



Talking about the Text

1. Discuss the following statements in groups of two pairs, each pair in a group taking opposite points of view.

- (i) A single event may change the course of the history of a nation.
- (ii) Reality is what is directly experienced through the senses.
- (iii) The methods of inquiry of history, science and philosophy are similar.

Answer:

(i) For

A single event may change the course of the history of a nation. The battle of Panipat for example is said to be the turning point in the history of India. In the Battle of Panipat, the Marathas gave in to the forces of Ahmed Shah Abdali. After this event the history of India took another turn. Gradually, the country was overtaken by the foreign forces. In the story The Adventure it is mentioned how in the beginning Prof. Gaitonde was preparing a speech on what course the history would have taken if the Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat. This shows the importance of a single event in the history of a nation.

Against

The motion that A single event may change the course of the history of a nation is a matter of perspective only. It is a relative truth. If we apply the catastrophic theory in understanding history then we will find that there may be alternative outcomes of a single event so that we cannot proclaim that any one course of event is the reality. Since there may be alternative courses of history so debating on a single course is not fruitful. In the story the Adventure due to catastrophic phenomenon the Battle of Panipat is revealed in a different version to Prof Gaitonde. According to this version, the Marathas emerged victorious in the Battle of Panipat. After the event the Marathas extended influence over the entire country. India never fell to the alien forces. So, to argue that a single course of event may change the course of history is not tenable. There may be alternative effects following an event.

(ii) For

Our senses, that is the senses of touch, sight, taste and hearing and smell provide us facts about the world we live in. Knowledge from experience comes through these senses. The reality is what we directly experience through these senses. No other reality exists which is not revealed to the senses.

Against

Reality is not what is directly revealed to the senses. We cannot experience so many entities like atoms and molecules but these are real. We cannot even predict the behaviour of these entities accurately. This point is mooted by Rajendra in the story Adventure when he points to the discoveries made by the physicists regarding the behaviour of the atoms. We can predict the position of a bullet fired in a particular direction from a gun but we cannot predict the position of an electron fired from a source. This proves that reality is not what is directly revealed to the senses, there can be alternative realities existing side by side.

(iii) For

The methods of inquiry of History, Science and Philosophy are

similar. In the story The Adventure one can find the perspectives of History, Philosophy and Science converging towards a focal point. History employs the methods of observation, analysis and rationalism in understanding the course of past events. Science is based on observation, experimentation and analysis. Rationalism is the most fundamental principle that Science follows. Philosophy is thoroughly critical in methodology.

Philosophy examines everything including the assumptions and methodology of Science and other disciplines like History. In the story The Adventure History, Science and Philosophy converge. Prof. Gaitonde experienced an altogether different version of the outcome of the Battle of Panipat. Contrary to the version as provided in History text books, the Marathas emerged as victorious in this battle. Prof. Gaitonde tried to understand this rationally but he failed to get any clue. In this context, Rajendra intervened to explain this phenomenon in the light of the Catastrophic theory which is being employed by Physicists in understanding the behaviour of atoms. Here we find Science and History converging. The similar perspective is seen in Philosophy that truth is relative and not absolute. In fact, the philosophical movement of post Modernism is based on this.

In other words, the methods of inquiry of History, Science and Philosophy are similar.

Against

It is a misnomer that the methods of inquiry of History, Science and Philosophy are similar.

The similarity is at superficial level and not at the core. In the story The Adventure Rajendra tried to rationalise the experience of Prof Gaitonde by applying the Catastrophic theory. But this explanation is not convincing though it convinced the professor. Catastrophic theory can best explain phenomenon of the physical world but History deals with behavioural world. It is concerned with the behaviour of society and individuals. The methods of inquiry will also vary accordingly.

The method of inquiry of Philosophy is speculative. Philosophy even questions rationalism. Philosophy is highly critical of the methods of Science and History. In other words, the methods of History, Science and Philosophy are not similar. The story The Adventure by Jayant Vishnu Narlikar is, in fact, a science fiction which is trying to show the convergence of Science History and Philosophy. In reality the three disciplines, namely, Science, History and Philosophy have to employ different methodology of inquiry vis-a-vis the subject matter.

2. (ii) Why do you think Professor Gaitonde decided never to preside over meetings again?

Answer:

(ii) Professor Gaitonde was experiencing a different version of the Battle of Panipat. According to this version, the Marathas emerged victorious in the Battle and started extending influence over the entire country. His mind was actually witnessing a different version of the historical reality. Interestingly, he was also witnessing an event that was not conforming to the conventions. The event was a lecture session on the outcomes of the Battle of Panipat. In this lecture session Prof. Gaitonde observed that the chair of the President was vacant. This again was contrary to the conventions. Prof. Gaitonde rushed to occupy the chair and started explaining the need of a President in a lecture session like this. The public got angry on this point and started throwing objects on him. He had a harrowing experience. This led him to decide not to preside over meetings again.

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