jenkins, so, declares that we are now at a postmodern moment when we can forget history totally.‘ Here he differs somewhat from his earlier location where he felt the need for anti-modernist reflexive histories‘. Recently, though, he has taken the location that thanks to the ~~non~~-historical imaginaries” that can be gleaned from postmodernism we can now wave goodbye to history‘. He just skepticism, deconstruction, discursive his location on the ground that the history we know is entirely a contemporary western product which never earlier lived anywhere in the world:

- We have obviously never seen anything like nineteenth- and twentieth-century western upper- and lower-case genres... at any other time or lay. That there have never lived, on any other part of the earth, at any other time, methods of historicizing time like that.‘

This extreme location questions the very subsistence of any type of professional history writing.

## **CRITIQUE OF POSTMODERNISM**

As postmodernist critique of modernity ranges from total rejection to partial acceptance, so does the criticism of postmodernism varies from virulent attack and complete rejection to some stage of its acceptance. The critiques have pointed out that in some extreme form of postmodern relativism, the implication may be that anything goes‘. Though, such a stance may justify the status quo where everything stays‘. Total relativism and nihilism denies the transformative praxis and does nothing to change the repressive socio-economic and political order. By segmenting the knowledge and by demarcating the socio-cultural boundaries to extreme micro stages, it creates it impossible to make a broad solidarity of the oppressed. Moreover, the postmodern analysis of society and civilization is lop-sided because it emphasizes the tendencies towards fragmentation while totally ignoring the equally significant movements towards synthesis and broader organisation. At another stage, by conceptualizing power as distributed into countless small and big systems, practices and organisations at several stages

of society, postmodernism obscures the selective concentration of power, the vital dealings of power and subordination, of repression and resistance. It also tends to ignore the roles of state and capital as much more potent apparatus of power and repression.

Some critics also charge postmodernism with being historicist as it accepts the inevitability of the present and its supposedly postmodernist character. If the world is now postmodern, it is our fate to be livelihood in it. But such post modernity which the western world has created now is no more positive than the earlier social formation it is supposed to have superseded. Moreover, it is not very sure that whether the modernity has actually approach to an end. In information, big parts of the world in the erstwhile colonial and semi-colonial societies and East European countries are now busy modernizing themselves. Even in the west, the chief features of modernity are still there – industrial economy, political parties and factions, markets, unions, state regulations, discipline-based knowledge, etc. The concept of post modernity, so, remnants mostly at an academic and intellectual stage. Critics also argue that several postmodernists, deriving from poststructuralism, deny the possibility of knowing facts and reality. As a result, no event can be given any weight age in excess of another. All happenings in the past are of the similar value. Therefore, theoretically, the Holocaust or any brutality of a similar nature can be equated with any other event, whether tragic or comic, because, in postmodernist view, it is the language which makes events and histories for us.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is the relationship between colonial domination and the idea of race?
- Discuss the ways in which the sciences helped to promote the notion of racial difference.
- How did the idea of race originate in India?
- What is the role played by the discipline of anthropology in promoting racial theories?

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **GENDER IN HISTORY**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- History as the narrative of power
- Absence of women in contemporary historiography
- Women's movement and gender sensitive history
- Characteristics of feminist historiography
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain history as the narrative of power
- Explain absence of women in modern historiography
- Explain women's movement and gender sensitive history
- Explain features of feminist historiography

#### **HISTORY AS THE NARRATIVE OF POWER**

Despite the surfacing of new concerns and a new will amongst a part of historians, there are several inherent troubles in writing a history that is genuinely inclusive of women. The sources of history, here as elsewhere, reflect the concerns of those who have wielded power. It is sometimes argued, with justification, that the notion of time, and so of history, in the dominant Indian custom, which may also be described the Brahmanical custom, has been cyclical and not linear, creation for a crucial variation in the understanding of history. One implication of this view is that the modern discipline of history in India is a derivative of the western, linear, custom and violates the spirit of the 'authentic' Indian custom. The further implication is

that, so, it cannot be subjected to sure types of scrutiny. What is ignored in this argument is that the cyclical notion of history is as much the product of those who have wielded power as the linear view of history is. It might be useful to note that unlike archaeological proof, which may be loosely described as the garbage of history, as the incidental remnants of material civilization, and so not associated with the conscious decision to leave something to posterity, written records are self-conscious products and are closely tied to those who have exercised power. The *Rajatarangini*, the *Harshacharita*, or the *Itihasa* portions of the *Puranas* are unambiguous narratives of power even if they may reflect a cyclical view of history.

It might also be argued that these sources constitute only a small fraction of the sources we have for ancient India and the bulk of the sources are not conventional historical sources at all but a variegated collection of myths, religious texts, and other kinds of literary productions. Nevertheless the textual sources that have approach down to us, even when they are religious, cultural, social, or concerned with the political economy, are products of a knowledge system which was highly monopolistic and hierarchical and therefore narrowly concentrated in the hands of a few men — a group that was even narrower here than elsewhere.

In this context it might be useful to explore the manner in which scholars have tried to break out of the limited concerns imposed by the recorders of history who have, in a sense, refracted history for us. In modern times it is possible to use oral history as a method of countering the biases of official history. But the connection of orality to textuality is very intricate in the case of our early history. In a sense, all texts were orally transmitted and then written up much later. Though these texts only ultimately became prescriptive, or were regarded as sacred, they were treated as authoritative and so worthy of formal handing down in the traditional method which was oral precisely because it could be cautiously controlled. Oral texts are not in and of themselves counter-hegemonic. Further, sure oral traditions which had been brought into the ideological field of the religious literati but nevertheless circulated mainly in the middle of the humbler folk, and were so more widely shared as they were narrated to a heterogeneous audience, such as the *Jatakas*

or the *Panchatantra*, though important in conditions of yielding a dissimilar type of proof on women and the lower orders, are not necessarily the compositions of such parts, at least in the versions that have approach down to us. The *Jatakas* for instance, comprise a rich repertoire of narratives and often describe the experiences of ordinary women and men with great poignancy; they are, nevertheless, firmly situated within a Buddhist world-view. As they stand, the *Jatakas* are the product of mediations flanked by high civilization and 'low' civilization; framed by the *bhikkhus* these narratives cannot be termed 'folk'. While they are an alternative to the Brahmanical texts they cannot be regarded as the dichotomised 'other' of elite texts. Likewise, the *Therigatha*, verses or songs of the *bhikkhunis*, a work that is almost certainly one of the earliest compilations of women's poetry anywhere in the world, while very definitely the compositions of women, have not escaped the editorial hand of the Buddhist monastic compilers. These factors have complicated the use of oral sources and the writing of a gender sensitive history from below. There are further troubles because of the difficulties of dating oral texts, which so cannot easily be collated with other proof accessible for specific periods; while we gain from the point of view of the richness of the data we lose from the point of view of specificity of time and region. Nevertheless, despite the several troubles inherent in the sources the newer generation of historians, writing from a 'history from below' standpoint including feminists, has begun to use these sources creatively. By strategies such as reading against the grain and flanked by the rows, especially in the case of prescriptive texts, or looking at the method myths and narratives change in a diachronic context they are raising new questions and bringing in fresh insights. We will further talk about these issues in later parts.

## **ABSENCE OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHY**

It might be useful at this point to look at the factors that led to a shift in the writing of history and therefore acted as a catalyst for gender history. In the Indian context nationalist history dominated the scene until the late 1950s. Nationalist history was primarily focused on political history as of the earlier

colonial history; liberal and imaginative officers, political institutions and so on) and cultural history — mainly a detailing of achievements on the cultural front. Separately from an obsessive concern with locating and outlining idealized images and golden ages, there was approximately a conscious steering absent from examining internal contradictions, hierarchies beside dissimilar axes, and oppressive structures. This point may be illustrated by seeing the numerous works of R.K.Mukherji, R.C.Majumdar and K.P.Jayaswal in the middle of others. This trend in the writing of Indian history establish its mainly systematic formulation in the Indian History and Civilization volumes edited by R.C. Majumdar and published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay flanked by 1956 and 1963. This was part of a move to present the imperial government with a united front but also a product of middle class myopia obsessed with a single axis of deprivation, flanked by the colonial power and the nation's *bhadralok* in relation to them. Tilak, the militant nationalist, for instance, argued that the distinctions flanked by laborers and masters was false; all Indians were laborers or rather *shudras* and slaves, and the British were the only masters. Meanwhile, going back to the late colonial era, social history made its appearance.

Here as elsewhere, in the early stages, social history was a type of residual history with politics and economics left out. Some of the issues explored under this rubric were the history of social reform, and religious and revivalist movements, mostly within the framework of biographical narratives of the men spearheading the movements. Finally in the decades after independence and under the power of Marxist approaches, social history became the history of social formations. D.D. Kosambi pioneered this field with two brilliant and wide-ranging books and a series of imaginative papers published from the mid fifties onwards. His formulations were the foundation for detailed analyses on several epochs of Indian history and the connection flanked by manners of manufacture and other political and social institutions. By the late 1970s and 1980s there were raging debates on whether or not there was feudalism in India, and while the issues thrown up in the course of this debate were significant, there was absolutely nothing on what happened to women in the feudal mode of manufacture, or where they figured in the new

dealings of manufacture. The underlying presumption was that history for women was the similar as history for men. No effort was made to move into the field of the manners of social reproduction while continuing to explore manners of manufacture where class and gender could be combined creation for a connection flanked by gender structures, ideologies, and social and economic power structures. Likewise, although there was a welcome shift towards exploring the history of the lower orders, such as the *dasa-karmakaras*, *shudras*, and *chandalas*, bringing in issues of caste and class and unequal power dealings, this did not contain an examination of unequal gender dealings. In any case a shortcoming, in my view, of the history of social formations is that human beings as individuals, whether men or women, and their experience of dissimilar social procedures, seemed to be missing from it. Since it centered on manners of manufacture the primary issues that were explored were the methods in which surplus was extracted, the scrupulous shapes of labour use, and the role of technology in transforming dealings of manufacture, human experiences, mentalities, and emotions tended to be left unexplored. In some methods then, such a history was as distant as the earlier dynastic or administrative histories had been. This lacuna has to some extent been rectified by new trends in history writing under the label of 'subaltern' studies but these scholars too have neglected women as a category. While they brought into the frame of history the lives and struggles of ordinary people such as peasants and tribals, they too focused on peasant *men* and tribal *men* without even being conscious that there could be subalterns within subalterns. Their writing was as male centered as earlier nationalist or Marxist history had been. It is ironical that even as a sure space was opening up for a history of the 'powerless' the mainly powerless in the middle of the powerless remained outside the framework of new historical trends.

## **WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND GENDER SENSITIVE HISTORY**

How then did the shift happen in conditions of the writing of women's history? We may attribute this to the women's movement of the 1970s which provided the context and the impetus for the emergence of women's studies in India. As Tanika Sarkar has recently pointed out, women's history as a

sustained and self-conscious custom urbanized from the 1970s since several feminist scholars were themselves involved in the vigorous and turbulent movements against rape, dowry and domestic violence. It was here that the contours of the multiple shapes and structures of patriarchies, and the cultural practices associated with them began to be outlined through the experiences of women on the ground. These years, throughout the heyday of an explicitly political women's movement, and the insights derived therein, provided feminist scholars with the experiential material on the foundation of which they formulated gender as a category of analysis are cashing in on the space created for women's history, without addressing the subsistence of patriarchies in their writing, is an explicitly anti-political and deflective agenda, marking a sharp break from feminist scholarship.) And since the 70s also witnessed other political movements of peasants, workers, and tribals turning our attention onto the marginalized and the oppressive circumstances under which they existed and struggled, historians were forced to broaden the ambit of history; the content of history has therefore been dramatically democratized and we are now happily moving in a direction which is creation history the mainly dynamic discipline in the social sciences. But it is significant to recognize that historians, and only some of them at that, respond to grass-roots assertions: they do not lead the new trends but merely follow the agendas set by our people, which is why a gender sensitive history had to wait for the women's movement and was not an automatic or logical trend following from Marxist history or subaltern history.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMINIST HISTORIOGRAPHY**

In a moment such as this, it is apt that a review of the main trends in women's history is undertaken. Beginning with tentative formulations and easy re-readings it is by now fairly apparent that despite a weak institutional base women's history has taken off. Throughout the last decade some very fine work has appeared in the field of women's history forcing mainstream historians to recognize and sometimes even cash in on the 'market' created by feminist scholarship. In the middle of the first major moves made by feminist scholars was that of dismantling the dominant nationalist narrative of the glory



of Hindu womanhood throughout the ancient past, specifically throughout the Vedic era. By breaking up the Hindu / Vedic woman into the 'Aryan' and the *dasi* woman attention was drawn to the differing histories of women according to respective social locations. This corrective was significant because while it was necessary to insert gender as an axis of stratification it was equally necessary, perhaps more so, to outline the stratification that lived *within* women. The suppressions entailed in the homogenized product of the nationalists, the 'Hindu' / Vedic or 'Aryan' woman, became apparent. At the similar time the need to outline the distinctive social histories of women was highlighted. Therefore while the major tendency throughout these early years was to write a complementary, or supplementary, history of women, to accompany the narratives of mainstream history, by plotting the history of women in dissimilar arenas and in dissimilar kinds of struggles the distinctive experiences of women in the context of class was built into the analysis of gender.

A second characteristic of the thrust in writing women's history was the painstaking uncovering and compiling of an archive of women's writing. Given the male biases of the sources normally relied upon by mainstream history, and the difficulties experienced by feminist historians in finding alternative sources, the putting jointly of this archive has been very important. It has helped to break down the canonization of sure sources which are no longer invariably regarded as more reliable but, more correctly, as having achieved authoritative status through their closeness to power. A parallel and no less important development has been the appearance of some very rich and sensitive readings of women's writing.

An overview of women's history and the insights derived from the new writing lead directly to the recognition that gender as a tool of analysis has been very unevenly used to explore the three conventional chronological phases of ancient, medieval and contemporary India. The bulk of the new writing is being done for colonial and post-colonial India and there is very little of such writing for ancient and even less for medieval India. This is in part due to the need for knowledge of the classical languages in which the sources are accessible for these phases but it is also partly attributable to the

dominant modern theoretical concerns which are focused solely on colonial and post colonial Indian society. In practice this has also meant the abandonment of these phases to the continuing power of the Ideological framework which is locked into a high classical and consensus approach, unwilling to recognize that there could be other histories.

Though, there have been pioneering works heralding a breakthrough in more methods than one. A recent revise by Kumkum Roy on the emergence of monarchy in early India is important because it uses precisely those sources that the Ideologists have always relied upon, the Brahmanical texts relevant for the era, but opened them up to a totally dissimilar row of inquiry. The revise also links the inter-relatedness of the dissimilar axes of stratification to outline the procedures by which hierarchies were recognized and legitimized through the use of Brahmanical rituals. Once the structure was in lay the king was regarded as the legitimate controller of the productive and reproductive possessions of the kingdom. At the similar time the *yajamana*, on whose behalf rituals were performed, came to be regarded as the controller of the productive and reproductive possessions of the household. The mainly important aspect of Roy's work is that it breaks down the false, but perhaps for the moment operationally necessary, divide flanked by gender history and mainstream history. It demonstrates how our understanding of the past is expanded and enriched when gender is incorporated as a category of analysis.

Other issues that have been probed at the conceptual stage contain the connection flanked by caste, class, patriarchy and the state, and the dynamics of the household in early India. Separately from these studies which are attempts at exploring women's histories at the stage of the connection of gender to other institutions there are studies of the changing versions of myths and other narratives, prostitution, motherhood, laboring women, property dealings, women as gift givers, and women as rulers. These accounts have helped to slowly build up a base for further conceptualizations and to break the hold of the Altekarian paradigm, which has dominated the field of women's history in the case of ancient India. A major lacuna that continues to restrict our understanding is the method in which gender shapes, and is in turn shaped by, other structures within a given social formation.

While a beginning has been made from the point of view of by a gender-based framework in the case of early Indian history there is a singular paucity of works by gender as a category of analysis in medieval Indian history. Even a women's history which complements or supplements mainstream history is distant from being systematically written. Perhaps this is because there has been a slow response to engage with gender as a category of analysis from scholars with mastery in excess of Persian in a situation where Persian sources continue to control the field of medieval Indian history. A slow beginning has been made recently but the works tend to be episodic rather than conceptual. The mainly sustained output is coming from south Asia specialists from American academies but these are usually narrowly empirical and steer clear of creation broader analytical points. The lack of a strong gender based standpoint is unfortunate because it is not as if the sources for medieval India are peculiarly disadvantaged; in information the situation is quite the reverse. It is presently that the sources have never been systematically explored from the point of view of gender. Kumkum Sangari's finely nuanced and elaborately analyzed revise of Bhakti poetry and within that of Mira's site is an instance of historicizing literature, and individuals throughout the medieval era. Sangari's analysis of the family, kinship and the state is a pointer to the direction that a gender sensitive history could fruitfully take. Happily, studies are now underway on a range of themes such the genderedness of language, landownership, inheritance, the politics of the royal household, women against women in polygamous households, and the changing narratives that produced the model of the virtuous and chaste *virangana*. Perhaps these studies and others can be connected jointly, and others can be undertaken, leading to broader understanding of gender dealings in medieval India.

A significant lacuna in the gender history of both ancient and medieval India is the absence of region-based studies. With the exception of a few explorations of Tamil literature and inscriptions of early and medieval south India we have very little by which we can create connections flanked by the social formations of dissimilar regions and the methods in which these would have shaped gender dealings in their respective regions.

More wide-ranging explorations have been possible in the field of women's history throughout the colonial and post-colonial era. More accessible from the point of view of the languages in which the sources are accessible, these sources are also better preserved. Consequently, feminist scholars have been able to not only insert women into history but also look at the connection flanked by several social and economic procedures and gender. They have also been able to explore sure themes in some depth and have made a dent in historical debates in relation to the nationalism, class formation and the operations of caste. In the middle of the more rigorous regions of research in women's history throughout this era has been the analysis of the method in which new colonial structures especially in the field of law shaped the lives of women. An impressive body of writing has examined the working of specific laws such as the Widow Remarriage Act, the impetus and the forces behind the creation and codification of laws, the contradictions flanked by the applications of dissimilar sets of legal systems such as customary law and statutory law, statutory law and 'personal' law, and the common move towards homogenizing the diversity of social customs and cultural practices. One of the mainly exhaustive and important studies by Bina Agrawal has focused on the method law shapes gender dealings by denying women access to productive possessions in the form of land. She has therefore provided us with an understanding of the political economy of the vulnerability of women. While some of these studies have been empirical others have examined the historical context, class dynamics and the connection of law to colonialist and nationalist ideologies at given moments. These studies have also been able reveal the possibilities and limitations of a colonialist hegemonic agendas.

The issue of women's education has been the subject of numerous writings. Initially scholars tended to plot the dissimilar stages by which opportunities for women's education were created and expanded in the context of the movement for social reform, taking for granted its 'positive', liberatory and transformative potential. Men's spearheading of the campaign for women's education then appeared to be genuinely 'liberal'; perhaps it was paternalistic but it was presumed that it was a means by which women would

be emancipated from an earlier deprivation. These studies have now been taken much further to look at the crucial role of education, or rather schooling, in the agendas of new patriarchies and the connection of schooling for women to procedures of class formation. Men's stake in women's education and power in excess of them, women's agency and resistance in a conflict ridden household in the procedure of several types of transition have also been outlined. Some of these analyses have been made possible through a secure examination of women's writing. As women were drawn into literacy and education, mostly at the instance of their men folk mothers), but sometimes against their approval, they took to writing. Letters, memoirs, essays, biographies, poetry, stories, travelogues, and, on occasion, social critiques of patriarchy appeared by the end of the 19th century and sustained into the 20th century. Feminist scholarship on this alternative archive has been important in fine tuning our understanding of social reform, but also in revealing to us what was suppressed in the accounts of mainstream history. It is to be expected that the social critiques written by 19th century women would be regarded as important markers in the history of women's resistance to the ideologies and practices of male power; women like Pandita Ramabai and Tarabai Shinde have therefore become recognized in the world of feminist scholarship. What is significant is that through a sensitive reading of a seemingly conformist piece of writing, by Rashsundari Devi, too one can uncover an oblique but moving critique of upper caste cultural practices.

The history of laboring women too has been sought to be incorporated in the rewriting of history. Accounts of their participation in agrarian struggles, issues that were raised and others that were suppressed and the perception of the women of those magic days, as some of them put it, have been significant not only to balance out the accounts of peasant struggles but also in exploring the complicated connection flanked by issues of class and gender, and the strategies of left wing groups in highlighting class oppression and suppressing gender oppression. Feminist scholars exposed that in their recuperation of earlier histories of women's political activism, questions of sexual politics and its complicated dealings with broader struggles were of central, absorbing importance: struggles that needed women, mobilized them,

conferred a political and public identity upon them, and yet subtly contained them and displaced their work for their own rights.

Women's lay in the organized labour force especially in the textile and jute industries have been the subject of monographs, and currently there are a number of studies underway on women in the unorganized sector, especially in the context of globalization and the structural adjustment programme. These studies, being the first of their type, have though retained a mainly empirical approach. Perhaps with more studies documenting the daily lives of laboring women we might be able to write an explanation of the creation of the working class from a woman centered point of view. Though, history is changing so rapidly in the new era of globalization that the working class may be transformed beyond recognition even before we can write their history! In the middle of the more important researches in writing an explanation of women's labour within an historical frame is the issue of domestic labour. This has been a central issue in feminism resulting in a considerable body of scholarship, in the west as well as the third world. Its connection to capitalism has been repeatedly stressed in western feminist scholarship. In India studies have analyzed domestic labour in its connection to caste, class, widowhood, hierarchies within the household, and the capability of households to buy domestic services. At the conceptual stage, the connection of domestic labour to the labour market and the proliferation of the sexual division of labour in waged work, even as it might appear to be outside the realm of market, has also been highlighted. The information that \_domestic labour exists within a system of non-dissoluble, non-contractual marriage permeated by ideologies of service and nurture has meant that domestic labour and domestic ideologies not only co-exist but are also jointly reproduced even in a rapidly changing economic and social system' has also been pointed out by Sangari.

Earlier on in this paper it has been suggested that feminist scholarship has had to be innovative in its use of sources as well as in their reading of them. One of the recent works that has been very successful in such an approach has used a range of sources including conventional sources such as statistics and government reports, but has balanced these off by folk literature, proverbs and fieldwork to locate women's perception of their own lives. The

framework of the political economy of gender used by Prem Chowdhry has acquiesced a significant revise of the everyday experiences of laboring women of a peasant caste in excess of a hundred year era.

The use of oral history by feminist historians to explicitly critique the inadequacies and biases of official and mainstream/male stream and elitist histories has been very important in the field of partition history. Here women have been the pioneers in writing an alternative history written from the point of view of the marginalized: women, children, and *dalits*. They have raised crucial questions in relation to the ideologies of the state in the context of notions of society, and honor in the recovery and rehabilitation of abducted women and the doubled dimensions of violence experienced by women first at the hands of men, and then at the hands of a patriarchal state which denied women agency as it sought to align boundaries with societies. It is important that feminist scholarship has provided a systematic critique of nationalism at the very moment of the birth of a new nation. Distant from a recognition of their pioneering work even their critique of nationalism and of the post-colonial Indian state is yet to be taken seriously by mainstream historians. This is perhaps an outcome of the territoriality of mainstream/male stream historians entrenched in the academy, with personal stakes in retaining their hold on historical writing. Further, in my view, these are part of an agenda of once more marginalizing, or even erasing, women's pioneering of a new field, thereby claiming both originality and monopoly in excess of theory. Given the backlash against feminist scholars in conditions of appointments to Universities at the highest stage, currently underway, the political dimensions of such marginalization's need to be seriously noted.

The issue of women's agency is part of a superior set of issues in feminist scholarship and it is at the moment often being simplified. The desire to write a dissimilar type of history has led feminist scholars to explore the histories of resistance by women, individually and collectively, and also their use of strategies such as subversion and manipulation of men's power in excess of women. While it is significant to document acts of resistance, subversion and manipulation, it is somewhat simplistic to celebrate all instances of subversion and manipulation; these may certainly be examples

of women's agency but scrupulous instances of subversion such as the strategies used by the tawaifs of Lucknow cannot be regarded as subversive as they work within, and so reinforce, patriarchal ideologies. It is useful to bear in mind the political consequences of actions as well as of theoretical formulations especially in the context of feminist writing in India, which owes its originary impulse to a political agenda, as pointed out earlier. Recent writings have tried to give a perspective for exploring women's agency. The dialectical connection flanked by structure and agency requires examining and it may be useful to seem at structure and agency as procedures that pre-suppose each other: there is also a need to bear in mind that social systems set limits and put pressures upon human action. Agency does not exist within a vacuum as women have approach to understand.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss the various features of feminist historiography.
- What is the relationship between women's movement and gender-sensitive history?
- Why have women been generally absent in the traditional historiography?

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **RACE IN HISTORY**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Race as political and social construct
- Race and science
- Race in relation to colonialism
- Race and the discipline of anthropology
- Racial research' and the politics of power



- Popularizing racial concepts
- India and the thought of race
- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain race as political and social construct
- Explain relationship between race and science
- Explain race in relation to colonialism
- Explain race and the discipline of anthropology
- Explain racial ‘research’ and the politics of domination
- Explain popularizing racial concepts
- Explain India and the idea of race

## **RACE AS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS**

Serious revise of race and race dealings as significant social issues can be traced back to the early part of the twentieth century. The expansion of research and scholarship in this region, though, happened approximately the 1960s, in the aftermath of the social transformations approximately questions of race that took lay throughout that decade. This was a time when social reforms implemented in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, urban unrest, and the development of black power thoughts and shapes of cultural nationalism. These helped enormously to reshape the politics of race not presently in America, but in other parts of the world, as well.

It was also throughout the 1960s that the ‘race dealings problematic’ as Michael Banton put it, became the dominant approach in this field. Seeing race as a information which transforms social dealings also grappled with thoughts on ‘ethnicity’ and social boundaries flanked by dissimilar groups in a given society. The thought of race has been utilized to comprehend procedures of migration and resolution as well. They are sometimes posed as a minority, ethnic or an immigrant problem. John Rex’s analytical model in race dealings

asserts that reading social dealings flanked by persons as race dealings is encouraged by the subsistence of sure structural circumstances:

- Subsistence of unfree, indentured or slave labour
- Unusually harsh class use
- Strict legal distinctions flanked by groups and occupational segregation
- Differential access to power
- Migrant labour as an underclass fulfilling stigmatized roles in a metropolitan setting.

In this context, Rex, in studies mannered by him, explored the degree to which immigrant populations shared the class location of their white neighbors and white workers in common. His analysis outlined a class structure in which white workers won sure rights through the working class movement, through the trade unions and the Labour Party. The nonwhite workers, though, were establish to be situated outside the procedure of negotiation that has historically shaped the location of white workers. They experience discrimination in all the regions where the white workers had made important gains, such as employment, education, and housing. Therefore the location of migrant, non-white workers placed them outside the working class in the location of an underclass.

Robert Miles has also looked at the condition of migrant societies, but he has done so within the context of real economic relationships. Therefore there is a contradiction flanked by on the one hand the need of the capitalist world economy for the mobility of human beings, and on the other, the drawing of territorial boundaries for human mobility. His greatest contribution is the proposition that races are created within the context of political and social regulation, and therefore race is above all is a political construct. The first proposition for our purposes is that thought of race is a human construct, an ideology with regulatory power within society. The use of race and race dealings, as analytical concepts, disguise the *social* construction of variation, presenting it as somehow inherent in the empirical reality of observable or imagined biological variation. Racialised groups are

produced as a result of specific social procedures, or specific social actions such as the protection of power, subordination and privilege.

The terrain of anti-racist thrash about today is no longer that of social equality but of cultural diversity. Equality has approach to be redefined from the right to be equal to mean the right to be dissimilar. In the sixties and seventies, the thrash about for equal rights meant campaigns against immigration laws or against segregation through which dissimilar races were treated differently. Today it means campaigns for separate schools, demands to use dissimilar languages, the insistence of maintaining scrupulous cultural practices. The black rights activists have argued that in the past civil rights reforms reinforced the thought that black liberation should be defined by the degree to which black people gained equal access to material opportunities and privileges accessible to whites – jobs, housing, schooling etc. This strategy could never bring in relation to the liberation, because such thoughts of equality were based on imitating the life styles, behavior are mainly importantly, the values and ethics of white colonizers.

To locate the concept of race, racism and racial dealings in modern times, and be able to comprehend the twentieth century attempts to understand these conditions; we will have to go back to the nineteenth century when Charles Darwin provided one of the first significant frameworks for this task. His thoughts are significant as they immediately gave rise to self appointed Social Darwinists, who are mainly responsible for both distorting the science component of Darwin's theory and for by it for justification of colonialism and imperialism.

## **RACE AND SCIENCE**

As Nancy Stepan points out, it was the early travel literature on human groups by explorers which tended to get transformed into scientific texts on race. When it appeared on its own, racial science was scavenger science which fed on whatever materials lay at hand. Such racial science had a national character as well for instance.) To a big extent, history of racial sciences is a history of a series of accommodation of the sciences in common to the demands of deeply held convictions in relation to the naturalness of

the inequalities flanked by human groups. The racial science of the 1850s was less dependent on bible, more scientific, but also more racist. It drew upon physical kinds, on racial worth, permanence of racial kinds and the like. Skull became the arbiter of all things racial in mainly of 19th century, and early 20th century, because of alleged mental differences which dissimilar skull shapes or sizes supposedly indicated.

### **Concept of Development within Racial Science**

Darwin was the originator of the evolutionary theory, and his main argument was for stability flanked by animals and humans, separated by not type but degree. Though, the aloofness flanked by the technological, industrial, highly civilized Europeans and animals seemed too vast. So Darwin turned to lower races or savages to fill the gap flanked by humans and animals. Later scientists used this argument to form an evolutionary level of races. Racist science picked this point up and used it to illustrate that racist hierarchy as well as other social hierarchies were real characteristics of nature's order. In retrospect, Darwin did not conceive of races in new conditions for his arguments on development of man, but old conditions. In essence, therefore, Darwin himself accepted out the task of accommodating the new evolutionary science to the old racial science. Evolutionism was also compatible with the thought of fixity and antiquity of races. Though, it should be remembered that as distant as a social location on slavery was concerned, Darwin was an abolitionist, not a racist. This ambivalence manifested itself with other thinkers as well. For instance, Prichard shared the racial prejudices of his time, but his ethnocentrism were also tempered by moral disgust for slavery, his belief in the essential humanity of the African, his Christian faith in the psychic unity of all the peoples of the world.

Evolutionary thought was compatible with the hierarchy of human races, and rather than dislodging old racial thoughts actually strengthened them, and provided them with a new scientific vocabulary of thrash about and survival he fittest', two of the mainly well recognized Darwinian tenets).

Darwin applied natural selection to cultural, intellectual and moral development. Natural selection had brought sure races like the European race to the highest point of moral and cultural life. He agreed with Wallace that after the appearance of intelligence, thrash about flanked by races became primarily a moral and intellectual one. Morally and intellectually less able of the races were extinguished and the reverse rose to spread themselves crossways the globe. It was natural thrash about that had produced the "wonderful intellect of the Germanic races". Darwin took up the view that natural selection worked on individual and racial variations to select the fittest races and to raise them up in the level of civilization. To Darwin, then, it seemed reasonable to consider that presently as natural selection produced Homo Sapiens from animal forbears, so natural selection was the primary agent for producing civilized races out of barbarity.

Incidentally, here it might be mentioned that the development of the field of medicine was seen as a great onslaught on natural selection, as it allowed the biologically unfit to survive and to pass on their unfitness to the after that generations. At any rate, development of medicine made natural selection on physical bases redundant, and led to a situation where it was possible to propose natural selection on the foundation of morality and intellect of human groups, instead. The developing disciplines of relative anatomy and animal biology gave validity to prevailing thoughts in relation to the hierarchy of human races. The challenge for an evolutionary anthropologist was to endorse a materialist, evolutionary view of man, based on stability flanked by man and animals, without relying on hierarchy of human races or retreating to theology. It was Wallace who first insisted on the gulf flanked by animals and humans and was then able to see that human progress is not inevitable, but depended on favorable social and political circumstances. He put forward the radical, original theory that the immense diversity of racial civilizations was because of dissimilar experiences and history, not biological differences flanked by dissimilar groups of people.

Darwin's thoughts took root all in excess of the world in some form or the other. The widely prevalent mid 19th century belief on the part of leading figures like Vogt in England and Topinard in France was also that racial traits

appeared by selection in thrash about for life. They further proposed that with time, traits became fixed by heredity, and became permanent. Therefore the false thought of the fixity and unchangeability of races became a widespread belief. Even though no individual could be establish who was not a mixture, faith in the kind‘ remained. More and more precise instruments were invented to measure the differences flanked by the kinds‘. It was forgotten that essentially, the human species being a migratory and conquering species is bound to be a mixed one, and hence has to be a constantly changing one. In spite of Wallace’s significant intervention, races came increasingly to be seen as natural, but static chains of excellence, shaped on the foundation of nervous organisation, skull form or brain size. Color was a traditional and convenient criterion of race, not the least because it did not require the permission of the individual for it to be assessed by the anthropologist, which head measurement, for instance, did! The smallness of differences separating the presumed kind’s nose was concerned) led to the use of more and more precise instruments, and to the subdivision of kinds. The results were never in doubt, and a vigorous analysis of the racial kinds which made up a family always followed after varied results in conditions of the form of the head were establish, for instance, and it was assumed that dissimilar racial kinds had got mixed, instead of doubting the veracity of the measurements themselves.

The science which involved measuring human measurements were described Anthropometry, though it never did rise above ideological thoughts to prove a hierarchy of races, and hence became a pseudoscience for all practical purposes.

### **Eugenics and Racial Science**

In order to be a purposeful discipline, science was expected to play a role in scheduling and managing human subsistence and human affairs, including cohabitation. The word eugenics itself was introduced into science for the first time in 1883 by Charles Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton. He defined eugenics as the revise of agencies under social manage that may

improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally'. In its essence, eugenics was a science and a social programme of racial improvement through selective breeding of the human species. Though slow to win approval in Britain, by the first years of the twentieth century, eugenics had recognized itself institutionally in England. By the 1920s, it had grown into a worldwide movement, with active eugenic or 'race hygiene' societies in Russia, Germany, Japan and the United States.

The initial German Nazi plan was to improve the racial stock – weed out the mentally deficient, hereditary criminal, hereditary unfit. A new age of racial thinking, though, had approached into being that was to last until the 1930s, when the horrors of compulsory sterilization and the mass murder of the Jews and Gypsies in Nazi Germany (science) caused worldwide revulsion. Eugenics in Nazi Germany was uniquely barbaric. It is worth mentioning here that not presently in Germany but all in excess of the world, adherents to this repugnant social programme were drawn mainly from the progressive middle class: doctors, psychologists, biologists and social reformers, and *not* politicians or businessmen. In its heyday, eugenics succeeded in drawing into its fold directly or indirectly a surprising number of the leading scientists of the day, and provided one more channel for the transmission of the racist custom. For the student of race science and racism, eugenics is significant because it connected race with hereditarianism, and the new science of genetics.

Socially and politically, many factors favored eugenics by the beginning of the twentieth century. The social optimism of the mid nineteenth century had given way by the end of the century to a pessimism which Galton's eugenics perfectly expressed. The 1880s had been a particularly hard era, with economic depression, unemployment, strikes, and rising political radicalism. It was clear from political events and sociological studies that poverty, alcoholism and ill health had not disappeared in Britain, despite what seemed to several to be decades of social legislation. The early military setbacks of the British in the Boer War in South Africa in 1899-1900 raised the specter of a physically degenerating British people, and increased concern that the imperial mission of Britain would be harmed unless the population

could be unified and made fitter. Mainly importantly, the declining birth rate, and especially the differential in the birth rate flanked by the middle class and the working class, raised the possibility in some people's minds that Britain was in relation to the to be swamped by the biologically 'less fit'.

Eugenics rested on the belief that the differences in mental, moral and physical traits flanked by individuals and races were hereditary. Such a belief had of course been implicit in race biology since the early nineteenth century. What gave eugenics its force in the contemporary era was its association with Darwinian development. Eugenics therefore obtained its scientific credential from the new science of heredity. It obtained its support and its notoriety as a social and political movement from the several new and often explosive subjects it introduced into the biological and social debate, such as the biological roots of 'degeneracy' in human society, or the sterilization of the 'unfit'. At a time of heightened nationalism, imperialistic competition, and social Darwinism, such thoughts for a while proved dangerously attractive to those looking for social change. Under the banner of eugenics, the science of human heredity received a clear programme – the goal was to explore the hereditary nature of traits in human populations that seemed desirable or undesirable, and to set up their variability in individuals or classes of individuals, or 'races'. Mental skill, moral character, insanity, criminality and common physical degeneracy, were all studied diligently. On the social and political face, the task of the eugenics was to publicize the findings of science, to talk about schemes to encourage the fit, and to discourage the unfit, to breed, and to air usually the social and political significance of such a programme.

Eugenics was seen to be not merely a power that humans now had in excess of future generations; it was seen to be a quasi-religious obligation because in the circumstances of contemporary culture, the biologically sick and unfit were not eliminated by natural selection but allowed to live and to breed. Man had, in consequence, to weed out where nature did not any more. The Eugenists' first legislative success occurred in 1913, when the House of Parliament passed the Mental Deficiency Bill, which the Eugenics Education Society had urged as a means of segregating mentally backward individuals



from the rest of society so as to prevent their breeding. Recent studies of eugenics in Britain have recognized it primarily as classes rather than a race phenomenon. The chief preoccupation of the eugenics was with the biological fitness of the working class. Mainly eugenics assumed that social class was a function of hereditary worth, and the social policies they contemplated were often directed against the unfit lower classes, especially the social residuum or social problem group – the permanent alcoholics, paupers and persistent criminal offenders.

