

1. Historiography : Development in the West

1.1 Tradition of Historiography

1.2 Modern Historiography

1.3 Development of Scientific Perspective in Europe and Historiography

1.4 Notable Scholars

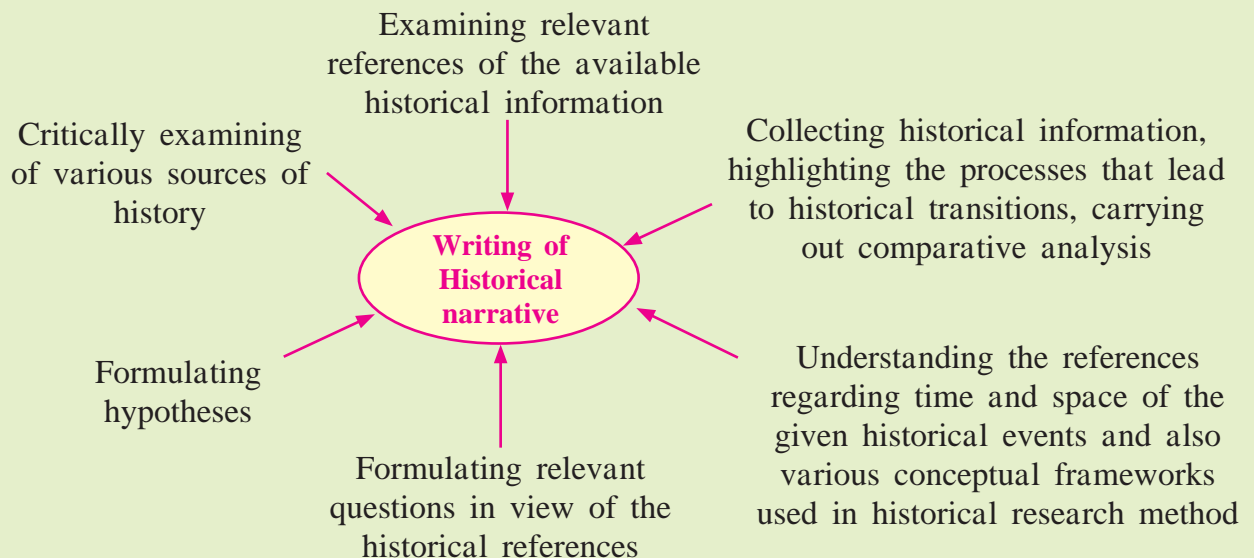
Historical research, writing and studies are carried out with an objective of understanding the chronology of the past events and their interconnections. This is a continuous process.

In the physical and natural sciences the empirical method (laboratory method of experiments and observation) is used to verify the available knowledge. This method allows formulating laws that remain true irrespective of the time and space. Those laws can be tested and proved repeatedly.

In historical research it may not be possible to use the method of laboratory experiments and observation. This is so because we were not present in the historical time and space and the historical events cannot be recreated. Also in history it is not possible to formulate laws that remain true irrespective of the time and space.

To begin, we need an expert who knows the language and script of a historical document in order to read it and understand its meaning. Also, the experts can examine the authenticity of the document by using criteria such as lettering style, author's style of writing, manufacturing date and type of paper, stamps of authority, etc. Such a document is further scrutinised by a historian with the help of relevant historical references.

Historical Research Method



Methods of various disciplines are useful in historical research. For example, Archaeology, Archival Science, Manuscriptology, Epigraphy (Study of inscriptions), Analysis of lettering style, Linguistics, Numismatics (Study of coins), Genealogy (Study of lineage), etc.

1.1 Tradition of Historiography

We have learnt about the historical research method, critically examining the historical sources and writing the historical narrative. The writing of critical historical narrative is known as 'Historiography'. A scholar who writes such a narrative is a historian.

The historian cannot include every past event in his narrative. The inclusion and interpretation of historical events by the historian often depends on the conceptual framework adopted by him. His style of writing is determined by that conceptual framework.

The tradition of writing historical narrative, that is historiography, was not prevalent in the ancient societies of the world. However, that does not mean that they were not aware of the historical time or were not eager to know about it. Ancient people also felt the need of passing on the stories of the life and valour of the ancestors to the next generation. Ancient communities all over the world used various means like cave paintings, story-telling, singing songs and ballads, etc. for this purpose. These traditional means are looked upon as the sources of history in the modern historiography.

1.2 Modern Historiography

Four main characteristics of modern historiography :



Do you know ?



The earliest inscription in the Louvre museum

The above picture shows a fragment of the earliest inscription. A forward marching file of soldiers holding shields and spears is seen here. The General is in the front.

