

Chapter – 1: How, When and Where

- Historians believed – history about dates – rulers were crowned – battles were fought
- History – about changes over time – about comparison of past and present – about before and after
- We don't ask historical questions – but there are moments – we ask questions like – when did people started drinking tea? – When were railways built? – When were newspapers printed?
- All questions – refer to time – not a precise (fixed) date – BUT – a period of time
 - Indians – developed taste for tea – over a period of time
- Similarly,
 - British rule – established over a period of time
 - National movement – grew stronger over a period of time
 - Economical and social changes – became visible over a period of time
- History – still associated with dates – why?
- Reason – past historians – wrote about – dates – prince was born, king won a battle, king married, prince was crowned, when king died – hence, dates were imp.
- Present historians – write about – livelihood of people, how cities developed, how kingdoms formed, etc.

Which dates?

- Criteria – choose dates – imp.?
- Dates we select – not imp. – Events on those dates imp.
- Focus of study changes – imp. Events changes – imp. dates changes
- History by British historians – rule of Governor-General – imp.
 - Started with – 1st Governor-General – Warren Hastings
 - Ended with – last Viceroy – Lord Mountbatten
 - In-between – Wellesley, Bentick, Dalhousie, Canning, Lawrence, Lytton, Ripon, Curzon, Harding, Irwin
- All dates – linked to Governor-Generals and Viceroys – their activities, policies, etc.
- Their lives – made up the history of British India
- History – above period – can be written differently
- When writing history (story) – divide in chapters – each chapter has coherence (clarity) – story makes sense – understandable
- History of British India – lives of Indians – do not fit
- Need another set of dates – new history – new point of view

How do we periodise?

- James Mill – Scottish philosopher – book in 3 parts – History of British India
 - Indian history – 3 periods – Hindu, Muslim, British
- Terms used for periodisation – become imp. – show difference between periods
- Mill thought – all Asian societies – lower civilization than Europe
- According to him – before British – Hindu and Muslim despots (cruel ruler) – ruled India – religious intolerance, caste taboos, superstitions – dominated
- Mill felt – British rule – civilize India
- Introduce – European manners, arts, institutions and laws
- Mill suggested – British – conquer – complete India – betterment of Indian people – India – not capable of progress

- In this idea – British – represented – progress and civilization – before them – darkness – idea not accepted
- Multiple religions existed – simultaneously – before British – cannot classify that period as of one religion
- New idea – new periodisation – 3 periods – ancient, medieval, modern
- Problem – inspired from west
 - Modern period – growth of modernity – science, reason, democracy, liberty, equality
 - Medieval period – features of modern society did not exist
- British rule – no freedom, liberty or equality
- This idea – failed again – not acceptable for Indian History
- Historians – British rule – colonial period

What is colonial?

- British – conquer countries – establish rule – controlling existing rulers
- Control over economy and society – collected revenue – bought goods – cheap rate – forced peasants (farmers) – grow certain crops
- Subjugation (control) of one country by another leading to social, economic, political and cultural changes – colonialization
- All classes / groups – did not experience same changes – hence, history book title – OUR PASTS – plural

How do We Know?

- Sources – historians use – writing about – Indian history – 250 years?

Administration produces records

- Imp. source – official records – British administration
- British believed – writing – imp.
- Every instruction, plan, policy, decision, investigation – written – debated effectively
- It produced the culture of memos, notings and reports
- British also believed – imp. documents and letters – preserved
 - Set up – record rooms in all administrative buildings
 - Tahsildar's office, the collectorate, secretariats, lawcourts, etc
 - Archives and museums – also set up
- Letters / memos, notes / reports, instructions – moved between administration – still preserved in archives
- Early 19th century – documents – copied by calligraphists
- Mid-19th century – printing spread – multiple copies made

Surveys become important

- British believed – surveying – knowing a country – before ruling – imp.
- Early 19th century – detailed surveys – covering entire country
 - Villages – revenue surveys
 - Surveys regarding – topography, soil, flora, fauna, local history, cropping pattern
 - Surveys – zoological, botanical, archeological, anthropological (origin of human society), forest

- End 19th century – census (population counting) – every 10 years – noting information on castes, religions and occupation

What official records do not tell

- Vast collection of records – official records – tells us about officials' working – do not tell us about working of people
- Other sources – elsewhere – difficult to find
- Diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims, autobiographies, etc. – local sources – BUT – written by literates
- Lives of peasants, tribals and workers – much difficult