## **RACE IN RELATION TO COLONIALISM**

Once human behaviour was seen as an outcome of structure of the mind fixed by heredity, it was not hard to stretch it and see human groups differently endowed and so destined for dissimilar roles in the history of human society. The hierarchy of races was whispered to correspond to and indeed to be the cause of what mainly people took to be the natural level of human attainment. The common public agreed because it coincided with the Europeans' image of themselves in the world. Approximately the mid-nineteenth century, in information, there lived a number of schools of thought, occupying themselves with the fundamental question of proving the inherent superiority of one people in excess of another. A possible cause for their coming into subsistence was search for some popular explanation to explanation for the information of imperialism, and to rationalize it in the public mind.

The aptitude of a race to colonies and the tendency of another to be colonized were already reflected in a number of earlier philosophical thinkers' categories, devised mostly on racial rows. Gustav Klemm and A. Wuttke had designated the so-described civilized races as active and all others as passive in 1843. Carus divided mankind into "peoples of the day, night and dawn" in 1849, depending on their lay in the level of civilization, and implicitly marking out the ones who needed help to be pulled out of the continuing night. Nott and Gliddon ascribed animal instincts only to the lower races, and it was deduced from this by their supporters that conquest by the civilized races would slowly cure such instincts of the conquered. In all these

categories, though, the supposed racial attributes, which made one race the perpetual conqueror and another doomed to conquest forever, had not been connected to any identifiable cause as yet. Writings of the 1850s became more specific and pointed in their search. Why were a people active or passive? Why would some *inevitably* belong to the day, others to the night? The first identifiable reasoning was in conditions of alleged superior mental capability of a people as compared to another: one would then naturally rule in excess of another. These mental features, moreover, seemed to clearly stem from some *fixed* attribute, which necessity be pinned down.

Climate was a part of the unchanging environment nearby any given set of people, and provided, in a number of creative methods, a ready explanation for the lower races' possession of lower mental faculties. A.H.Keane, one of the vice presidents of the Anthropological Institute at Cambridge proposed that in excessively hot and moist intertropical regions, in the thrash about for survival by the inhabitants, the animal face of a human being is improved at the expense of the mental face. temperate zones where the white population existed). Another motivating point of view was that mental development suffered in regions where food was easily and abundantly accessible e.g. in the tropical regions. On the other hand, it was claimed that wherever men have been involved in a strenuous disagreement with a cold climate, they have acquired heroic qualities of character: power, courage, and integrity. It is significant to note here that ~~thrash about for subsistence~~ vis-à-vis the climate was held to have dissimilar consequences for the whites and the non-whites. In the former it urbanized virtues of character, in the latter animal like physical development at the cost of the mental.

A transition from mental qualities to the category of racial qualities was certainly an advance as distant as popular rhetoric was concerned: new assertions could now be made without any reference to a constant factor like physical environment/climate as the earlier authors were impelled to do. One race, for instance, could be basically *asserted* to be more moral than another, a totally new input into the argument, requiring no proof whatsoever. E.B.Tylor was the originator of this reasoning: ~~There is a plain variation flanked by the low and high races of man, so that the dull minded barbarian has not the power~~

of thought enough to approach up to the civilized man's moral average." Soon the information of colonization will not need any explanation at all: ~~It~~ is only necessary to seem at the physique of the Hindoos in order to explanation for their subjection to alien races..." Weak physical bodily traits led to weak morality, and both the weaknesses adequately explained colonialism. It is worth mentioning that E. B. Tylor, the supposed father of evolutionary anthropology, picked up for his academic researches the common trend of the above arguments. He could confidently assert that ~~it~~ was reasonable to imagine as latest shaped the white race of the temperate region, least able to bear extreme heat or live without the appliances of civilization, but gifted with the powers of knowing and ruling". Clearly a scrupulous race was constituted of mental qualities, via climate, which either condemned it to slavery, or the power of ruling. This strain of reasoning was sufficiently influential for Emerson to inquire, ~~It~~ is race, is it not, that puts the hundred millions of India under the dominion of a remote island in the north of Europe?"

At some point, though, the genetically determined physical traits (the body) become more significant than the physical environment/ climate as the determinant of mental capacities of the colonized races. All beside, there was a parallel school of research working on the physical person of the colonized, attempting to reach the similar conclusion, viz. the colonized needed to be colonized.

## **RACE AND THE DISCIPLINE OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

Much debate took lay in the late nineteenth century, approximately the theory of social Darwinism. There were, in principle, two methods establish of locating a scrupulous race on the level of social development:

- By examining the physical development of the race in question, and
- By analyzing the social component of the society which that scrupulous race had built for itself.

The second was mostly ignored, and the first became the scientific problem of the day. As distant as the scientific society was concerned, the physical development of a race was not to be judged in conditions of physical

beauty — that was for the layperson. The scientist was interested in proving development of the internal parts - the skull, the brain, the nasal bone, and so on. This strain of research had its own trajectory. In the initial phases of social evolutionism, it was attempted to relate the mental capability of the race in question to some *measurable* physical attribute. The concept of 'cranial capability' was an early and enduring one.

A clear formulation of the concept of cranial capability is given by one of its proponents, Keane. This author asserted that mental gradations – a level of mental capability — could be shown flanked by several races, based on the principle of cranial capability. In information, Darwin himself observed that there did exist a relation flanked by the size of the brain and development of the intellectual faculties. It was with the intent of proving this point that he presented the following data: “The mean internal capability of the skull in Europeans is 92.3 cubic inches, in Americans 87.5, and in Australians only 81.9 cubic inches”. The information that Franz Boas challenged this, and pointed out as late as 1922 that both Europeans and Mongols have the main brains, and not Europeans alone, shows the currency of these thoughts well into the twentieth century. Later in the nineteenth century, another popular notion which gained power was that “the black is a child and will extensive remain so”. Investigations were done to illustrate that this was because of the “sudden arrest of the intellectual faculties at the age of puberty”. It was claimed that studies showed that upto the age of puberty, a negro child learnt extraordinarily well, but after that became 'incurably stupid'. Moreover, there was no religious, intellectual, moral or industrial advancement in the negro who was also a political idiot. It is important how explicitly the supposed lack of political acumen or industrial development is being attributed to a fixed incurable cause, i.e. the so-described cranial sutures!

The details have been given to illustrate a scrupulous trend in supposed scientific research as distant as determining the potential of a race was concerned. These researches sustained in several more directions than presently on the skull of individuals. It will suffice here to record that slowly, but relentlessly, the parameters of civilization changed from the size of the skull to size of the jaws, to size and form of the nose, to the length of the arms

etc. reflecting the then current concerns of the sciences of anthropometry and anthropology of the era in relation to racial differences. With work going on in the opposite direction, though, it soon became clear that there was *no* connection flanked by low mental development and the size and form of any part of the body. Franz Boas cited research done by Karl Pearson, Maneuvered and so on to contradict views of older authors like Gobineau, Klemm, Carus, Nott and Gliddon who assumed feature mental differences flanked by races of humans. More importantly, he recognized the cause for revival of these older views to the growth of contemporary nationalism.

The professed connection flanked by the physical kind and mental capability had run into dangerous ground by the end of the century. By 1896, while still insisting that whites did symbolize the highest kind of mental development, it was admitted that “mental differences are self-governing of the common body structure”. How else could one explain that intellects like Alexander Pope’s “dwelt in a feeble frame, while the stupid Negroes of Senegambia are endowed with Herculean bodies?” As a result of researches done by the likes of Franz Boas, it got recognized by the early decades of the twentieth century that mental action followed the similar laws in each individual of whatever ‘race’, and its manifestations depended approximately entirely upon the character of individual social experience. There was another direct offshoot of rhetoric which derived from evolutionary ideology: there was regularly an effort to compare, albeit favorably, the ‘lower races’ with animals, and not always with apes: the aloofness flanked by the representatives of the two races was so much that one race was closer to animals than to humans. An author wrote of the Australians that

- “The variation flanked by the brain of a Shakespeare and that of an Australian savage would doubtless be fifty times greater than the variation flanked by the Australian’s brain and that of an orangutan. In mathematical capability the Australian who cannot tell the number of fingers on his two hands is much nearer to a lion or a wolf than to Sir Rowan Hamilton, who invented the way of quarter ions. In moral development, this similar Australian whose language contains no languages for justice and benevolence is less remote from dogs and

baboons than from Howard...The Australian is more teachable than the ape, but his limit is nevertheless very quickly reached. All the distinctive attributes of man, in short, have been urbanized to an enormous extent through extensive ages of social development”.

The imagery of animals to describe such people was a frequent occurrence in ethnology/ anthropology books. So, while in the Andaman Islander, the peculiar goat like exhalations of the Negro were absent, the Yahgan’s intelligence is inferior to that of a dog’s as ~~un~~like a dog, they forget in which hole they hid their remaining food after a feast”. Presently like the wild animals of Australia were peculiar and always of a low kind, so were its dark colored natives with their coarse and repulsive characteristics. Francis Galton’s researches with South African societies became classics in anthropological literature and were universally quoted as exhibiting the great mental intervals’ flanked by the higher and the lower races. According to Galton, taking the dog and the Damara, the comparison reflected no great honor on the man.

By contrasting the mainly undeveloped individuals of one race with the mainly highly urbanized of another, and in information, by relegating the former a category closer to animals, the reader was made to identify with an idealized, unusual specimen of his/ her own race as the communal norm. Visually, too, the standards of European beauty were measured the norm, and to emphasize the variation, the mainly degraded specimens were chosen for taking photographs — ~~the~~ ugliest and the weirdest looking” of an otherwise handsome race” for use in ethnology books. This type of research was complemented if not started with accounts showing similarities flanked by these societies and several species of animals, other than monkeys and apes: ~~in~~ the middle of the rudest fragments of mankind are the in accessible Andaman Islanders... the old Arab and European voyagers described them as dog-faced man-eaters. As mentioned earlier, Hunter described the ~~Non~~-Aryans” of India as ~~the~~ remnants of extinct animals which paleontologists discover in hill caves...” Something was being said, in the era of evolutionary anthropology, when the rung on the level assigned to some societies was even

lower than that of apes, which would evolve at some point of time into humans.

## **RACIAL ‘RESEARCH’ AND THE POLITICS OF POWER**

What was the impulse behind the researches that were done on sure groups of ‘uncivilized’ people? The ethnographic material of the era shows a marked tendency to symbolize the aborigines belonging to the lowest rung of the world evolutionary level. There is a separate tendency to overemphasize their barbaric practices. John Lubbock, an eminent anthropologist of his time, and one of the early Presidents of the Anthropological Institute published his popular “Prehistoric Times” in 1865. Here he studies ‘contemporary savages’ like the Andaman Islanders, Australians and Maoris with the message that they needed to be colonized. These statements were important in a context where a part of European political and public opinion had begun to challenge the rightness of colonial attendance all in excess of the world. Racially motivated research provided ample data from this time onwards well into the twentieth century to illustrate the barbarism of the subject races in common.

In retrospect, the people of the colonies were presented by the evolutionary theorists as curiosities and specimens of a bygone era. This emphasis on the Asians or Africans, Australians and Native Americans as leftovers of the *past* served an significant purpose: to dull the reader’s sensibilities as distant as their *current* situation was concerned. Seeing them from the point of view of anthropological science detracted from the information of them as politically active people. India, for instance, was posed as a great museum of races — this scrupulous view denied the people concerned a legitimate lay in the present. More significant, it robbed them of any recognition as a society in a state of flux like any other by fixing them in a dead mould — the unchanging leftovers of the past. Remnants of earlier extensive dead generations, they were going to be studied, analyzed, classified and exhibited.

It is not a coincidence that spectacles of these specimens were so popular in England and even in the colonies, in the form of great colonial exhibitions in the second half of the 19th century; with anthropological

displays an significant and popular part. What was propagated throughout such exhibitions was that ~~–~~taking him all in all, the Australian aborigine symbolizes better than any other livelihood form the generalized characteristics of primitive humanity”. While working on the issue of ancesthood‘ represented by the current aborigines, another possible link was explored: that flanked by level of civilization and moral/ethical progress. It was asserted here that European morality was more perfect and ~~–~~the ancestors” were immoral in their disposition. Therefore not only earlier societies were deemed to be less ethical, but also those supposedly the leftovers of earlier ones, existing in the form of African or Australian societies. This sort of reasoning served to justify the immense level of massacres of aborigines and native American populations in order to colonies their land. In information, it was explicitly said of the black republic of Hyati that in the absence of the colonizer’s civilizing power; the free people of Hyati had reversed back to pagan rites, snake worship, cannibalism.

Once Darwin’s *Descent of Man* appeared in 1858, it was not extensive before social Darwinism became a fashionable and influential school of thought in British society and politics. There were commonsensical reasons for this from a practical view-point: the doctrine of survival of the fittest justified political conquest of weaker races‘ and their elimination if necessary; there was also affinity flanked by this doctrine and the economic policy of *laissez faire* at home. In addition, by implication, this doctrine provided scientific reasons for denying protective legislation for factory workers, the poor, the elderly and the weak in society in common: if they could not thrash about sufficiently to survive, they deserved to perish. Herbert Spencer and Henry Maine advocated this doctrine as a key to social troubles of welfare and state’s role at home; the imperialists grasped it as a useful theoretical guideline in defense of expansionism and colonialism.

Though, ~~–~~survival of the fittest”, the vital tenet of the theory of evolutionism, seemed to approach under challenge with events like the Boer war at the end of the 19th century. This doctrine had not prepared the imperial powers to be resisted so tenaciously by the supposedly less fit races, and survive a war! There were also other challenges emerging to the definitions of



civilization, morality and ethics. The essence of morality was claimed by some modern European thinkers to exist not in the shapes of European social organisations, but the ones which aborigine societies had evolved for themselves, ensuring protection for its young or the aged, or giving rights to its individual members. The third quarter of the 19th century was also the time to begin to speak in conditions of protection to the weak as the hallmark of an ethical society. Therefore the theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ while dominating European politics and public opinion was also beginning to increasingly approach under attack. Progress was being defined in conditions which were now not so smug, and increasingly controversial. A few like Huxley directly challenged social Darwinism and pointed out that the spot of a really civilized society is one in which competition to survive is cut down to the minimum and one which is premised on protection of the weak, *not* survival of the fittest.

It is also an motivating information that in principle, there was contradiction flanked by the evolutionist’s view of colonial societies and the fast delivering reforms of the imperial rule. So while the evolutionary ethnographers focused on the essential unchangeability of societies like India – except very slowly, approximately imperceptibly, in excess of a era of a few thousand years – the officers sustained to emphasize the changes that had been brought in relation to the by the British in a relatively short time. There was one more region of disagreement: flanked by the theory of racial evolutionism and the immediate interests of the British traders, in information, a crucial political cause for ultimate decline of the evolutionary theory. The nineteenth century saw an interest in the aborigines from a new part separately from the missionaries and the colonial administrator - the merchants. Competition from Germany in excess of colonial markets in scrupulous provided the impetus for ‘revise’ of such races from a political and commercial, separately from a scientific point of view. The science of the earlier decades, in the form of Darwin’s guidelines, though, had to be abandoned. If the people at the bottom of the evolutionary level needed a extensive span of time to civilize, how could they be expected to use these goods?

## **POULARISING RACIAL CONCEPTS**

It became then the duty of authors of ethnology books to inform the common public of the commercial interests of the Europeans in lower races‘. The editor of the *Native Races of the British Empire Series* wrote that since Anthropology textbooks were too technological and bulky, the series in question were an effort to supply in a readable form information in relation to the uncivilized races of the empire, and the peoples of the lower stages of civilization. This genre of literature became the staple of popular reading material on the question of ‘races‘, and served to a very big extent the political-economic purposes for which it was written.

Ethnology books of the era borrowed from fiction, and supervised to project quite effectively the image of an animal, and sometimes even a criminal native. This theme had many variations. Kipling’s fantasy tale of a wolf-reared child inspired an ethnographer to discover proof of a supposedly real case of the similar type. He even published the article in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* in a paper with a generalized title “‘jungle life in India” giving the impression that such half humans were an integral part of Indian wild life. This contribution was quoted by the author of *Livelihood Races*, complete with references and page number of the concerned journal, giving the impression of scientific analysis. Moreover, the author of the article was mentioned to be an official of the Indian Geographical Survey, again adding to the authenticity of the statement. All this served to confound fantasy with research. In any case, the axis flanked by travel books, popular ethnology works, anthropologists and fiction writers had an interlocking, mutually reinforcing impact on the readers’ mind. One source made the other respectable and recycled the data in a selective and often exaggerated form. The scientific layout gave the impression of authenticity, validating the fiction of Kipling and others. While these fiction writers and cartoonists drew from anthropology, popular ethnology borrowed from fiction. The row flanked by information and fiction, as distant as the ‘races‘ of the world were concerned, slowly grew blurred by the circular nature of information.

## **INDIA AND THE THOUGHT OF RACE**

Throughout the last quarter of the 19th century, especially after the 1857 events, there was a great desire on the British administrator's part to understand India. This was the era of classifications and categories like warrior or martial races; criminal tribes; cultivating or professional castes and so on. Therefore while India establish its due lay in the level of development in societal conditions on a world foundation, within India the evolutionary theory was applied to sort out the loyal from the disloyal, the respectable from the criminal, the malleable from the obstinate - the *dasyu* from the potential *dasa*. W.W. Hunter appears to have contributed conceptually to the hierarchisation of the Indian people by proposing an evolutionary level within India itself, which it was claimed was a ~~g~~great museum of races in which we can revise man from his lowest to his highest stages of civilization....” The Aryans in India with whom the British felt political affinity by now were not only fair skinned, but of noble lineage, speaking a stately language, worshipping friendly and powerful gods. The others were the original inhabitants whom the lordly newcomers – the Aryans – had driven back into the mountains or reduced to servitude on the plains. ~~T~~The victors described the non-Aryans, an obscure people, Dasyu or Dasa”. These creatures were the subject matter of Edgar Thurston's studies twenty years later, with a similar evolutionary hierarchy in mind.

In the ethnographical writing of the era, there is a curious mix of the Hindu religious texts passing as history, and Darwin's scientific terminology. The reinforcing of the arguments from the Vedas with proof from Darwin was an ingenious method of reading of Indian history by the British anthropologists. Some particularly daring samples are quoted here:

- ~~S~~Speaking usually of the aborigines of India, we have sacred traditional accounts which symbolize them to have been savages allied to the apes....In the existing aborigines we discover here and there marked peculiarities which point to a possible descent from some lower kind of animal subsistence - the regularly recurring ear point of Darwin, peculiar to sure apes, the opposable toe, feature of the similar animal; the extensive stiff hair of bipeds or quadrupeds in unusual parts of the body; the keen sight, hearing and smell of some of the

lower animals, coupled with mental qualities and habits...which can hardly be described human”.

- Further, –A comparison of the accounts that are given of in the Vedas with the Indian aborigines of today shows conclusively that some of them necessarily have been possessed of a very low bodily and mental organisation — indeed, that they were a more debased kind of beings than what is now described mankind.
- –The Aryans described them Dasyus, or enemies....in information, their account is approximately identical with that of some of the Andaman Islanders of the present day. They described them eaters of raw flesh, without gods, without faith, lawless, cowardly, perfidious and dishonest...The Brahmins described the Dasyus or aborigines as Bushmen or monkeys...in Ramayana, the monkey common Hanuman...plays a prominent part.” Hunter’s classification of the non Aryans’ into potential criminals was something Thurston borrowed later. The aboriginal races of the plains, according to him, had –supplied the hereditary criminal classes, alike under the Hindus, Mohammedans and the British. The non-Aryan hill races also appeared from Vedic times downwards as marauders”.

There is a subtle shuttling flanked by the past and the present by this writer, and the two merge imperceptibly fairly quickly: the aborigines of today are aborigines of yesterday; there appears to have been no development in this case. In information, these who exist today have some of the features of apes that Darwin described — not only the Brahmin would describe them as monkeys, Darwin would call them apes. Here it is motivating to discover the convergence of the existing Andaman Islanders into monkey/ape/aborigine of yesterday at one stage, and views of Aryans of yesterday /Aryans of today and Darwin on the other. It appeared that there had been identical reading of this part of the population all beside from the time of the Vedas upto Darwin. In other languages, the theory of evolutionism was put to quite creative use by the British ethnographer/ administrator in that he totally brahminised a Darwinian concept! In this framework for analysis of the aborigines of the late

19th century, the scientific component was an significant link of the past to the present. The Vedas helped to justify conquest of the aborigines in an earlier era, and Darwin was used to support their subsequent subjugation through the concept of the 'survival of the fittest'. This mode of analysis was given a coherent form for the first time by Hunter. He, through the indirect agency of Darwin, recognized the convergence of the concepts of the Brahmin of the Vedas and those of the British colonizer: both establish the aborigines akin to either the Dasyu or Dasa.

Invocation of Darwin in account of an evolving part of mankind, therefore invites the reader to consider the natural trajectory of the aborigines in common: like the Aryans did, they ought to be 'conquered' first. The British felt an affinity with the Aryan as both had a superior God, and a superior civilization which could be rightfully imposed on the Godless inferior race of aborigines. Hunter could be writing of British imperialism in eulogistic conditions when he wrote with admiration that 'The stout Aryan spread... d their gods. Like other conquering races, they whispered that both themselves and their deities were altogether superior to the people of the land and their poor, rude objects of worship. Indeed, this noble confidence is a great aid to the success of a nation. The 'history' of the apish aborigines was, then, gleaned from the Vedas and merged into the future that Darwin promised: they shall evolve into mankind at some point, albeit with help from the evolved.

There was a sound historical cause for the British concerning aborigines as Dasyus. Through the 19th century, expansionist desires now extended from the plains to the hills, as also need for land for plantations pressed on the management. The hill tribes increasingly came to be seen as a political and administrative problem as they resisted the encroachment on their land by the planters or recruitment as plantation workers or interference by missionaries with their social institutions. There was trouble with the Nagas in 1878, the Santals in 1855 for many years. Earlier, in 1835, on the moral grounds of suppressing the custom of human sacrifice practiced by the Kondhs, the British army burned down their villages and had to remain deployed for extensive periods to check further resistance. A regular pacification programme to deal with the tribes had been launched by the

British, and this made them see a parallel flanked by their own situation and that faced by the Aryans centuries ago. Through these devices, the British hoped that incorrigible Dasyus could successfully be turned into the Dasa mould, either as workers or soldiers in British armies.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is the relationship between colonial domination and the idea of race?
- Discuss the ways in which the sciences helped to promote the notion of racial difference.
- How did the idea of race originate in India?

## **PART 4. APPROACHES AND THEMES IN INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

### **CHAPTER 19**

#### **COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY**

##### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Influential works of history in colonial India
- Some other historiographic growths
- Colonial ideology in historiography
- Impact of historical writings in colonial India
- Review questions

##### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand colonial historiography.
- Explain colonial ideology in historiography.
- Discuss the impact of historical writings in colonial India.

## **INFLUENTIAL WORKS OF HISTORY IN COLONIAL INDIA**

Before we take up the question of the colonial ideology in historiography, let us attempt and get a clear thought of the historians we are talking in relation to the. In the eighteenth century there were very few genuinely historical works. The British were perhaps too busy fighting their method to the top pf the political pyramid in India to devote much attention to history. One of the notable writers in the historical vein in the eighteenth century was Charles Grant, who wrote *Observations on the State of Society in the middle of the Asiatic Subjects of India* in 1792. He belonged to the evangelical school, i.e. the group pf British observers who whispered that it was the divine destiny of the British rulers of India to bring the light of Christianity to India which was sunk in the darkness of primitive religious faiths and superstitions. Though, this type of reflective writing on Indian society and history was rather unusual in till the early decades of the nineteenth century. By the second decade of the nineteenth century British rule in India had stabilized considerably and was in relation to enter a new era of expansion. By 1815 in Europe Britain was not only recognized as a first class power after Britain's victory in excess of Napoleon and France, but Britain had also undergone the first Industrial Revolution and had appeared as the mainly industrialized country in the world. Britain's confidence in being at the top pf the world was nowhere better displayed than in British writings on India, a country she dominated and regarded as backward. This attitude is reflected in the historical writings of the British from the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Presently in relation to the time, flanked by 1806 and 1818, James Mill wrote a series of volumes on the history of India and this work had a formative power on British imagination in relation to the India. The book was entitled

*History of British India*, but the first three volumes incorporated a survey of ancient and medieval India while the last three volumes were specifically in relation to the British rule in India. This book became a great success, it was reprinted in 1820, 1826 and 1840, and it became a vital textbook for the British Indian Civil Service officers undergoing training at the East India's college at Haileybury. By the 1840s the book was out of date and in his comments its editor H.H. Wilson pointed that out in 1844 ors in the book; but the book sustained to be measured a classic.

Mill had never been to India and the whole work was written on the foundation of his limited readings in books by English authors on India. It contained a collection of the prejudices in relation to the India and the natives of India which several British officers acquired in course of their stay in India. Though, despite shortcomings from the point of view of authenticity and veracity and objectivity, the book was very influential for two reasons. One of these reasons is often recognized: James Mill belonged to an influential school of political and economic thought, the Utilitarians inspired by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham. As a Utilitarian exposition of history Mill's history of India was also at the similar time implicitly a Utilitarian agenda for British management in India. The other cause for the immense power the book exercised has not been recognized as much as one might have expected. This book perfectly reflected the cast of mind at the beginning of the nineteenth century which we have noticed earlier, a cast of mind which urbanized in the wake of Britain's victory in the Anglo-French wars for hegemony in Europe, and Britain's rising industrial prosperity. James Mill broadcast a message of confident imperialism which was exactly what the readers in England wanted to hear.

While James Mill had produced a Utilitarian interpretation of history, a rival work of history produced by Mountstuart Elphinstone is harder to categorise in conditions of philosophical affiliation. Elphinstone was a civil servant in India for the greater part of his working life and he was distant better equipped and better informed than Mill to write a history of India. His work *History of Hindu and Muhammedan India* universities and was reprinted up to the early years of the after that century. Elphinstone followed this up



with *History of British Power in the East*, a book that traced fairly systematically the expansion and consolidation of British rule till Hastings' management. The periodisation of Indian history into ancient and medieval era corresponding to 'Hindu' era and 'Muslim' era was recognized as a convention in Indian historiography as a result of the lasting power of Elphinstone's approach to the issue. While Elphinstone's works sustained to be influential as a textbook, especially in India, a more professionally proficient history was produced in the 1860s by J. Talboys Wheeler. The latter wrote a comprehensive *History of India* in five volumes published between 1867 and 1876, and followed it up with a survey of *India Under British Rule* to Elphinstone's work as an influential text book, one would almost certainly turn to the *History of India* by Vincent Smith who stands almost at the end of an extensive series of British Indian civil servant historians. In 1911 the last edition of Elphinstone's history of 'Hindu and Muhammedan India' was published and in the similar year Vincent Smith's comprehensive history, structure upon his own earlier research in ancient Indian history and the knowledge accumulated by British researchers in the decades since Elphinstone, saw the light of day. From 1911 till in relation to the middle of the twentieth century Vincent Smith's was the authoritative textbook on the syllabi of approximately all Indian universities. While Vincent Smith's book approximated to the professional historians' writings in form and was unrivalled as a text book in summing up the then state of knowledge, in some compliments his approach to Indian history appears to have been colored by his experience as a British civil servant in India. The rise of the nationalist movement since 1885 and the intensification of political agitation since the Partition of Bengal in 1905 may have influenced his judgments in relation to the course of history in India. For instance, time and again he referred to the fragility of India's unity and the outbreak of chaos and the onset of common decline in the absence of a strong imperial power. The disintegration and decline experienced in ancient and medieval times at the end of great empires suggested an obvious lesson to the Indian reader, viz. it was only the iron hand of imperial Britain which kept India on the path of stability with progress, and if the British Indian empire ceased to be there would be the deluge which will

reverse all progress attained under British rule. As regards the potentials of the nationalist movement and the fitness of the Indian subjects to decide their own destiny, Vincent Smith did not pay much attention to that 'political' question.

The political question, though, was assuming rising importance in the last years of British rule and a historical work more accommodative to the political outlook of the Indian nationalist movement appeared in 1934. This work, *Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India* was dissimilar from all the previously mentioned books in that it was written from a liberal point of view, sympathetic to Indian national aspirations to a great extent. The authors were Edward Thompson who was a Missionary who taught for several years in a college in Bengal and became a good friend of Rabindranath Tagore, and G.T. Garratt, a civil servant in India for eleven years and thereafter a Labour Party politician in England. Given their background, both were disinclined to toe the row laid down by the civil servant historians of earlier days. Thompson and Garratt faced very adverse criticism from conservative British opinion leaders. On the other hand, several Indians establish this work distant more acceptable than the officially prescribed textbooks. This book, published less than fifteen years before India attained independence, is a landmark indicating the reorientation in thinking in the more progressive and liberal circles in the middle of the British; it was in accord with the mindset which made the transition of 1947 acceptable to the erstwhile imperial power. From James Mill to Thompson and Garratt historiography had traveled forward a great aloofness. This era, spanning the beginning of the 19th century to the last years of British rule in India, saw the development from a Euro-centric and disparaging approach to India towards a more liberal and less ethno-centric approach.

### **SOME OTHER HISTORIOGRAPHIC GROWTHS**

Till now we have focused attention on histories which were mainly widely read and attained the status of text books, and hence influenced historical imagination and understanding. There were other historical works not of that type but nevertheless of historiographic importance. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century two great authors wrote on India, though

India was really not in the centre of their interest. One was Lord Macaulay whose essays on some great British Indian personalities like Robert Clive were published in *Edinburgh Review*. Macaulay's literary approach made Indian history readable, though his essays were flawed by poor information and poorer judgment in relation to the 'native' part of British India. It was a great change from the uncommonly dull and censorious James Mill's writings. Macaulay's lasting power was the establishment of a custom of writing history in the biographical mode; this was widely imitated later and hence volume after volume of biographies of Viceroys and the like and histories of their management.

Sir Henry Maine's contribution was of another type. A great juridical historian, Maine applied himself to the revise of ancient Indian institutions while he was for a short era the Law Member of the Governor-Common's Council in India. His *Ancient Law* mutinies were path-breaking works in history. Maine changed the course of European thinking on the development of law by looking at laws and institutions beyond the domain of Roman law. There were, though, few mentionable contributions by British Indian scholars to follow up Maine's custom in legal and institutional history. His impact was limited to European scholarly work in the late nineteenth century and perhaps even beyond in the development of sociology in the hands of Max Weber and others. In the region of legal history the works which British Indian authors produced were of a stage dissimilar to, indeed inferior to Maine's. Therefore for instance Sir James Fitz James Stephen, also a Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, wrote a defense of British management under Warren Hastings. Edmund Burke, he argued, was wrong in thinking that the punishment awarded to Nanda Kumar by Justice Elijah Impey was a case of miscarriage of justice. This was the subject of Stephen's *Story of Nuncoomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey* icer, Henry Beveridge, wrote in support of the impeachment and in condemnation of the trial and punishment of Nanda Kumar: *Nanda Kumar: a narrative of a judicial murder* envious British management, Sir John Strachey of the I.C.S., wrote *Hastings and the Rohilla War* debates in relation to the a thing in the past, Warren Hastings and his impeachment and Edmund Burke's criticism of British management. The

location of this type of debate was history, but the hidden agenda was modern – to present British conquest and management of India as an unsullied record which necessity not be questioned.

In the high noon of the Empire two very contrary tendencies of historical writing were displayed by two prominent authors. One was Sir William W. Hunter, the editor of a good series of Gazetteers and the author of a pedestrian work on the history of British India. From 1899 he began to edit a series of historical books described *The Rulers of India*. The series lauded the makers of empires in India – mainly the makers of the British Indian Empire, though one or two token Indians, like Asoka and Akbar, were incorporated. The series was endowed with government sponsorship and the volumes establish lay in official libraries and syllabi. The substance was to present history in a popular form and very often incorporated not only solemn moments of resolve to do good on the part of an empire builder, but also cute stories of incidents in their childhood back house. The ‘hardboiled kinds’ of empire builders were chosen for immortality in a biographical form – British civil servants who sympathized with India were excluded — and it was a caricature of the eighteenth century English custom of writing history as biography.

Sir Alfred Lyall’s work, *Rise and Expansion of British Dominion in India* great originality in his methodology and interpretation, although one may disagree very fundamentally with the trend of his interpretation. In methodology his originality consisted of the use, in the manner of ethnographers, of his own observation and knowledge of modern Indian society, customs, institutions, etc. in order to understand the past events and procedures. Therefore he went beyond the textual proof which mainly historians at that time depended upon. In his interpretation of Indian history Lyall projected the story on a very wide canvas, looking at the incursion of the British into India in the light of the whole history of the connection flanked by the East and the West from the days of the Greeks and the Romans. This wide sweep of history, resembling in some methods Arnold Toynbee’s wide-angled global vision of connection flanked by civilizations, was dissimilar from that of mainly British Indian historians of the nineteenth century. The third element

of originality in Lyall was his theoretical location that India and Europe were on the similar track of development, but India's development was arrested at a sure point. This was also the view of Sir Henry Maine who wrote that Indian society had a great part of our own culture with its elements...not yet unfolded."

India as an arrested culture' was an influential thought in Europe but in India it had few takers. The nationalistically inclined intelligentsia rejected the view that India was presently a backward version of Europe; they whispered that India was radically dissimilar from Europe in the organisation of her society and state systems, and that India necessity be allowed to work out a dissimilar historical destiny rather than attempt to imitate Europe. At any rate, while in some matters Lyall's interpretative framework may be questioned, his effort to seem at India as a civilization merits recognition.

Finally, a noteworthy historiographic development that occurred in the first two or three decades of the twentieth century was the beginning of explorations in economic history. A foundation for that had already been laid in the work of several British civil servants who examined economic records and shaped broad conclusions in relation to the course of agrarian dealings and agricultural history. This they did as district collectors or magistrates responsible for land revenue resolution', i.e. fixation of tax on agricultural income in order that Land Revenue may be composed by the government. In the middle of such civil servants an outstanding historian appeared: this was W. H. Moreland who examined the economic condition of *India at the Death of Akbar*, published in 1920. This work was followed up with another work of economic history on the era *From Akbar to Aurangzeb* *an System of Mughal India* h was flawed by a preconceived notion that the economic condition of India was better under British rule than what it was in medieval times. He tried to prove this preconception by several means in his works, including his writings on Indian economics in the twentieth century. Moreover, his response to the Indian economic nationalists' critique of British economic impact was distant from being adequate. One of his junior contemporaries was Vera Anstey who wrote on similar rows; she taught at the University of London and wrote an average textbook on *The Economic Development of India* depth

which Moreland attained. Moreland's outstanding contribution was to lay the foundation of a new discipline of economic history. Though, economic and social history remained marginal to the concerns of the typical colonial historians. This is apparent from the classic summation of all the British historians' work on British India in the volume in the *Cambridge History of India* P E Roberts' textbook, *History of British India*. Neither Indian economic and social circumstances nor indeed the people of India were in focus in such works; their history was all in relation to the the British soldiers and civil servants did in India.

### **COLONIAL IDEOLOGY IN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

It will be an error to homogenize all of British historical writings as consistently colonial, since dissimilar approaches and interpretative frameworks urbanized within the colonial school in course of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Though, there were sure features general to mainly of the works we have surveyed till now. Though simplistic it may be it may be useful to sum up these features:

- An Orientalist' representation of India was general, promoting the thought of the superiority of contemporary Western civilization; this is a theme recently brought into prominence by Edward Said and others, but the Indian nationalist intelligentsias had recognized and criticized this trend in British writings from James Mill onwards.
- The thought that India had no unity until the British unified the country was commonly given prominence in historical narratives; beside with this thesis there was a representation of the eighteenth century India as a dark century' full of chaos and barbarity until the British came to the rescue.
- Several late nineteenth century British historians adopted Social Darwinist notions in relation to the India; this implied that if history is a thrash about flanked by several peoples and cultures, akin to the thrash about in the middle of the species, Britain having approach to

the top could be *ipso facto* legitimately measured to be superior and as the fittest to rule.

- India was, in the opinion of several British observers, a stagnant society, arrested at a stage of development; it followed that British rule would illustrate the path of progress to a higher stage; hence the thought that India needed Pax Britannica.
- The mythification of heroic empire builders and ‘Rulers of India’ in historical narratives was a part of the rhetoric of imperialism; as Eric Stokes has remarked, in British writings on India the focus was on the British protagonists and the whole country and its people were presently a shadowy background.
- As we would expect, colonial historiography displayed initially a critical stance towards the Indian nationalist movement since it was perceived as a threat to the good work done by the British in India; at a later stage when the movement intensified the attitude became more intricate, since some historians showed plain hostility while others were more sophisticated in their denigration of Indian nationalism. In common, while some of these features and paradigms are commonly to be established in the colonial historians’ discourse, it will be unjust to ignore the information that in course of the first half of the twentieth century historiography out-grew them or, at least, presented more sophisticated versions of them.

In essence colonial historiography was part of an ideological effort to appropriate history as a means of establishing cultural hegemony and legitimizing British rule in excess of India. The vital thought embedded in the custom of Colonial Historiography was the paradigm of a backward society’s progression towards the pattern of contemporary European civil and political society under the tutelage of imperial power. The guiding hand of the British officers, education combined with ‘filtration’ to the lower orders of society, implantation of such institutions and laws as the British thought Indians were fit for, and protection of Pax Britannica from the threat of disorder nationalism posed in the middle of the subject people – these were the ingredients needed

for a slow progress India necessity create. Sometimes this agenda was presented as the civilizing mission of Britain.

