

# MEANING AND NATURE OF HISTORY- PART 2

(PG SEM-1, CC:1, HISTORIOGRAPHY)

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# NATURE OF HISTORY

- **A study of the present in the light of the past:** The present has evolved out of the past. Modern history enables us to understand how society has come to its present form so that one may intelligently interpret the sequence of events. The causal relationships between the selected happenings are unearthed that help in revealing the nature of happenings and framing of general laws.
- **History is the study of man:** History deals with man's struggle through the ages. History is not static. By selecting “innumerable biographies” and presenting their lives in the appropriate social context and the ideas in the human context, we understand the sweep of events. It traces the fascinating story of how man has developed through the ages, how man has studied to use and control his environment and how the present institutions have grown out of the past.



# NATURE OF HISTORY

- **History is concerned with man in time:** It deals with a series of events and each event occurs at a given point in time. Human history, in fact, is the process of human development in time. It is time which affords a perspective to events and lends a charm that brightens up the past.
- **History is concerned with man in space:** The interaction of man on environment and vice versa is a dynamic one. History describes about nations and human activities in the context of their physical and geographical environment. Out of this arise the varied trends in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres of man's activities and achievements.



# NATURE OF HISTORY

- **Objective record of happenings:** Every precaution is taken to base the data on original sources and make them free from subjective interpretation. It helps in clear understanding of the past and enables us to take well informed decisions.
- **Multisided:** All aspects of the life of a social group are closely interrelated and historical happenings cover all these aspects of life, not limited only to the political aspect that had so long dominated history.



# NATURE OF HISTORY

- **History is a dialogue between the events of the past and progressively emerging future ends.** The historian's interpretation of the past, his selection of the significant and the relevant events, evolves with the progressive emergence of new goals. The general laws regulating historical happenings may not be considered enough; attempts have to be made to predict future happenings on the basis of the laws.
- **Not only narration but also analysis:** The selected happenings are not merely narrated; the causal relationships between them are properly unearthed. The tracing of these relationships lead to the development of general laws that are also compared and contrasted with similar happenings in other social groups to improve the reliability and validity of these laws.



# NATURE OF HISTORY

- **Continuity and coherence are the necessary requisites of history:** History carries the burden of human progress as it is passed down from generation to generation, from society to society, justifying the essence of continuity.
- **Relevant:** In the study of history only those events are included which are relevant to the understanding of the present life.
- **Comprehensiveness:** According to modern concept, history is not confined to one period or country or nation. It also deals with all aspects of human life-political, social, economic, religious, literary, aesthetic and physical, giving a clear sense of world unity and world citizenship.



# NATURE OF HISTORY

- **The modern concept of history** :Modern history has gone beyond the traditional status of an antiquarian and leisure time pursuit to a very useful and indispensable part of a man's education. It is more scientific and more comprehensive. It has expanded in all directions both vertically and horizontally. It has become broad-based and attractive. According to modern concept, **history does not contain only the history of kings and queens, battles and generals**, but the history of the common man-his house and clothing, his fields and their cultivation, his continued efforts to protect his home and hearth, and to obtain a just government, his aspirations, achievements, disappointments, defeats and failures.



# NATURE OF HISTORY

It is not only the individual but the communities and the societies are the subject of study of history. Study of history deepens our understanding of the potentialities and limitations of the present. It has thus become a future-oriented study related to contemporary problems. For all these reasons, history has assumed the role of a human science.





## HISTORY –A SCIENCE OR AN ART

Opinions are very much divided on the question whether history is a science or an art. History is a science in the sense that it pursues its own techniques to establish and interpret facts. Like other natural sciences such as the Physics and Chemistry uses various methods of enquiry such as observation, classification, experiment and formulation of hypothesis and analysis of evidence before interpreting and reconstructing the past. **History also follows the scientific method of enquiry to find out the truth.** Though historian uses scientific techniques, experiment is impossible since history deals with events that have already happened and cannot be repeated.



## ARGUMENTS AGAINST HISTORY AS A SCIENCE

- **No forecasting:** Rickman has rightly said, “History deals with sequence of events, each of them unique while Science is concerned with the routine appearance of things and aims at generalizations and the establishment of regularities, governed by laws.” A historian cannot arrive at general principles or laws which may enable him to predict with certainty the occurrence of like events, under given conditions. A scientist on the other hand, looks at knowledge from a universal angle and arrives at certain generalizations that help him to control the present and predict the future.
- **Complex:** The facts of history are very complicated and seldom repeat in the real sense of the term.



## ARGUMENTS AGAINST HISTORY AS A SCIENCE

- **Varied:** The underlying facts of history have wide scope. They are so varied that they can seldom be uniform.
- **No observation and experimentation:** Historical data are not available for observation and experimentation.
- **No dependable data:** Historical data are the products of human thoughts and action which are constantly changing. They therefore cannot provide dependable data for the formation of general principles and laws.



## HISTORY IS BOTH A SCIENCE AND AN ART

History is a *unique subject possessing the potentialities of both a science and an art*. It does the enquiry after truth, thus history is a science and is on scientific basis. It is also based on the narrative account of the past; thus it is an art or a piece of literature. Physical and natural sciences are impersonal, impartial and capable of experimentation. Whereas absolute impartiality is not possible in history because the historian is a narrator and he looks at the past from a certain point of view. History cannot remain at the level of knowing only. The construction and reconstruction of the past are inevitable parts of history. Like the work of art, its wholeness, harmony and truth are inseparable from a concrete and vivid appreciation of its parts. *History, in fact, is a social science and an art*. In that lie its flexibility, its variety and excitement.