The tradition of recording historical event can be traced back to Sumer civilisation in Mesopotamia. Names of Sumerian kings and the stories of battles fought by them have been preserved in various inscriptions. The earliest inscription shown above, dates back to 4500 B.C.E. It records a battle fought between two kingdoms. It is now displayed at the Louvre museum in France.

(1) Its method is based on scientific principles. It begins with the formation of relevant questions.

(2) These questions are anthropocentric. It means that these questions are about the deeds of the members of ancient human societies of a particular period. History does not suggest any interrelation between the Divine and human deeds.

(3) Answers to these questions are supported by reliable evidence.

(4) History presents a graph of mankind's journey with the help of past human deeds.

It is said that the modern historiography with above characteristics has its roots in the ancient Greek historical writings. 'History' is originally a Greek term. Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.E. used it first for his book entitled, 'The Histories'.

1.3 Development of Scientific Perspective in Europe and Historiography

Till the eighteenth century C.E. Europe had achieved a remarkable progress in the fields of Philosophy and Science. Scholars by then had come to believe in the possibility of studying the social and historical truths by applying scientific methods. Now the philosophical discussions focused more and more on the objectivity in history and historiography.

Prior to the eighteenth century all European universities were interested only in the philosophical discourses revolving around Divine phenomena. However, gradually this scenario began to change. In 1737 C.E. the Gottingen University was founded in Germany. This university for the first time had an independent department of history. Later, other German universities also became centres of historical studies.

1.4 Notable Scholars

The contributions of many scholars are important in the development of historiography. Let us have a look at the contributions of the few notable scholars.



René Descartes

René Descartes (1596-1650) : René Descartes was the foremost among scholars who insisted on verifying the reliability of historical documents by critically examining them. Among the rules

given by him in his book, 'Discourse on the method', the following is supposed to have a great impact on the scientific method of research : Never to accept anything for true till all grounds of doubt are excluded.

Voltaire (1694-1778) : Voltaire's original name was François-Marie Arouet. He was French. He opined that along with objective truth and chronology of historical events considering social traditions, trade, economy, agriculture, etc. was also equally



Voltaire

important in historiography. It gave rise to the thought that understanding all aspects of human life is important for history writing. Thus, it is said that Voltaire was the founder of modern historiography.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) : Hegel was a German philosopher. He insisted that the historical reality should be presented in a logical manner. To him the timeline of historical events was indicative of progress. He also thought that the presentation of history is bound to change over time as new



**Georg Wilhelm
Friedrich Hegel**

is published in a book, entitled 'Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences'. His book, 'Reason in History', is well known.

evidence would come forth. With Hegel's philosophy many scholars were convinced that historical methods were not of lesser quality though they differed from scientific methods.

The collection of his lectures and articles

It is good to know this :

According to Hegel, grasping the meaning of any event happens in terms of two direct opposites. Human mind cannot understand the true nature of that event, without understanding the opposites, for example, True-False, Good-Bad, etc. In order to understand the true nature of a thing one needs to know both true and false, similarly good and bad. This method of analysis which is based on opposites is known as 'Dialectics'. In this method a theory is proposed at the beginning, which is called, 'Thesis'. Then another theory is proposed, which is contrary to the thesis. It is called, 'Antithesis'. After a thorough logical discussion of the both a new thesis is proposed which includes the gist of both, the thesis and the antithesis. This process of arriving at the new thesis is called, 'Synthesis'.

Leopold von Ranké (1795-1886) :

Historiography of the nineteenth century was greatly influenced by the thoughts of Leopold Von Ranke of Berlin University. He spoke about the critical method of historical research. He put emphasis on the utmost importance of information



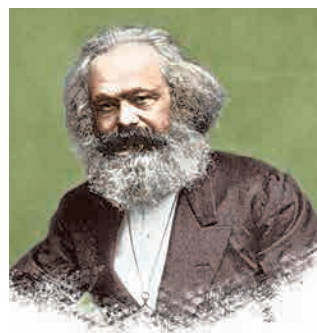
Leopold von Ranké

gathered through original documents. He also stated that all types of documents associated with a historical event need to be examined with greatest care. He believed that with this method it was

possible to reach the historical truth. He criticised imaginative narration of history. Collection of his articles is published in two books, entitled 'The Theory and Practice of History' and 'The Secret of World History'.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) :

In the latter half of the nineteenth century a new school of thought arose keeping in view the new thesis formulated by Karl Marx. According to Karl Marx, history was not about abstract ideas; it was about living people. Human relationships are shaped by the fundamental needs of people and the ownership as well as nature of



Karl Marx

prevalent means of production to meet those needs. The accessibility of these means to different strata of the society may not be equal. This inequality causes

a division of the society into classes, leading to class struggle. According to Marx, human history is the history of class struggle, as the class that owns the means of production economically exploits the rest of the classes. 'Das Kapital', a treatise written by him is the most referred book all over the world.