What the intellectual lineages of the colonial ideology were as reflected in historiography? Benthamite or Utilitarian political philosophy represented Britain's role to be that of a guardian with a backward pupil as his ward. It may be said that Jeremy Bentham looked upon all people in that light, European or otherwise. That is partly true. But this attitude could discover clearer expression and execution in action in a colony like India. Another source of inspiration for the colonialist historian was Social Darwinism, as has been mentioned earlier. This gave an appearance of scientific respectability to the notion that several native Indians were below par; it was possible to say that here there were victims of an arrested civilization and leave it at that as an inevitable outcome of a Darwinian determinism. A third major power was Herbert Spencer. He put forward an evolutionary scheme for the explication of Europe's ascendancy and his relative way addressed the differences in the middle of countries and cultures in conditions of progression towards the higher European form. It was an assumption general in the middle of Europeans, that non-European societies would follow that evolutionary pattern, with a bit of assistance from the European imperial powers. This mindset was not peculiar to the British Indian historians. In the heydays of mid-Victorian imperialism the British gave free expression to these thoughts while in later times such statements became more circumspect. In the 1870s Fitzjames Stephen talked of "heathenism and barbarism" versus the British as representatives of a "belligerent culture". In 1920s David Dodwell's rhetoric is milder, indeed approximately in a dejected tone: the Sisyphean task of the British was to raise to a higher stage the "great mass of humanity" in India and that mass "always tended to relapse into its old posture ...like a rock you attempt to lift with levers." *a, 1858- 1918.*

## **IMPACT OF HISTORICAL WRITINGS IN COLONIAL INDIA**

The ideological characterization applies to the dominant trend in historical thinking in the colonial school. But it will be inaccurate to apply this without discrimination. It is well recognized that in the middle of the British



officers of the government of British India, as we all know, there were some like Thomas Munro or Charles Trevelyan who were widely regarded as persons sympathetic to the subject people although as officers they served an alien and exploitative regime; there were British officers and British Missionaries *in India*, 1925, who sympathized with the National Congress; and there were also those, like say Garratt of the Indian Civil Service and later of the Labour Party in England, or George Orwell of the Indian Police Service who were inveterate critics of the empire. It was the similar case with the historians. But the inclinations of lone individuals were insignificant in the face of the dominant custom in the middle of the servants of the British Raj. Official encouragement and sponsorship of a method of on behalf of the past which would uphold and promote imperial might, and the organized or informal peer opinion the dissident individual had to contend with. Our characterization of the ideology at the root of colonial historiography addresses the dominant trend and may not apply in every respect to every individual historian. Such a qualification is significant in a course on Historiography in scrupulous because this is an instance where students of history necessity exercise their judgment in relation to the range and the limits of generalization. It necessity be noted that despite the colonial ideology embedded in historiography in British India, the early British historians of India made some positive contributions. Separately from the obvious information that the colonial historians laid the foundations of historiography according to methodology urbanized in contemporary Europe, their contribution was also substantial in providing in institutions like the Asiatic Society and Archaeological Survey of India opportunity for Indian historians to obtain entry into the profession and into academic research. Further, despite an ethnocentric and statistic bias, the data composed by the British colonial historians as well as the practice of archiving documents was and remnants a significant resource. Mainly significant of all, the teaching of history began from the very inception of the first three universities in India at Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. This had many unintended consequences.

The history that was taught under colonial auspices was highly biased in favor of the imperial point of view. The textbooks were those produced by

the school of colonial historiography. Nevertheless, there was a positive outcome. First, beside with the history of India by James Mill or Elphinstone, Indian students also read histories of England and of Europe and therefore were implanted in the minds of the educated Indians the thoughts of Liberty and Freedom and Democracy and Equity, as exemplified in European history, the lessons of the Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution, the American War of Independence, the struggles of Mazzini and Garibaldi in Italy, etc. Any one familiar with the early Moderate stage of the development of nationalism in India will see the relevance these thoughts acquired through reading history. Secondly, professionally trained Indian historians began to engage in writing history. Writing history on contemporary rows with documentary research and the usual tools of scholarly work was no longer a monopoly of the amateur historians of British origin. Indians professionally trained began to engage in research, first in learned associations like the Asiatic Society, then in the colleges and universities, and in the government's educational services, particularly the Indian Education Service.

Thirdly, and this is the significant part, the history which the Indian students were made to read, the books by British civil servant historians of the nineteenth century, created a critical reaction against that historiography. The first graduate of an Indian University, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, repeatedly reviled the British interpretation and raised the question, When shall we write our own history? Rabindranath Tagore put it mainly eloquently: in other countries, he wrote, history *reveals* the country to the people of the country, while the history of India the British have gifted us *obscures* our vision of India; we are unable to see our motherland in this history. This reaction was typical of the intelligentsia in India and it led some of the best nationalist minds to search for a new construal of history. Therefore there urbanized a Nationalist interpretation of Indian history, putting to an end the hegemony of British colonial historiography. Writing history became a major means of structure the consciousness of a national identity. In the after that Unit in this collection the Nationalist School of historiography has been surveyed.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is colonial historiography? Discuss some of the important works of historians who are generally associated with colonial historiography.
- Do you think that all the works written by colonial or the British historians on India belong to the colonial school of history-writing? Answer with examples.
- Discuss the basic elements of colonialist ideology contained in colonial historiography.

## **CHAPTER 20**

### **NATIONALIST APPROACH**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Colonial versus nationalist historiography
- Nationalist history of ancient and medieval periods
- Nationalist history of contemporary era
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand nationalist history of ancient and medieval periods
- Discuss colonial vs. nationalist historiography.
- Explain nationalist history of modern period.

#### **COLONIAL VERSUS NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY**

Nationalist approach to Indian history may be described as one which tends to contribute to the growth of nationalist feeling and to unify people in the face of religious, caste, or linguistic differences or class differentiation.

This may, as pointed out earlier, sometimes be irrespective of the intentions of the author.

Initially, in the 19th century, Indian historians followed in the footsteps of colonial historiography, considering history as scientific based on information-finding, with emphasis on political history and that too of ruling dynasties. Colonial writers and historians, who began to write the history of India from late 18th and early 19th century, in a method created all India history, presently as they were creating an all-India empire. Simultaneously, presently as the colonial rulers followed a political policy of divide and rule on the foundation of region and religion, so did colonial historians stress division of Indians on the foundation of region and religion throughout much of Indian history. Nationalist historians too wrote history as either of India as a whole or of rulers, who ruled dissimilar parts of India, with emphasis on their religion or caste or linguistic affiliation. But as colonial historical narrative became negative or took a negative view of India's political and social development, and, in contrast, a justificatory view of colonialism, a nationalist reaction by Indian historians came. Colonial historians now increasingly, day by day, threw colonial stereotypes at Indians. Vital texts in this respect were James Mill's work on Ancient India and Elliot and Dawson's work on Medieval India. Indian nationalist historians set out to make counter-stereotypes, often explicitly intended to oppose colonial stereotypes thrown at them day after day. Presently as the Indian nationalist movement urbanized to oppose colonialism, so did nationalist historiography develop as a response to and in confrontation with colonial historiography and as an effort to build national self-respect in the face of colonial denigration of Indian people and their historical record? Both sides appealed to history in their every day speech and writing. Even when dealing with mainly obtuse or obscure historical subjects, Indians often relied in their reply on earlier European interpretations.

For instance, several colonial writers and officers asserted that historical experience of Indian people made them unfit for self-government and democracy, or national unity and nation-formation or contemporary economic development, or even defense against invasion by outsiders. Colonial rule would slowly prepare them – and was doing so – distant all these

tasks. Moreover, in the second half of the 19th century, the need for permanent attendance of colonial rulers and colonial management for the development of India on contemporary rows was sometimes implied and sometimes explicitly asserted. While the utilitarians and missionaries condemned Indian civilization, the Orientalists emphasized the character of India as a nation of philosophers and spiritual people. While this characterization bore the marks of praise, the accompanying corollary was that Indians had historically lacked political, administrative, and economic acumen or capability. Indians should, so, have full freedom to develop and practice their spiritualism and power the world in that respect, the British should manage the political, administrative, and economic affairs and territorial defense of India against foreign aggression, which had succeeded whenever India had an Indian ruler. In information, in the absence of foreign rule, India had tended to suffer from political and administrative anarchy. For instance, it was the British who saved India from anarchy throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The colonial writers and officers also maintained that, because of their religious and social organisation, Indians also lacked moral character of that British management came into social get in touch with only with their cooks and other servants or with compradors that were out to create money through their dealings with the Sahibs. Also, some of the European writers praised Indian spiritualism, because of their own reaction against the evils of the emerging industrialism and commercialism in their own countries.

Several colonial historians also held that it was in the very nature of India, like other countries of the East, to be ruled by despots or at least by autocratic rulers. This was the cause why British rule in India was and had to be autocratic. This view came to be widely recognized as the theory of Oriental Despotism. Furthermore, these writers argued that the notion that the aim of any ruler being the welfare of the ruled was absent in India. In information, the traditional political regimes in India were monstrously cruel by nature. In contrast, the British, even through autocratic, were presently and benevolent and worked for the welfare of the people. In contrast with the cruel Oriental Despotism of the past, British rule was benevolent though autocratic.

The colonial writers also held that Indians had, in contrast to Europeans, always lacked a feeling of nationality and so of national unity, – Indians had always been divided. Indians, they said, had also lacked a democratic custom. While Europeans had enjoyed the democratic heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, the heritage of Indians – in information of all people of the Orient or East – was that of despotism. Indians also lacked the excellence of innovation and creativity. Consequently mainly good things— institutions, customs, arts and crafts, etc. – had approach from outside. For instance, it was colonial rule which had brought to India law and order, equality before law, economic development, and modernization of society based on the thoughts of social equality. All these colonial notions not only hurt the pride of Indian historians and other intellectuals but also implied that the rising demand of the Indian intellectuals for self-government, democracy, legislative reform, etc., was unrealistic precisely because of Indians' past history. After all, democracy was alien to their historical character and so not appropriate to them.

## **NATIONALIST HISTORY OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL PERIODS**

Several Indians, affected by nationalism, and some Europeans, took up an examination of colonial stereotypes virtually as a challenge from the second half of the 19th century. They did on the base of detailed and meticulous research, which has created excellent traditions of devotion to facts and details and of reliance on primary sources in Indian historical discipline. Indian historians tried to prove the falsity of colonial historical narrative on the foundation of analysis of existing historical sources, as also the hunt for fresh sources. Of course, they also were moved by a feeling of hurt national pride. For decades, their work was confined to ancient and medieval periods. The professional historians did not take up the contemporary era though, as we shall see, the economists did, basically because of two reasons: or government-controlled schools and colleges, there was fear that any critique of colonialism would affect their careers; h historical views that scientific history necessity not deal with recent or modern era.

The Indian historians proclaimed the colonial notion of India's custom of spirituality as a spot of distinction and of India's greatness and superiority in excess of the West, especially in conditions of 'moral values' as compared to the essentially 'materialistic' character of Western civilization appeal to the Indians of middle classes who belonged to money lending and trading families who daily struggled for acquisition of material goods. At the similar time, they denied the Indians' exclusive devotion to spirituality and stressed their prowess in management and statecraft, empire structure, diplomacy, taxation structure, and military organisation, warfare, agrarian, industrial, and commercial development. Several historians exposed in India's past diplomatic and political institutions analogous to those of modern Europe. They vehemently denied the notion of ancient Indian being inefficient in running a state. They hailed the detection in the beginning of the 20th century of *Arthashastra* by Kautilya and said that it proved that Indians were equally interested and proficient in management, diplomacy and economic management by the state. Several glorified Kautilya and compared him with Machiavelli and Bismarck. Several also denied the dominant power of religion on the state and asserted the latter's secular character. They also contradicted the view that ancient Indian state was autocratic and despotic. The Kings in ancient India dispensed justice to all, they said. Others refuted the view that Indian rulers did not stay in mind the aim of the welfare of the people. Some even asserted the strong attendance of the popular element in the state and went even so distant as to say that in several cases the political structure approached that of contemporary democracies. In any case, all of them argued that government was not irresponsible and capricious. There were several limits on autocracy or the power of the rulers. There were several channels through which public opinion became effective. Some even argued that Indian monarchies were limited and often approached constitutional monarchy. For instance, the Mantri Parishad described by Kautilya was compared with the Privy Council of Britain. Very often the subsistence of local self-governments was asserted and the instance of democratically elected village panchayats was cited. A few writers went so far as to talk of the subsistence of assemblies and parliaments and of the cabinet system, as under Chandra Gupta, Akbar,

and Shivaji. Quite often, the wide observance by the rulers of international law, especially in the case of war, was also pointed out. They denied the charge that Indian rulers took recourse to arbitrary taxation and argued that a taxation system virtually analogous to that of a contemporary system of taxation prevailed. K.P. Jayaswal, a celebrated historian of the first quarter of the 20th century, took this whole approach to the extreme. In his *Hindu Polity*, published in 1915, he argued that the ancient Indian political system was either republican or that of constitutional monarchy. He concluded: ‘The constitutional progress made by the Hindus has almost certainly not been equaled, much less surpassed, by any polity of antiquity.’ at Greece was the house of democracy.

Basically, the nationalist approach was to assert that anything that was politically positive in the West had already lived in India. Therefore R. C. Majumdar wrote in his *Corporate Life in Ancient India* that institutions ‘which we are accustomed to seem upon as of western growth had also flourished in India extensive ago.’ Therefore, interestingly, the value structure of the west was accepted. It is not ancient Indian political institutions which were declared to be, on the whole, greater, but western institutions which were accepted as greater and then establish to have lived in ancient India.

Colonial historians stressed that Indians were always divided by religion, region, language, and caste, that it was colonialism alone which unified them, and that their unity would disappear if colonial rule disappeared. This also meant that Indians lacked a sense of patriotism and national unity. Nationalist historians countered the colonial view by claiming that cultural, economic, and political unity and a sense of Indian nationhood had prevailed in pre-colonial India. Kautilya, for instance, they said, had advocated in the *Arthashastra* the need for a national king. This need to assert the unity of India in the past explains, in part, why Indian historians tended to see Indian history as a history of Indian empires and their break up and why they treated the era of empires as era of national greatness. In their view Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka, Chandragupta Vikramditya, and Akbar were great because they built great empires. Interestingly, this led to a contradiction in the nationalist approach throughout the Gandhian era. On the one hand India was praised as



the land of non-violence and, on the other hand, the military power of the empire-builders was praised. One curious result was that Asoka was praised for his commitment to nonviolence by some historians; others condemned him for the similar as it weakened the empire against foreign invaders. The nationalists wrote approvingly of India's civilization and social structure. In the bargain they underplayed caste oppression, social and economic denigration of the lower castes, and male power. Moreover, while rightly emphasizing India's contribution to the development of civilization in the world, they tended to underplay the impact of other cultures and civilizations on India's development. Furthermore, as in the case of political institutions, often the worth of social values and institutions was accepted and then establish to have lived in ancient India.

Separately from its historical veracity, which cannot be discussed here, the nationalist historians' approach towards ancient India had a few highly negative consequences people in dissimilar regions of human endeavour were associated with the ancient era, culture in its Sanskritic and Brahmanical form that was emphasized merge with communalism and, later, with regionalism. In any case the high water-spot of the Indian historical writing on the ancient era of Indian history was reached approximately early 1930s. Later, it became more and more a caricature of the writings of the earlier era.

Nationalist historiography of medieval India urbanized mostly throughout the 1920s and after, often to dispute the colonial and communal approaches. Nationalist's historians of medieval India repeated more or less the whole nationalist approach towards ancient Indian history. In scrupulous, they emphasized the development of a composite civilization in Northern India as a result of interaction in the middle of Hindus and Muslims both at the stage of the general people and the elite. They also denied the colonial-communal assertion that Muslim rulers remained foreigners even after settling down in the country or that they were inherently oppressive or more so than their precursors or counterparts in the rest of the world. They denied that Hindus and Muslims existed in a confliction situation, ever at each other's throats. Despite their tendency to glorify India's past and to defend Indian civilization against colonial denigration, several of the nationalist's historians

also looked for an answer to the question: how could a small trading company, backed by a small country thousands of miles absent, conquer such a big country as India with its hoary past and great civilizations. This indicated the beginnings of a critique of Indian civilization and social structure, which, in turn, led to initial steps being taken towards the revise of social history, especially pertaining to the caste system and the location of women. The modern nationalist critique of colonialism also led to first steps being taken towards the economic history of pre-colonial India. Also as the national movement urbanized as a mass movement, attention turned in the 1930s towards a revise of the role of the general people in history. This trend fructified, though, only after the 1950s.

It may also be kept in view that the historians we are discussing were handicapped by the limitation of their sources. They had to rely mostly on written sources, though epigraphy and numismatics were beginning to create a major contribution. Archaeology was still in its infancy, while the use of anthropology and sociology was negligible. Economics too was seen as a preserve only of the economists.

## **NATIONALIST HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY ERA**

Nationalist historiography flourished mainly in dealing with the ancient and medieval periods. It hardly lived for the contemporary era and came into being mainly after 1947, no school of nationalist historians of contemporary India having lived before 1947. This was in part because, in the era of nationalism, to be a nationalist was also to be anti-imperialist, which meant confrontation with the ruling, colonial authorities. And that was not possible for academics because of colonial manage in excess of the educational system. It became safe to be anti-imperialist only after 1947. Consequently, a history of the national movement or of colonial economy did not exist. This is, of course, not a complete explanation of the absence of nationalist historiography before 1947. After all, Indian economists did develop a sharp and brilliant critique of the colonial economy of India and its impact on the people.

A detailed and scientific critique of colonialism was urbanized in the last quarter of the 19th century by non-academic, nationalist economists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, G. V. Joshi, R. C. Dutt, K. T. Telang, G. K. Gokhale, and D. E. Wacha. Many academic economists such as K. T. Shah, V. C. Kale, C. N. Vakil, D. R. Gadgil, Gyan Chand, V.K.R.V. Rao and Wadia and Merchant followed in their footsteps in the first half of the 20th century. Their critique did not discover any reflection in history books of the era. That was to happen only after 1947, and that too in the 1960s and after. This critique, though, shaped the core of nationalist agitation in the era of mass movements after 1920. Tilak, Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, and Subhash Bose, for instance, relied heavily upon it. A few historians who referred in passing to the national movement and nationalist historians after 1947 did not see it as an anti-imperialist movement. Likewise, the only history of the national movement that was written was by nationalist leaders such as R.G. Pradhan, A.C. Mazumdar, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Patabhi Sitaramayya. Post- 1947 historians accepted the legitimacy of nationalism and the Indian national movement but seldom dealt with its base in the economic critique of the colonialism. They also tended to underplay, when not ignoring totally, other streams of the nationalist thrash about.

Contemporary historians have also been divided flanked by those, such as Tara Chand, who held that India has been a nation-in-the-creation since the 19th century and those who argue that India has been a nation since the ancient times. At the similar time, to their credit, all of them accept India's diversity, i.e., its multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and so multi-cultural character. Nationalist historians also have ignored or severely underplayed inner contradictions of Indian society based on class and caste or the oppression of and discrimination against women and tribes. They have also ignored the movements against class and caste oppressions. They have seldom made an in-depth analysis of the national movement, and often indulged in its blind glorification. While adopting a secular location and condemning communalism, they do not create a serious analysis of its character or elements, causation, and development. Quite often, it is seen merely as an outcome of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. They provide due space to

the social reform movements but do not take a critical seem at them, and often ignore the movements of the tribal people and the lower castes for their emancipation. As a whole, historians neglected economic, social and cultural history and at the mainly attached a chapter or two on these without integrating them into the main narrative.

We may create a few additional remarks concerning nationalist historians as a whole. They tended to ignore inner contradictions within Indian society. They suffered from an upper caste and male chauvinist cultural and social bias. Above all they tended to accept the theory of Indian exceptionalism that Indian historical development was entirely dissimilar from that of the rest of the world. They missed a historical evaluation of Indian social institutions in an effort to prove India's superiority in historical development. Especially negative and harmful both to the revise of India's history and the political development of contemporary India were their acceptance of James Mill's periodisation of Indian history into Hindu and Muslim periods.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss the differences between the colonial and nationalist historiography.
- What are the specific features of nationalist historiography concerning ancient India?
- Write a note on the issues discussed by nationalist historians writing on the modern period.

## **CHAPTER 21**

### **COMMUNALIST TRENDS**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Dependence on colonialist historiography

- Vital constituents of communal view of Indian history
- Differences flanked by nationalist and communalist historiography
- Critique of communalist historiography
- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Dependence on colonialist historiography.
- Explain basic constituents of communal view of Indian history.
- Understand the differences between nationalist and communalist historiography.

## **DEPENDENCE ON COLONIALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY**

Unlike nationalist historians who countered colonial stereotypes, communal historians based themselves approximately entirely on colonial historiography of medieval India and colonial era textbooks. Mainly of the generalizations made by Indian communal historians can be traced to the writings of British historians and officers. Nor were British motives innocent. From the late 1820s, the British rulers clearly realized that India was too big to be ruled by force by the British and, so, they had to follow the policy of Divide and Rule. They sought to divide Indians on grounds of region, language, and caste, but above all they took recourse to religious divide. Secondly, aware of their own foreign status, they wanted to illustrate that Indians had always been ruled by foreigners. Muslim rule was foreign rule, so, there was nothing wrong in relation to the British being foreigners. The British had only replaced one foreign rule by another foreign rule, which was benevolent and humane compared with the previous despotic and inhuman rule.

Thirdly, they tried to illustrate that Muslim rulers had subjugated, oppressed, and maltreated Hindus and that the British had virtually liberated them. Hindus were, so, better off under British rule, and should, so, support and not oppose it. Fourthly, they asserted that Hindus and Muslims had always

been divided and had fought each other and could, so, never live peacefully jointly unless a third party – the British were present as rulers. Therefore, the leading British historian of medieval India, H.M. Elliot, wrote in 1849 in his original preface to his *History of India As Told by Its Own Historians* that of the few glimpses we have, even in the middle of the short extracts in this single volume, of Hindus slain for disputing with Mohammedans, of common prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant events of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants who enjoined them.‘ He also frankly confessed his motive in publishing his history. It was to create our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule‘ and to create the emerging nationalist intellectuals – the bombastic Babus‘ as he described them.

In this respect, it is significant to stay in view that it was not M.A. Jinnah or V. D. Savarkar who first put forward in 1937 the two-nation theory that led to the partition of the country. Much before them the British writers had created the view that Indian nation meant Hindu nation, that rule by Turkish, Afghan and Mughal rulers was foreign‘ rule, while rule by Rajput Rajas or Maratha Sardars was Indian or Hindu rule. But how could Mughal rule be foreign? Because they were Muslim. Therefore, to sum up, this aspect, communal interpretation of history was a part of the British policy of Divide and Rule‘.

One cause why the British writers and later Indian historians took such a communal view was their reliance on medieval chronicles for reconstruction of medieval history. Firstly, several of the writers of the chronicles and histories in medieval were from the priestly classes who primarily constituted the educated at the time. Their religious outlook and interests seriously distorted and limited their writings. They often saw secular political events in religious conditions. They tended to depict rulers and chiefs as Divine mediators. Moreover, the priestly as well as other chroniclers existed on the patronage of the Kings, nobles, rajas, and zamindars. So, they tended to illustrate religious virtue in their mainly selfish actions. Brutal wars, court

intrigues, everyday politics and administrative policies were shown as religiously motivated. Their efforts to conquer others, or expand their domains or to fight for their own zamindaris and kingdoms were seen as acts of religious zeal, earning religious merits for them. Therefore, for instance, the administrative or political actions of Asoka, Chandra Gupta, the Sultans, the Mughals, the Maratha Chiefs, or the Rajput Rajas were often portrayed by modern writers in religious conditions. This is, of course, true, not only of India. It is equally true of the medieval historians of Europe. But European historians of the 19th and 20th centuries slowly discounted this religious bias for instance in the revise of the Crusades or of the medieval Popes and kings. Likewise, Portuguese and Spanish expansion in the 16th and 17th centuries was portrayed at the time as motivated by the desire to spread Christianity. Today, no European historian will accept this as the main factor in considering whether to praise or to criticize the Portuguese or the Spanish regimes.

Unluckily, the colonial and some contemporary Indian historians incorporated the religious outlook of the ancient and medieval chroniclers in their own writings and therefore contributed to a communal interpretation of Indian history. For instance, till this day, the communal historians, whether Hindu or Muslim, go on portraying Mahmud Ghazni's invasions as religiously motivated and as throwing light on the character of Islam. Likewise, they portray the political thrash about of medieval India, for instance flanked by Rana Pratap and Akbar or Shivaji and Aurangzeb as struggles based on or motivated by religion. Moreover, invariably the literary sources of the ancient and medieval periods deal primarily with the doings of the kings, princely courts, and upper classes and not with the society as a whole. In the military and diplomatic affairs of the ruling groups religious thoughts do appear significant. When wars are waged and alliances are made, several factors are balanced and appealed to. Real issues are often kept disguised. Appeals are made to marriage ties, kinship, language, caste, region, as well as religion. But the main factor is consideration of interest, economic or political. It was very much the similar in the past as today. Today, every nation clothes even the mainly marked of its aggressions with some decent motive. The variation is that a historian who accepts the official explanations of today would be

laughed at by fellow historians. But several historians have accepted official explanations of the past rulers and of the official chroniclers.

It may also be pointed out that, presently as in the case of colonial writing, modern communal politics were, and are, projected into the past and the happenings of the past so described and historical myths created as to serve modern communal politics. Therefore both communalists, Hindu as well as Muslims, adopted, and continue to adopt, an interpretation of the past through which feelings of fear, insecurity and schism could be aroused in the middle of their modern followers. In this sense, if communal history produced and propagated communalism, in its turn communal politics gave, and provides, a fillip to communal history writing and propagation. Another method of saying the similar thing is to stress that it was not medieval history as existed by the medieval people or the medieval historical procedures that generated communalism, it was the communal interpretation of history that produced communalism as well as got produced by communalism – that is, this interpretation was itself communal ideology. Lastly, it may be noted that because of being subjected to communal view of history from very childhood, elements of this view came to prevail even in the middle of several nationalists and other secular persons, who were unaware of their communal implications. For instance, several talked of India having undergone a thousand years' of foreign rule or having suffered social and cultural decline throughout the medieval era or having been ruled by Muslims or Muslim rule. Likewise, elements and themes of the communal view of history are established in nationalist historical works.

## **VITAL CONSTITUENTS OF COMMUNAL VIEW OF INDIAN HISTORY**

In the following explanation, we will talk about some of the significant characteristics of the communalist interpretation of Indian history.



## **Conception of Hindus and Muslims as Antagonistic Societies**

In communal view, India's medieval history was one extensive story of Hindu-Muslim disagreement. Hindus and Muslims were permanently divided into hostile camps whose mutual dealings were bitter, distrustful, antagonistic, and hostile. There lived separate and separate Hindu and Muslim cultures. Because of their belonging to dissimilar religions, Hindus and Muslims shaped separate and exclusive and mutually hostile cultural and political societies. Therefore, for instance, R.C. Mazumdar wrote in 1957 that medieval India remained permanently divided into two powerful units, each with marked individuality of its own, which did not prove amenable to a fusion or even any secure permanent coordination. Likewise, Ishtiaq Ahmad Qureshi wrote in the 1950s that at all times the Muslims of the sub-continent were resolute in refusing to be assimilated to the local population and made conscious efforts to uphold their distinctive character.

This view establishes a more virulent form in the hands of the communal political leaders. Therefore, in his presidential address at the Lahore session of the Muslim League in March 1940, M.A. Jinnah said: The history of the last 12 hundred years had failed to achieve unity and had witnessed, throughout the ages, India always divided into Hindu India and Muslim India. V.D. Savarkar wrote in 1923 in his *Hindutva* that the day when Mohammad Gazani crossed the Indus... that day the disagreement of life and death began which ended shall we say with Abdali. In this disagreement, all Hindus, belonging to dissimilar sects, regions, and castes, suffered as Hindus and triumphed as Hindus. This thrash about flanked by Hindus and Muslims was then accepted in excess of to the 19th and 20th centuries. This view was to form the foundation of the communal view that Hindus and Muslims have always existed in mutual antagonism. M.S. Golwalkar, for instance, condemned the nationalists for spreading the view by which Hindus began to class ourselves with our old invaders and foes under the outlandish name – Indian. And he added: That is the real danger of the day, our self-forgetfulness, our believing our old and bitter enemies to be our

friends.‘ The Muslim communalists readily accepted and propagated this view and based their two-nation theory on it.

As a corollary of this view, the communal historians denied or underplayed any other social tension or disagreement in medieval society. For instance, any caste or class tensions were ignored and other political conflicts such as flanked by Rajput and Maratha chieftains or flanked by Afghans and Turks were underplayed. The Hindu communalists described the rule by medieval Muslim rulers as foreign rule because they were Muslim. Muslims were, therefore, not seen as integral parts of Indian society. Instead they were seen as permanent foreigners in India. This was because they practiced Islam. In other languages, any Indian, as soon as he changed his religion from Hinduism, became, because of that act, a foreigner in the land. Because Islam had been founded outside India, it was a foreign religion and anyone who practiced it became a foreigner.

The communalists bracketed rule by Muslim rulers and British rule as foreign. As was pointed out earlier, they talked of a thousand years of slavery.‘ Golwalkar, for instance, repeatedly referred to Muslims as foreigners who treated India not as a house but as a *sarai*. He also warned Muslims and Christians: There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its civilization, or to live at the sweet will of the national race.‘ The view that Muslim was permanent foreigners in India was accepted by the Muslim communalists, though in an altered form. In their hands, the foreigner‘ view took the form of emphasizing the complete separateness of Muslims from Hindus. The Muslims, they said, could not be Indians in the similar method as Hindus. M.A. Jinnah, for instance, asserted in 1941 that a Muslim when he converted, granted that he was converted more than a thousand years ago, belongs to a dissimilar order, not only religious but social, and he has existed in that distinctly separate and antagonistic social order, religiously, socially and culturally. It is now more than a thousand years that the bulk of the Muslims have existed in a dissimilar world, in a dissimilar society, in a dissimilar philosophy and a dissimilar faith.‘ Likewise, Nawab of Mamdot, a Muslim League leader, said in 1941 that Pakistan had lived in India for

almost twelve centuries.' The theory of historical antagonism' led both Hindus and Muslim communalists to claim that Hindus and Muslims shaped two dissimilar nations. The Muslim communalists demanded after 1937 that, since the two nations' could not live jointly, Muslims should be given a separate state – Pakistan – after independence. The Hindu communalists, on the other hand, argued after 1937 for the creation of a Hindu state in which Muslims would live in a subordinate location.

### **View of Muslims as Rulers in Medieval India**

One of the vital constituents of communal ideology was the view that in medieval India Muslims constituted the ruling class and the Hindus were the ruled, the dominated, or the subject race.' Therefore, all Muslims, including the overwhelming majority in the middle of them of rural and urban poor, the peasants and artisans and the lowly administrative employees and soldiers were portrayed as rulers, and all Hindus, including the rajas, chiefs, nobles, zamindars, and higher officials as the ruled. Therefore, addressing Lahore students in 1941, M.A. Jinnah said: Our demand is not from Hindus because Hindus never took the whole of India. It was the Muslims who took India and ruled for 700 years. It was the British who took India from the Mussalmans.' The Hindu communalists too readily accepted that Hindus were slaves' under Muslim rule'. For instance, in 1937, V.D. Savarkar described the rule of Muslim rulers as a veritable death-warrant to the Hindu nation.'

As a corollary of this view, it was then argued that the 19th and 20th century Muslims had the happy' and proud' ever present memory of having been the ruling class, while Hindus had the sad' and humiliating' memory of having been the subject race'. Another corollary was the notion that politics and political power in India had always been based on religion and religious differences and that too of and in the middle of the rulers; therefore, the character of the Indian state was determined by religion and that too of the rulers. Furthermore, the vital objective of the medieval state was the propagation and glorification of Islam, and that this was so because of the

inherent character of a state whose rulers were Muslims. As the Statement of the *Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee* pointed out that the communalists regarded the Muslims rulers as zealous crusaders whose dominant motive was the spread of Islam and whose way for achieving this substance was the destruction of temples and forcible conversions... The Muslim writers deplore the want of true religious feeling in Muslim kings in permitting idolatry to persist in their dominion and the unbelievers to prosper, while the Hindu writers bewail the weakness of the religious sentiment in Hindu rulers and their want of patriotism in not combining effectively against a foreigner in defense of their religion and their country.’

For the similar cause, the autonomous states ruled by Hindu rajas and chiefs, such as the Maratha Empire, and the states ruled by Maratha chieftains, Rajput rajas and Jat zamindars were declared to be Hindu states whose rulers were the defenders of the Hindu religion. At the similar time, the communalists branded those rulers who did not conform to the communal stereotypes as bad Hindus or bad Muslims who were some sort of traitors to their faith and their societies. Real or fictitious incidents were narrated to prove this point. As pointed out earlier, such incidents could be often dug up from the writings of the medieval chroniclers, court poets, etc., who earned their livelihood by justifying, on religious grounds, the deeds or misdeeds of their patrons.

Communalists also adopted a purely religion-based definition of cultures and that too based solely on the religions of the upper classes. Hence, since Hinduism and Islam were by definition dissimilar, there could be, and was, no general cultural ground or even mutual interaction flanked by the two. The Hindu communalists also readily adopted and propagated the colonial view that Muslim rulers, and so Muslims, had tyrannized Hindus throughout the medieval era. They depicted the history of the medieval Indian society as one extensive tale of murder, rapine and oppression, hostility to Hinduism and Hindus and the forcible spread of Islam through temple destruction and forcible conversion by the Muslim rulers and their officials... The examples of this view were, as in other characteristics, established in non-academic writing. M.S. Golwalkar, for instance, in his booklet *We or Our Nationhood*

*Defined*, published in 1939, usually referred to Muslims as ‘murderous hoards’, ‘murderous bands’, ‘despoilers’, ‘the enemy’, ‘forces of destruction’, ‘old invaders and foes’, and ‘our old enemies’. The ‘Muslim tyranny’ was moreover portrayed as being a result not of the character of the rulers or the ruling classes but of the vital character of Islamic religion itself. Indra Prakash, a Hindu Mahasabha leader, for instance, wrote in *Where We Differ* in 1942:

- ‘The Muslim religion exalts and hero-worships an assassin. This religion encourages its followers to kill men of other religions. According to the tenets of Islam the killing of a Kafir or a man belonging to the fold of any other religion raises the murderer or assassin in the estimation of his fellow-men or society; nay, it creates him a *shahid* and facilitates his transport to heaven.’

The wide prevalence of the theory of ‘Muslim tyranny’ and its roots in Islam is very well brought out in the following two passages from the Statement of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee:

- ‘These stories of idol-breaking and forcible conversions provide color to the view usually canvassed in our histories which symbolizes the whole movement as if it was a sustained religious war flanked by Hinduism and Islam extending in excess of eight centuries. Even those writers, who appear to understand its political nature by their common treatment of the subject, invariably leave upon the mind the similar impression.
- ‘Of the several wrong impressions prevailing at present one which is the mainly fruitful source of bitterness and ill-will is the impression that Islam is inherently bigoted and intolerant.... The theory that Islam has spread by the sword has been canvassed so widely and so persistently that for the average Indian mind this proposition has become approximately an axiom.... problem....’

Likewise, a note concerning the Punjab University examination question paper said:

- Those who have examined university papers in history will know how Muslim rulers and officers are depicted as blood-sucking vampires and fiends of cruelty. The common impression which they provide is that the Muslim rulers came to India basically to destroy the Hindus and their civilization and to convert the people to Islam at the point of the sword.

Muslim communalists reacted to these views by defending the record of the medieval Muslim rulers and chieftains, including that of a ruler like Aurangzeb, including his religious bigotry, imposition of Jaziya and the destruction of temples. Several of them hailed Aurangzeb as the builder of *Dar-al-Islam* in India. On the other hand, they condemned Akbar for weakening Islam. To counter the theory of 'Islamic destruction' in India, they stressed the beneficial impact of 'egalitarian' Islam on the Hindu society, "hidden with superstition, caste, untouchability, and inequality."

The Hindu communal view of Indian history relied on the myth that Indian society and civilization-Indian civilization-which had reached great, ideal heights in the ancient era fell into decay and decline throughout the medieval era as a result of "Muslim intrusion and power." Consequently, to prove its great height, the ancient era was viewed totally uncritically and was treated as sacrosanct; no critical evaluation of any of its characteristics was to be tolerated. Even its mainly negative characteristics were denied or defended. Moreover, Indian civilization was recognized with ancient civilization, which was, in turn, recognized with Hinduism in its Sanskrit and Brahmanical form. Therefore, it was the Gupta Age which was declared to be India's Golden Age. Also 'greatness' of a civilization was often defined by military conquests, strong monarchies, and the size of the empires. Furthermore, antiquity or 'ancientness' of a civilization was seen as one sign of its greatness. Consequently, the communalists proclaimed Aryan civilization to be the oldest in the world. Sometimes, to prove this, they dated back the Vedic era by many centuries, sometimes by thousands of years.

A vital component of the 'rise and fall' view of Indian history was the declaration that the civilization and civilization of India underwent a 'terrible

fall' throughout the medieval era. Mainly of the social, cultural and economic ills of Indian society – indeed all of its backwardness – were ascribed to the medieval era, Muslim rule' and the impact of Islam. The whole medieval era was characterized as a dark age. Another Hindu communal theme was that of the Hindu revival' in the late 17th and early 18th century. The Maratha revolt under Shivaji, the establishment of Maratha empire under the Peshwas, the rebellions by many Rajput rajas against Aurangzeb and the thrash about of Sikh gurus, against Mughal power were described as Hindu revolts' against Muslim power' and Hindu thrash about to regain Hindu honor' and glory'. The communalists described the rebellions, revolts, and struggles for territory and political power by petty zamindars, rajas and Maratha chieftains as Hindu thrash about and the states they founded as Hindu Kingdoms. This whole approach was summed up by V.D. Savarkar in 1923 when he described the 18th century Maratha thrash about as ~~the~~ "Great Movement of National Liberation" and wrote:

- In this prolonged furious disagreement our people became intensely conscious of ourselves as Hindus and were welded into a nation to an extent strange in our history....Sanatanists, Satnamis, Sikhs, Aryas, Anaryas, Marathas and Madrasis, Brahmins and Panchmas - all suffered as Hindus and triumphed as Hindus... The enemies hated us as Hindus and the whole family of peoples and races, of sects and creeds that flourished from Atak to Cuttack was suddenly individualized into a single Being.'

