

COLONIAL OR IMPERIALIST APPROACH IN INDIAN HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY (PART-1)

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

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INTRODUCTION

The term colonial historiography applies to the history of the countries colonized during their period of colonial rule and also to the ideas and approaches commonly associated with historians who were or are characterized by a colonial or imperialist ideology.

In the British India the term was used was used in the first sense and only since independence the second meaning of the term has come into prominence

Colonial or Imperialist Approach

- ❖ Many of the front rank historians were British colonial officials, and the term colonial history, when it was used at all, was meant to refer to the **subject** rather than to the **ideology** embedded in that history.
- ❖ Today the ideology is the subject of criticism.
- ❖ In a sense colonial history as a subject of study and colonial(imperialist) approach as an ideology are interconnected.

Colonial or Imperialist Approach

- ❖ The theme of empire building in the historical works of the British naturally gave rise to a set of ideas justifying British rule in India.
- ❖ This justification led to highly critical attitude towards Indian society and culture.
- ❖ Praising the role of soldiers and administrators who conquered and ruled in India.
- ❖ To glorify the benefits India received from Pax Britannica, i.e. British Peace.

Colonial or Imperialist Approach

- ❖ Lack of consciousness of the ideological dimension was a characteristic of colonial history writing in the major part of 19th and 20th century.
- ❖ The ideological dimension of colonial historiography was brought to the surface only in the post-independence critique of earlier historiography.

This critique was launched mainly in India. C.H. Philips, who wrote “ The Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon (1961)” did not raised the issue in this comprehensive survey of historiography.

(To be continued)