Annales School : At the onset of the twentieth century a new school of historiography arose in France, which is known as 'Annales School'. Annales school gave a new direction to history writing. It was recognised now that history is not only about the political events, kings, great leaders and accordingly politics, diplomacy and wars but also about the climate, local people, agriculture, trade, technology, means of communication, social divisions and their collective psychology, etc. in the historical times. The Annales School was started by French historians.

Feminist Historiography

Feminist historiography means the restructuring of the history from the perspective of women. The writings of Simone de Beauvoir, helped in establishing the fundamentals of feminism. She was French. The feminist historiography emphasised not only on the inclusion of women in history but also on the rethinking of the male dominated perspective of history. It drove historical research to focus in depth on various aspects of women's life such as their employment, their role in trade union, institutions working for their cause, their family life, etc. In the historical writings after 1990 women were portrayed as an independent social class.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) : The French historian of the twentieth century, Michel Foucault brought forth a new concept in historiography. He, in his book, 'Archaeology of Knowledge', argued that the prevailing practice of arranging historical events in a chronological order



Michel Foucault

is not right. He drew attention to the fact that archaeology does not strive to reach the ultimate historical truth but attempts to explain various transitions in the past. Foucault felt

that explaining the transitions in history is more important. He called his method, 'the archaeology of knowledge'.

Foucault subjected the so far unacknowledged areas by historians such as psychological disorders, science of medicine, prison administration, etc. to historical analysis.

Thus, the scope of historiography kept continuously expanding. Writing of histories of various subjects like literature, architecture, sculpture, drawing and painting, music, dance, drama, films and television, etc. came into practice.



Exercise

1. (A) Choose the correct option from the given options and complete the sentences.

- (1) It may be said that was the founder of modern historiography.
(a) Voltaire (b) René Descartes
(c) Leopold Ranké (d) Karl Marx
- (2) wrote the book entitled 'Archaeology of Knowledge'.
(a) Karl Marx (b) Michel Foucault
(c) Lucien Febvre (d) Voltaire

(B) Identify the wrong pair in the following, correct it and rewrite.

- (1) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – 'Reason in History'
- (2) Leopold von Ranké – 'The theory and Practice of History'
- (3) Herodotus – 'The Histories'
- (4) Karl Marx – 'Discourse on the Method'

2. Explain the following concepts.

- (1) Dialectics
- (2) Annales School

3. Explain the following with its reason.

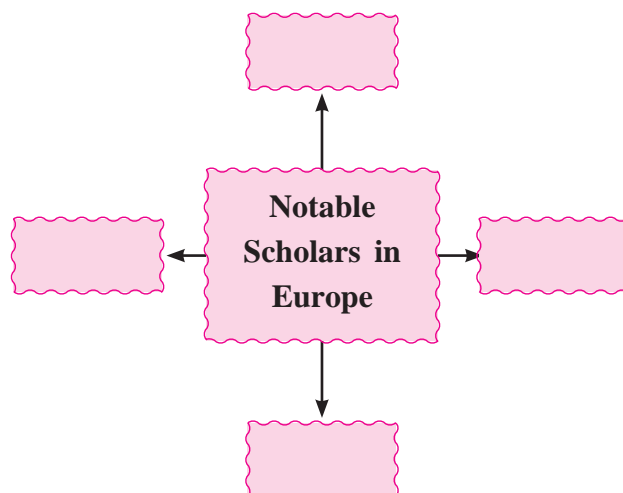
- (1) Historical research was driven to focus in depth on various aspects of women's life.
- (2) Foucault called his method, 'the archaeology of knowledge'.

4. Answer the following in 25-30 words.

- (1) What is historiography?
- (2) What did René Descartes insisted upon?

- (3) Why is Voltaire said to be the founder of modern historiography?

5. Complete the concept chart.



6. Answer the following in detail.

- (1) Explain Karl Marx's 'Class Theory'.
- (2) What are the four characteristics of modern historiography?
- (3) What is feminist historiography?
- (4) Explain Leopold von Ranké's perspective of history?