Muslim communalists created their own Golden Age. But feeling that it was not so easy to glorify India's medieval past and unwilling to praise the Hindu', i.e., ancient era, they harkened back to the Golden Age of Islam' or to Arabic and Turkish achievements of the middle ages. Therefore the heroic myths, the great figures and cultural achievements they appealed to belonged to medieval West Asian history. They therefore tended to put greater emphasis on their Muslimness' than their Indianness. The Muslim communalists also urbanized their own version of the decline and fall' of the Muslims. While Hindus were going up throughout British rule, they said, Muslims were

‘falling’ and getting ‘ruined’ not as a part of the Indian people but as a society because they had lost their political power. Their social condition, it was said, was becoming pitiable; their civilization, religion, and economic interests were threatened with ruin. They were increasingly becoming weak and helpless. This theme of ‘Muslim melancholy’, as Altaf Hussain Hali put it, was picked up, and used politically in support of the demand for Pakistan by Muslim League leaders. One of the League’s major ideologues, Z.A. Suleri, wrote in the 1940s that Muslims were facing the danger of being ‘drowned’ or ‘blotted out’. By the end of the 19th century, ‘the century – extensive prosperity and patronage of the new power had made the Hindus solid, strong, educated...on the other hand, while the century-extensive suppression had thrown the Muslims into the very mire of misery.’

### **DIFFERENCES FLANKED BY NATIONALIST AND COMMUNALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The professional nationalist historians and several early nationalists contributed unconsciously to communal historiography. They looked for heroes to inspire the Indian people and establish them in those medieval figures who had fought against oppression and in defense of their own states and territories. This was because, on the one hand, they wanted to express their nationalism and, on the other, academics and early nationalists did not want to antagonize the British rulers who frowned upon any effort to treat as heroes those who had fought against the British. For instance, the British immediately put a ban on any favorable writing on Siraj-ud-daulah, Tipu Sultan, Tantia Tope, or Rani of Jhansi. I have, in another lay, described this as ‘vicarious’ nationalism. Unluckily, the communalists used this vicarious nationalism to propagate their view of Indian history. Instead of treating Rana Pratap, or Shivaji, or Guru Gobind Singh as fighters against oppression and for defense of their people or territory or as local patriots, they were declared to be national heroes because they fought against ‘foreigners’. But how were the Mughals Foreigners? The latter could not describe as foreigners by any other definition except that they were Muslims. It is also significant to note that the nationalists not only declared Rana Pratap, Shivaji, and Guru Gobind Singh as



national heroes but also Asoka, Akbar, Tipu Sultan, Rani of Jhansi and all others, Hindu or Muslim, who had fought against the British in 1857. Later, Khudi Ram Bose, Lokamanya Tilak, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mahatama Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Bhagat Singh, and Chandra Shekhar Azad became heroes of the nationalists.

There was another aspect in which nationalists differed from the communalists in their treatment of the past. They too made a positive appraisal of ancient Indian society, polity, economy, and civilization. But they also presented a positive picture of the medieval era, while creation a critique of the negative characteristics of both ancient and medieval periods. The nationalist glorification of the past was part of the effort to bolster national self-confidence and pride, especially in the face of the colonial ideological effort to undermine them and make a psychology of inferiority and dependence. The Hindu communalists praised or idealized the ancient era in order to contrast it with the fall and decline throughout the medieval era and therefore make anti-Muslim feelings. The nationalists went to the past looking for positive characteristics in order to prove India's fitness for contemporary parliamentary democracy, contemporary civic and political rights, popular representation through elections and self-government. Nationalist historians like K.P. Jayaswal, P.N. Banerjee, B.K. Sarkar, U.N. Ghosal, D.R. Bhandarkar, and even the early R.C. Mazumdar accentuated the democratic, constitutional, non-despotic and even republican, non-religious and secular, and rational elements of the ancient Indian polity and social life. Therefore, in nationalist hands, the glorification of ancient Indian society was a weapon in the anti-imperialist thrash about. Despite its unscientific characteristics and the potential for mischief in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-caste country, it had a sure historically progressive content. Moreover, the nationalists readily adopted and accepted scientific criteria for the evaluation and the further development of their views. The communalists, on the other hand, used the ancient past to make and consolidate communal feelings. They also held up for praise some of the mainly negative characteristics of ancient Indian society and polity. They would also not tolerate the scientific treatment or criticism of any of its characteristics.

The communalists tended to underplay the role of colonialism and put greater emphasis on the adversarial connection with the other religious society. They were, in common, critical of the actual national movement and its secularism. While the Hindu communalists declared it to be pro-Muslim, or at least indulging in 'Muslim appeasement', the Muslim communalists accused it of being anti-Muslim or at least of being Hindu controlled and so of being an instrument of Hindu power. The Hindu communalists were in scrupulous critical of the Moderate nationalists of late 19th century who had initiated the economic critique of colonialism and laid the foundation of contemporary secularism. The only major critique of colonialism that both communalists made was that it had introduced modernity or contemporary thought based on rationality and science and scientific outlook. The communalists also defined nationalism not in economic or political conditions, as the national movement did, but in cultural conditions or as cultural nationalism based on Hindu or Muslim civilization. Consequently, they traced contemporary nationalism to Bankim Chandra or Swami Dayanand or Sayed Ahmed Khan rather than to early national leaders, such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, and Surendranath Banerjea.

### **CRITIQUE OF COMMUNALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The communal view of history is virtually dissolved if history is studied in its wider sense. For instance, economic history reveals class interests, class solidarity, and class antagonisms which cut crossways religious frontiers. A Hindu peasant had much more in general with a Muslim peasant than he had with a Hindu zamindar or moneylender. A Muslim weaver of Agra had distant more in general with a Hindu weaver than with a Muslim noble or king. In other languages, division of society flanked by those who produced economic surplus and those who appropriate it would form multi-religious groups on both sides of the economic row.

Social and economic history reveals that basically there was no Muslim rule under the Sultans or Mughals. All the Muslims did not form the ruling class, not all the Hindus the ruled classes. The Muslim masses were as poor and as oppressed as the Hindu masses. Moreover, both of them were

looked down upon as low creatures by the rulers, nobles, chiefs, and zamindars, whether Hindu or Muslim. Social history would illustrate that if Hindus were divided by caste, in the middle of Muslims the Sharif Muslims behaved as a superior caste in excess of the Ajlaf or lower class Muslims. History of management would reveal stability in the administrative structures of the Mughals and Marathas, and so on. It would illustrate how wrong it is to talk of Hindu or Muslim character of ancient or medieval states. Social and cultural history would bring out the forces of cultural cooperation and integration and the development of a composite civilization in medieval India as also in ancient India. They would also illustrate that in medieval as also contemporary times and upper class Muslim had distant more in general culturally with an upper class Hindu than he had with a lower class Muslim. Or that a Punjabi Hindu stood closer culturally to a Punjabi Muslim than to a Bengali Hindu. Social and cultural history would also reveal social divisions and diversities other than those based on religion. For instance, those based on sect or caste. There was the fierce thrash about flanked by the Right-hand castes and the Left-hand castes in 18th century South India. Would one be justified in describing this disagreement in conditions of a two-nation theory? Even a careful revise of political history would bring out that the politics of Indian states, as politics the world in excess of, were moved mainly by thoughts of economic and political interests and not by thoughts of religion. Then, as today, rulers as well as rebels used religious appeal as an outer coloring to disguise the hard facts of material interests and ambitions.

Moreover, political events and movements should be placed in their vital social and economic setting. We should inquire such questions as who decides, who dominates, who benefits from a political system? How does a system operate? Why are one set of policies followed and not others? One should, for instance, compare Aurangzeb's and Shivaji's policies towards the peasants or merchants and bankers. Or what political, social, and economic relationships did the state systems of ancient or medieval India support? How were economic gains, social prestige, and political power distributed in the middle of dissimilar social classes and groups in ancient or medieval era or, say, in Rana Pratap's state. To what extent did the Turks or later Mughal rulers

disturb the existing patterns of political, social, and economic power? Even such an easy demographic information as that the population of the Rajputs in Rajputana was only 6.4% in 1901 reveals several things. Likewise, social analysis of contemporary political movements would illustrate that the social base of the Hindu and Muslim communalists was the similar. Also they shared a general, basically pro-imperialist political approach.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss the important features of communalist historiography.
- What are the differences between nationalist and communalist historiography?
- Discuss the relationship between communalist and colonialist views of history.

## **CHAPTER 22**

### **MARXIST APPROACH**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Beginnings
- D.D. Kosambi and paradigm shift
- The feudalism debate
- Indian nationalism
- Intellectual history: debate on Indian renaissance
- Other trends and historians within Marxist historiography
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the important trends and provide information about some important historians within Marxist tradition in Indian historiography.

## BEGINNINGS

The two books which heralded the beginning of Marxist historiography in India were *India Today* by R. Palme Dutt and *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* by A.R. Desai. *India Today* was originally written for the well-known Left Book Club in England and was published by Victor Gollancz in 1940. Its Indian edition was published in 1947. In the preface to a new edition of the book in 1970, the author was aware of its limitations and realized that it can now only be regarded as a historical work of its era, constituting a survey from a Marxist standpoint of the record of British rule in India and of the development of the Indian people's thrash about, both the national movement and the working class movement, up to the eve of independence, as seen at that time'. Despite its limitations, though, its location as a foundational text of Marxist thinking on Indian history has not diminished in excess of time. It comprehensively covers mainly characteristics of Indian society, economy, and politics under colonial rule. It applies Marxist analysis to several growths in the colonial economy, to the troubles of peasantry, to the national movement and to the communal troubles.

It, at several stages, reinforces the nationalist criticism of the economic impact of colonial rule in India. Although strident in its criticism of the colonial rule, it looks at colonialism as both a destructive' and a regenerative' force, following Marx's own comments on this issue. Though, Dutt is quite categorical that this regenerating' role of colonialism was rather limited and the situation has been reversed in his own times:

- Today imperialist rule in India, like capitalism all in excess of the world, has extensive outlived its objectively progressive or regenerative role, corresponding to the era of free trade capitalism, and has become the mainly powerful reactionary force in India, buttressing all the other shapes of Indian reaction.'

Dutt squarely holds colonialism and capitalism responsible for the poverty of the country. The procedure of plundering the possessions of the country started quite early and was responsible for funding the capitalist development in Britain and other countries of Europe:

- The conquest of India by Western civilization has constituted one of the main pillars of capitalist development in Europe, of British world supremacy, and of the whole structure of contemporary imperialism. For two centuries the history of Europe has been built up to a greater extent than is always recognized on the foundation of the power of India.

Dutt divides the whole era of imperialist rule in India into three phases, a periodisation which, with sure modifications, has now become conventional, particularly in the middle of the Marxist historians. The first stage belonged to the merchant capital represented by the East India Company, and extending in the common character of its system to the end of the eighteenth century. Then came the power by industrial capitalism which recognized a new foundation of use of India in the nineteenth century. The third stage is that of financial capitalism which started in the last years of the 19th century and flourished in the 20th century.

The stage of merchant capitalism was characterized by the monopolistic hold of the East India Company in excess of the Indian trade. This was facilitated by its rising territorial manage from the second half of 18th century. Separately from this monopolistic manage; Indian wealth was also plundered directly by the colonial state and privately by the servants of the Company. The huge wealth transferred through this plunder made the Industrial Revolution possible in England. This started the search for a free market for the products of English industries. Therefore India had to be transformed from an exporter of cotton goods to the whole world into an importer of cotton goods. The monopoly of the East India Company had to be abolished now and this was achieved in phases and after 1858, the rule of India was transferred to the British Crown. This started the procedure of turning India into an uninhibited market for the British goods.

After the First World War, a new stage of imperialism was inaugurated in India. Although the older shapes of getting 'tribute' and seeking India as market British goods still sustained, there was now an emphasis on capital investment in India. According to Dutt, it was clear that 'by 1914 the interest and profits on invested capital and direct tribute considerably exceeded the total of trading, manufacturing and shipping profits out of India. *The finance-capitalist use of India had become the dominant character in the twentieth century*'. He further talks in relation to the 'stranglehold of finance capital' and its rising volume and concludes:

- 'Contemporary imperialism ... no longer performs the objectively revolutionizing role of the earlier capitalist power of India, clearing the method, by its destructive effects, for the new advance and laying down the initial material circumstances for its realization. On the contrary, contemporary imperialism in India stands out as the main obstacle to advance of the productive forces, thwarting and retarding their development by all the weapons of its financial and political power. It is no longer possible to speak of the objectively revolutionizing role of capitalist rule in India. The role of contemporary imperialism in India is fully and totally reactionary.'

Another region of Dutt's concern was Indian nationalism. On the revolt of 1857 his view is that it 'was in its essential character and dominant leadership the revolt of the old conservative and feudal forces and dethroned potentates'. This is a view which is supported even today by many Marxist historians. Therefore it is only from the last quarter of the 19th century that Dutt traces the beginning of the Indian national movement. The premier organisation of this movement was the Indian National Congress which was recognized in 1885. According to Dutt, although the Congress arose from the 'preceding development and beginnings of action of the Indian middle class', it was brought into subsistence through British official initiative as a safety-valve. In detail Dutt writes in relation to the role of Hume and his alarm at the impending rebellion. Hume then contacted the officials of the colonial

government and pleaded with them to help set up the Congress to stall the insurgency against the British rule. Dutt is, so, sure that:

- The National Congress was in information brought into being through the initiative and under the guidance of direct British governmental policy, on a plan secretly pre-arranged with the Viceroy as an planned weapon for safeguarding British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling.

Though, it soon grew out of its original subservient nature due to pressure of populist nationalist feelings. Therefore, from its early years, even if at first in very limited and careful shapes, the national character began to overshadow the loyalist character'. It slowly became a strong anti-colonial force and started leading people's movement against colonial rule. Dutt based his analysis of nationalism on its varying class base in excess of the years. Therefore in its earliest stage Indian nationalism ... reflected only big bourgeoisie – the progressive elements in the middle of the landowners, the new industrial bourgeoisie, and the well-to-do intellectual elements'. Then rose the class of the urban petty bourgeois who made its aspirations felt in the years preceding the First World War. It was only after the War that the Indian masses – peasantry and the industrial working class – made their attendance felt.

Though, the leadership remained in the hands of the propertied classes who were quite influential in the Congress. These elements were against any radicalization of the movement and, so, tried to scuttle it before it could become dangerous to their own interests. He is particularly harsh on Gandhi whom he castigates as the Jonah of revolution, the common of unbroken disasters ... the mascot of the bourgeoisie' for trying to discover the means in the midst of a formidable revolutionary wave to uphold leadership of the mass movement'. Therefore the Non-cooperation Movement was described off because the masses were becoming too militant and a threat to the propertied classes within and outside the Congress:

- The dominant leadership of the Congress associated with Gandhi described off the movement because they were afraid of the awakening



mass action; and they were afraid of the mass action because it was beginning to threaten those propertied class interests with which they themselves were still in information closely connected.’

A similar fate befell the Civil Disobedience Movement which was suddenly and mysteriously described off at the moment when it was reaching its height‘ in 1932. Dutt thinks that this dual nature of the Congress could be traced to its origins:

- This twofold character of the National Congress in its origin is very significant for all its subsequent history. This double strand in its role and being runs right through its history: on the one hand, the strand of co-operation with imperialism against the ~~menace~~” of the mass movement; on the other hand, the strand of leadership of the masses in the national thrash about. This twofold character, which can be traced through all the contradictions of its leadership, from Gokhale in the old stage to his disciple, Gandhi, in the new ... is the reflection of the twofold or vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, at once in disagreement with the British bourgeoisie and desiring to lead the Indian people, yet fearing that ~~too~~” advance may end in destroying its privileges beside with those of the imperialists.‘

This was the foundational statement of Marxist historiography on Indian National Congress, the leading organisation of the Indian national movement, for quite some time to approach. Mainly of the subsequent works of the Marxist historians on nationalism were in some events influenced by it. A.R. Desai’s book, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, has been a very popular book and many editions and reprints of this book have been published since its first publication on 1948. It has also been translated into several Indian languages. It is another thoroughgoing explanation of the colonial era and the rise of nationalism from a Marxist perspective. As Sumit Sarkar writes in the Foreword‘ to a new edition in 2000:

- For fifty years, it has served generations of students all in excess of the country as an introduction to contemporary Indian history, and one

which for several also provided a highly accessible illustration of Marxist historical way‘.

In a single volume this book gives us a synoptic explanation of the several characteristics of economy, society and politics of colonial India. It particularly focuses on the rise of nationalism in India. Desai traces the growth of the national movement in five phases, each stage based on scrupulous social classes which supported and sustained it. Therefore, in the first stage, Indian nationalism had a very narrow social foundation‘. It was pioneered by the intelligentsia who were the product of the contemporary system of education. Desai considers Raja Rammohan Roy and his followers as the pioneers of Indian nationalism‘. This stage sustained till 1885 when the Indian National Congress was founded. It heralded a new stage which extended till 1905. The national movement now represented the interests of the development of the new bourgeois society in India‘. The development in the contemporary education had created an educated middle class and the development of the Indian and international trade had given rise to a merchant class. The contemporary industries had created a class of industrialists. In its new stage, Indian national movement voiced the demands of the educated classes and the trading bourgeoisie such as the Indianization of Services, the association of the Indians with the administrative machinery of the state, the stoppage of economic drain, and others formulated in the resolutions of the Indian National Congress‘.

The third stage of the national movement sheltered the era from 1905 to 1918. Throughout this stage the Indian national movement became militant and demanding and acquired a wider social foundation by the inclusion of parts of the lower-middle class‘. In the fourth stage, which began from 1918 and sustained till the end of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, the social base of the national movement was enormously enlarged? The movement which was hitherto restricted mainly to upper and middle classes, further extended ... to parts of the Indian masses.‘ Though, according to Desai, the leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of those who were under the strong power of the Indian capitalist class:

- It was from 1918 that the Indian industrial bourgeoisie began to exert a powerful power in determining the programme, policies, strategies, tactics and shapes of thrash about of the Indian national movement led by the Congress of which Gandhi was the leader.‘

Two other important growths throughout this era were the rise of the socialist and communist groups since the late 1920s, which tried to introduce pro-people agenda in the national movement, and the consolidation of communalist forces which sought to divide the society. The fifth stage was characterized by rising disenchantment with the Gandhian ideology within the Congress and further rise of the Socialists who represented the petty bourgeois elements. Outside the Congress several movements were taking lay. The peasants, the workers, the depressed classes and several linguistic nationalities started agitations for their demands. Moreover, there was further growth of communalism. Though, according to Desai, all these stirrings were not of much consequence and the mainstream was still solidly occupied by the Gandhian Congress which represented the interests of the dominant classes. These two books, particularly the one by R. Palme Dutt, laid the foundations of the Marxist historiography on contemporary Indian history. The after that break came with the writings of D.D. Kosambi that we will talk about in the after that part.

### **D.D. KOSAMBI AND PARADIGM SHIFT**

Romila Thapar credits D.D. Kosambi for affecting a paradigm shift‘ in Indian studies. According to her, such paradigmatic changes had occurred only twice before in Indian historiography. These were done by James Mill and Vincent Smith. James Mill, whose book *History of India* set the parameters for history writing on India, was contemptuous towards the Indian society. He measured the pre-colonial Indian civilization as backward, superstitious, stagnant and lacking in mainly compliments as a civilization. He was an unabashed admirer of the British achievements in India and relentless critic of pre-British Indian society and polity. He divided the Indian history into three parts – the Hindu, the Muslim and the British. This division,

according to him, was essential to demarcate three dissimilar civilizations. Vincent Smith's *The Oxford History of India* historiography as it avoided the sharp value judgments and contemptuous references to the pre-British era of Indian history contained in Mill's book. He instead tried to present a chronological explanation of Indian history and focused on the rise and fall of dynasties.

Kosambi viewed history totally differently. For him, Mill's religious periodisation and Smith's chronological accounts of dynasties were of no value. He whispered that the Society is held jointly by bonds of manufacture. Therefore he defines history as the presentation, in chronological order, of successive growths in the means and dealings of manufacture. This, according to him, is the only definition recognized which allow a reasonable treatment of pre-literate history, usually termed "pre-history". He further argues that history should be viewed in conditions of disagreement flanked by classes:

- The proper revise of history in a class society means analysis of the differences flanked by the interests of the classes on top and of the rest of the people; it means consideration of the extent to which an emergent class had something new to contribute throughout its rise to power, and of the stage where it turned to reaction in order to preserve its vested interests.

He describes his approach to history as dialectical materialism, also described Marxism after its founder. Though, Kosambi was flexible in his application of Marxism. He argued that Marxism is distant from the economic determinism which its opponents so often take it to be. He further asserts that the adoption of Marx's thesis does not mean blind repetition of all his conclusions at all times. He, instead, measured Marxism as a way which could be usefully applied for the revise of Indian society and history.

The paucity of relevant data for the early era of Indian history was one factor which prompted him to analyze the broad social formations rather than small-level events. He thought that the use of relative way would balance out the absence of reliable historical sources. He, so, adopted an inter-disciplinary

approach in his studies of Indian society. This enabled him to view the reality from several angles in order to get a full picture of it. These thoughts are apparent in his four major books: *An Introduction to the Revise of Indian History*, *Exasperating Essays: Exercises in the Dialectical Way*, *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Civilization* and *The Civilization and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*. Kosambi's non-dogmatic approach to history is clear when he rejected two key Marxist concepts – the Asiatic Mode of Manufacture and Slavery – as inapplicable to ancient Indian society. Although he accepted the concept of feudalism in Indian context, he denied the subsistence of serfdom. According to him, it would be more rewarding to view the early Indian society in conditions of the transition from tribe to caste. He argues that the 'pre-class society was organized ... into tribes'. The tribes were small, localized societies and 'for the tribesman, society as such began and ended with his tribe'. The beginning and development of plough agriculture brought in relation to the radical change in the system of manufacture. This destabilized the tribes and the clans and gave rise to castes as new form of social organisation. This was a very crucial development. Kosambi writes:

- 'The whole course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused into a common society. This phenomenon, which lies at the very base of the mainly striking Indian social characteristic, namely caste, is also the great vital information of ancient history.'

Kosambi tried to relate the intellectual and cultural manufacture with the prevailing social and economic situation. Therefore, according to him, the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* can be understood only with reference to the feudal society in which it originated. It, so, preaches the ideology of the ruling class which emphasized 'the chain of personal loyalty which binds retainer to chief, tenant to lord, and baron to king or emperor'. Likewise, he considers the Bhakti movement as preaching a sense of loyalty to the lord which, in the earthly sense, translates into loyalty and devotion to the rulers. His detailed revise of the poetry of Bhartrihari, the 7th-century poet, reflects a similar approach. He describes Bhartrihari as 'unmistakably the Indian intellectual of

his era, limited by caste and custom in meadows of action and so limited in his real grip on life'. In his revise of the myths, he contended that they reflected the transition of society from matriarchy to patriarchy.

## **THE FEUDALISM DEBATE**

As we have seen in the previous part, D.D. Kosambi argued that, contrary to Marx's own statements and to those of many Marxists, the Indian society did not witness a similar progression of several manners of manufacture as happened in Europe. He said that the slave mode of manufacture was not to be establishing in India. He also rejected Marx's own schema of the Asiatic Mode of Manufacture as inapplicable to India. He, though, thought that there was the subsistence of feudalism in India, even though he conceived it differently. He was aware that the medieval Indian society was quite dissimilar from that of Europe. One of the significant features of European feudalism, i.e., manorial system, demesne farming and serfdom, were not to be establishing in India. But he explained it as a result of the non-subsistence of the slave mode of manufacture in the preceding era. He further differentiated flanked by two kinds of feudalism in India – feudalism from above' and feudalism from below':

- Feudalism from above means a state wherein an emperor or powerful king levied tribute from subordinates who still ruled in their own right and did what they liked within their own territories – as extensive as they paid the paramount ruler.... By feudalism from below is meant the after that stage where a class of land-owners urbanized within the village, flanked by the state and the peasantry, slowly to wield armed power in excess of the local population. This class was subject to service, hence claimed a direct connection with the state power, without the intervention of any other stratum.'

Kosambi's lead on this issue was followed by R.S. Sharma who made a comprehensive revise of feudalism in India in his book entitled *Indian Feudalism* and in several articles. According to him, there were a decline in trade and rising numbers of land grants to the state officials in lieu of salary

and to the Brahmans as charity or ritual offering in the post-Gupta era. This procedure led to the subjection of peasantry and made them dependent on the landlords. Approximately all characteristics of west European feudalism, such as serfdom, manor, self-enough economic units, feudalization of crafts and commerce, decline of extensive-alooftness trade and decline of towns, were said to be establish in India. According to R.S Sharma, the mainly crucial characteristics of Indian feudalism was the rising dependence of the peasantry on the intermediaries who received grants of land from the state and enjoyed juridical rights in excess of them. This development restricted the peasants' mobility and made them subject to increasingly rigorous forced labour. The decline of feudalism also took the similar course as in west Europe. Revival of long-distance trade, rise of towns, flight of peasants and development of monetary economy were measured to be the main procedures responsible for the decline of feudalism in India. In this schema, the procedure of feudalization started sometimes in the 4th century and declined in the 12th century.

This view of the medieval Indian society and economy has been questioned by many historians who argue that the development of the Indian society did not follow the western model. They further argue that such a model of development cannot be universally applied to all societies. Harbans Mukhia, in a thought-provoking article Was There Feudalism in Indian History? questions these arguments at many stages. He begins by arguing that there is no single, universally accepted definition of feudalism. It is because feudalism was not a world-system. In information, capitalism was the first world system and, so, all societies before that had their own peculiarities and profound differences from each other. Therefore feudalism was, throughout its history, a non-universal specific form of socio-economic organization – specific to time and region, where specific ways and organization of manufacture obtained'. Mukhia defines feudalism as the structured dependence of the whole peasantry on the lords'. Such a system was specific to Western Europe flanked by the fifth or the sixth century and the fifteenth. Feudalism also urbanized in its classic form in eastern Europe flanked by the sixteenth and the eighteenth century and perhaps in Japan throughout the

Togukawa regime in scrupulous'. He considers feudalism as a middle system' which:

- Stood mid-method in the transition of the West European economy from a primarily slave-based system of agricultural manufacture to one dominated by the complementary classes of the capitalist farmers and the landless agricultural wage-earner, but in which the free peasantry also shaped a important element.'

On the foundation of this definition of feudalism, Mukhia now argues against the concept of feudalism in India. He says that even in Europe the connection flanked by extensive-alooftness trade and the growth or decline of feudalism is not clear. In information, the trade had differential impact on several European societies. While at some places, as in west Europe, it led to the dissolution of feudal bonds, in east Europe it provided the lords with the power to reinforce and revitalize the feudal ties. In any case, Mukhia argues, it is not sure that there was a very important decline of trade and towns in early medieval India. Secondly, while in Europe feudalism urbanized and declined due to changes at the base of society, in Indian case the cause for the emergence of feudalism is seen as the land grants from above. According to Mukhia, it is hard to accept that such intricate social structures can be recognized through administrative and legal procedures'. In relation to the mainly crucial aspect of feudalism – the dependence of peasantry on the landlords – Mukhia thinks that there is no proof to prove it in Indian case. He argues that even though the use of the peasantry might have increased, there is no proof to prove that there was any extraneous manage in excess of the peasant's procedure of manufacture'. He thinks that forced labour in India remained, by and big, an incidental manifestation of the ruling class' political and administrative power rather than a part of the procedure of manufacture'. He concludes that the primarily free peasant form of agricultural manufacture slowly evolving from post-Maurya times, therefore characterized the agrarian economy of ancient and medieval India'. In such a scenario there was no possibility of a feudal system of manufacture in India.



Many of Mukhia's arguments were criticized by Marxist and non-Marxist scholars in this field. Although there was an acknowledgement of the significance of the questions he raised, criticism related to his concept of feudalism, his understanding of the west European experience, his interpretation of Indian history and, particularly, his notion of a free peasant manufacture in India. R.S. Sharma, in his response, wrote an essay entitled How Feudal Was Indian Feudalism? While accepting the information that feudalism was not a universal phenomenon, he argues that this was not true of all the pre-capitalist formations. Therefore tribalism, the stone age, the metal age, and the advent of a food-producing economy are universal phenomena. They do indicate some laws conditioning the procedure and pattern of change'. He, so, thinks that there was feudalism in India, even though its nature was significantly dissimilar. According to him, Presently as there could be enormous variations in tribal society so also there could be enormous variations in the nature of feudal societies'. He questions the very notion of peasant's manage in excess of means of manufacture, particularly land. He maintains that there were multiple and hierarchical rights in the land with the peasant approximately always possessing the inferior right. In the regions where land grants were given the grantees enjoyed much superior rights:

- On the foundation of the land charters we can say that in the donated regions the landed beneficiaries enjoyed common manage in excess of manufacture possessions. Of course they did not enjoy specific manage in excess of every plot of land that the peasant cultivated. But there is nothing to question manage in excess of the plots of lands that were directly donated to them by the king, sometimes beside with the sharecroppers and weavers and sometimes beside with the cultivators.'

He further argues that, contrary to Mukhia's arguments, forced labour was also prevalent in several parts of the country. On the foundation of several evidences, he asserts that there was feudalism throughout the early medieval era in India which was characterized by a class of landlords and by a class of subject peasantry, the two livelihood in a predominantly agrarian economy

marked by decline of trade and urbanism and by drastic reduction in metal currency'.

Irfan Habib introduces another important element for identifying the predominant mode of manufacture in any social formation. He argues that although the social form of labour defines a scrupulous mode of manufacture, it cannot be measured as the sole determinant. Therefore although 'Wage-labour remnants the vital form of labour in socialism, but this does entitle us to identify the capitalist and socialist manners'. Likewise, petty peasant manufacture may be established in many social formations. So, another crucial element should be taken into explanation and that is 'the form in which the surplus extracted from the producer is distributed'. Although Habib is doubtful in relation to the subsistence of feudalism in pre-colonial India, he considers Mukhia's arguments a little distant-fetched. He thinks that Mukhia's points in relation to the subsistence of a 'free peasantry' and 'relative stability in India's social and economic history' are untenable. Such conclusions, according to him, 'presume a rather idyllic picture of pre-colonial India ... for which there is little justification'. In his opinion, 'there were presently as intense contradictions here as anywhere else; but that these were dissimilar in nature and consequence from the contradictions leading to capitalism in Europe'. Moreover, he rejects the thought of 'exceptionalism' in Indian context. It was also a society with deep internal contradictions, a stratified peasantry and class use.

Burton Stein praises Mukhia for raising a significant question, but he points out many inadequacies in Mukhia's arguments. According to him, only the absence of serfdom may not determine the absence of feudalism in India because many other features lived. With focus on south India, he argues that these features were local manage and private legal jurisdiction of several powerful men, the subsistence of self-governing warrior groups which claimed tributes and weak state shapes. Secondly, he also questions Mukhia's proposition in relation to the 'relative stability' of pre-colonial Indian society and economy. Such a notion in relation to the stability assumes that for two thousand years there was no change in the means and dealings of manufacture. This worries Stein: 'This is indeed stability, not "relative"', but quite absolute,

a location which ought to trouble him as an historian; it troubles me!’ On the role of the state, he rejects the notion of a centralized and bureaucratic state. Instead, he forwards the concept of ‘segmentary state’, a state whose power was limited. As distant as the ‘free peasantry’ is concerned, he puts more emphasis on peasant collectivities having mastery in excess of productive forces. He questions the notion of free ‘individual peasants as productive mediators’. In this sense of communal peasant manufacture and the segmentary, Stein thinks that the era from the 10th to the 17th centuries may be said to be a single social formation in south India.

In his response to these criticisms, Mukhia sticks to his point that capitalism was the first world-system and all the earlier systems were specific to regions and ‘did not possess the internal dynamism that would provide them the hegemony’ in excess of the world. Only mainly common characteristics such as agrarian economy and surplus appropriation through non-economic coercion could be general in relation to the several pre-industrial societies. But it does not take the specificities, such as manufacture procedure and social organisation of labour, into explanation. He reemphasizes his concept of a ‘free peasantry’ in pre-colonial India ‘whose procedure of manufacture was free of extraneous manages’. We, so, encounter a wide diversity of interpretations of the medieval Indian society by the Marxist historians who differ quite significantly from each other. In the course of this debate we also approach crossways the rich diversity of Marxist interpretations relating to medieval Indian history.

## **INDIAN NATIONALISM**

We discussed the views of R.P. Dutt and A.R. Desai on Indian nationalism. They analyzed it as a movement which was mostly dominated by the bourgeoisie. Although several classes, including the peasantry and the working classes, participated in it, its vital character remained bourgeois. This view of national movement remained quite general in the middle of the Marxist historians for quite some time. Though, in excess of the years, many Marxist historians began to disagree with this paradigm for understanding Indian nationalism. Bipan Chandra mounted a major critique of this view and

this criticism became more comprehensive in excess of the years. In his very first book, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, he pleaded for according sure autonomy to the thoughts as important vehicle of action and change. Even though he accepts that 'social dealings exist independently of the thoughts men form of them', he feels that 'men's understanding of these dealings is crucial to their social and political action'. Moreover, he argues that the intellectuals in any society stand above the narrow interests of the class in which they are born. It is 'sheer crude mechanical materialism' to sort out the intellectuals only on the foundation of their class of origins. It is because the intellectuals are guided 'at the stage of consciousness, by thought and not by interests'. Therefore the Indian nationalist leaders were also, as intellectuals, above the interests of the narrow class or group they were born in. This does not mean, though, that they did not symbolize any class. They did symbolize class interests, but this was done ideologically and not for personal gain. As Bipan Chandra puts it:

- 'Like the best and genuine intellectuals the world in excess of and in all history, the Indian thinkers and intellectuals of the 19th century too were philosophers and not hacks of a party or a class. It is true that they were not above class or group and did in practice symbolize concrete class or group interests. But when they reflected the interests of a class or a group, they did so through the prism of ideology and not directly as members, or the obedient servants, of that class or group.'

On the foundation of his analysis of the economic thinking of the early nationalist leaders, both the so-described moderates and the extremists, Bipan Chandra concludes that their overall economic outlook was 'basically capitalist'. By this he means that 'In almost every aspect of economic life they championed capitalist growth in common and the interests of the industrial capitalists in scrupulous'. This does not mean that they were working for the individual interests of the capitalists. In information, the capitalist support for the Congress in the early stage was negligible. Nationalist support for industrial capitalism derived from the belief of the nationalists that 'industrial development beside capitalist rows was the only method to regenerate the

country in the economic field, or that, in other languages, the interests of the industrial capitalist class objectively coincided with the chief national interest of the moment'. Therefore, Bipan Chandra abandons the instrumentalist approach espoused by Dutt and Desai.

This was a major change in perspective in the historiography of the Indian national movement. Though, despite this change in perspective, Bipan Chandra remained anchored to many points within the paradigm urbanized by R.P. Dutt. In an essay presented at a symposium at the Indian History Congress in 1972 and published in his book *Nationalism and Colonialism in Contemporary India*, his arguments approach extraordinarily secure to the traditional Marxist perspective urbanized by R.P. Dutt on Indian nationalism. In this article entitled 'Elements of Stability and Change in the Early Nationalist Action', he still criticizes the narrow perspective which dubs the nationalist leaders as bourgeois in an instrumentalist sense that they were following the commands of the capitalists. In his opinion, the early nationalist leaders were trying to unify the Indian people into a nation. Their vital objective was 'to generate, form and crystallize an anti-imperialist ideology, to promote the growth of contemporary capitalist economy and in the end to make a broad all India national movement'. This view corresponded with the perspective urbanized in his earlier book on economic nationalism.

- But there were other points where his arguments resembled those of Dutt and Desai. Firstly, he interprets the 'peaceful and bloodless' approach of the leadership as 'a vital guarantee to the propertied classes that they would at no time be faced with a situation in which their interests might be put in jeopardy even temporarily'. This understanding of non-violence was similar as that of Dutt and Desai. Secondly, the connection flanked by the Indian masses and the nationalists always remained problematic. For the moderate leaders, the masses had no role to play. Even the extremists, despite their rhetoric, failed to mobilize the masses. Although the masses came into nationalist fold throughout the Gandhian era, they were not politicized and the lower classes of agricultural workers and poor peasants in mainly parts of country were

never politically mobilized, so that the social base of the national movement was still not very strong in 1947'. And even when they were mobilized, the masses remained outside the decision-creation procedure and the gulf flanked by them and the leaders was unabridged'. According to Bipan Chandra: Above all, the political action of the masses was rigidly controlled from the top. The masses never became a self-governing political force. The question of their participation in the decision-creation procedure was never even raised. The masses were always to remain ... ~~passive~~ "passive actors" or ~~extras~~ "extras" whose political action remained under the rigid manage of middle class leaders and within the confines of the needs of bourgeois social development. Herein also lay the crucial role of the method non-violence was defined and practiced by Gandhi.'

Thirdly, the nationalist leaders in all phases of the movement stressed that the procedure of attainment of national freedom would be evolutionary, and not revolutionary. The vital strategy to attain this goal would be pressure-compromise-pressure. In this strategy, pressure would be brought upon the colonial rulers through agitations, political work and mobilization of the people. When the authorities were willing to offer concessions, the pressure would be withdrawn and a compromise would be reached. The political concessions given by the colonial rulers would be accepted and worked. After this, the Congress should prepare for another agitation to gain new concessions. It is in this phased, non-violent manner that many political concessions would be taken from the British and this procedure would ultimately lead to the liberation of the country. On the foundation of his analysis of the social base, the ideology, and the strategy of political thrash about, Bipan Chandra concluded that the nationalist movement as represented by the Congress was a bourgeois democratic movement, that is, it represented the interests of all classes and segments of Indian society vis-à-vis imperialism but under the hegemony of the industrial bourgeoisie'. This character remained constant throughout its whole history from inception to 1947. Even throughout the Gandhian stage, there was no change. In information,

according to Bipan Chandra, the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in excess of the national movement was, if anything, even more firmly clamped down in the Gandhian era than before‘.

In a later book, *India's Thrash about for Independence, 1857-1947*, Bipan Chandra has decisively moved absent from the views of Dutt and Desai on Indian national movement. In this book, co-authored with some other like-minded scholars, he applies the Gramscian perspective to revise the national movement. Mainly of the propositions concerning the Indian National Congress urbanized in the earlier quoted article are now dropped or revised. The Congress strategy is no longer seen in conditions of pressure compromise-pressure. It is now viewed in conditions of Gramscian war of location‘ whereby a prolonged thrash about is waged for the attainment of goal. As Bipan Chandra puts it:

- The Indian national movement ... is the only movement where the broadly Gramscian theoretical perspective of a war of location was successfully practiced; where state power was not seized in a single historical moment of revolution, but through prolonged popular thrash about on a moral, political and ideological stage; where reserves of counter-hegemony were built up in excess of the years through progressive stages; where the phases of thrash about alternated with ~~passive~~“passive” phases.‘

This thrash about was not overtly violent because the nationalist leaders were seized of the twin agenda of forging the Indian people into a nation and to undermine the colonial hegemony. Through their prolonged thrash about they wanted to expose the two significant myths in relation to the British colonial rule that it was beneficial to the Indians and that it was invincible. The Gandhian non-violence is also to be measured in this light. According to Bipan Chandra,

- It was not ... a mere dogma of Gandhiji nor was it dictated by the interests of the propertied classes. It was an essential part of a movement whose strategy involved the waging of a hegemonic thrash

about based on a mass movement which mobilized the people to the widest possible extent.’

The national movement was now conceived as an all-class movement which provided space and opportunity for any class to build its hegemony. Moreover, the main party, the Congress, which led ‘this thrash about from 1885 to 1947 was not then a party but a movement’. He criticizes the several schools of historiography on India for their failure to address the central contradiction in colonial India which was flanked by the Indian people and the British colonialism. Although he still considers that ‘the dominant vision within the Congress did not transcend the parameters of a capitalist conception of society’, he has made a clear break from the conventional Marxist interpretation of the Indian national movement and it appears that any revise of Indian nationalism has to take his views into explanation.

Sumit Sarkar is another Marxist historian who is critical of Dutt’s paradigm. In his first book, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, he conditions it as a ‘simplistic version of the Marxian class-approach’. Contrary to the assertion by Dutt that the moderate stage was dominated by the ‘big bourgeoisie’ while the extremist stage by the ‘urban petty bourgeoisie’, he thinks that ‘a clear class-differential flanked by moderate and extremist would still be very hard to set up, and was obviously nonexistent at the leadership stage’. According to him, this version of Marxist interpretation suffers from the ‘defect of assuming too direct or crude an economic motivation for political action and ideals’. He instead prefers to analyze the actions of the nationalist leaders by Trotsky’s concept of ‘substitutism’ whereby the intelligentsia acts ‘repeatedly as a type of proxy for as-yet passive social forces with which it had little organic connection’. He also uses Gramscian categories of ‘traditional’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals. According to Antonio Gramsci, the well-known Italian Marxist activist and thinker, the ‘organic’ intellectuals participate directly in the manufacture-procedure and have direct links with the people whom they lead. The ‘traditional’ intellectuals, on the other hand, are not directly linked with either the manufacture-procedure or the people. Though, they become leaders of scrupulous classes by



ideologically resuming the responsibility of those classes. According to Sarkar, the leaders of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal recruited overwhelmingly from the traditional learned castes, and virtually unconnected after the 1850s with commerce or industry ... may be regarded perhaps as a ~~traditional~~ "intelligentsia in Gramsci's sense". This view is quite secure to that of Bipan Chandra in which he emphasizes the role of ideology in the formation of the early nationalist leaders. Sumit Sarkar, though, considers that even though the nationalist leaders were not directly connected with the bourgeoisie, they objectively did help to at least partially clear the method for the self-governing capitalist development of our country. He emphasizes this point further in his article "The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism". Here the objective stance of the Swadeshi Movement in favor of the bourgeoisie gets transformed into direct intervention by the bourgeoisie and the subjective location in the interests of the capitalists by the leaders of the Civil Disobedience Movement. By learning the social forces involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement and the growths leading to the Gandhi-Irwin pact, he concludes that there was the vastly enhanced role of distinctively bourgeois groups, both in contributing heavily to the initial striking power of Civil Disobedience and ultimately in its calling off. He qualifies his statement by saying that Gandhi was no mere bourgeois tool in any simplistic or mechanical sense and that he can hardly be measured as a puppet in the hands of the capitalists. He, though, insists that the Gandhian leadership had a sure coincidence of aims with Indian business interests at specific points and an occasional important coincidence of subjective attitudes and inhibitions with bourgeois interests.

## **INTELLECTUAL HISTORY: DEBATE ON INDIAN RENAISSANCE**

The role of the intellectuals in shaping the public opinion and leading the people is beyond doubt. What is more contentious is the extent of their power and the reasons for this limitation. One such phenomenon which attracted wide interests in the middle of both the Marxist and non-Marxist scholars was the Bengal Renaissance which is sometimes equated with the

Indian Renaissance‘. It is because a cluster of modern intellectuals became associated with several movements of thoughts mostly derived from western sources. Since the colonial attendance in Bengal had been the longest, we discover there the earliest manifestations of such interests in the middle of the local intelligentsia and their thoughts had countrywide power in excess of the years. The point which is under debate is the nature of this intellectual movement which is named after the Italian intellectual experience of the 15th and 16th centuries as the Renaissance‘.

In the middle of the Marxist historians Susobhan Sarkar was the first to analyze this flowering of social, religious, literary and political behaviors in Bengal‘. In his essay, Notes on the Bengal Renaissance‘, first published in 1946, he declared that the role played by Bengal in the contemporary awakening of India is therefore comparable to the location occupied by Italy in the story of the European Renaissance‘. This contemporary‘ movement arose because the impact of British rule, bourgeois economy and contemporary Western civilization was first felt in Bengal‘. Therefore the modernity brought into India by the British produced an awakening recognized usually as the Bengal Renaissance‘. It generated such intellectual force that For in relation to the century, Bengal’s conscious awareness of the changing contemporary world was more urbanized than and ahead of that of the rest of India‘.

Such a rosy picture of the 19th-century intellectual behaviors has now been seriously questioned. The concept of Bengal, or Indian, Renaissance has approach under criticism. The critics point out that, unlike the European Renaissance, the range of the 19thcentury intellectual ferment was rather limited and its character was rather less modernist than was earlier assumed. The traditionalist‘ and modernist‘ dichotomy cannot be applied as the so-described Renaissance‘ intellectual was a deeply divided personality. The break with the past was severely limited in nature and remained mainly at the intellectual stage. Mainly of the intellectuals did not have the courage to implement even at their own individual stages the principles they preached. And those, like Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, who publicly campaigned for their ideals faced continuous failures. In mainly cases, the similar traditional

scriptural power was sought to derive sanction for their policies and practices against which the intellectuals launched their ideological thrash about.

Moreover, this intellectual movement remained confined within an elitist Hindu framework which did not contain the troubles and realities of the lower castes and Muslims. The social forces, which could have given the thoughts a solid base and moved them in the modernist direction, were not present. The colonial power remained the ultimate guarantee for the implementation of the reforms proposed by the thinkers. Though, the colonial state was not much interested in taking radical events for the fear of alienating the traditionalists who shaped the great majority. This led to frustration in the middle of the enthusiasts for the reforms and the movement in common retreated and declined by the late 19th century. Some of the Marxist historians who have criticized the concept of the 'Renaissance' in Indian context are: Barun De in the articles 'The Colonial Context of Bengal Renaissance' and 'A Historiographic Critique of Renaissance Analogues for Nineteenth Century India'; Asok Sen in his book *Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestones*, Sumit Sarkar in his articles 'Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past', 'The Complexities of Young Bengal', and 'The Radicalism of Intellectuals', all the three articles now composed in a book *A Critique of Colonial India*; and K.N. Panikkar whose several essays on this theme from 1977 to 1992 have been composed in the book *Civilization, Ideology, Hegemony*.

## **OTHER TRENDS AND HISTORIANS WITHIN MARXIST HISTORIOGRAPHY**

As we have pointed out earlier in the 'Introduction' it is impossible to deal with the Marxist historiography on India in full detail within the space of this Unit. We have so distant sheltered a few trends and the thoughts and historians associated with them. Now in this part we will briefly talk about some other trends and historians.

In the revise of early India, there are many historians working with Marxian ways. R.S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, D.N. Jha, B.D. Chattopadhyay and Kumkum Roy are some of them. Their researches have enriched our

understanding of ancient India. We have already discussed Sharma's book on *Indian Feudalism*. Separately from this, his revise of the lower castes of ancient India, *Sudras in Ancient India*, his work on several topics such as marriage, caste, land grants, slavery, usury, and women contained in his *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, his *Material Civilization and Social Formation in Ancient India* are the books which enormously enrich our understanding of ancient and early medieval periods. Likewise, Romila Thapar's works on early India have expanded the scope of historical research related to the era. She has approached the ancient era from many angles and debunked many myths and stereotypes associated with it. Some of these myths related to Oriental Despotism, the Aryan race, and Ashoka's non-violence. Her many books, like *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, *Ancient Indian Social History* and *Interpreting Early India*, have increased our knowledge of early Indian history in a refreshing manner.

The history of medieval India has also attracted a fair number of Marxist historians. Nurul Hasan, Satish Chandra, Irfan Habib and Athar Ali are some in the middle of them. They have studied the medieval Indian society, polity and economy in detail. In the middle of them, the works by Irfan Habib are particularly extra ordinary in the range of scholarship and imagination. His revise of the Mughal economy, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, has acquired the status of a classic. In this book, he argues that the vital contradiction in the late medieval era was flanked by 'the centralized ruling class and the peasantry'. But there were other contradictions also flanked by the state and the zamindars, flanked by the untouchables and the rest of the society and flanked by the tribes and the encroaching caste peasantry. In the middle of all these, Habib argues, the 'drive for tax-revenue may be regarded as the vital motive force. Land revenue sustained the big urban sector; but the pressure for higher collection devastated the country, antagonized zamindars whose own shares of surplus was thereby affected, and drove the peasants to rebellion'. This book on medieval Indian history was followed by other significant contributions in the form of *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* and his edited book, *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I*. Separately from these, his many books and articles, including

*Caste and Money in Indian History*, and *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception*, explore and comment on several periods of Indian history.

The Marxist historians have written on many characteristics of contemporary Indian history and the colonial economy. Separately from these, we can discover an important number of the Marxist historians in the meadows of peasant history, labour history and social history.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Write a note on the Marxist historiography of Indian nationalism. Discuss the differences between various Marxist historians on this issue.
- What is the role of D.D. Kosambi in the development of Marxist historiography in India?
- Write a note on the conflicting views on ‘Indian Renaissance’.

## **CHAPTER 23**

### **THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- The background
- The emergence of the Cambridge school
- The major works of the Cambridge school
- Characteristics of the Cambridge interpretation
- The skepticism of the Cambridge school
- The end of the Cambridge school
- Evaluation
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to;

- Explain the emergence of the Cambridge school
- Explain the major works of the Cambridge school
- Explain features of the Cambridge interpretation
- Explain the skepticism of the Cambridge school
- Explain the end of the Cambridge school

## **THE BACKGROUND**

Earlier, two historiographical schools had appeared in course of the 1960s. One favored the Marxist view and the other advanced the elite theory of the West. It was out of the latter camp that the Cambridge School appeared in 1973. To understand the tenets of Cambridge requires knowledge of the earlier debates in the 1960s. The debate involved the Cambridge School in due course.

Briefly, the debate centered approximately three questions. First of all, what is the innermost spring of the mechanics of contemporary politics in British India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? Was it economics that drove politics or was it the institutional opportunity offered by English education, political representation, and other institutional innovations of the British? The Marxists inclined towards the first answer, the elite theorists preferred the second answer. The second question concerns the mainly decisive territorial unit in which political change in the subcontinent was to be studied – was it the nation as a whole, or was it the region? The Marxists analyzed the problem against the national canvas, but the elite theorists claimed that the region was the true locus of political change in British India. Thirdly, the debaters differed in relation to the nature of the social group on which they should focus. Should they focus upon class and class disagreement, or upon the English educated elite and the disagreement flanked by several castes and societies competing for the rewards of English education and political representation? Predictably, the Marxist historians looked at class, and the elite theorists concentrated on caste, society and the western educated elite.

Since the Cambridge School appeared out of the elite theory and branched off from it, the interpretation offered by the elite theorists is relevant in this context. Historians from a number of Western universities, especially from Canberra, Sussex and Cambridge, offered this interpretation in reaction to Marxist historiography in India and the Soviet Union. Three influential works emphasizing the role of the English-educated elite in Indian politics came out in quick succession: D. A. Low, *Soundings in Contemporary South Asian History*; J.H. Broomfield, *Elite disagreement in a Plural Society. Twentieth Century Bengal*; and Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*. The interpretation had three points to create against the Marxists. First of all, the main motive force behind contemporary politics, including nationalist politics, was not economic change, but on the contrary the institutional innovations introduced by the British. Anil Seal emphasized the institutional opportunities offered by English education, especially the new jobs accessible in the subordinate civil service and the contemporary professions of law, western medicine, journalism and teaching. John Broomfield for his part dwelt on the institutional opportunities offered to a rising group of politicians by the new constitutional structure of elections and representatives in the changing system of government. Secondly, the interpretation focused upon the region, as against the nation, and upon the traditional cultures in each region; it was against the background of the region that the elite theorists traced the course of political change set off by the institutional changes. Thirdly, the interpretation focused, not upon class and class disagreement, but upon the formation of English-educated elite, and upon the rivalries within each region flanked by contending castes and societies for securing the opportunities offered by English education and legislative representation.

### **THE EMERGENCE OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL**

Anil Seal, whose thesis at Cambridge was supervised by John Gallagher and which was subsequently published under the title *Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, subscribed to these views in his thesis. So did the first generation of Anil Seal's students, especially Judith Brown, the author of

*Gandhi's Rise to Power*. In their view, the English-educated nationalist elite were originally the high caste minority of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and the politics of the backward castes and regions was also a minority's protest against this English-educated nationalism. Subsequently, though, John Gallagher, Anil Seal and yet another batch of their students radically customized their stand, and the Cambridge School was the product of the customized standpoint.

John Gallagher, jointly with Ronald Robinson, had earlier written a book entitled *Africa and the Victorians*, which had made a critical impact on imperial studies in the early 1960s. Briefly, Gallagher and Robinson had argued that imperialism was not the product of the new economic forces in Europe, but was induced by the political collapse caused by indigenous procedures in Africa and Asia. Imperialism was compelled to move into the political vacuum created by the internal conflicts in native societies. Anil Seal, as a brilliant young pupil of Gallagher, had also dwelt on the political rivalries within Indian society in his explanation of the emergence of contemporary politics in India, focusing especially upon caste and the competition for English education in the middle of several regions, societies and castes. In the early 1970s, a new batch of research students gathered approximately John Gallagher, Anil Seal and Gordon Johnson. This was the Cambridge School, and it distinguished itself from the earlier elite theory version by formulating new answers to the questions posed in the ongoing debate. Though, they still subscribed to the view that nationalism was basically a play for power.

In the new version, the dynamic factor behind contemporary politics was no longer English education and its opportunities, nor of course any broad economic change under colonial rule. On the contrary, the dynamic factor was the rising centralization of government in the subcontinent and the rising element of representation within its structure. This implied the increasingly great attendance of government in the countryside and the integration of the margin to the centre through the new mechanism of legislative representation. Government impulse fostered contemporary politics in British India, and created the space for national politics in the country. Secondly, the locality was now projected as the real base of politics instead of the region or the



nation. The real interests involved in politics were local interests, not a mythical national interest, or even a local-cultural interest. Local interests sought to pass themselves off as the cultural interest of the region or the national interest of the whole country. Thirdly, the operating unit in politics was recognized, not as caste or society, not to speak of class, but as the faction based on the patron-client linkage in the locality. The patron-client network was a pragmatic alliance cutting crossways classes, castes and societies. The patrons in whose interest the networks were shaped were local magnates, either town notables or rural-local bosses, depending upon the locality. The local notables were now projected as more influential than the English-educated professional men who constituted the educated elite. The dynamic factor that pulled the local networks of patronage into national politics was the increased attendance of government in the locality and the rising attendance of the representative element in the government.

### **THE MAJOR WORKS OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL**

The origins of the Cambridge School may be traced back to Robinson and Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians* and Seal's *Emergence of Indian Nationalism* in the 1960s, but the Cambridge School announced itself only in the 1970s with *Locality, Province and Nation*. The tenets of the Cambridge School were set forth in a number of works, in the middle of which may be mentioned John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal; Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1890 to 1905*; C.A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880 –1920*; D.A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: Madras Presidency 1870 –1920*; C.J. Baker, *The Politics of South India 1920 –1937*; B..R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj 1929 – 1942*; and C. J. Baker, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal. The first and the last were collections of essays by members of the Cambridge School; the rest were Cambridge and Oxford Theses supervised by Anil Seal and John Gallagher.

These books may have differed in their tone and emphasis to some extent, but they shared a number of general characteristics. Collectively, they

constituted the Cambridge School. Some Cambridge theses, which Anil Seal supervised at approximately the similar time, did not share the similar characteristics. For instance, Mushirul Husan's *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India 1916-1928*, and Rajat Kanta Ray's *Social Disagreement and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927*, did not share the emphasis on power play, but on the contrary dwelt on ideological and economic factors. Despite guidance by Anil Seal, they did not belong to the Cambridge School. What distinguished the historians of the Cambridge School was their focus upon the search for power by individuals and factions. They pushed their inquiries down from the nation and the region to the locality; and in the locality, their attention focused, not upon social groups such as classes or castes, but on connexions' straddling these social categories. Their analysis concentrated on the slow bonding jointly of these local factions and connections into an all-India political structure by the rising intrusion of the power at the centre into the affairs of the margin.

The gradual centralization of the government, matched as it was by the growth of a representative element within the centralized structure, pulled local politics outwards, into politics with a national focus. Nationalism, in this view, was disguised collaboration with imperialism.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE INTERPRETATION**

The Cambridge interpretation began with the locality, and with the connexions' in each locality. In C.A. Bayly's analysis of mid-nineteenth century politics in Allahabad town, local politics consisted of a series of loose consortia of patrons each with their clientelia to satisfy'. The town was dominated by commercial magnates who in the vicinity enjoyed the status of *rais* or notable. He establishes it useful to describe the several groups in clientage to the commercial *raises* as connexions'. A bunching of economic functions approximately the magnates gave the connexions a cross-caste, cross-society aspect. Later the similar connexions' became the operative units in nationalist politics in Allahabad. In his revise of Bombay politics, Gordon Johnson concurred with this. The mainly obvious feature of every Indian

politician was that each politician acted for several diverse interests at all stages of Indian society, and in doing so cut crossways horizontal ties of class, caste, region and religion.'

Anil Seal put the similar point forcefully in the introductory article on 'Imperialism and nationalism in India' in *Locality, Province and Nation*. Politics was originally a local affair and there it was a race for power, status and possessions. In this race, patrons would regiment their clients into factions which jockeyed for location.' So these were not partnerships flanked by the similar sorts of fellows. They were rather associations of bigwigs and their followers. In other languages, the factions were vertical alliances, not horizontal alliances.' The local rivalries were seldom marked by the alliance of landlord with landlord, educated with educated, Muslim with Muslim, and Brahman with Brahman. More regularly, Hindus worked with Muslims, Brahmans were hand-in-glove with non-Brahmans.

According to the Cambridge interpretation, the roots of politics lay in the localities – the district, the municipality, the village. There the town notables and the rural-local bosses enjoyed the power to distribute possessions without any interference by the seemingly impotent imperial government. But things began to change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Motivated, according to David Wash brook, by 'the need to improve, to gather more wealth, to do more good', the imperial authorities accepted out bureaucratic and constitutional reforms which forced more and more local politicians to turn their attention from the local centers of power to the government at the centre. This was John Gallagher's 'Government impulse' and it altered the working of Indian politics. 'That is not to say', he cautioned, 'that Indian politics had been tidied up into parties with programmes, tailored to fit the needs of coherent social groups. The main elements were still the links flanked by patrons and clients, the connections in localities and the shifting alliances flanked by factions; these sustained to cut crossways the spurious unities which now seemed to have appeared. Nevertheless, there had been a significant change; more localities had to be bonded jointly, and they had to be related to the politics of superior arenas. The lessons of these electoral systems followed the logic of administrative change'.

Anil Seal, in his introduction to *Locality, Province and Nation*, had the similar thing to say. As a centralized and increasingly representative government appeared, 'it was no longer enough for Indians to secure political benefits in the localities alone.' The rising power to be bargained for at the centers for government necessitated the creation of provincial and then all India politics. Village, district and small town politics 'sustained unabated in the undergrowth', but political associations, such as the Madras Native Association or the Indian National Congress, deployed a dissimilar grammar of politics in the provinces and at the centre. 'For the formal structure of government provided the framework of politics, and it was only by operating within it that Indians could share and determine the sharing of power and patronage'.

According to C. J. Baker, local bosses, so extensive left on their own to strike local bargains of power, establish it necessary to match the new administrative and representative structure of the British Raj with a national political structure built upon organisations with broader constituencies, such as the Justice Party in Madras, the Hindu Mahasabha, The All India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. Ascribing 'spurious political change' to administrative logic, the Cambridge School denies any sudden transformation of elite clubs into mass movements on the advent of Gandhi. In their view, successive doses of constitutional reform were the medicine which revitalized the otherwise languishing all India politics in each stage: the Montford reforms precipitated the Non- Cooperation movement, the Simon Commission provoked the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Cripps Mission brought on the Quit India Movement. Whenever government proposed any reform at the centre which would affect the sharing of patronage in the locality, the politicians establish it necessary to be active in the new national arena of politics. As Gordon Johnson puts it, 'There is no easy chronological growth of nationalism in India: nationalist action booms and slumps in stage with the national action of the government.'

## **THE SCEPTICISM OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL**

What *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume V, Historiography* has recognized as the 'Cambridge School' questioning 'the nationalist pretensions of the Congress movement' is marked above all by its skeptical tone towards Indian Nationalism. Behind the skepticism lay an assumption in relation to the politics in common. Politics is in relation to the individual's search for power, patronage and possessions. It is not a reflection of social sentiment or economic location, but a separate arena of action which possesses its own laws. Disputing the assumption that class, societies or castes supplied the foundation for political organisation, D.A. Washbrook claimed that in the pursuit of power some men would do anything to obtain their goal. Power is wanted for its own sake. The vital concern of the politicians is power, office and lay rather than a wish to change society, particularly in a society like that of the Madras Presidency where wealth was concentrated in a few hands and where no significant person wanted to change this scheme of things. In order to set up power, politicians needed the support of several interests, classes and societies. Merchants, landlords, lawyers, Brahmans, untouchables, Hindus, Muslims, in information all types of people were perfectly prepared to work with one another to obtain the general goal – power. The pure skepticism of this view allows little room for any fundamental social and economic conflicts of a common character. Above all, the Cambridge School denies any deep-seated contradiction flanked by imperial rule and its native subjects.

Imperialism did not really manage the vast and diverse subcontinent, and its subjects, who were concerned for the mainly part with local issues, did not really oppose it. As Anil Seal had earlier pronounced in *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Indians competed with one another, and collaborated with their British rulers. He now went further and observed in the introduction to *Locality, Province and Nation* that it was no longer credible to write in relation to the a nationalist movement grounded in general aims, led by men with similar backgrounds, and recruited from widening groups with compatible interests. That movement seemed to him a ramshackle coalition throughout its extensive career. 'Its unity appears a figment. Its power appears as hollow as that of the imperial power it was supposedly demanding. Its history was the rivalry flanked by Indian and Indian, its connection with

imperialism that of the mutual clinging of two unsteady men of straw. Consequently, it now appears impossible to organize contemporary Indian history approximately the old notions of imperialism and nationalism'.

This is a skeptical view of Indian nationalism in scrupulous and of politics in common. The Cambridge School follows a purely political approach to the revise of Indian politics, setting aside the inputs of economics or sociology. In this approach, the individual behaves in politics, as does the man in the market. One seeks power, the other seeks profit and both are guided by self-interest.

### **THE END OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL**

John Gallagher, Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History in Cambridge University, died, in 1980. In his memory the Cambridge group brought out a collection of essays: Christopher Baker, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal, *Power, Profit and Politics: Essays on Imperialism, Nationalism and Change in Twentieth Century Politics*. In the middle of other essays it incorporated a joint article by Ayesha Jalal and Anil Seal entitled 'Alternative to Partition: Muslim Politics flanked by the Wars', which stimulated rethinking in relation to the partition, and later led to a path breaking book by Ayesha Jalal entitled *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim league and the Demand for Pakistan*, wherein she showed that a confederation with Muslim consent had been a very real possibility and an alternative to Partition. But *Power, Profit and Politics* was the last communal statement of the Cambridge School. After that the group ceased to exist and the individual authors went their individual methods. Under Anil Seal's supervision, Ayesha Jalal wrote *The Sole Spokesman*, and Joya Chatterji wrote *Bengal Divided; Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-47*, but these were individual's works and not part of a communal.

Another communal, *Subaltern Studies*, claimed public attention in 1982. It was critical of the Cambridge School, but in some compliments there was a parallel. The Subalternists, too, denied the importance of class division in politics, and they gave primacy to power dealings rather than class dealings. From the angle of power, they set separately the elite from the subalterns, and

accused the nationalist elite of collaboration with imperialism. They, too, went back to the locality in their search for the roots of subaltern politics. There was an echo of Cambridge here. All in all, the Cambridge School left a visible trail in Indian historiography.

## EVALUATION

Historians in India, Marxist, liberal and subalternist sharply criticized the Cambridge School's skeptical views. They accused the Cambridge historians of 'Namierism', recalling that the Oxford historian Lewis Namier, too, had reduced Parliamentary politics in England to pure self interest and power play. The several critical reviews in journals incorporated a trenchant attack by Tapan Raychaudhuri in the *Historical Journal*, Vol. XXII, 1979, entitled 'Indian Nationalism as Animal Politics'. Summing up the criticism in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Historiography* later on, Raychaudhuri conceded that it would not be quite fair to dismiss the Cambridge School as a sophisticated restatement of the old colonial view which saw Indian nationalism as nothing but a masquerade concealing a cynical quest for material gain. Since British rule in India undoubtedly rested on the collaboration of some and the indifference of several, the exploration of this face of Indian politics by the Cambridge School 'has certainly enriched understanding by the whole procedure.' Raychaudhuri, though, is still critical of the view that genuine opposition to imperialism was 'no more than collaboration by other means' or that nationalism was 'a mere create-consider in the Indian case.' In his view, the Cambridge interpretation takes no explanation of a pervasive feeling of humiliation, and the need for cultural self-assertion.

Looking back, it is possible to see that the Cambridge School provided historians of India with two useful insights, which they could not afford to ignore even if they were opposed to the in excess of-all tone of the interpretation. In the first lay, much politics was, and still is, by its nature local, and there, patron-client linkages cutting crossways caste, class and society were and still are an everyday truth. Secondly, in a diverse subcontinent where life was existed in so several localities, the tightening

administrative constitutional structure of the Raj did undoubtedly make a political space for central and national concerns which allowed the nationalist movement, psychical and ideological in its origin, to gain momentum. Needless to say, nationalism cannot exist without a national arena of politics, and one consequence of British imperialism in India was the creation of an all-India stage in politics in excess of and above the local and local stages. Acute and sophisticated as the Cambridge interpretation of Indian nationalism is, it still, though, lacks the analytical framework for capturing the fleeting psychical dimension of society and nation.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What do you understand by the ‘Cambridge School’? Which historians are generally associated with it?
- How did the Cambridge School emerge?
- Discuss the basic constituents of Cambridge School interpretation of Indian history.

## **CHAPTER 24**

### **HISTORY FROM BELOW**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Beginning and growth
- Main trends
- Troubles of writing history from below
- Indian context
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**



- History from Below is an attempt to make history-writing broad-based, to look into the lives of the marginalized groups and individuals, and to explore new sources and to reinterpret the old ones.

## **BEGINNING AND GROWTH**

The beginning of the History from Below may be traced to the late 18th century. In the classical western custom, history-writing involved the narration of the deeds of great men. The general people were measured to be beyond the boundaries of history and it was beneath the dignity of the historian to write in relation to them. In any case, as Peter Burke points out, until the middle of the eighteenth century, the word “society” in its contemporary sense did not exist in any European language, and without the word it is very hard to have any conception of that network of relationships we call “society” or “the social structure”.

According to Eric Hobsbawm, such an approach to history became possible only from the moment when the ordinary people become a constant factor in the creation of such decisions and events. Not only at times of exceptional popular mobilization, such as revolutions, but at all or mainly times. By and big this did not happen until the era of the great revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> In scrupulous, he traces the origin of this trend in the French Revolution which provided the impetus and opportunity for writing such history by drawing the general people in the public sphere and by creating documents related to their actions. He states:

- One of the reasons why so much contemporary grassroots history appeared from the revise of the French Revolution is that this great event in history combines two features which rarely happen jointly before that date. In the first lay, being a major revolution, it suddenly brought into action and public notice enormous numbers of the sort of people who previously attracted very little attention outside their family and neighbors. And in the second lay, it documented them by means of a vast and laborious bureaucracy, classifying and filing them for the benefit of the historian in the national and departmental archives of France.<sup>4</sup>

The procedure basically started with the 'detection of people' by the Romantics in late- 18th century Europe. They used the popular cultural possessions like ballads, folk songs and stories, myths and legends to reconstruct the past. Their emphasis on passion as against cause, on imagination as against mechanical science shaped the foundation for recovering the popular history. In Germany J.G.Herder coined the term 'popular civilization'. The two early-19th century histories which used the word 'people' in their titles were the History of the Swedish People by E.G.Geijer and the History of the Czech People by Palacky. In Germany, Zimmermann wrote in relation to the German peasant war. In France, it was Jules Michelet who, in his voluminous writing on French Revolution, brought general people into the orbit of history-writing. His History of France, History of the French Revolution and The People are notable for taking the masses into explanation. In England, the History from Below may be traced to the writings of J.R.Green, Goldwin Smith and Thorold Rogers in the 1860s and 1870s. Green, in the Preface to his book Short History of the English People criticized the tendency to write the 'drum and trumpet' history, i.e., the history of wars and conquests. He wrote:

- 'The aim of the following work is defined by its title; it is a history not of English kings or English conquests, but of the English People .... I have preferred to pass lightly and briefly in excess of the details of foreign wars and diplomacies, the personal adventures of kings and nobles, the pomp of courts, or the intrigues of favorites....'

Likewise, Thorold Rogers's vast, seven-volume revise, *History of Agriculture and Prices*, was a major work on the social and economic history. In the 20th century, the historian whose works inspired the left custom of History from Below was Georges Lefebvre. He empirically grounded the revise of peasantry in the context of the French Revolution. In his *The Peasants of Northern France throughout the French Revolution*, he made a detailed statistical examination of the peasant life on the eve of the Revolution. He differentiated flanked by several groups of peasants and

outlined their differential responses to the Revolution. He further sought to comprehend the motives behind their actions. It was, though, his other book, *The Great Fear of 1789*, which comprehensively described the peasant mentality throughout the Revolution. It is measured in the middle of the first texts of the new history from below which is basically concerned in relation to the delineating the thoughts and actions of the general people. Eric Hobsbawm, writing in 1985, feels that 'If there is a single historian who anticipates mainly of the themes of modern work, it is Georges Lefebvre, who's *Great Fear* ... is still extraordinarily up to date.' Therefore it may be said that the History from Below, as we know it today, began with Lefebvre.

Structure on his work, his pupil and friend, George Rude, advanced this custom which had moved absent for the 'uncritically sentimental custom' of Michelet and the Romantics. Rude was basically concerned with the revise of 'the lives and actions of the general people... the very stuff of history'. In his several books, including *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, and *Ideology and Popular Protest*, Rude discussed the participation of ordinary people in the epoch-making event. He was not interested in the actions and behaviour of the dominant classes. Rather, in the languages of Frederick Krantz, 'He sought ... to understand the crowd action of craftsmen, small shopkeepers, journeymen, laborers and peasants not as "disembodied abstraction and personification of good and evil", but as meaningful historical action susceptible, through meticulous and innovative research, to concrete re-creation'. The questions he asked in relation to the masses set the precedent for the later work on grassroots history: 'how it behaved, how it was composed, how it was drawn into its behaviors, what it set out to achieve and how distant its aims were realized.' He sought to understand the crowd as a 'thing of flesh and blood' having its own 'separate identity, interests, and aspirations'.

In Britain, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, there were several popular history books published by the leftist Book Club. In the 1940s, the Communist Party Historians' Group accepted forwards this custom. Several of the figures recognized with History from Below, such as George Rude, E.P.Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill, and John Saville were members of this

group. This group was instrumental in bringing out the well-known journal *Past and Present* in 1952 and later on the *Labour History Review*. Later on this custom was accepted forward by the *History Workshop Journal*, founded in 1976, which remained devoted to publishing people's history. E.P.Thompson, in his essay 'History from Below', published in 1966, first provided the theoretical foundation to this custom of history-writing. After that, according to Jim Sharpe, 'the concept of history from below entered the general parlance of historians'. Thompson had already written his classic book, *The Creation of the English Working Class*, in which he had explored the perspective of the working classes in the context of the Industrial Revolution in England. In a well-known statement he stressed that his aim was to understand the views and actions of those people who had been termed as backward-looking and had, so, been relegated to the margins of history. He wrote:

- 'I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity. Their crafts and traditions may have been backward-looking. Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they existed through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in conditions of their own experience; and if they were casualties of history, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties.'

In one of his well-known essays, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Thompson studied the crowd behaviour involved in food riots. According to him, the food riots were 'a highly intricate form of direct popular action' where the people involved had rational and clear objectives.

Likewise, Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm sought to emphasize the importance of the thoughts and actions of the lower classes in the creation of history. Hill studied the radical and democratic ideologies in the course of the

17th-century English Revolution. In his book, *The World Turned Upside Down*, Hill argued that the radical movements of the ordinary people, such as the Levellers, the Diggers, the Ranters, had great revolutionary potential and was capable of subverting the 'existing society and its values'. It is a history written from the point of view of the radical religious groups involving ordinary people. Likewise, Hobsbawm wrote extensively on the thoughts and actions of the contemporary workers and pre-industrial peasants in books like *Labouring Men*, *Primitive Rebels* and *Bandits*. John Foster's *Class Thrash about and Industrial Revolution* and Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* carries forward this custom. In the USA, the works on the slaves by Eugene Genovese and Herbert Gutman belong to the similar custom.

Although the Marxist historians have mostly influenced the writing of History from Below in the 20th century, there are others also whose writings can be said to constitute this trend. Prominent in the middle of them are some of the historians of the *Annales* School. Both the founders of the *Annales*, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, had interests in popular mentalities. Bloch's classic book, *The Royal Touch*, shows his interest in communal psychology and in people's mentalities, thoughts and beliefs. Bloch explores the popular belief in the healing powers of the French and the English kings and their capability to cure the skin disease scrofula presently by touching the patient. This belief became a fundamental element in construction of royalty and maintenance of its strength. Likewise Febvre's *Martin Luther* and *The Troubles of Unbelief in the 16th Century* were studies of mentalities. These works stimulated the later generations of historians to explore the history of mentalities. It was, though, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294-1324* that became one of the classic texts of this genre. It is a revise of the thoughts and beliefs of a medieval Pyrenean peasant society and offers valuable insights into the lives and behaviors of general people. Ladurie used as his vital source material the inquisitorial records of the Catholic church to explore the thoughts and beliefs of a small society.

Another classic work in the similar custom, though not of the *Annales* lineage, is Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*. Here the author looks

into the intellectual and spiritual world of one individual, an Italian miller named Domenico Scandella. He was tried by the church authorities for his heretic beliefs and was executed in 1600. The copious documentation dealing with his case provided the vital source material to Ginzburg who is aware of the conceptual and methodological troubles involved in recreating the world of subordinate groups and individuals in the pre-contemporary era. Though, he thinks that the information that a source is not "objective" does not mean that it is useless.... In short, even meager, scattered and obscure documentation can be put to good use.' Ginzburg's other works, such as *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* and *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, also strengthened the custom of History from Below. His works, beside with those of Giovanni Levi, also created a new trend in history-writing recognized as micro history' which we have discussed in detail in Unit 11. Peter Burke's *Popular Civilization in Early Contemporary Europe*, Robert Darton's *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* and Natalie Zemon Davis's *Society and Civilization in Early Contemporary France* are some other works which explore the popular mentalities and belong to this type of historiography.

## MAIN TRENDS

According to Raphael Samuel, the term "people's history" has had an extensive career, and covers an ensemble of dissimilar writings. Some of them have been informed by the thought of progress, some by cultural pessimism, some by technological humanism'. There is diversity in the subject matter also. In some cases the focus is on apparatus and technology, on others on social movements, on yet others on family life.' This type of history has also gone under a diversity of dissimilar names – "industrial history" in the 1900s., "natural history" in those relative ethnologies which arose in the wake of Darwin... "Kulturgeschichte" in those late-nineteenth-century studies of folkways to whose themes the "new" social history has recently been returning'.

It is, though, clear that this version of historiography has been dominated by the Marxist historians. From Georges Lefebvre in France to Eric

Hobsbawm and E.P.Thompson in England to Eugene Genovese and Herbert Gutman in the United States, the nature and way of History from Below in the West have been defined by Marxist social historians. They have first used this term and delineated its characteristics in relation to the conventional historiography. Thompson, Hobsbawm and Raphael Samuel have written in relation to its concepts and contents and mainly of them have practiced this type of history-writing. In this version, politics of class thrash about has been a significant attendance. Whether it is the revise of the 18th-century French peasantry by Lefebvre, or the medieval English peasantry by Christopher Hill, or the working classes of the 19th and 20th centuries by Thompson, Hobsbawm and John Foster, the subsistence of classes and the class thrash about is always noticeable. These historians insist on the agency of the people and their own role in shaping their lives and history. Some of them, particularly Thompson and Genovese also emphasize on the existed experiences of the people instead of abstract notions of class for understanding their behaviour.

But the Marxist historians are not the only ones in this field. The historians belonging to the *Annales* School such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie have also studied the life and thoughts of the subordinate classes. Though, with them, it goes under the name of history of mentalities. Closely allied to this is the new cultural history. Urbanized in the 1960s by Le Roy Ladurie, Robert Mandrou and Jacques Le Goff who were part of the later *Annales* School in France, this version of historiography had a more populist conception of history and was critical of the religious psychology approach of Febvre. These historians stressed that the people were not passive recipient of the thoughts imposed from above or outside, but were creators of their own civilization. Some other historians, such as Carlo Ginzburg, Robert Darnton and Natalie Zemon Davis, who are not allied with the *Annales*, may also be classified as cultural historians. This type of cultural history is the history of popular thoughts. It differs from the approach of the Marxist historians in that it does not stress on classes or economic or political groups. Instead, they focus on small societies or individuals, on everyday life, on routine work practices, and on ceremonies and rituals. It is, so, a version of

History from Below in which the politics, though not absent, clearly plays a much less significant role than in the Marxist version.