Project

Obtain detailed information on your favourite subject and write its history. For example :

- History of Pen
- History of Printing technology
- History of Computers



2. Historiography : Indian Tradition

2.1 Tradition of Indian Historiography

2.2 Indian Historiography : Various Ideological Frameworks

2.1 Tradition of Indian Historiography

We learnt about the western tradition of historiography in the last lesson. In this lesson we will know about the tradition of Indian historiography.

Historiography in the Ancient Period : In the ancient period in India memories of the great deeds of ancestors and mythological lore, also memories of social transitions were preserved with the help of oral recitals.

The inscriptions on the Harappan seals and other artefacts confirm that Indians had mastered the art of writing as early as the third millennium B.C.E. or perhaps before that. However, the Harappan script is not yet successfully deciphered.

The earliest known written documents of historical nature found in India are in the form of inscriptions. They are dated to the 3rd century B.C.E., that is emperor Ashok Maurya's times. His edicts are inscribed on natural rocks and stone pillars.

From the 1st century C.E. inscriptions begin to occur on coins, metal images and sculptures, and also on copper plates. They provide important historical information. We get to know about the dates of various kings, dynastic genealogies, territorial extent and

You would like to know this:



Sohagaura Copper-plate : The copper-plate was found at Sohagaura (District Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh). It is supposed to be from the Mauryan period. The inscription on it is in Brahmi script. The symbols known as 'Tree-in-railing' and 'Mountain' at the beginning of the inscription also occur on punch marked coins. Another symbol which looks like a structure erected on four pillars is supposed to be indicative of a granary. The inscription records a royal order that the grains stored in the granary should be distributed carefully. It is supposed to be suggestive of precautions taken in the times of a famine.

administration of various empires and kingdoms and also important political events, social organisation, climate, famines, etc. of the respective times.

The ancient Indian literature including the epics Ramayana and Mahabharat, Puranas, Jain and Buddhist texts, historical accounts by Indian authors and also travelogues by foreign travellers are

important sources of history.

Writing of biographies of kings and dynastic histories mark an important step in the Indian historiography. 'Harshacharit', written in the 7th century C.E. by Banabhatta is King Harsha's biography. It portrays a realistic picture of the social, economic, political, religious and cultural life during the king's times.

Historiography in the Medieval Period : The style of writing 'Rajtarangini', the history of Kashmir by Kalhana in the 12th century C.E. is quite close to the concept of modern historiography. Kalhana himself says that he wrote this text after critically examining various sources like inscriptions, coins, remains of ancient monuments, dynastic records and local traditions.

In the medieval India the historians in the courts of Muslim rulers were influenced by Arabic and Persian historiography. Among them Ziauddin Barani holds an important place. In 'Tarikh-i-Phiruz Shahi', a book written by him, he has stated the purpose of historiography. According to him the historian's duty is not limited only to the recording of the ruler's valour and policies of welfare but he should also write about the ruler's failings and incorrect policies. Barani further says that a historian should also take into consideration the impact of the teachings of the wise, the learned, and the saints on the cultural life of people. Thus, Barani expanded the scope of historiography.

For the historians in the Mughal courts praising the emperors and exhibition of loyalty became more important. The custom of adding suitable poetic quotes and beautiful pictures was also introduced.



Do you know ?

Alberuni wrote in Arabic about Indian knowledge and social life. In the following period many books about India were written by foreign scholars. Among them, to name a few, are : Hasan Nizami's 'Tajul-Ma'asir'; Minhaj-i-Siraj's 'Tabaqat-i-Nasiri'; various works by Amir Khusrau; 'Tuzuk-i-Timuri', the autobiography of Timur (-i) Lang, who was also known as Amir Timur who invaded India; 'Tarikh-i- Mubarakshahi' by Yahya Bin Ahmad Sirhindi. Their accounts provide us with historic information of Sultanate period.

Accounts of foreign travellers in India are also important. Among them are Ibn Battuta, Abdul Razzaq, Marco Polo, Nicolo Conti, Barbosa and Domingos Paes. Their accounts provide us with historic information of medieval India. Ishwardas Nagar, Bhimsen Saxena, Khafi Khan and Niccolao Manucci were among the historians of Aurangzeb's times whose accounts are important sources of Mughal history.

Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire wrote an autobiography, entitled, 'Tuzuk-i-Babari'. It contains the descriptions of the battles fought by him. Babur also recorded his minute observations of various regions and cities travelled by him including the local economy, customs and the flora.

Abul Fazl's 'Akbarnama' is very important from the viewpoint of critical historiography. His method of collecting authentic historical documents and their

scrutiny is looked upon as devoid of bias and hence realistic.