These two trends, one associated with Marxism and the other with the history of mentalities and cultural history have been the mainly significant versions of History from Below in the 20th century. Though, there are other versions of this type of historiography. In the right-wing version of such history there is no lay for politics. It is a history of people in which there is no class thrash about, any disagreement of thoughts and there is a strong sense of religious and moral values. The institution of family is idealized and there is a tendency to interpret the social relationships as reciprocal rather than exploitative. Raphael Samuel states that the characteristic site of right-wing people's history is in the "organic" society of the past.... The ideology is determinedly anti-contemporary, with urban life and capitalism as alien intrusions on the body politic, splintering the age-old solidarities of "traditional" life. G.M. Trevelyan's *English Social History* and Peter Laslett's *World We Have Lost* are examples of this trend. In the liberal version, the History from Below celebrates the spirit of modernity and benefits of capitalism and material progress. It is optimistic in tone and is future-oriented. It is critical of the pre-contemporary era which it considers synonymous with superstition and warfare. Guizot, Mignet, Thierry and later Michelet were some of the historians who symbolize this trend.

## **TROUBLES OF WRITING HISTORY FROM BELOW**

Both the exponents and critics have pointed towards many troubles involved in the practice of History from Below. The mainly significant problem relates to the nature and availability of sources. Mainly of the records left by the past describe the lives and deeds of the ruling and dominant groups. Even those records which relate to the lives and behaviors of ordinary people were created by the dominating classes or by those who were associated with them. This was done mostly for administrative purposes. The records in relation to the subordinate groups are more numerous for the periods when they were resisting or rebelling against the authorities. Before the late 18th century in Europe access to such sources is restricted. For other parts of the



world, particularly the Third World countries, the availability of such records is even harder. Moreover, as mainly of these records were created by and for the members of the dominant groups, they suffer from hyperbole, neglect and misrepresentation. For instance, the police records revealing the subversive behaviors in the middle of the masses are often exaggerated. Likewise, they totally ignore those regions in the life of people which were not in administrative interest.

The problem is compounded because the masses have usually not left much records of their own. Popular civilization is usually preserved through the oral medium and not through written medium. The oral custom, as Hobsbawm remarks, 'is an extraordinarily slippery medium for preserving facts. The point is that memory is not so much a recording as a selective mechanism, and the selection is, within limits, constantly changing'. The paucity of written sources left by the ordinary people is a great hindrance in writing in relation to the feelings and thoughts.

At another stage, there are troubles related to conceptualization also. Although all practitioners of History from Below claim to write in relation to the people, the term 'people' itself is used with dissimilar, sometimes conflicting, meanings. Raphael Samuel states that 'In one version of people's history – radical-democratic or Marxist – the people are constituted by dealings of use, in another by cultural antinomies, in a third by political rule'. The problem is further complicated by excluding some groups from the category of people, while considering some as more people than others. In one version it is the proletariat which constitutes the real people, in another it is peasantry. Herder, the German Romantic scholar, did not contain the urban masses in the category of 'people'. For him and his followers, the 'people' were the peasants who existed secure to nature and were innocent. The term sometimes also adopts racist connotations in which people speaking other languages or following dissimilar faiths are not counted in the middle of the real people. At the left radical stage, the exclusion takes another form. Peter Burke, while praising the histories written by British Marxist historians, points out:

- Edward Thompson's *Creation of the English Working Class* comes quite close to excluding working-class Tories from the people. As for *The World Turned Upside Down* [by Christopher Hill], it deals alternately with radical thoughts and with the thoughts of ordinary people, so that an incautious reader may very well be led to equate the two. Though, in seventeenth-century England, not all ordinary people were radicals and not all radicals were ordinary people.<sup>6</sup>

The History from Below has also been criticized for not taking theoretical issues into explanation and for romanticizing and idealizing the people. Its rank and file approach ignores the information of institutional power on industrial dealings. Moreover, its neglect of quantitative analysis and overemphasis on narrative has also been criticized.

## INDIAN CONTEXT

The main problem in writing the History from Below in India is the absence of relevant sources. The records pertaining to the lower classes were approximately exclusively produced by those not belonging to that stratum of society. The relevant sources are a big problem even in advanced countries where the working-class literacy was much higher. Even there the sources related to the peasants and other pre-industrial groups approach to us through those in power. In India, mainly of the members of the subordinate classes, including the industrial working classes, are not literate. So, direct sources coming from them are very unusual, if not totally absent. Given this scenario, the historians trying to write history from below have to rely on indirect sources. As Sabyasachi Bhattacharya points out, 'Given the low stage of literacy we have to depend on inferences from behaviour pattern, reports on opinions and sentiments on oral testimonies etc.'<sup>7</sup> Oral traditions also have their troubles. They cannot be stretched back too distant and one has to work within livelihood memory. These troubles are outlined by one of the great practitioners of History from Below, Ranajit Guha, the founder of the *Subaltern Studies* in relation to the which we will read more in the after that Unit. Guha, in his book, *Elementary Characteristics of Peasant Insurgency in*

*Colonial India*, talks in relation to the elitist origins of mainly of the evidences which the historians use for understanding the mentalities behind the peasant rebellions:

- Mainly, though not all, of this proof is elitist in origin. This has approach down to us in the form of official records of one type or another – police reports, army dispatches, administrative accounts, minutes and resolutions of governmental departments, and so on. Non-official sources of our information on the subject, such as newspapers or the private correspondence flanked by persons of power, too, speak in the similar elitist voice, even if it is that of the indigenous elite or of non-Indians outside officialdom.’

To overcome these elitist biases, it is often supposed, folk traditions may be used. But, according to Guha, there is not enough to serve for this purpose either in quantity or excellence in spite of populist beliefs to the contrary’. Firstly, there are not much of such evidences accessible. Moreover, An equally disappointing aspect of the folklore relating to peasant militancy is that it can be elitist too.’ Guha’s suggestion for capturing the insurgent’s consciousness is to read flanked by the rows, to read the attendance of a rebel consciousness as a necessary and pervasive element within that body of proof ‘. Though, Sumit Sarkar discovers a much deeper problem which may be the cause of this non-availability of evidences. It is the sustained subalternity of the lower classes:

- Above all, ~~the~~ “history from below” has to face the problem of the ultimate relative *failure* of mass initiative in colonial India, if the justly abandoned stereotype of the eternally passive Indian peasant is not to be replaced by an opposite romantic stereotype of perennial rural rebelliousness. For an essential information surely is that the ~~the~~ “subaltern” classes have remained subaltern, often surprisingly dormant despite abject misery and ample provocation, and subordinate in the end to their social ~~the~~ “betters” even when they do become politically active.’

It is with these constraints that the historians have worked on Indian people's histories.

### **History of Peasant Movements**

A common history of peasant movements by Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, puts the Indian peasant movements in a relative perspective. In Moore's explanation, the Indian peasantry lacked revolutionary potential and were comparatively docile and passive in the face of poverty and oppression. Therefore peasant rebellions in India were relatively unusual and totally ineffective and where modernization impoverished the peasants as least as much as in China and in excess of as extensive an era of time. This view of the Indian peasant was challenged by several historians. Kathleen Gough, in her article on Indian Peasant Uprising, counted 77 peasant revolts throughout the colonial era. Her conclusion is that the negligible of which almost certainly occupied many thousand peasants in active support or combat. And the main of these is the "Indian Mutiny" of 1857-58, in which vast bodies of peasants fought or otherwise worked to destroy British rule in excess of an region of more than 500,000 square miles. Ranajit Guha, in his book, states that there are no fewer than 110 recognized instances of these even for the somewhat shorter era of 117 years – from the Rangpur *dhing* to the Birsait *ulgulan*. A.R.Desai is also against this view of the docility of the Indian peasantry and asserts that the Indian rural scene throughout the whole British era and thereafter has been bristling with protests, revolts and even big level militant struggles involving hundreds of villages and lasting for years. It is so, clear that, at least throughout the British era, the quiescence of the Indian peasantry is a myth and a big number of works explode this myth.

There are several studies undertaken on Indian peasant movements. Separately from Kathleen Gough's work, A.R.Desai's and *Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence*, Sunil Sen's *Peasant Movements in India – Mid-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Ranajit Guha's *Elementary*

*Characteristics of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Eric Stokes's *The Peasants and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India*, and D.N.Dhanagare's *Peasant Movements in India, 1920-1950* are some of the all-India studies.

On Bengal, Suprakash Roy's pioneering work in Bengali published in 1966, and translated into English as *Peasant Revolts and Democratic Struggles in India*, looks at these revolts basically in conditions of class struggles of peasants against the imperialist and landlords' use and oppression. He also connected these rebellions to the fight for a democratic polity in India. Muinuddin Ahmed Khan's *History of the Faraidi Movement in Bengal* sought to interpret this peasant movement basically as a religious movement against the non-Muslim gentry. Though, Narhari Kabiraj, in his *A Peasant Uprising in Bengal and Wahabi and Farazi Rebels of Bengal* refuted this thesis and emphasized on economic factors as the cause of the rebellion. His conclusion was that throughout this movement the 'agrarian aspect took precedence in excess of the communal one'. Blair King's revise of the indigo rebellion in Bengal. Though, Ranajit Guha views the Indigo rebellion differently and argues that there were contradictions flanked by several parts of the peasantry.

Some of the other significant local studies on peasant movements are: Girish Mishra's revise on Champaran movement, *Agrarian Troubles of Permanent Resolution: A Case Revise of Champaran*, and Stephen Henningham's *Peasant Movements in Colonial India, North Bihar, 1917-1942*; Majid H. Siddiqi's *Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918-32*, and Kapil Kumar's *Peasants in Revolt: Tenants, Lanlords, Congress and the Raj in Oudh* on U.P.; works by Stephen Dale, Robert Hardgrave, Sukhbir Chaudhary and Conrad Wood on the Moplah rebellion in Malabar, Kerala. Separately from these there are also many works on peasant movements in other parts of India.

## **History of Working-class Movements**

Until in relation to the twenty-five years ago, the history of Indian labour was approximately synonymous with the history of trade unions. Writing in 1982, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya commented that ‘Till now in our labour history the Trade Union movement has been the subject of the main number of published work’. Besides this, the focus was on the worker as an economic being, which did not take into explanation his/her social and cultural subsistence. Since the 1980s, though, this situation began to change. Many studies have appeared which view the working class history from a broader perspective. For one thing, the trade unions are no longer measured as synonymous with the working class. It is true that the trade unions symbolize a highly organized form of working class behaviors. Though, trade unions are only one of the shapes in which the workers organize themselves. Working class movement, on the other hand, is a much broader phenomenon and covers several mobilizations of all types of workers. Secondly, the recent studies have pointed out that economic motivation is not the sole determinant of working class action. The creation of the working class and its movement derives from several sources in which the cultural, the social and the political are as significant as the economic. Thirdly, it is indicated that the industrial workers, whom the trade union studies take as their vital staple, form a rather small part the whole working class which comprises within its ambit the rural workers, urban workers in informal sectors, and service sector workers. Moreover, gender questions are also coming to the fore for an understanding of the attitude and behaviour of the workers, the employers, the public activists and government officials.

The studies which take into explanation these characteristics of the changing scenario contain E.D.Murphy’s ‘Class and Society in India: The Madras Labour Union, 1918-21’ and *Unions in Disagreement: A Relative Revise of Four South Indian Textile Centres, 1918-1939*, R.K.Newman’s *Wokers and Unions in Bombay, 1918-29: A Revise of Organization in the Cotton Mills*, S.Bhattacharya’s ‘Capital and Labour in Bombay Municipality, 1928-29’, Dipesh Chakrabarty’s *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal,*

1890-1940, Rajnarayan Chandavarkar's *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and Working Classes in Bombay, 1900-40*, Janaki Nair's *Miners and Millhands: Work, Civilization and Politics in Princely Mysore*, Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India: The Bengal Jute Industry*, and Nandini Gooptu's *The Politics of the Urban Poor in the early Twentieth- Century India*.

## **History of Tribal Movements**

Many scholars treat tribal movements as part of the peasant movements. It is because in excess of the years the tribal society and economy have started resembling those of the peasants and the agrarian troubles of the tribal's are similar as those of the peasants. Kathleen Gough, A.R.Desai and Ranajit Guha have dealt with the tribal movements as such. Moreover, several scholars like Ghanshyam Shah, Ashok Upadhyay and Jaganath Pathy have shown the changes in the tribal society and economy which have pushed them in the direction of the non-tribal peasants. Though, K.S. Singh, one of the authorities in the field, is of the opinion that such an approach is not justified because it tends to gloss in excess of the diversities of tribal social formations of which tribal movements are a part, both being structurally related'. Singh puts more emphasis on social organisation of the tribals than on their economic grievances. He argues that:

- while the peasant movements tend to remain purely agrarian as peasants existed off land, the tribal movements were both agrarian and forest based, because the tribals' dependence on forests was as crucial as their dependence on land. There was also the ethnic factor. The tribal revolts were directed against zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials not because they exploited them but also because they were aliens.'

In contrast to this view, some scholars have questioned the very category of the tribe itself. For instance, Susana Devalle, in *Discourses of*

*Ethnicity: Civilization and Protest in Jharkhand*, argues that the category 'tribe' was constructed by the European scholars in India and the colonial officials in their effort to understand the Indian reality. Andre Beteille also thinks that there are a lot of similarities flanked by the tribals and the peasants and, so, it would be a mistake to consider them as two separate structural kinds.

Though, the information remnants that a big part of the tribal societies, particularly until the 20th century, possessed many specific characteristics which put them separately from the mainstream peasant societies. For one, social and economic differentiation within the tribal society was much less than in the middle of the peasantry. Secondly, the great dependence of the tribes on the forests also separates them from the peasants whose main source of survival was land. Thirdly, tribal social organisation and the spatial concentration of the tribes in sure regions kept them relatively in accessible. These factors made them particularly sensitive to the changes brought in relation to the by the colonial rule and imparted more militancy to their rebellion.

The colonial officers were the first to write in relation to the tribals. This attention was due to the recurring tribal revolts as a result of colonial intervention. The earliest writings were an effort to understand the tribal societies for better management. W.W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, E.T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, and H.H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal* were some of these early works which described the tribal society. One of the earliest works by an Indian is Kali Kinkar Datta's *Santal Insurrection*. According to Datta, the main cause for the rebellion was the oppression and use by the outsiders. Three of his students also focused on Chotanagpur region for their initial studies on the tribes. J.C. Jha's *The Kol Insurrection of Chotanagpur*, S.P. Sinha's *Life and Times of Birsa Bhagwan* and K.S. Singh's *The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist: A Revise of Birsa Munda and his movement in Chota Nagpur, 1874-1901* were pioneering efforts on these themes. The three volumes edited by K.S. Singh on *Tribal Movements of India* are a big contribution to deal with the subject at the all-India stage. John MacDougall's *Land or Religion? The Sardar and Kherwar*



*Movements in Bihar, 1858-95*, D.M. Praharaj's *Tribal Movement and Political History in India: A Case Revise from Orissa, 1803-1949*, David Hardiman's *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, David Arnold's article on Gudem-Rampa uprisings in Andhra Pradesh, S.R. Bhattacharjee's *Tribal Insurgency in Tripura: A Revise in Exploration of Causes* are some of the local studies..

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What is History from Below? Discuss its beginning and growth.
- Write a note on the History from Below in the context of history-writing on India.
- What are the main problems associated with writing History from Below?

## **CHAPTER 25**

### **SUBALTERN STUDIES**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Beginning of the thought
- Development of the project
- Critique
- Rejoinder
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- In this Unit we will discuss the various positions taken by the writers associated with the *Subaltern Studies* as well as the criticism of the project by historians and others working in the area of Indian studies.

## BEGINNING OF THE THOUGHT

The *Subaltern Studies* was proclaimed by its adherents as a new school in the field of Indian history-writing. Some of the historians associated with it declared it to be a sharp break in the custom of Indian historiography. A group of writers dissatisfied with the convention of Indian history-writing became part of the communal and contributed for the volumes. It, though, also involved historians and other social scientists not formally associated with the subaltern communal. Besides the articles published in the volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, these writers also wrote for several other journals and edited volumes as well as published monographs which are today associated with subaltern themes and methodology. Starting the venture with the help of those whom Ranajit Guha termed as ‘marginalized academics’, the *Subaltern Studies* soon acquired vast reputation both inside and outside India for the views they professed as well as for rigorous research on subaltern themes. Initially planned as a series of three volumes, it has now become an ongoing project with eleven volumes in print till date. Separately from these volumes, Ranajit Guha has also edited one volume of essays taken from the several earlier volumes for the international audiences. In some of the recent volumes the *Subaltern Studies* has incorporated themes from non-Indian Third World countries also.

The term ‘subaltern’ has a rather extensive history. It was initially applied to the serfs and peasants in England throughout the Middle Ages. Later, by 1700, it was used for the subordinate ranks in the military. It, though, gained wide currency in scholarly circles after the works of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and Communist Party leader. Gramsci usually used the term in a broader connotation of ‘class’ to avoid the censorship of the prison authorities as he was in jail and his writings were scanned. Gramsci had adopted the term to refer to the subordinate groups in the society. In his opinion, the history of the subaltern groups is approximately always related to that of the ruling groups. In addition, this history is usually ‘fragmentary and episodic’. Ranajit Guha, though, in the Preface to *Subaltern Studies* I, did not mention Gramsci’s use of the term, even though he referred to Gramsci as an inspiration. Instead, he defined it as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*:

- “The word “subaltern” in the title stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, “of inferior rank”. It will be used in these pages as a name for the common attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in conditions of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other method.”

A little later, at the end of his opening essay in the volume, he further clarified this term:

- “The conditions “people” and “subaltern classes” have been used synonymously throughout this note. The social groups and elements incorporated in this category symbolize the demographic variation flanked by the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the “elite”.”

The Subaltern historians made a radical departure in the use of the term from that of Gramsci. Even while accepting the subordinated nature of the subaltern groups, they argued the history was autonomous from that of the dominant classes.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT**

Now there is a common and clear acknowledgement of basically two phases in the career of the Subaltern Studies. Stage I consist of:

- Concern with the subaltern, i.e., lower, exploited classes;
- Criticism of the elite, i.e., exploiting classes; and
- Power of Gramscian thought and Marxist social history and an effort to work within broader Marxist theory.

In the second stage, there is a clear shift from these concerns. Now:

- There is an rising engagement with textual analysis, a shift absent from exploring the history of the exploited people, and more engagement, even though critical, with elite discourses; and

- Marx and Gramsci are jettisoned in favor of Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and other postmodernists and post colonialists.

### **First Stage: Elite vs. Subaltern**

The Subaltern Studies asserted itself as a radically new form of history-writing in the context of Indian history. It was initially conceived as a series of three volumes to be edited by its eldest protagonist and the prime mover of the thought, Ranajit Guha. The thought was seemingly informed by Gramscian thought. A deliberate effort was made to break from both the economic determinism of a diversity of Marxist theory as well as the elitism of bourgeois-nationalist and colonialist interpretations. A group of writers likewise dissatisfied with the convention of Indian historiography joined the communal and contributed essays for the volumes. It, though, also involved historians and other social scientists not formally associated with the subaltern communal.

Although basically concerned in relation to the India, the *Subaltern Studies* project was first conceived in England by some Indian academics, Ranajit Guha being the principal motive force behind it. Right from the beginning it was set against approximately all existing traditions of Indian historiography. In what can be described as the manifesto of the project, Ranajit Guha, in a vein reminiscent of the opening row of *The Communist Manifesto* declared in the very first volume of the *Subaltern Studies*, that ‘The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a extensive time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism.’ Both kinds of historiography was said to derive from the ideological discourse of the British rule in India. Despite their differences, both shared sure things in general and the mainly significant of these was the absence of the politics of the people from their accounts. In his view, there was now an urgent requirement for setting the record straight by viewing the history from the point-of view of the subaltern classes. This standpoint as well as the politics of the people was crucial because it constituted an autonomous domain which

neither originated from elite politics nor did its subsistence depend on the latter'. The people's politics differed from the elite politics in many crucial characteristics. For one, its roots lay in the traditional organisations of the people such as caste and kinship networks, tribal solidarity, territoriality, etc. Secondly, while elite mobilizations were vertical in nature, people's mobilizations were horizontal. Thirdly, whereas the elite mobilization was legalistic and pacific, the subaltern mobilization was relatively violent. Fourthly, the elite mobilization was more careful and controlled while the subaltern mobilization was more spontaneous.

The *Subaltern Studies* soon became the new history from below' which did not attempt to fuse the people's history with official nationalism. It, so, attracted the attention of the scholars who had become disenchanted with the nationalistic claims as embodied in the post-colonial state. Mainly influenced by Gramsci in its initial stage in trying to discover the radical consciousness of the dominated groups, it was pitted against the three main trends in Indian historiography – colonialist, which saw the colonial rule as the fulfillment of a mission to enlighten the ignorant people; nationalist, which visualized all the protest behaviors as parts of the creation of the nation-state; and Marxist, which subsumed the people's struggles under the progression towards revolution and a socialist state. The aim of the project was manifold:

- To illustrate the bourgeois and elite character of Congress nationalism which was said to restrain popular radicalism;
- To counter the attempts by several historians to incorporate the people's struggles in the grand narrative of Indian / Congress nationalism; and
- To reconstruct the subaltern consciousness and stress its autonomy. Considering the non-availability of evidences from subaltern sources, it was a hard task. To overcome this, the subaltern historians endeavored to extract their material from the official sources by reading them against the grain'.

*Subaltern Studies* was conceived in an atmosphere where Gramsci's thoughts were creation important impact. Eric Hobsbawm, Raymond Williams

and Stuart Hall were incorporating Gramsci's thoughts into their works. Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, on the other hand, were developing a favorable critique of Gramsci. Other powers were that of the new social history, written by Western Marxist historians such as Henri Lefebvre, Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson, Eugene Genovese and others, who emphasized the necessity for considering people's point of view. Therefore the objective of the Subaltern Studies was proclaimed to 'promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies and therefore help to rectify the elitist bias feature of much research and academic work in this scrupulous region'. Guha, in the Preface to vol. III, stated that what brought the subaltern historians jointly was 'a critical idiom general to them all – an idiom self-consciously and systematically critical of elitism in the field of South Asian studies'. He further asserted that it was in the opposition to this elitism that the unity of the subaltern project laid:

- 'We are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography and the social sciences for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project. There is no method in which it can express itself other than as an adversary of that elitist paradigm which is so well entrenched in South Asian studies. Negativity is so the very *raison d'être* as well as the constitutive principle of our project.'

On the political face, the international and national scenes of the late 1960s and early 1970s had become radicalized and questions were being raised on the recognized and conventional thoughts. The conventional political parties, from the Right to the Left, came for criticism and much emphasis was placed on the non-conventional political formations and behaviors.

The Subaltern historians, disenchanted with the Congress nationalism and its embodiment in the Indian state, rejected the thesis that popular mobilization was the result of either economic circumstances or initiatives from the top. They claimed to have exposed a popular domain which was autonomous. Its autonomy was rooted in circumstances of use and its politics was opposed to the elites. This domain of the subaltern was defined by

perpetual resistance and rebellion against the elite. The subaltern historians also attributed a common unity to this domain clubbing jointly a diversity of heterogeneous groups such as tribals, peasants, proletariat and, occasionally, the middle classes as well. Moreover, this domain was said to be approximately totally uninfluenced by the elite politics and to possess a self-governing, self-generating dynamics. The charismatic leadership was no longer viewed as the chief force behind a movement. It was instead the people's interpretation of such charisma which acquired prominence in analysis of a movement or rebellion.

Shahid Amin's revise of the popular perception of Mahatma Gandhi is a revealing instance. In his article, Gandhi as Mahatma, deriving evidences from Gorakhpur district in eastern UP, he shows that the popular perception and actions were totally at variance with the Congress leaders' perception of Mahatma. Although the mechanism of spread of the Mahatma's message was rumors, there was an whole philosophy of economy and politics behind it – the need to become a good human being, to provide up drinking, gambling and violence, to take up spinning and to uphold communal harmony. The stories which circulated also emphasized the magical powers of Mahatma and his capability to reward or punish those who obeyed or disobeyed him. On the other hand, the Mahatma's name and his supposed magical powers were also used to reinforce as well as set up caste hierarchies, to create the debtors pay and to boost the cow protection movement. All these popular interpretations of the Mahatma's messages reached their climax throughout the Chauri Chaura incidents in 1922 when his name was invoked to burn the police post, to kill the policemen and to loot the market. Earlier historians were criticized not only for ignoring the popular initiative but, equally seriously, accepting the official characterization of the rebel and the rebellion. Ranajit Guha, in his article The Prose of Counter-Insurgency, launched a scathing attack on the existing peasant and tribal histories in India for considering the peasant rebellions as purely spontaneous and unpremeditated affairs and for ignoring consciousness of the rebels themselves. In his opinion,

- Historiography has been content to deal with the peasant rebel merely as an empirical person or member of a class, but not as an entity whose

will and cause constituted the praxis described rebellion. The omission is indeed dyed into mainly narratives by metaphors assimilating peasant revolts to natural phenomena: they break out like thunder storms, heave like earthquakes, spread like wildfires, infect like epidemics.’

He accused all the accounts of rebellions, starting with the immediate official reports to the histories written by the left radicals, of writing the texts of counter-insurgency which refused to acknowledge the insurgent as the subject of his own history’. Gyan Pandey, in Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism, 1919-1922’, argued that peasant movement in Awadh arose before and independently of the Non-cooperation movement and the peasants’ understanding of the local power structure and its alliance with colonial power was more advanced than that of the urban leaders, including the Congress. Moreover, the peasant militancy was reduced wherever the Congress organisation was stronger.

In Stephen Henningham’s explanation of the Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces’, the elite and the subaltern domains were clearly defined and separate from each other. Therefore, the great revolt of 1942 consisted of an elite nationalist uprising combined with a subaltern rebellion’. Their motives and demands were also dissimilar:

- Those occupied in the elite nationalist uprising sought to protest against government repression of Congress and to demand the granting of independence to India. In contrast, those involved in the subaltern rebellion acted in pursuit of relief from privation and in protest against the misery in which they establish themselves.’

He further contends that it was this dual character of the revolt which led to its suppression. David Hardiman, in his numerous articles, focused on subaltern themes and argued that whether it was the tribal assertion in South Gujarat, or the Bhil movement in Eastern Gujarat, or the radicalism of the agricultural workers throughout the Civil Disobedience Movement, there was a self-governing politics of the subaltern classes against the elites. Likewise,



Sumit Sarkar, in 'The Circumstances and Nature of Subaltern Militancy', argued the Non-cooperation movement in Bengal 'revealed a picture of masses outstripping leaders'. He stated that the term 'subaltern' could refer to basically three social groups: 'tribal and low-caste agricultural labourers and share-croppers; landholding peasants, usually of intermediate caste-status in Bengal; and labour in plantations, mines and industries.' These groups might have divisions in the middle of themselves and contain both the exploiters and exploited in their ranks. Though, he argued that:

'The subaltern groups so defined shaped a relatively autonomous political domain with specific characteristics and communal mentalities which need to be explored, and that this was a world separate from the domain of the elite politicians who in early twentieth century Bengal came overwhelmingly from high-caste educated professional groups linked with zamindari or intermediate tenure-holding'.

Therefore we see that in these and in several other essays in the earlier volumes, an effort was made to separate the elite and the subaltern domains and to set up the autonomy of subaltern consciousness and action. Although there were some notable exceptions, such as the writings of Partha Chatterjee, this stage was usually characterized by emphasis on subaltern themes and autonomous subaltern consciousness.

## **Second Stage: Discourse Analysis**

In excess of the years, there began a shift in the approach of the Subaltern Studies. The power of the postmodernist and post colonialist ideologies became more marked. While the emphasis on the subalterns may be associated with Guha, Pandey, Amin, Hardiman, Henningham, Sarkar and some others, the post colonialist powers were revealed in the works of Partha Chatterjee right from the beginning. His influential book, *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World*, applied the postcolonial framework of Edward Said which viewed the colonial power-knowledge as overwhelming and irresistible.

Such themes were also apparent in Chatterjee's articles in the volumes of the Subaltern Studies even earlier. His later book, *The Nation and its Fragments*, carries this analysis further. Several other writers in the Subaltern Studies slowly abandoned the earlier adherence to Marxism. There was a bifurcation of intellectual concerns in their ranks. While some of the Subaltern historians still stuck to the subaltern themes, a superior number began to write in post colonialist manners. Now there was a clear move from the research on economic and social issues to cultural matters, particularly the analysis of colonialist discourse.

Subalternity as a concept was also redefined. Earlier, it stood for the oppressed classes in opposition to the dominant classes both inside and outside. Later, it was conceptualized in opposition to colonialism, modernity and Enlightenment. The researched articles on themes concerned with subaltern groups decreased in number in later volumes. So, while in the first four volumes there were 20 essays on the subaltern classes like peasants and workers, in the next six volumes there were only five such essays. There was now a rising stress on textual analysis of colonial discourse. Consequently, the discourse analysis acquired precedence in excess of research on subaltern themes. The earlier emphasis on the 'subaltern' now gave method to a focus on 'society'. Earlier the elite nationalism was stated to hijack the people's initiatives for its own project; now the whole project of nationalism was declared to be only a version of colonial discourse with its emphasis on centralization of movement, and later of the state. The thoughts of secularism and enlightenment rationalism were attacked and there began an emphasis on the 'fragments' and 'episodes'. There is also an effort to justify this shift and link it to the initial project. Therefore the editors of Vol. X of *Subaltern Studies* proclaim that 'Nothing – not elite practices, state policies, academic disciplines, literary texts, archival sources, language – was exempt from the effects of subalternity'. So, all the elite domains need to be explored as the legitimate subjects of Subaltern Studies.

Gyan Prakash has argued that since the Indian subalterns did not leave their own records, the 'history from below' approach in imitation of the Western model was not possible. So, the *Subaltern Studies* had to conceive

the subaltern differently and write dissimilar histories'. According to him, it is significant to see the subalternity as a discursive effect' which warrants the reformulation of the notion of the subaltern'. Therefore,

- Such reexaminations of South Asian history do not invoke ~~real~~" subalterns, prior to discourse, in framing their critique. Placing subalterns in the labyrinth of discourse, they cannot claim an unmediated access to their reality. The actual subalterns and subalternity emerge flanked by the folds of the discourse, in its silences and blindness, and in its over determined pronouncements.'

The subalterns, so, cannot be represented as subjects as they are entangled in and created by the working of power. Dipesh Chakrabarty goes even further in denying a separate domain not only for the subaltern history, but the history of the Third World as a whole:

- It is that insofar as the academic discourse of history – that is, ~~history~~" as a discourse produced at the institutional location of the university – is concerned, ~~Europe~~" remnants the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ~~Indian~~", Chinese", ~~Kenyan~~", and so on. There is a peculiar method in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be described ~~the~~ history of Europe". In this sense, ~~Indian~~" history itself is in a location of subalternity: one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history.'

The second stage of the *Subaltern Studies*, so, not only moves absent from the earlier emphasis on the exploration of the subaltern consciousness, it also questions the very ground of historical works as such, in row with the postmodernist thinking in the West.

## CRITIQUE

There has been wide-ranging criticism of the *Subaltern Studies* from several quarters. Right from the beginning the project has been critiqued by the Marxist, Nationalist and Cambridge School historians, besides those who

were not affiliated to any location. Approximately all positions it took, ranging from a search for autonomous subaltern domain to the later shift to discourse analysis, came under scrutiny and criticism. Some of the earlier critiques were published in the *Social Scientist*. In one of them, Javeed Alam criticized *Subaltern Studies* for its insistence on an autonomous domain of the subaltern. According to Alam, the autonomy of the subaltern politics is predicated on perpetuity of rebellious action, on a constant tendency towards resistance and a propensity to rebellion on the part of the peasant masses'. Whether this autonomous action is positive or negative in its consequences is of not much concern to the subalternists:

- The historical direction of militancy is ... of secondary consideration. What are primary are the spontaneity and an internally situated self-generating momentum. Extending the implications of the inherent logic of such a theoretical construction, it is a matter of indifference if it leads to communal rioting or united anti-feudal actions that overcome the initial limitations.'

In another essay, a review essay by Sangeeta Singh and others, Ranajit Guha was criticized for presenting a caricature of the spontaneous action by peasant rebels. In Guha's understanding, it was alleged, spontaneity is synonymous with reflexive action'. Since Spontaneity is action on the foundation of traditional consciousness', Guha's whole effort is said to rehabilitate spontaneity as a political way'. Moreover, Guha, in his assertion in relation to the centrality of religion in rebel's consciousness, approves the British official view which emphasizes the irrationality of the rebellion and absolves colonialism of playing any disruptive role in the rural and tribal social and economic structures. Ranjit Das Gupta points out that there is no precise definition of the subaltern domain. Moreover, the subaltern historians have tended to concentrate on moments of disagreement and protest, and in their writings the dialectics of collaboration and acquiescence on the part of the subalterns ... have by and big been underplayed'. The rigid distinction flanked by the elite and the subaltern, ignoring all other hierarchical

formations, was criticized by others as well. David Ludden, in the Introduction to an edited volume, writes that:

- Even readers who applauded Subaltern Studies establish two characteristics troubling. First and foremost, the new substance of subalternity appeared only on the underside of a rigid theoretical barrier flanked by “~~elite~~” and “~~subaltern~~”, which resembles a concrete slab separating upper and lower space in a two-storey structure. This hard dichotomy alienated subalternity from social histories that contain more than two storeys or which move in the middle of them... Second, because subaltern politics was confined theoretically to the lower storey, it could not threaten a political structure. This alienated subalternity from political histories of popular movements and alienated subaltern groups from organized, transformative politics....’

Rosalind O’Hanlon offers a comprehensive critique of earlier volumes of *Subaltern Studies* in her article Recovering the Subject’. She argues that, despite their claims of surpassing the earlier brands of history-writing, the manner in which the subaltern creates his appearance through the work of the contributors is in the form of the classic unitary self-constituting subject-agent of liberal humanism’. In the middle of the Subaltern historians, particularly in the writings of Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Stephen Henningham and Sumit Sarkar, there is the tendency to attribute timeless primordiality’ to the communal traditions and civilization of subordinated groups’. She discovers essentialism at the core of the project arising from an assertion of an irreducibility and autonomy of experience, and an easy-minded voluntarism deriving from the insistence upon a capability for self-determination’. This leads to idealism, particularly in Guha’s drive to posit originary autonomy in the traditions of peasant insurgency. He does at times appear to be approaching a pure Hegelianism’.

Christopher Bayly, in Rallying approximately the Subaltern’, questions the project’s claim to originality. According to him, the Subaltern historians have not made use of new statistical material and indigenous records’ which could substantiate their claim of writing a new history. Their

main contribution appears to be re-reading the official records and mounting an internal critique'. Therefore, the only distinguishing spot which separates the Subaltern Studies from the earlier and modern history from below' is a rhetorical device, the term subaltern' itself, and a populist idiom'. Bayly thinks that the greatest weakness of the Subaltern orientation' is that it tends to frustrate the writing of rounded history as effectively as did ~~elitism~~'.

Sumit Sarkar, who was earlier associated with the project, later on criticized it for moving towards post colonialism. In his two essays, The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies' and Orientalism Revisited', he argues that this shift may have been occasioned due to several reasons, but, intellectually, there is an effort to have the best of both worlds: critiquing others for essentialism, teleology and related sins, while claiming a special immunity from doing the similar oneself'. Moreover, such works in Indian history have not produced any spectacular results. In information, the critique of colonial discourse, despite vast claims to total originality, quite often is no more than a restatement in new language of old nationalist positions – and fairly crude restatements, at that'. The later subaltern project became some sort of Third World nationalism, followed by post modernistic valorizations of ~~fragments~~'. In information, the later *Subaltern Studies* comes secure to positions of neo-traditionalist anti-modernism, notably advocated ... by Ashish Nandy'. Even earlier, according to Sarkar, there was a tendency towards essentialising the categories of subaltern' and autonomy', in the sense of assigning to them more or less absolute, fixed, decontextualised meanings and qualities'. Sarkar argues that there are several troubles with the histories produced by the subaltern writers and these arise due to their restrictive analytical frameworks, as Subaltern Studies swings from a rather easy emphasis on subaltern autonomy to an even more simplistic thesis of Western colonial cultural power'. Such criticism of the *Subaltern Studies* is still continuing and the Subaltern historians have responded to it with their own justification of the project and counter-attacks on critics.

## **REJOINDER**

The subalternists took some time before reacting to the critiques. In vol. IV, Dipesh Chakrabarty's reply to some of the critiques was published. But before that, in the Preface of the similar volume, Ranajit Guha railed against the criticism by those whom he described the vendors of readymade answers and academic old rods who supposedly posed as the custodians of official truth entrenched within their liberal and leftist stockades. He peremptorily dismissed the criticism by those scholars who have existed too extensive with well-rehearsed thoughts and methodologies. He also derisively referred to what he termed as the manic reaction of a Delhi critic who, on the publication of each volume, has gone round the block waving his review copy and shouting, like the mad watchman in Tagore's story, —sab jhuta hai! Sab jhuta hai!"

Chakrabarty's reply was more detailed and well-argued. He questioned the intentions of some reviewers. For instance, the charge of both Hegelianism and positivism against Guha seemed contradictory. It was because, he says, —Idealism", —positivism", etc. are not used in the essay as easy, descriptive conditions; they are conditions of condemnation as well. In reply to the charge of ignoring the colonial contexts or any outside powers on the politics and consciousness of the subalterns, he said that this alleged —failure" is actually our conscious refusal to subordinate the internal logic of a —consciousness" to the logic of so-described —objective" or —material" circumstances. He further asserted that:

- The central aim of the Subaltern Studies project is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiative.