‘Bakhar’ is an important type of historical documents of medieval times. It contains eulogies of the heroes and stories of historic events, battles, lives of great men.

Marathi bakhars are of various types. ‘Sabhasad Bakhar’ was written by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad during the reign of Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj. It is an important bakhar for getting information about the rule of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

‘Bhaushebanchi Bakhar’ describes the Battle of Panipat. Another bakhar, entitled ‘Panipatachi Bakhar’, is also about the same event. ‘Holkaranchi Kaiphiyat’ provides information about the Holkars and their contributions to the Maratha rule.

Bakhars can be divided into various types such as biographies of kings, dynastic history, descriptions of events, history of a sect, autobiographies, regarding grievance, based on mythologies and state administration by a king.

Historiography in the Modern Period : In the 20th century the Indian archaeological exploration and research started under the British rule. A number of ancient sites were excavated under the supervision of Sir Alexander Cunningham, the first Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India. He chose mainly the sites mentioned in the Buddhist texts for this purpose. Harappan Civilisation was discovered during the tenure of Sir John Marshall. Because of this discovery the antiquity of Indian history could be traced to 3rd millennium B.C.E. or even earlier.



Alexander Cunningham



John Marshall

Many British officials in India wrote about Indian history. Their writings display strong influence of the colonial policies of the British.

Three Volumes of ‘The History of British India’, written by James Mill were published in 1817. This was the first book



James Mill

on Indian history written by a British historian. It clearly reflects an absence of objective perspective and prejudice about various aspects of the Indian culture.

‘The History of India’, written by Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay (now Mumbai) was published in 1841.

The period of Maratha Empire is very important in the Indian history. Grant Duff’s name stands out among the British officers who wrote about Maratha history. He wrote the book entitled, ‘A History of Mahrattas’. This book is published in three volumes. Grant Duff’s writing also shows the British inclination of condemning Indian culture and history. Similar tendency is witnessed in Colonel Todd’s writings about Rajasthan’s history. The two volumes written by William

Wilson Hunter on Indian history show a somewhat impartial treatment of the subject.

Nilkanth Janardan Kirtane and Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade were two Indian historians who took upon the task of exposing the limitations of Grant Duff's writings.

2.2 Indian Historiography : Various Ideological Frameworks

Colonial Historiography : The early scholars who studied and wrote Indian history were mainly British officers and Christian missionaries. Their prejudice is clearly reflected in the way some of them have ridiculed Indian culture. Their writings were used to justify the colonial British rule. The five volumes of 'Cambridge History of India', published during 1922-1937 C.E. are distinct examples of colonial historiography.

Orientalist Historiography : Many European scholars felt curious about civilisations and countries of the East. Some of those scholars felt admiration and respect for them. These scholars were known as 'Orientalists'.

The orientalist studied the similarities between Sanskrit and some of the European languages. They focused more on Vedic tradition and Sanskrit literature. Their studies resulted into formulating the notion of an ancient language that could be the mother of all Indo-European languages.

In 1784, Sir William Jones founded Asiatic society in Kolkata. It opened the doors for research in ancient Indian literature and history.

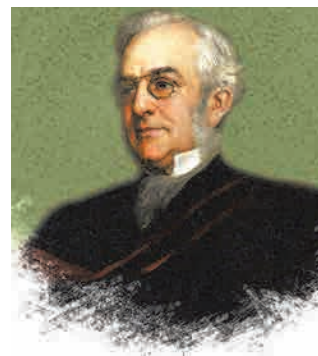
Among the Orientalist scholars, Friedrich Max Muller deserves a special



William Jones

mention. In his opinion Sanskrit was the most ancient language of the Indo-European languages. He was deeply interested in Sanskrit literature. He first translated the Sanskrit text of 'Hitopadesh'. He was the editor of 50 volumes of 'The Sacred Books of the East'. He also compiled 'Rigveda', which has been published in six volumes. He translated Rigveda in German.

Lately, Edward Said, a scholar who has re-evaluated the orientalist writings, has thrown light on imperialistic interests of orientalist scholars.



Friedrich Max Muller

Nationalistic Historiography : The writings of Indian historians who were trained in the British educational system show an inclination to restore the pride in the ancient glory of India and the self-esteem of the Indian readers. Their writings are known as 'Nationalistic Historiography'. Nationalistic writings in Maharashtra were inspired by Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. He criticised the prejudiced history of ancient India written by British officers. The nationalistic historians tried to seek the golden era of Indian history. They are at times blamed for ignoring the critical analysis of the historical truth. Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Rajendra Lal Mishra,