It was because, as shown by subaltern historians, in the course of nationalist struggles involving popular mobilization the masses often put their own interpretations on the aims of these movements and proceeded to act them out. Besides Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash has been a mainly vocal defender of the project. He praises the project as part of the post-foundational and post-Orientalist historiography of India. He argues that the

Subaltern historians have been able to rescue their writings from the clutches of elite historiography:

- The significance of their project lies in the writing of histories freed from the will of the colonial and nationalist elites. It is this project of resisting colonial and nationalist discursive hegemonies, through histories of the subaltern whose identity resides in variation, which creates the work of these scholars an important intervention in third-world historiography.

In another article, Gyan Prakash outlines the cause for a shift in the location as the *Subaltern Studies* project urbanized and he defends this change. He supports the later growths as it has turned into a sharp critique of the discipline of history. Gyan Pandey, writing In Protection of the Fragment, argues against mainly of the writings on communal riots in India. He states that in these versions, The fragments of Indian society – the smaller religious and caste societies, tribal parts, industrial workers, and activist women's groups, all of which might be said to symbolize "minority" cultures and practices – have been expected to fall in row with the "mainstream" ... national civilization. It is because since the nineteenth century the state and the nation have been the central organizing principles of human society. Likewise, Ranajit Guha, in The Small Voice of History, accused the contemporary historiographical custom of being statist. He argues that,

- The general sense of history may be said usually to be guided by a sort of statism which the mantises and evaluates the past for it. This is a custom which goes back to the beginnings of contemporary historical thinking in the Italian Renaissance.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism, criticizes the Marxist historiography for being influenced by a sure form of hyper-rationalism feature of colonial modernity. He further argues that now post-structuralist and deconstructionist philosophies are useful in developing approaches suited to learning subaltern histories under circumstances of colonial modernities. The information that



there was a shift in the location is also sometimes denied. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that from the very beginning, the *Subaltern Studies* was dissimilar and raised questions in relation to the history writing that made a radical departure from English Marxist historiographical custom inescapable'. He says that right since its inception the *Subaltern Studies* followed the postcolonial agenda and was not in tune with the history from below' approach:

- With hindsight it could be said that there were broadly three regions in which Subaltern Studies differed from the "history from below" approach of Hobsbawm or Thompson.... Subaltern historiography necessarily entailed a relative separation of the history of power from any universalist histories of capital, an interrogation of the connection flanked by power and knowledge.... In these differences ... lay the beginnings of a new method of theorizing the intellectual agenda for postcolonial histories.'

Therefore, in their responses to the critics, the writers associated with the Subaltern project sought to defend their works as part of the post-Marxist, post-colonial and poststructuralist streams of historical thinking.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What do you understand by the term subaltern'?
- How did the *Subaltern Studies* begin in India?
- What are the basic points of criticism directed towards the *Subaltern Studies*?
- What is the response of the Subalternist historians?

## **CHAPTER 26**

### **ECONOMIC HISTORY**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives

- Colonial and nationalistic writings
- Pre-colonial economy and colonial trends
- Statistical inquiries
- Town and country
- Industrialization
- Review questions

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand colonial writings
- Understand nationalistic writings
- Understand pre-colonial economy and colonial trends
- Understand statistical inquiries
- Understand industrialization

## **COLONIAL AND NATIONALISTIC WRITINGS**

Early colonial writers in relation to the economy of India did not have to reckon with a critical Indian public and nationalistic opinion. Some of them were free and frank in their criticisms of the effect of the British rule upon the indigenous economy and they were sometimes critical of what they admitted to be a drain of wealth from India to Britain. They did not deny what a modern Persian chronicler named Saiyid Ghulam Hussain Khan observed in *The Seir Mutaqherin* with regard to the English habit of ‘scraping jointly as much money’ in this country as they can, and carrying it ‘in immense sums to the kingdom of England’. A manuscript official statement, entitled ‘Historical Review of the External Commerce of Calcutta from 1750 until 1830’, commented freely on ‘the plunder of the country’. After conquering Bengal, the East India Company ceased to import silver for their purchases of Indian goods for export to Europe, and deployed the revenues of Bengal for the purpose. According to the statement, the unrequited exports became the vehicle for the remittance of the fortunes made by individual Englishmen in the country.

As critical Indian opinion appeared in the later nineteenth century, the colonial management became more concerned to illustrate that economic progress was happening in the country. The Madras management commissioned a voluminous statistical work by S. Srinivasa Raghavaianagar, entitled *Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency throughout the last forty years of the British Management*, which constituted a well-documented apology for foreign rule in the country. The second century of British rule in India was marked by an ongoing controversy flanked by the critics and apologists of empire. Indian nationalists, sympathetic Britishers and, at a later state, Marxists intellectuals blamed the drain for the impoverishment of India. Colonial officials, at the instance of Lord Curzon, contended that there was no impoverishment at all, and rival estimates of national income were produced on both sides. In the middle of the works of the era may be mentioned, on the one face, Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, an earlier version 1873, and William Digby, *—Wealthy” British India: a Revelation from the Official Records*; and on the opposite face, F.T. Atkinson, *‘A Statistical Review of the Income and wealth of British India’, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, June 1902. Atkinson, an official under Lord Curzon, sought to illustrate that the national income of India was rising in excess of the years, though somewhat slowly. Naoroji who entertained contrary views, computed the annual drain from India at approximately £30,000,000 in his own day, and estimated that earlier, approximately 1800, the figure had stood at in relation to the £5,000,000.

The debate generated the first common work on the economic history of India. To Curzon’s annoyance, a retired ICS officer who became President of the Indian National Congress, Romesh Chunder Dutt, drew up a formidable critique of the economic effect of British rule upon India in *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule* and *The Economic History of India under the Victorian Age*. Dutt dwelt on the heavy land tax upon the peasants, the destruction of the handicrafts, the recurrence of famines, and the annual drain to Britain in his economic critique of British rule. The British, he said, had given India peace, but not prosperity. Colonial management did not accept his nationalist contentions, but one claim he made is indisputable: No revise

is more motivating and instructive in the history of nations than the revise of the material condition of the people from age to age.' Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, before he became the Mahatma, wept as he read Dutt's *Economic History* and, in the after that generation, the doctrine that the mainly fundamental impact of British rule upon India was a destructive economic impact, became axiomatic with Marxist intellectuals, such as R.P. Dutt. A member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, he wrote a radical critique of colonial rule entitled *India Today*. Published by the Left Book Club from London in 1940, it was promptly banned in India. In this book, R.P. Dutt sought to illustrate that the industrial imperialism which R.C. Dutt had criticized in his day had since then made a transition to financial imperialism, and that the drain had become more enervating for the economy in the latest stage of imperialism in India.

## **PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMY AND COLONIAL TRENDS**

The debate on the colonial impact on the economy and the question of impoverishment under British rule brought forth a new issue: what was the state of the economy before British rule? Was India more wealthy then, and had she already embarked on an endogenous path of development that was cut off by the British ascendancy? Was national income higher at the time? Valuable official reports on the state and structure of the indigenous economy had been written in early colonial times, the mainly notable in the middle of these being the reports on eastern and southern India by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton. His voluminous and statistical surveys of agriculture, manufactures and inland trade were partially printed in Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar 1801*; and Francis Buchanan, *An Explanation of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 1811 – 1812*, 2 vols.. Later on, historians directed their curiosity to the economic circumstances in Mughal Times, some early studies being Edward Thomas, *The Revenue Possessions of the Mughal Empire in India* and Jadunath Sarkar, *The India of Aurengzeb: Topography, Statistics and Roads*. It was, though, a British revenue official of UP, W.H. Moreland, who first ventured into a common economic history of pre-colonial India in *India at the Death of*

*Akbar*, and the *Agrarian System of Moslem India*. In Moreland's estimate the national income of India at the time of Todar Mal's survey in Akbar's reign was not perceptibly higher than what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Moreland concluded that a parasitic agrarian despotism had driven India to an economic dead end, despite the considerable expansion of foreign trade that the Dutch and English East India Companies brought in relation to the in the seventeenth century. The conclusion that the foreign companies operating in Mughal India brought in a lot of silver and stimulated textile exports was later confirmed by K.N. Chaudhuri's econometric revise, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760*. A soviet author named A. I. Chicherov presented an argument in *Indian Economic Development in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* which Moreland would not have supported: that Mughal India was undergoing an endogenous capitalist development which was cut off by the ascendancy of foreign monopoly capital under the English East India Company. That this is unlikely to have been the case is shown by the reputed Marxist historian Irfan Habib in 'The Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. XXIX, 1969. Habib demonstrated the sophistication of the Mughal urban economy, but like Moreland he accentuated its parasitic connection with the heavily taxed rural economy.

For the colonial era, R.C. Dutt's *Economic History* was followed by a series of works: D.R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Development of India in Recent Times*; Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*; and D.H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India*. More recently, there has been a communal two-volume survey; Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol 1, C.1200 – C.1750*; and Dharma Kumar, *The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol. 2 C.1757 – C.1970*. Daniel Houston Buchanan, an American author, was of the opinion that other-worldly values and the caste system inhibited economic development in India. D.R. Gadgil, who updated his close to classic work many times, emphasized, on the contrary, more strictly economic factors: the

difficulties of capital mobilization on explanation of the absolute smallness of capital possessions in respect to the size of the population, the late development of organized banking, and the seasonal fluctuations of a monsoon economy. A dispassionate economist, he did not blame either foreign rule or the Indian social structure for the absence of an industrial revolution in India; some of the Western contributors to the second volume of *The Cambridge Economic History*, on the other hand, showed a disposition to challenge R.C. Dutt's vision of the negative impact of colonialism, and they dwelt instead on the technological backwardness of the Indian economy. This, in their view, inhibited industrial development and capitalist enterprise throughout the colonial era.

## **STATISTICAL INQUIRIES**

The colonial management had produced vast body of annual official statistics. After independence, economic historians utilized these statistics to interpret extensive-term trends in national income and agricultural and industrial manufacture. The two seminal works in this respect were by George Blyn on agricultural manufacture and by S. Sivasubramonian on national income. Both authors based their conclusions on detailed statistical information set out in tabular form, so that other historians might draw their own conclusions from the tables. George Blyn's work was entitled *Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947: Output, Availability and Productivity*. S. Sivasubramonian's thesis at the Delhi School of Economics, National Income of India 1900-01 to 1946-47, was later published in expanded form, including the post-independence era, as *The National Income of India in the Twentieth Century*,

Blyn exposed that agricultural manufacture in India showed adverse trends after 1920. The negative trends were especially pronounced in what he described the Greater Bengal region, which incorporated Bihar and Orissa. There was declining per capita food availability in the late colonial era. S. Sivasubramonian demonstrated that the national income of India grew slowly in the era flanked by 1900-1947, since agriculture, which was the principal sector in the economy, did not perform well. Industrial manufacture expanded

more perceptibility, especially because of the rapid growth of factory industry. On S. Sivasubramonian's proof, there is no question of any 'deindustrialization' having occurred in India flanked by 1900-1947.

There is no comparable statistical series for the nineteenth century. The issue of deindustrialization is so very much alive as regards the nineteenth century. Since factory industry did not explain for an appreciable part of industrial manufacture at the time, the issue boils down to the question whether cottage industries declined in that century. In a well-publicized controversy throughout the 1960's, Morris David Morris argued, against his opponents, that the cotton weavers benefited from the cheaper threads from Britain, but since neither side could produce any statistical series, the controversy, embodied in M.D. Morris et al, *Indian Economy in the Nineteenth Century: a Symposium*, produced more heat than light. In yet another controversy, later on, Amiya Kumar Bagchi, in an article entitled 'Deindustrialization in Gangetic Bihar 1809 – 1901', produced statistical proof from Buchanan Hamilton's survey that the proportion of people employed in cottage industries went down drastically in the nineteenth century. The article, published in Barun De, *Essays in Honour of Professor Susobhan Chandra Sarkar*, provoked a critique by Marika Vicziany, who doubted the reliability of the statistical data from Buchanan Hamilton. Her critique, entitled 'The Deindustrialization of India in Nineteenth Century: A Methodological critique of Amiya Kumar Bagchi', beside with 'A Reply' by Amiya Kumar Bachi, came out in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol 16, 1979. Subsequently, J. Krishnamurty, in 'Deindustrialization in Gangetic Bihar throughout the nineteenth Century: Another Seem at the Proof', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 22, 1985, argued that the qualitative proof was in favor of Bagchi's decline thesis. More recently, Tirthankar Roy, in *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*, has once again argued against any decline in the nineteenth century, but except for Bagchi, nobody else in this controversy has been able to adduce any statistical data from modern sources. As regards the eighteenth century, when the East India Company imposed a monopoly on textile exports, the Bangladeshi scholar Hameeda Hossein has produced proof of terrible coercion upon the weavers in

*The Company Weavers of Bengal: The East India Company and the Organisation of Textile Manufacture in Bengal 1750 – 1813.*

## **TOWN AND COUNTRY**

The beginnings of contemporary Indian business enterprise in the early 19th century have been traced by Blair B. Kling in *Partnership in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India*, and by Asiya Siddiqui in 'The Business World of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy'. Private European enterprise in the colonial port municipalities of the nineteenth century has been sketched in Amal Tripathi, *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833* and, for the subsequent era, when managing agency homes became dominant, in Radhe Shyam Rungta, *The Rise of Business Corporations in India 1851-1900*. Big Indian enterprise on the model of Dwarkanath Tagore and Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy suffered a setback in the colonial port municipalities as European capital became slowly monopolistic, but as C.A. Bayly has shown in an influential work entitled *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770 – 1870*, Indian traders fared better in the inland markets by adjusting to colonial rule. Essays by many historians concerning the colonial impact upon the Indian economy are composed jointly in K.N. Chaudhuri and C.J. Dewey, *Economy and Society*, and C.J. Dewey and A.G. Hopkins *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of India and Africa*. Some of these essays presented new conclusions, especially on markets, industrial policy, and agrarian society. Several local economic histories have appeared in excess of time, two well-recognized works being N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, 3 vols. and C.J. Baker, *An Indian Rural Economy: the Tamil Nad Countryside 1880 – 1950*. There is also one micro-history of economic and social change in a single Punjab Village in excess of time by Tom Kessinger, entitled *Vilayatpur 1848 – 1968: Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village*.

The major British investments in the Indian economy, intended for imperial rather than national benefit, were in railways and canals. These investments did not bring in relation to the sort of industrial growth witnessed in Germany, Russia and Japan in the nineteenth century, and hardly improved



per acre agricultural productivity in excess of the land as a whole. There were harmful ecological face effects, and famines sustained to visit the rural population time and again. These themes are explored in Daniel Thorner, *Investment in Empire*; Daniel Thorner. 'Great Britain and the Economic Development of India's Railways', *Journal of Economic History*, vol XI, 1951; Elizabeth Whitcombe, *Agrarian Circumstances in Northern India: the United Provinces under British Rule, 1660 – 1900*; and Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: an Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, a brilliant essay by the Nobel Laureate economist showing that famines could happen because of adverse movements in prices and wages even when the food stocks were accessible.

## **INDUSTRIALIZATION**

The twentieth century in its first half witnessed a sure degree of industrialization, but there was no industrial revolution, nor any economic break-through despite an appreciable growth of big-level industry before 1947. Historians have differed on why there was no 'take-off'. The Marxist economist Amiya Kumar Bagchi, in *Private Investment in India 1900 – 1939*, and the non-Marxist historian, Rajat K. Ray, in *Industrialization in India: Growth and Disagreement in the Private Corporate Sector 1914 – 1947* both argued that colonial policies were responsible for this. Morris D. Morris, an American economic historian of note, argues, on the contrary, in his contribution to the second volume of the *Cambridge Economic History of India*, that the technological backwardness of the Indian economic structure blocked the sustained growth of investment in big-level industry. Subsequently B.R. Tomlinson, a historian who hardly took a face in the dispute, nevertheless observed, in his *The Economy of Contemporary India 1860 – 1970* that 'a ruthless insistence by government on strategic priorities limited the expansion' of Indian industry throughout the Second World War, when there were new opportunities. By then, there was a big Indian capitalist class locked in a thrash about with European capital in India. Its growth, and internal tensions, is studied in Claude Markovitz, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics 1931-1939. The Indigenous Capitalist Class and the Rise*

*of the Congress Party.* By general consent, the explanation of backwardness is no longer sought in social values and customs. The political factor in economic backwardness or growth is still, though, a matter of dispute.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What are the differences between colonialist and nationalist works on Indian economic history?
- Write short notes on the following with reference to the economic history of India :
  - Industrialization
  - Town and country.

## **CHAPTER 27**

### **PEASANTRY AND WORKING CLASSES**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Historiography before 1947
- The left paradigm and its critics
- The longer term perspective
- Peasant movements
- Labour history
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain historiography before 1947
- Explain the left paradigm and its critics
- Explain the longer term perspective
- Explain peasant movements

- Explain labour history

## HISTORIOGRAPHY BEFORE 1947

It would be a mistake to think that peasant and workers did not constitute an entirely new subject, nor would it be right to say that there was no interest in the subject before the emergence of socialism. That there was an early interest in the circumstances of the poor is shown by Reverend Lal Behari Day's English language fictional work, *Govinda Samanta*. It was brought out in a new edition entitled *Bengal Peasant Life*, which contained significant material on the peasantry of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the Brahmo social reformer, Sasipada Banerjee, launched the Bengali magazine *Bharat Sharmajibi* as early as 1874, and this magazine contained significant historical material.

One may, indeed, go back to the eighteenth century, and discover English and Persian accounts of agriculture and the agriculturist. H.T. Colebrooke, a senior East India Company servant, wrote his *Remarks on the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal in 1794*. Recently, historians have traced an significant Persian manuscript entitled *Risala-i Zirat*, written by a late Mughal official of Bengal for a company servant in 1785, in which he set out four separate categories of cultivators;

- *Muqarrari* cultivator, a tenant with a permanent deed
- *Khudkasht* cultivator, a tenant with understood rights in his own village,
- *Paikasht* cultivator, a tenant residing in a village other than the one in which his field was situated, and
- *Kaljanah*, or 'one who tilled land as the subordinate of another cultivator'.

From later records, it becomes clear that the fourth kind of agriculturist might be an under-tenant, a sharecropper or a plain farm servant. The distinction flanked by the resident peasant and the migrant peasant slowly disappeared throughout the colonial era due to rising population pressure, but

the similar factor kept alive the more fundamental distinction flanked by the peasant and the agricultural servant. The latter was entered in the censuses of colonial India as farm servant or field laborer, and he was a man even below the sharecropper, who still had the status of a peasant.

Because of the British authorities' dependence on the land revenue, the colonial management kept the ryot constantly in its view and so in its records. The similar cannot be said of the agricultural laborer, for he was not a tenant and was not liable to pay land revenue from any tenancy. Only the ryot, so, is treated beside with the zamindar in B. H. Barden-Powell's *Manual of Land Revenue System and Land Tenures of India*, later republished in the well-recognized three volume *Land Systems of British India*. Another official, W.H. Moreland, drew up the *Notes on the Agricultural Circumstances and Troubles of the United Provinces, Revised up to 1911*, and later on he produced the classic *Agrarian System of Moslem India*. From the works of Baden Powell and W.H. Moreland, it appeared clearly that the land revenue of the state and the rent of the landlord had been the traditional mechanisms of the appropriation of the peasant surplus, not only in the colonial era but also in pre-colonial times. Yet another traditional mechanism of surplus appropriation, indebtedness and the charges upon it, assumed a novel importance in the colonial era, and drew the attention of the British officials in due course. As the ryot began to lose land, and riots broke out against the money-lender, two Punjab officers wrote significant works on the ryot's indebtedness, and on the social tensions generated by money lending operations: S.S. Thorburn, *Musalman and Money-lenders in the Punjab* and Malcom Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*.

The colonial management also generated works on labour employed in cottage and small-level industries. Two significant official works relating to Uttar Pradesh were William Hoey, *A Monograph on Trade and Manufactures in Northern India*, and A.C. Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries of the United Provinces*. Logically, a mid-day point in the transition from the cottage to the factory was the workshop employing many artisans, and this significant development was touched on in an unofficial work: N.M. Joshi, *Urban Handicrafts of the Bombay Deccan*.

The emergence of big-level industry produced two new social forces: labour and capital. In the middle of the works of the colonial era relating to these new growths may be mentioned S.M. Rutnagar, *Bombay Industries: the Cotton Mills*; D.H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India*; and Radhakamal Mukherjee, *The Indian Working Class*. It will be apparent that by the late colonial era the worker had established his lay beside the peasant as a force to reckon with in the economic life of the country. The involvement of these kinds of people in the rising political unrest incorporated the UK Government to dispatch two royal commissions that generated significant reports on their circumstances: *The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, Statement* and *The Royal Commission on Labour in India, Statement*. The colonial era generated great body of proof on the peasant and the worker for research after independence.

## **THE LEFT PARADIGM AND ITS CRITICS**

The left recognized the working class as the vanguard of the class thrash about and the mainly progressive political force in Indian society. The overwhelming mass of the population still existed off agriculture, and the leftist historians were so induced to pay some attention to the peasantry. They came up with a paradigm, or framework of understanding, in order to create sense of change in agrarian society throughout the colonial era. The paradigm was worked out soon after independence in such works as S.J. Patel, *Agricultural Workers in Contemporary India and Pakistan* and Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*. On this view of the matter, colonial rule in India produced a series of related changes in agrarian society: the creation of landed property by law; forced commercialization of crops; land brought to the market as a commodity; the spread of peasant indebtedness and land alienation; the disintegration of the peasantry into rich peasants and poor peasants; depeasantisation, landlessness and the emergence of a pauperized class of landless laborers; the collapse of the village society of self-enough peasants and a distant reaching procedure of social stratification in the countryside

Subsequent research revealed that these notions were misinformed, and based on an inadequate acquaintance with the vast documentation in the colonial archives. The work of serious historical investigation and revision began with Dharma Kumar's pioneering work, *Land and Caste in South India, Agricultural Labour in Madras Presidency throughout the Nineteenth Century*. She proved with rich documentation that pre-colonial and early-colonial India already possessed a vast agrarian under-class of bonded laborers who traditionally belonged to the untouchable castes. Landlessness here was function of caste and not of the market. Rajat and Ratna Ray followed with an article in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, entitled 'The Dynamics of Stability in Rural Bengal under the British Emporium: a revise of Quasi-Stable Survival Equilibrium in Underdeveloped Societies in a Changing World', in which they contended that a group of rich peasants who had their lands cultivated by sharecroppers and bonded laborers lived even at the beginning of colonial rule, and were beneficiaries of economic change in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Yet another attack on the Marxist paradigm of polarization flanked by rich and poor peasants throughout the colonial era came from a contrary direction. There had earlier been a debate in Russia flanked by V.I. Lenin and A.V. Chayanov on stratification with the peasantry. As against Lenin's thesis that growth of agrarian capitalism and the emergence of a class of *kulaks* had permanently stratified the Russian peasantry into rich and poor, Chayanov contended that the Russian peasantry remained a homogeneous and survival-oriented society of small-holders in the middle of whom differences of farm size were cyclical and not consolidated into permanent distinctions. Eric Stokes, in his contribution to *The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol.2, C.1757-c.1970*, edited by Dharma Kumar, expressed the opinion that there was no agrarian polarization. If divisions did happen in the countryside, it was 'more because of the slow impoverishment of the mass than the enrichment of the few'. Opinion on this intricate issue has remained divided. Did the peasants remain an undifferentiated class of poor small holders? Neil Chalesworth, in *Peasants and Imperial Rule: Agriculture and Agrarian Society in the Bombay Presidency, 1850 – 1935* contended that a sure degree

of commercialization of agriculture in colonial India had the effect of pushing up a number of peasants. Sugata Bose, on the other hand, maintained, in *Agrarian Bengal: Economy, Social Structure and Politics 1919-1947*, that rich farmers were to be seen only in the middle of declaimers of land in a few boundary regions. In the more settled districts of East Bengal, the egalitarian peasant small holding system remained intact for mainly of the colonial era. More recently, Nariaki Nukazato, in *Agrarian System in Eastern Bengal C. 1870-1910*, has establish that even there, at least a quarter of the land had approach under the unequal connection of cultivating employers and sharecropping under-tenants. He lends support to an earlier thesis to this effect in Binay Bhushan Chudhuri, 'The Procedure of Depeasantization in Bengal and Bihar, 1885-1947,' *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 2, 1975. Chaudhuri's article made the significant point that the rising number of sharecroppers in the middle of the peasants indicated an incipient procedure of depeasantisation even while outwardly the small-holding system appeared to be intact.

Historians, moreover, came to concede that class was not the only factor in differentiation in the middle of the peasantry. Studies such as M.C.Pradhan, *The Political System of the Jats of Northern India*, David Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar: a revise of the Patidar Society of Gujarat*, and Stephen F. Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Boundary: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922* showed that caste and society were capable of producing significant rural solidarities in the middle of the members, setting them separately from other peasants.

## **THE LONGER TERM PERSPECTIVE**

W.H. Moreland had set the agenda for an extensive-term visualization of the role of the state in the life of the rural population. Marxists historians at Aligarh, following in his footsteps set in relation to the exploring aspect of agrarian life and the state formation in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods. In the early 1960s, Irfan Habib, a formidable Aligarh historian, demonstrated the overwhelming attendance of the Mughal state in the life of the heavily taxed peasantry in *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*. He depicted many peasant rebellions that occurred in the reign of

Aurangzeb. The two ends of the spectrum, the state and the village, were also portrayed with the help of rich Marathi documentation by the Japanese historian Hiroshi Fukazawa, whose essays were composed jointly in *The Medieval Deccan; Peasants, Social Systems and States, Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries*. The American historian, Burton Stein, maintained that the state, rooted in the life of the peasant society, had a weaker and more segmented character that Irfan Habib had allowed, at least in the south. This non-Marxist perspective was set forth in Stein's *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*. Another American historian, David Ludden, undertook an extensive-term revise of local rulers and villagers in Tirunelveli district in the deep south. The micro-study spanned the pre-colonial and colonial periods and was entitled *Peasant History in South India*. The history of peasants now had a broader perspective than the initial Marxist studies of peasant movements.

## **PEASANT MOVEMENTS**

The perspective lent a rising sophistication to the revise of peasant struggles. A rising brand of non-Marxist historians entered the field with new concepts. The pioneer in this sophisticated new diversity of history was Eric Strokes, whose essays on the circumstances and movements of peasants paid due attention to caste, markets, tax burden and a diversity of other factors. His essays were composed jointly in *The Peasant and The Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India*. The sociologist D. N. Dhangare's *Peasant Movements in India* represented another breakaway from the older one-dimensional Marxist perspective. Ranjit Guha, at the similar time, brought a subalternist perspective to bear on the subject in *Elementary Characteristics of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. He showed that peasant actions were typically circumscribed by the locality, based on caste or communal ties, and oriented towards an inversion of existing hierarchy rather than a revolutionary breakthrough on the Marxist model.

## **LABOUR HISTORY**



The older leftist history of the trade union movement in India assumed, uncritically, that the working class in India was practically the similar, in its social constitution and outlook, as the European working class. Closer examination of the sources by the historians threw doubt on the revolutionary potential and socialist outlook of the so-described 'proletariat'. It was demonstrated by the new labour historians that the mentality and the consciousness of the industrial workers did not differ all that much from the outlook of the poor who depended on the casual labour market in town and country. In the middle of the works that revised labour history considerably may be mentioned Morris David Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force India: A Revision of the Bombay Cotton Mills 1845-1947*; R.K. Newman, *Workers and Unions in Bombay 1919-29: a Revision of Organisation in the Cotton Mills*; Sujata Patel, *The Creation of Industrial Dealings. The Ahmedabad Textile Industry 1918-1939*, a revision of the Gandhian model of trade unionism based on the cooperation of capital and labour; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890-1940*, a revision of jute mill labour from the Subalternist point of view; and Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay 1900-1940*. Dipesh Chakrabarty noted that the 'hierarchical precapitalist civilization' of the workers made them prone to communal violence and inclined them to dependence on the 'Sardars' who recruited them. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, in his wide ranging revision, noted the dependence of the workers on the 'Dadas' in the neighborhood. Instead of organizing themselves into effective contemporary trade unions, the rural migrants to the mill towns depended on jobbers and on communal solidarities. They were prone to unorganised easily-suppressed violence. Communal riots displaced prolonged, successful strikes all too often in labour unrest.

In a book entitled *Village Societies in the East and West*, Sir Henry Maine conceived old Indian society in conditions of status and society, as against contract and class. The picture of inaccessible, self enough village societies might have been overdrawn even then. As colonial rule progressed, so did the understanding of Indian society, and this is reflected in the title of a

recent work: Kapil Kumar, *Congress and Classes: Nationalism, Workers and Peasants*. The extensive-term effect of colonial rule was to bring the classes into play in a new national region.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- How did the peasant and working class histories begin?
- Discuss the histories related to these classes before independence.
- Give an account of the histories of peasants and working classes after independence.

## **CHAPTER 28**

### **CASTE, TRIBE AND GENDER**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- The detection of caste
- Colonial ethnology and the tribes
- Low caste and tribal protests
- Are caste and tribe real?
- Gender
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the discovery of caste
- Explain colonial ethnology and the tribes
- Explain low caste and tribal protests
- Explain the concept of gender.

## THE DETECTION OF CASTE

The colonial British management in India used the concept of caste in a principal method to understand the society it administered. The British derived the term 'caste' from the Portuguese word *casta*. The Portuguese observation of a social institution described *casta* throughout early maritime voyages led in due course to the elaboration of the concept of 'caste system'. This happened in the nineteenth century, in course of which the colonial management came to understand the whole social formation in conditions of the caste system. Colonial officers commented on the subsistence of the institution of caste, in an imperfect form, even in the middle of the Muslims and Christians.

The Portuguese travelogue, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa An Explanation of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants. Written by Durate Barbosa and completed in relation to the year 1518 A.D.*, trans M.L. Dames was in the middle of the first works to touch upon the institution. But the first to conceive 'the caste system' was the French Missionary, Abbe Dubois. In a work of 1816, entitled 'Account of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India, and of their Institutions, Religious and Civil', he referred to the caste system of India. He said, 'I am persuaded that it is basically and solely due to the sharing of the people into castes that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism and that she preserved the arts and sciences of culture whilst mainly other nations of the earth remained in the state of barbarism.' Other Christian missionaries did not share his favorable view of the civilization value of caste and the Madras Missionary Conference of 1850 held caste to be 'one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the gospel in India.' Indian social reformers, while unwilling as yet to condemn the caste system as a whole, also dwelt on some of the harmful social consequences of the institution.

Colonial social ethnology debated the origin and function of caste extensively in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the foundation of the census of 1881, two colonial officers speculated in their reports from the Punjab and North-Western Provinces and Oudh that caste was basically a frozen occupational system. These early official reports are Denzil

Ibbetson, *Statement on the Census of the Punjab*, subsequently re-published as *Punjab Castes*, and John C. Nesfield, *Brief View of the Caste System of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, jointly with an Examination of Names and Figures Shown in the Census Statement*. A brilliant Bengal official named H.H. Risley disagreed with this view and put forth the influential contention that caste had a racial origin, to be established in the Aryan conquest of India's darker original inhabitants. Not all colonial officials agreed with this view which was set forth in Risley's *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, 2 vols., and *The People of India*. William Crooke, an official in sympathy with Ibbetson and Nesfield in his matter, argued against Risley's race theory, and emphasized occupational criteria for understanding caste in *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, 4 vols.. Risley and Crooke based their official reports on the census of 1891. Whatever their variation on the origin of caste, the colonial census had by then officially recognized caste as the principal concept for analyzing Indian society. Risley's effort to set up the social ranking of caste through the census set off a keen competition in the middle of several caste groups in relation to the matters of rank.

In due course the colonial management fostered political rivalries in the middle of the several castes and the proposal for separate legislative representation of 'the depressed classes' led to Mahatma Gandhi's fast unto death and a compromise flanked by the caste Hindus and the untouchable leader B.R. Ambedkar. The keen interest concerning caste at this time is reflected in works by both Indians and foreigners: Nripendra Kumar Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*; J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India: It's Nature, Function and Origins*; and G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*. Though none were professional historians, all three speculated in relation to the origin and meaning of caste. Hutton, who was the Census Commissioner of 1931, was dissatisfied with the race and job theories of caste. He speculated:

- The information is, several roads of migration have led to India - and have ended there. This has resulted in the accumulation of a big number of societies of very dissimilar stages of civilization and very varying customs neither in a region in which they have neither been mutually inaccessible nor without some measure of individual

separation. The mere inescapable necessity of finding a *modus vivendi* on the part of a number of dissimilar cultures has almost certainly played a not unimportant part in the middle of the several factors that have combined to cause the caste system to develop.<sup>6</sup>

Speculation in relation to the nature of caste sustained in the era after independence. Louis Dumont's contemporary sociological classic, *Homo Hierarchicus: Essai sur les systems des castes* argued that the purity-pollution hierarchy, by which all castes is placed in relation to each other, was the central characteristic of the caste system. Morton Klass, in his *Caste, The Emergence of the South Asian Social System*, argued on the other hand that a caste, in its irreducible essence, was a marriage circle, general job or other characteristics being secondary to the system.

## **COLONIAL ETHNOLOGY AND THE TRIBES**

Colonial speculation in relation to the origins of the caste system incorporated the assumption that several tribes had at dissimilar times been given a specific caste ranking and had therefore been absorbed into the caste system. The colonial management also exposed, though, that many aboriginal tribes had not been so absorbed and had maintained a separate subsistence of their own. These tribes, which had remained separately from the rest of society, were thought to be dependent on forest produce and shifting farming, and were supposed to be easy, backward people prone to violence. Closer acquaintance with the tribes showed, though, that their circumstances varied, and that several had taken to settled agriculture. Early colonial ethnology incorporated speculations in relation to the origins and history of the tribes. Colonel E.T. Dalton, who was Chota Nagpur Commissioner and had secure acquaintance with that wild country which today constitutes, beside with the Santhal Parganas, the new state of Jharkhand, was in the middle of the first to venture into the history and present condition of the tribes. His work was entitled *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*. It was a pioneering work.

After Colonel Dalton, an amateur Bengali ethnologist who existed in Bihar became interested in the tribes of the similar region where Dalton had

served as Commissioner. His name was Sarat Chandra Roy. His inquiries were more detailed and he showed an extra ordinary academic grasp of the new discipline of anthropology. He wrote a number of works on the tribes of Chota Nagpur. It may be noted that the region, beside with the Santhal Parganas, was incorporated in his time in the province of Bihar and Orissa. In Colonel Dalton's time, the whole region, today the state of Jharkhand, had been part of the vast Bengal Presidency. In whatever management the region might be incorporated at dissimilar times, it had a distinctive habitat. It was a wild plateau, and the caste system had not urbanized there into a predominant social system. Some of the wild tribes had their own Rajas, some existed under their local chiefs. The Santhals of the Santhal Parganas and the Mundas of the Chota Nagpur division were numerically big population blocs. In a well-known work on agrarian history, *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, W.W. Hunter had earlier touched on the Santhal insurrection of 1855. Sarat Chandra Roy turned his attention to the Mundas, and produced an anthropological work on them entitled *The Mundas and their Country*. He went on with his detailed researches and produced two more works: *The Oraons of Chota Nagpur: Their History; Economic Life and Social Organisation*; and *The Birhors: a Little – recognized Jungle Tribe of Chota Nagpur*. Dalton had commented on the joyous life of the tribals. Roy added that every bachelor had his sweetheart in the middle of the maidens.

It was clear by this time that the sexual organisation of society was very dissimilar in the middle of the tribals compared to the more familiar caste society. A missionary named Verrier Elwin who had urbanized empathy with the tribals of Central India turned his attention to the matter. He touched on an institution described the *ghotul* which permitted free mixing. 'Throughout tribal India', he said, 'divorce is easy and usually the wife has the similar rights as her husband'. In the middle of his works may be mentioned *The Baiga, The Muria and their Ghotul* and the *Bondo Highlander*. A novel characteristic of his work was the use of tribal songs as primary material for depicting their condition and mentality. A Baiga song which he composed runs as follows:

- In some homes there is food

- In other homes there is money
- But in every home there is youth and desire.

There is a hint here that the material condition of the tribals might not be easy, but their social organisation left scope for the natural joys of life. Some of the early colonial anthropologists speculated in relation to the history of the tribes, but actual historical materials were not forthcoming from a non-literate society. A.R. Radcliffe Brown, in his influential anthropological work entitled *The Andaman Islanders*, disapproved of such speculative history and urged that tribal society should be studied as it appeared in the present before the anthropologist. The inherent difficulties in constructing the history of the tribals meant that the main body of research work concerning them was anthropological. The work of the Anthropological Survey of India accentuated this tendency. Though, these similar anthropological reports on current circumstances in the middle of the tribals became valuable historical documents when, as it happened in self-governing India, their condition changed beyond recognition, and for the worse.

## **LOW CASTE AND TRIBAL PROTESTS**

When historians turned to learning the circumstances of low castes and tribals, they devoted a good deal of attention to the question of oppression and protest throughout the colonial era. Both groups were marginal, and were discriminated against. Yet from time to time ideological leadership appeared from amongst them and there were movements of protest which figured in the colonial archives. In the middle of the low castes at least, statements of their own point of view were also sometimes accessible. Two recent works which have made motivating use of such material, telling the story from the point of view of the group concerned, are: Rosalind O' Hanlon, *Caste, Disagreement and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India*; and Shekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: the Namasudras of Bengal 1872-1947*. The gender mores of the low castes and the tribals differed from the high caste ethic, and in their studies of protest. O'Hanlon and Bandyopadhyay did not forget the

gender factor. They also showed how the Non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra and the Namasudra movement in Bengal negotiated conditions with the broader issues of social reform and political nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It should be noted that the Non-Brahman movement in the peninsula of India, especially as it urbanized in the Maharashtra region and the Tamil country, did not necessarily symbolize the lowest of the low. The distinction flanked by the Non-Brahman movement and the Dalit movement has become clearer in the historical literature relating to the matter. Eugene F. Irschik, an American historian, who suggested that caste played a significant role in colonial Indian politics, dealt with the Non-Brahman castes, as separate from the untouchable Adi Dravidas, in *Politics and Social Disagreement in South India: the Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism*. He showed that the Non-Brahman movement in Tamil country was a protest movement of the middling castes against the Brahman-dominated nationalist movement of the Congress. Below the middling Non-Brahman castes, which suffered from a sense of discrimination, there were untouchable castes that were even more oppressed. It is from this part of society that the Dalit movement appeared in late colonial India under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar. The Maharashtra region witnessed both the Non-Brahman movement and the Dalit movement and the distinction stands clear in two separate works, both by Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873-1930*; and *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*. Another work dealing with the Dalit movement is Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*.

Movements of protest turned violent more readily in the middle of the tribals, at least in the middle of those tribes livelihood in the remoter jungle regions. The tribals were not integrated with the rest of the society, and they did not fully comprehend the might of the colonial state. Invariably their rebellions were drowned in blood. We have seen that W.W. Hunter left an explanation of the Santhal rebellion in his *Annals of Rural Bengal*, written not extensive after the event happened. Tribal movements of protest did not draw



much attention afterwards. The focus was upon the more organised politics of nationalist and low caste protest. The focus upon history from below has resulted in greater attention to tribal revolts in more recent years. In the middle of such studies may be mentioned K.S. Singh, *Dust Storm and Hanging Mist: The Story of Birsa Munda and His Movement*; and J.C. Jha, *Tribal Revolt of Chota Nagpur, 1831-32*. Dealing with the Munda and Kol rebellions respectively, both works related to the Chota Nagapur plateau. Historians of India have paid little attention to the tribes of the north-eastern hill states. Several years ago, the anthropologist Christophe von Furer- Haimendorf wrote the well-recognized work, *The Naked Nagas: Head Hunters of Assam in Peace and War*. Recently research in the history of the northeastern hills has begun in the north-east itself, and in pace with the trends in current research, social factors such as gender have begun to figure in this research. For instance, there is Frederick S. Downs, *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in North East India*.

### **ARE CASTE AND TRIBE REAL?**

Post-modernist historians have recently questioned whether categories such as ‘\_caste’ and ‘\_tribe’ are real. In their opinion, colonial officers invented these categories in their discourses upon India and Africa. The argument that ‘\_tribe’ is a figment of the colonial imagination appeared in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Custom*. Terence Ranger, a historian of Africa, argued this in relation to the Dark Continent, but there were resonance of ‘\_the invention of tribalism’ in the Indian subcontinent, too. That caste, too, was a product of colonial discourse and not a natural growth of pre-colonial history, were argued by Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, and by Nicholas B. Dirk, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Creation of Contemporary India*. These arguments have not established common acceptance outside post-modernist circles. Historians are aware of the dangers of ‘\_essentializing’ categories such as tribe, caste and religious society, and are also conscious of the constructed element in the colonial ethnology concerning these groups. Nevertheless, they have not been able to dispense with ‘\_tribalism’ or ‘\_casteism’ in interpreting Indian history. That tribal society is a real social

category has been reasserted by Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri in his essay, 'Tribal Society in Transition: Eastern India, 1757-1920', in Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta, *India's Colonial Encounter: Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes*. That caste assumed new shapes in colonial India was recognized many years ago by Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susan H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Custom: Political Development in India*. Therefore there was recognition that caste might have 're-invented' itself in colonial India. That it was often a smoke-screen for others interests in the politics of the colonial era are an argument that figures in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal, *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays in Indian Politics, 1870 to 1940*. But that caste became a real factor in politics, at least in the colonial era, is not denied even by post-modernist historians such as Dirks. The point is not to essentialism these categories too readily.

Dirks observes, 'Caste as we know it today is not in information some unchanged survival of ancient India...Rather...Caste... is a contemporary phenomenon, that is specifically the product of an historical encounter flanked by India and Western Colonial rule'. Though, feminist historians, in their studies of pre-colonial Indian society, have established caste to be very much an oppressive attendance in the lives of women even them. Uma Chakravarti in *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* establishes this to be the case with regard to Maharashtra in the age of Peshwas, as well as in the time of Pandita Ramabai in the late nineteenth century. This takes us to the question of gender.

## **GENDER**

Throughout the colonial era, two controversial works focused international attention upon the women's question in India. Highly critical of the condition of the Indian women, these two works were: Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* and Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*. At an early date serious historical interest on the subject of women in Indian civilization was indicated by B.C. Law, *Women in Buddhist Literature*; I.B. Horner, *Women under Primitive Buddhism*; and A.S. Altekar, *The Location of Women in Hindu Culture from the Prehistoric Times to the Present*.

The feminist movement and the International Women's year, 1975, set off a wave of women's studies, beginning with such works as B.R. Nanda, *Indian Women*:

- *from Purdah to Modernity*. Soon though, women's history broadened out and assumed the more intricate form of gender history. Instead of learning women as such, gender historian studied the problem in conditions of the power dealings flanked by the sexes in society. An influential work edited by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, entitled *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* indicated the transition to gender history. This was followed by more collections of articles that exhibited the new sophistication of gender history: J. Krishnamurty, *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Survival, Work and the State*; Bharati Ray, *From the Seams of History: Essays on Indian Women*; and Aparna Basu and Arup Taneja, *Breaking out of Invisibility: Women in Indian History*. The voices of women through the ages were composed jointly in the significant anthology edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita and entitled *Women Writing in India 600 B.C. to the Present*. Two authoritative, male produced texts for the guidance of Hindu and Muslim women respectively were critically examined in Julia Leslie, *The Perfect Wife: the Orthodox Hindu Woman according to the Stridharmapaddhati of Tryambakayajvan*, and Barbara Metcalf, *Perfecting Women, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar*.
- Bengal took the lead in the women's movement. Not surprisingly, a big number of works relate to the gender dealings in colonial Bengal. These works contain: Usha Chakraborty, *Condition of Bengali Women approximately the Second half of the Nineteenth Century*; Ghulam Murshid, *Reluctant Debutant: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization 1949-1905*; Malavika Karlekar, *Voices from within*; Barbara Southard, *The Women's Movement and Colonial Politics in Bengal: The Quest for Political Right, Education and Social Reform Legislation*; and Sonia Nishat Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in*

*Colonial Bengal 1876-1939*. Other provinces of India have been sheltered more recently. For instance, Prem Chowdhury, *The Veiled Woman: Shifting Gender Equations in Rural Haryana 1880-1990*; Sita Anantharaman, *Getting Girls to School: Social Reform in the Tamil Districts 1870-1930*; and Gail Minault, *Scheduled Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, which covers North India. There is also a common revise of Indian women in the contemporary era in *The New Cambridge History of India* series: Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Contemporary India*.

- More recently, gender history has broadened out and taken up the revise, not merely of femininity, but also of masculinity. An instance is Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the late Nineteenth Century*. Gender history now pays attention to race, society, caste and tribe. An inter-related field of social studies has appeared, and has enriched history writing.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- How will you define caste? Discuss the writings of various scholars on caste.
- Give an account of the colonial understanding of tribe.
- Discuss the historical works related to gender.

## **CHAPTER 29**

### **RELIGION AND CULTURE**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Pre-colonial and colonial historiography

- Post-colonial research in religion
- The revise of Indian culture
- Culture studies and religious identities
- Mentality and history of culture
- Review questions

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss pre-colonial and colonial historiography
- Discuss post-colonial research in religion
- Discuss the study of Indian culture
- Discuss culture studies and religious identities
- Discuss mentality and history of culture

## PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

What P.J. Marshall calls ‘the British detection of Hinduism’ was preceded extensive ago by the Muslim detection of Hindu sacred and secular learning. As early as C.1030, the Muslim scholar of Ghazni, Al Biruni, had written extensively and sufficiently on Hindu beliefs in *Kitab -ul- Hind*. The Tibetan lama, Taranatha, wrote a history of the Buddhist faith in India, *gar - chos - „Gyun*, approximately 1608, by which time Hinduism had already triumphed in excess of Buddhism. In the similar century, the Mughal Prince, Dara Shikoh, sought to illustrate that the monotheistic fundamentals of both Hinduism and Islam were capable of mingling jointly. His work, entitled *Majma - ul - Bahrain*, was based on inquiries into authoritative texts much as the *Upanishads* and the Sufi work *Gulshan Raz*. It was written in a philosophical vein, but yet another significant work of the seventeenth century, the *Dabistan - l Mazahib* of Mushin Fani, clearly exhibited the historical and relative way. This work, translated as *The Dabistan or School of Manners. The Religious Beliefs, Observances, Philosophical Opinions and Social Customs of the East* by David Shea and Anthony Troyer treated the major faiths and sects of India comprehensively.

The work of the British Orientalists on the 'great traditions' of Hinduism and Islam resulted in the codification of 'Hindoo law' and 'Anglo Muhammadan law', but at least one major Orientalist, H.H. Wilson, pushed his researches into regions beyond the orthodox religious traditions. His 'Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus', published in *Asiatic Researches*, recorded the history of several *bhakti* sects, including obscure ones. Following Wilson, the Brahma reformer Akshay Kumar Datta wrote in greater historical detail on a big number of unorthodox popular sects in his Bengali work, *Bharatbarshiya Upasak Sampraday*. It is the similar popular cults, such as the Bauls that Rabindranath Tagore brought into the limelight in his Hibbert lectures at Oxford published as *The Religion of Man*. He drew upon the historical work of a colleague at Santiniketan whom he had asked to research the subject. The Santiniketan teacher, Kshitimohan Sen, wrote a significant work in Bengali, entitled *Bharatiya Madhya Yuge Sadhanar Dhara*, which he translated subsequently as *Medieval Mysticism in India*. Later on, Sashi Bhushan Dasgupta dwelt on the unorthodox sects of early colonial Bengal in *Obscure Religious Cults*. The development of the Sufi cult in Bengal was treated in a thesis of the 1930s by Muhammad Enamul Huq, who subsequently published it in self-governing Bangladesh as *A History of Sufiism in Bengal*. Yet another significant work of the colonial era covering the history of a significant sect was George Weston Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*. The Jogis were an unorthodox sect and were established from Bengal right up to the Punjab. The works of Wilson, Datta, Tagore and other recognized that there was, at the popular stage, a number of heterodox sects, both Hindu and Muslim, which represented a radical syncretistic religious custom going back to late antiquity. In other languages disagreement flanked by antagonistic religions was not all there was to the religious custom of the subcontinent.

Even as research into the obscure characteristics of Indian religion made significant advances in the colonial era, religious and social reform was changing the custom in many characteristics. This was a new region of investigation, and a pioneer in this field was J.N. Farquhar. A sympathetic Christian Missionary, he wrote a work entitled *Contemporary Religious*

*Movements in India*. First published in 1919, it still remains a significant reference work with first hand information. After 1947, the subject would become a major topic of research, but Farquhar's sympathetic explanation still retains its fresh excellence.

## **POST-COLONIAL RESEARCH IN RELIGION**

Research in both the orthodox and unorthodox characteristics of the religions of the subcontinent made major advances after Partition, and there was a new focus on Islam in its specific South Asian context. Comprehensive surveys of Islam in India appeared from dissimilar perspectives: S.M. Ikram's *History of Muslim Culture in India and Pakistan* and Muhammad Mujeeb's *The Indian Muslims* presented the Pakistani and Indian perspectives respectively, while Anne-Marie Schimmel's *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* presented an external perspective on the subject. On the Sikh society, W.H. McLeod, a sympathetic historian from New Zealand, wrote the widely accepted and objective work, *The Development of the Sikh Society*. The southern peninsula was the focus of new society studies such as Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922: Islamic Society on the South Asian Boundary* and Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900*. These works showed the distinctive local shapes of Islam and Christianity. The syncretic local shapes imported to Islam by popular Fakirs were imaginatively explored by Richard M. Eaton in *The Sufis of Bijapur: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India*, and by Asim Roy in *The Islamic Syncretistic Custom in Bengal*.

The Research in the esoteric and popular shapes of Hinduism made a major advance with Mircea Eliade's classic revise for Yoga in French: *Le Yoga: Immortalité et Liberté*. Other significant books that explored shapes of Hinduism outside the orthodox Brahmanical mould incorporated: Edward C. Dimock, *The Lay of Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Sahajiya Vaishnava Cult of Bengal*; Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva*; Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens and Teun Goudriaan,

*Hindu Tantrism*; and Charlotte Vaudeville, *A Weaver Named Kabir: Selected Verses with a Detailed Biographical and Historical Introduction*.

The religious and social movements of reform in colonial India appeared as a significant focus of research after independence. The movement of Islamic revival went back to the eighteenth century and was studied by S.A.A. Rizvi in *Shah Wali-allah and His Times*. The Brahmo movement in Bengal, one of the mainly significant reform movements in the nineteenth century, was treated by David Kopf in *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Contemporary Indian Mind*. The movement of reform in Islam in the nineteenth century was treated by Christian W. Trall in *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: a Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*. More usually, themes of religious reform were treated in synthetic common works such as Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, and Kenneth W. Jones *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India: The New Cambridge History of India 3.1.* The movements of revival and reform fostered a new type of politics of religious identity. In Pakistan, Ishtiaq Husain Qureishi claimed, in *The Muslim Society of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent 610-1947: A Brief Analysis*, that the Muslims had always constituted a separate nation in the subcontinent. Religion tended to become a matter of politics in the twentieth century historiography.

## **THE REVISE OF INDIAN CULTURE**

The colonial era produced significant studies of Indian culture, beginning with the Orientalists. Sir William Jones exposed the Indo-European language group and therefore transformed notions of Indian culture. There was a keen Orientalist interest in Indian art, apparent in such works as James Ferguson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. The Orientalists were sometimes unjustly critical of early Indian historiographical efforts in this direction, as is apparent in Ferguson's criticisms of Rajendralal Mitra's highly original revise of the temples of Orissa in *The Antiquities of Orissa*. This did not stop Indian intellectuals and in due course Ghulam Yazdani wrote a wonderful explanation of Ajanta paintings entitled *Ajanta*. Approximately this time Indian historians exhibited an interest in the culture of people as separate



from the chronicles of the Kings. Muhammad Habib wrote *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi* in 1927, and K.M. Ashraf wrote an explanation of popular culture throughout the Delhi Sultanate in *Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan*.

By this time English education had brought in relation to the an significant change in the mentality of the middle class, a theme explored by the American intellectual B.T. McCully in *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*. Indian intellectuals themselves studied the impact of the West on the new vernacular literatures, for instance, Sushil Kumar De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, and Sayyid Abdul Latif, *The Power of English Literature on Urdu Literature*. One of the intellectual achievements of this time was Surendranath Dasgupta's *History of Indian Philosophy*, 5 vols..

Independence and Partition brought a renewed interest in the subcontinent. The synthetic surveys of the time deserve mention: A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that Was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Subcontinent before the Coming of the Muslims*, and S.M. Ikram, *History of Muslim Culture in India and Pakistan*. In recent years, the Western cultural impact has been studied in new and sophisticated methods, for instance, Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*, and Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*. Such works explore the emergence of contemporary Indian culture from fresh perspectives and have broadened our understanding of the procedure dubbed the Indian Awakening. The phenomenon is now studied from a more critical angle of vision and culture is now more closely related to the emerging shapes of consciousness and society.

## **CULTURE STUDIES AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES**

Post-modernism, colonial discourse analysis and culture studies have focused attention on the question of religious and cultural identities in Indian history. Post-colonial theory questions such identities and argues that they are constructed by colonialism, nationalism and other motivated forces. The validity of religious identities, especially Hinduism, has been doubted by the

post-colonial deconstructionists. Poststructuralist literary criticism, deriving from such intellectuals as Jacques Derrida and Edward Said, has been a key factor in such deconstructionism.

The deconstructionists contend that the British Orientalists constructed Hinduism out of diverse religious practices, and that even Islam in British India was too diverse to be the foundation of one Muslim society crossways the subcontinent. As an instance of Orientalism and the fictitious identities it created, the post-colonial critics point to such works as Sir Monier Monier-Williams's *Hinduism*. He spoke of Hinduism as one religion despite its several sects because of the information that there was only one sacred language and only one sacred literature, accepted and revered by all adherents of Hinduism alike.<sup>4</sup> Indian nationalists, too, as for instance K.M. Sen, who wrote the average work *Hinduism*, are thought to have followed in the footsteps of the Orientalists in relating the history of a non-existent single religion.

In a typically post-modernist vein, Brian Smith contended in *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion*: Presently who invented Hinduism first is a matter of scholarly debate. Approximately everyone agrees that it was not the Hindus.<sup>4</sup> In his opinion it was the British who did this in the early part of the nineteenth century, to make and manage<sup>4</sup> a diverse body of people. This made it possible to speak of a religion when before there was none or, at best, several.<sup>4</sup> In the middle of other works which have dwelt on the constructed nature of religious boundaries in India may be mentioned Harjot S. Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Custom*; and Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron, *On behalf of Hinduism: the Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*. Barbara Metcalf has argued, for her part, that identities such as the Indian Muslims<sup>4</sup> are neither primary, nor of extensive standing, and are, in information, the products of colonial history. In an article entitled Imagining Society: Polemical Debates in Colonial India<sup>4</sup>, she goes so distant as to say that India<sup>4</sup>, Hindus<sup>4</sup> and Muslims<sup>4</sup> are not presently imagined societies, they are, in her view, imaginary societies<sup>4</sup>.

Not all historians accept these arguments, and they have sustained to write religious, cultural and social history in conditions that imply the real

subsistence of such societies from pre-colonial times. As instances of this contrary view may be cited: C.A. Bayly, 'The Pre-history of "Communalism"? Religious Disagreement in India, 1700-1860'; Cynthia Talbot, 'Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-colonial India'; Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: a Quest for Identity*; Stephen Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498- 1922: Islamic Society on the South Asian Boundary*; Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Boundary 1204-1706*; David Lorenzon, *Bhakti Religion in North India: Society Identity and Political Action*. Not surprisingly, the disagreements in the middle of the scholars have given rise to a wide-ranging controversy on the nature of identities in colonial and pre-colonial India, and on the question whether patriotism and communalism have deep roots in Indian history. The development of the controversy may be followed through the following works: Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*; C.A. Bayly, *The Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Creation of Contemporary India*; Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *On behalf of the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims*; Rajat Kanta Ray, *The Felt Society: Commonalty and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism*. Whereas Pandey and Chattopadhyaya have emphasised the construed nature of the identities in Indian Society, Bayly and Ray have seen religious and patriotic loyalties in old India as more real.

A solid body of research in religious and cultural history has emphasised that identities and loyalties in Indian society necessity not be seen as hostile and monolithic blocs. Richard Eaton's work on the Sufis of Bijapur and Asim Roy's work on the Islamic syncretistic custom in medieval Bengal, referred to earlier, have brought out the very big extent to which Islam in the subcontinent was shaped by syncretic interaction with the Hindu religion. The Bhakti movement, which also made a very important contribution to the syncretic custom, has been studied, in the middle of other works, in Karine Schoemer and W.H. McLeod, *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Custom of India* and Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: the Early History of Krishna Devotion in South India*. Separately from the spiritual Sufi and Bhakti movements, there was a persistent *Lokayata* custom, with a materialistic and

popular orientation, which worked against the hardening of religious identities into antagonistic blocs. This important custom is explored in D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata: a Revise in Ancient Indian Materialism*. The continuation of this materialistic custom in the middle of the Bauls of Bengal, who set aside the Hindu-Muslim divide as false spiritualism, has been traced to recent times by Jeanne Openshaw in *Seeking Bauls of Bengal*. Such movements were more radical in nature than the Sufi and Bhakti movements and they undermined gender, religious, caste and class distinctions even more thoroughly. Miranda Shaw, in her *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*, has dwelt on this radical strand, too. The atheistic strand in the Indian religious custom, it has been demonstrated, has tended to subvert the existing distinctions in Indian society.

Notwithstanding all this, contemporary India has experienced a separate tendency towards religious polarisation. Peter van der Veer has dwelt on this theme in *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. The public life of the emerging nation has been influenced to a big extent by religious controversy.

## **MENTALITY AND HISTORY OF CULTURE**

Cultural history has been enriched by the revise of *mentalite* or mentality, a term coined by the *Annales* School of Historians in France. This goes beyond conventional intellectual history and explores the popular attitudes and subconscious categories of thought. A related region of research, also exploring the mind, is psycho-history, which seeks to uncover the unconscious stage of the mind with the help of Sigmund Freud's technique of psycho-analysis. This type of history is not concerned with the conscious emotions of the individual or the group. Psycho-history probes repressed impulses rather than open sentiments. The revise of emotion in cultural history, including conscious sentiment, is a wider field that may be described emotional history. Historical studies of mentality in India's culture and civilization have approach to embrace these dissimilar strands of history. They contain popular attitudes and symbols of thought, unconscious mental procedures, and the history of culturally shaped sentiments and emotions.

At the similar time, intellectual history continues to flourish. A significant revise of the interaction of European and Indian thought from the pre-colonial era onwards is Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: an Essay in Understanding*. There is also a vast literature on how the West affected the mind and thought of India in the colonial era. This keen interest in the middle of scholars is reflected in such works as Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*. This is a Subalternist work by a political scientist. Another work is Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth-Century Bengal*. This is a revise of the thought of Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Swami Vivekananda by an eminent liberal historian.

Studies of mentality going beyond strict intellectual history began to appear from approximately the 1970s. The wide range of works contain: David Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj and the Shaping of the Contemporary Indian Mind*; Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj*; Judith Walsh, *Rising up in British India*; Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the „Manly Englishman‘ and the „Effeminate Bengali‘ in the Late Nineteenth Century*; Rajat Kanta Ray, *Mind, Body and Society: Life and Mentality in Colonial Bengal*; Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*; and Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of a Nationalist Discourse in India*. What these works have done is to bring out some of the tensions embedded in the emerging mental formation throughout the colonial era.

Psycho-history, with its use of insights from Freudian psycho-analysis, is a more technological and closely focused exercise. In relation to India, it may be said to have started off with the well-known psycho-analyst Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-violence*. In India, Sudhir Kakkar, a practicing psycho-analyst, has specialized in this type of history, and has written such works as *Intimate Dealings: Exploring Indian Sexuality*. Another writer who has made psycho-history his field and has demonstrated its relevance to Indian culture is Ashis Nandy. He has explored

the colonial impact on the unconscious mind in *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*.

The discipline of psycho-history, recognized by Erikson, is now applied to specific subjects by non-specialists. This is especially notable in the subjects of religion, Eros and sexuality. For instance, here are two highly controversial psycho-analytical studies of Ramakrishna Paramhansa's mind and life: Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna*; and Narasingha P. Sil, *Ramakrishna Revisited: A New Biography*. In their studies of religion and culture, they have focused on the psychosexuality of the saint. Psycho-analysis is so well-recognized in India from the time of Freud himself that there are now histories of it. The Austrian author Christiane Hartnack has written *Psychoanalysis in Colonial India*, where she examines the birth and growth of psycho-analysis in India from the angle of culture theory.

As opposed to the psycho-analysts and psycho-historians, there is a group who call themselves 'social constructionists', who approach emotion from the angle of post structural anthropology, critical theory and culture studies. They hold that emotion is totally relative to culture and have rejected Freud. In relation to Indian society, we may mention here Owen M. Lynch, *Divine Passions: the Social Construction of Emotion in India*. Lynch argues that in India the conception of emotions and emotional life itself differ so radically from what prevails in the West that Westerners may never understand 'an Other, such as India.' This location has been rejected by some historians who, while locating emotion in primary impulses, trace its impact on culture as a real factor. Their treatment of emotion in history is broader than that of the psycho-historians in the sense that they explore not merely unconscious emotion, but also conscious sentiment. This newly emerging emotional history may be seen in Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Perceptions, Emotions, Sensibilities: Essays on India's Colonial and Post-Colonial Experiences*; and Rajat Kanta Ray, *Exploring Emotional History: Gender, Mentality and Literature in the Indian Awakening*.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Discuss recent trend of using the history of mentality for the study of Indian culture.
- Write a detailed note on the historical writings on Indian religion and culture.

## **CHAPTER 30**

### **ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Learning objectives
- Early historiography
- Recent historiography
- Role of technology in contemporary history
- Review questions

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand early historiography
- Understand recent historiography
- Understand role of technology in modern history

#### **EARLY HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The British rule in excess of India establishes a moral justification for itself by virtue of the benefits of cause and contemporary science it had extended to the colony. The British view of Indian civilization was that it was extensive on religion and short on science. Seven centuries ago, early Muslim visitors to the country had a dissimilar view of the civilization then prevailing in the land. Al Beruni gave equal and serious attention to both the religion and science of Hind approximately 1030. The Muslims themselves brought with them many new technological products, such as paper and the Persian wheel.

Europe, which at that time borrowed many techniques from China and the Islamic world, later strode ahead in course of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century. This constituted, upon the British conquest of India, the ground for the European claim of scientific and civilization superiority. The Indian scientists who appeared throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the colleges and universities of British India did not deny the positive role the British had played in bringing contemporary science to India. At the similar time, they maintained that India had an ancient scientific custom. This dual attitude is reflected in the work of the Chemistry Professor of the Presidency College of Bengal, Dr. P.C. Ray, who, besides creation major chemical discoveries in the field of nitrates, wrote a work on *The History of Hindu Chemistry*. Published in two volumes in 1902 and 1908, this was a world-renowned scientist's historically substantiated refutation of the imperialist thought of science as the attainment of Western enlightened thought alone. That science had multi-civilizational origins would be argued by several other historians in the future, including Joseph Needham of *Science and Culture in China*.

Within the leadership of the nationalist movement in India, two separate attitudes crystallized at in relation to the this time as regards contemporary science and its historical effect on Indian civilization. Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi denounced railways, lawyers and doctors, and declared machinery to be a 'great sin'. He said in *Hind Swaraj* : 'It is machinery that has impoverished India'. Jawaharlal Nehru, his disciple, could not agree with this view of the matter. In a tract entitled *The Unity of India*, he declared: 'Politics led me to economics, and this led me inevitably to science and the scientific approach to all our troubles of hunger and poverty.' As Prime Minister he transformed the landscape of India by means of the Five Year Plans, the great dams and the steel plants. Contemporary day radical environmental historians invoke Gandhi rather than Nehru in the debate in relation to the science, technology and the ecological question. In the later colonial era, an ecological query appeared: how distant had the face of the country changed in excess of time? The economist Radhakamal Mukherjee,



who wrote a work on *Social Ecology* in this era, examined historical proof of riverine and ecological change in an motivating work entitled *The Changing face of Bengal: a Revise in Riverine Economy*. Nor was he the first to record ecological proof of change. Even in the early nineteenth century, the British official D. Butter, in a statement entitled *An Outline of the Topography and Statistics of the Southern Districts of Oudh*, had accounted the 'unremitting advance' of the hot summer wind in recent decades. It may be noted that the northern Gangetic plains, the region he accounted on, had experienced big-level deforestation from the Mughal era onwards. But in the other regions, agriculture was still considerably mixed with jungle in the early nineteenth century, a information commented on, for instance, by James Taylor in the *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*. Colonial officials showed an interest in historical geography, and a pioneering work in this respect was Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*. Later Jadunath Sarkar wrote *The India of Aurangzeb*, Such works recorded proof that even before contemporary science and technology intervened, demographic and commercial factors had been changing the face of the country in excess of time. It is only recently, though, that this issue has been explored by historians in a self conscious ecological manner.

## **RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY**

In the new historical studies of science, technology and environment that appeared in the 1990s many key themes and questions provided a sophisticated framework of discussion. What was the politics of science and technology? Were they the means of imperial power and / or national reconstruction? What was the technological impact upon the economic organisation of life – to enrich or impoverish? What was the popular reception of science – acceptance or resistance? What was the impact of ecological change upon the question of welfare – partially beneficial or wholly negative?

Commentaries on recent historical writings have pointed out that the concerns were not entirely new. In information, the similar issues had implicitly shaped a part of imperial, nationalist and popular discussions and sayings. Let us take a few instances. For one, imperial planners who laid down

the railways, in the middle of them Bartle Frere of Bombay in 1863 proclaimed clearly that the railways would quadruple the British Military strength in India. For another, one strand of nationalist opinion, represented by Gandhi in 1908, declared openly: 'Railways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country, so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined.' To take a third and rather motivating instance, there had been attempts to revise the popular response to the innovations of the contemporary age in the middle of the nineteenth century folk songs composed by William Crooke. One was on the train and it ran as follows: 'Eating no corn, drinking water / by the force of steam it goes / it goes on no plain road, on rods of iron it goes / In front of the engines, behind the cars, *bhak, bhak* they go.' The attitude reflects neither approval nor rejection, presently a strange new addition accepted as part of the landscape, it has been argued. What was new in relation to the new historiography was that it dealt with all these questions in a linked method, in analytical frame. Earlier discussions of science and technology had not always shown good, critical sense. On the one hand, patriotic Indians sought to upstage Western Science and Technology by claiming to have exposed everything in the Vedas. On the other hand, colonial statements on scientific and technological progress were basically and approvingly reproduced by some historians without examining the motives behind those statements.

In the middle of recent works on science and technology which have all focused in one method or the other on the question of power and politics may be mentioned Dipak Kumar, *Science and The Raj*; David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India*, Gyan Prakash, *Another Cause: Science and The Imagination of Contemporary India*; David Arnold, *Science. Technology and Medicine in Colonial India*. Arnold and Prakash, both belonging to the Subalternist school, regarded science as an integral part of the political sphere. Arnold brought science under the technique of colonial discourse analysis; Prakash on the other hand, treated science as part of the discourse of imagining the nation as a contemporary, rational body of people. Both saw the new technology as a means of forging 'a link flanked by space and the state', and science, so, as

very much a matter of power and power. In the name of science, the colonial management pursued policies of power biased towards maintaining imperial power and not the welfare of the colonized. In the name of science again, the nationalist movement and the Indian scientists sympathetic to that movement sought an alternative centre of power, an imagined society described the nation that would liberate itself by means of the contemporary spirit of scientific rationality. As for the colonized themselves, the subalternists speculated that popular resistance to colonial power might arise from the people's mental association of railways and telegraphs with calamities such as famines and epidemics. There appeared historical studies of the mortality caused by plague, malaria, small-pox, cholera and the influenza epidemic of 1918; the political unrest and administrative chaos caused by disease; and the popular response to harsh colonial public health policies.

Ecological history, which appeared as a separate branch of history in the 1990s, was a response to the world-wide environmental movement. In 1987, C.A. Bayly declared in *Indian Society and the Creation of the British Empire, New Cambridge History of India, Vol II*,: 'Ecological change in India is the coming subject, but no overview has appeared.' Bayly himself concluded that the hundred years following 1780 witnessed 'the beginnings of extensive deforestation in the subcontinent. The first work of the new ecological history, Ramchandra Guha's *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, concerned itself with the Sublternist theme of power and resistance rather than with the actual tracking of environmental change in excess of the extensive duration. It was a revise of the emergence of a popular movement in the Himalayan foothills against the commercial use of the forest possessions of the Himalayas. The after that work, Ramchandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil's *This Fissured Land: an Ecological History of India*, was wider in scope, and it took the following location: 'In India the ongoing thrash about flanked by the peasant and industrial manners of resource use has approach in two stages: colonial and post-colonial. It has left in its wake a fissured land, ecologically and socially fragmented beyond belief and, to some observers, beyond repair.' Other works, which focused on conservation and the adverse ecological

consequences of colonial policies, incorporated Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism 1600 – 1860* and Mahesh Rangarajan, *Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India's Central Provinces 1860-1914*. The loss of the rights of the forest-dwellers was a principal theme of ecological history, as was the development of resistance and of efforts at conservation.

More conventional economic histories had already focused on the impact of colonial rule on the environment. The advance of the agricultural boundary and irrigation canals, with the attendant troubles of salination, water-logging and spread of disease, were studied, in the middle of others, by Elizabeth Whitcombe, *Agrarian Circumstances in Northern India: the United Provinces under British Rule, 1860-1900*; Ian Stone, *Canal Irrigation in British India: Perspectives on Technological Change in a Peasant Economy*; and M. Mufakharul Islam, *Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj: Punjab 1887-1947*. It appeared that the roads and canals interrupted the natural watercourses, yet on balance it could not be denied that irrigation increased agricultural productivity. A revise of the impact of the railways, by Robert Varady in the middle of others, shows that the railways depleted the Himalayan timber region, wiped out the remaining jungles on the plains, and could carry on only because of the advent of cheap coal. Roads and railways shaped disease-laden puddles, spread epidemics and speeded up soil erosion. Nevertheless, economic historians such as John Hurd and Mukul Mukherjee, have concluded that the railways promoted internal trade, reduced seasonal fluctuations and inter-market price differentials for grain and cotton, and integrated the market in bulk commodities. Economic historians, rather than ecological historians, have mapped the extensive-term recession of forest and pasture under the onslaught of agriculture in Indian history. Shireen Moosvi, in her *Man and Nature in the Mughal Era* recognized that farming doubled flanked by 1601 and 1909 at the expense of pasture and waste in Northern India.

A balanced picture emerges when we take jointly the work of the mainstream economic historians and the new historians of science, technology

and environment. New dimensions of history have appeared, the harmful effects of contemporary science and technology on environment have been highlighted, yet the benefits have also been stressed.

## **ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY**

The emergence of environmental history has induced historians to rethink the role of science and technology in contemporary Indian history. This is because environmental historians have drawn attention to the manner in which technological progress has affected the natural environment, sometimes quite adversely in some regions, throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. The earlier uncritical attitudes to technological progress have given method to a more critical treatment of the theme of science and technology. British colonial historians were quite sure that British rule in India had worked to the betterment of the lot of the Indians through the introduction of science and technology. They were also influenced that Indians, at least initially, were resistant to the radical technological innovations such as railways and telegraph. This shaped part of J.H. Kaye's explanation of the revolt of 1857 in his well-known book, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*. The Hindu priesthood, said Kaye, were confounded by the railways cars, which travelled, without horses or bullocks, at the rate of thirty miles an hour, and the electric wires, which in a few minutes accepted a message crossways a whole province. The prodigious triumphs in excess of time and space achieved by these 'fire carriages' and 'lightning posts' put to shame the wisdom of the Brahmans and, in his view, produced a reaction resulting in the revolt. The British colonial view was that, after the suppression of the revolt, there was genuine progress brought in relation to the by the improvements in technology, communications and transport. In the well-recognized book *Contemporary India and the West: a Review of the Interactions of their Civilizations*, the editor, L.S.S.O' Malley, who was a colonial official, devoted a whole chapter to 'Mechanism and Transport'. In this chapter he surveyed the new shapes of communication, including railways, broadcasting and films, and his estimation of the consequences for India were clearly positive.

It took some time after Independence for studies of technology to acquire an analytical historical perspective. A preliminary venture in this direction was a series of lectures by leading scientists and technological educators at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, edited by B.R. Nanda as *Science and Technology in India*. Here, too, the impact was judged in somewhat uncritically positive conditions, with an emphasis on the progressive leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Technology was treated in such preliminary works as part of the history of science. It took some time to provide more intricate and critical attention to technological history on its own. Several historians in the West sustained to emphasize the progress brought in relation to the by technology transfer from the West to non-Western societies. Daniel R. Headrick's *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* dwelt on the transfer of a range of new technologies, such as railways, botany, urban infrastructures, metallurgy, technological education, etc., with special attention to India. A more critical assessment for India specifically was made in Roy McLeod and Dipak Kumar, *Technology and the Raj*. An significant article in this collection, 'The Structure of India's Railways: the Application of Western Technology in the Colonial Margin', by Ian Derbyshire, pointed out that railway development in India, unlike UK, secured few direct, 'backward linkage' benefits. Labour market circumstances discouraged greater mechanization. Technological development remained 'colonial-dependent'. In relative conditions, India lagged behind not only the USA, but also Russia, where innovation in constructional, equipment and operational spheres was conspicuously greater.

Backward linkage effects relate to the stimulation of behaviors in the economy that ensure supply to a new row of manufacture. Forward linkage effects, on the other hand, mean the stimulation of demand for other products resulting from the new product. In the case of railway construction in India, a forward linkage benefit might have approach in relation to the with the construction of locomotives. This hardly happened throughout the colonial era on an appreciable level. In a pioneering article entitled 'Great Britain and the Supply of Railway Locomotives in India: a Case Revise of "Economic Imperialism"', first published in *The Indian Economic and Social History*

*Review*, F. Lehmann calculated that throughout the whole era of British rule in India, not more than 700 locomotives were built in the country, despite the vast railway network that lived by 1947. All the other locomotives came from abroad, and, predictably, mainly were constructed in Great Britain. Had the railway authorities gone in for structure locomotives in India on a better level, this might have laid the foundation of a heavy engineering industry before Independence. As it happened, such a development had to await the coming of the Nehru era. One noted author who analyzed the limited economic incentive resulting from colonial technological innovation was Daniel Thorner. He noted the limited effect of colonial railway and steamship enterprise on India's capital market in *Investment in Empire: British Railway and Steam Shipping Enterprise in India 1825-1849*. In yet another notable contribution entitled 'The Pattern of Railway Development in India' first published in *Distant Eastern Quarterly*, he went even further, and noted: 'India alone of the countries with great railway networks is unindustrialized.'

It may be noted that such critical observations of the historical role of the transfer of science and technology from Britain to India were still formulated in economic rather than environmental conditions. The emergence of environmental history added a new dimension to the existing criticism of the role of technology and science. Both the economic and environmental arguments have been brought jointly by Ian J. Kerr, the editor of an significant anthology of articles on the railroads entitled *Railways in Contemporary India*. Kerr has faithfully incorporated the criticisms of the railway network by both the new environmental historians and the more conventional economic historians. At the similar time, he has not forgotten to emphasize the positive benefits of railways in scrupulous and technology in common. One aspect of science and technology is the import of Western medicine in India. Here, too, recent research has highlighted not merely the positive effects, but also some of the negative growths. In excess of all, though, the new research, even when at its mainly critical has still not dislodged the impression that technology brought significant benefits. Without science, technology and contemporary medicine, India's vast and rising population would have been more vulnerable to famines and epidemics.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Write a note on the role of technology in modern history.
- What are the views of the nationalists on the nature and role of modern technology?
- Discuss some of the historical works on science and technology.



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ENGINEERING MINDS

**Rai Technology University Campus**

Dhodbhallapur Nelmangala Road, SH -74, Off Highway 207, Dhodbhallapur Taluk, Bangalore - 561204

E-mail: [info@raitechuniversity.in](mailto:info@raitechuniversity.in) | Web: [www.raitechuniversity.in](http://www.raitechuniversity.in)