

Intro To Human Sciences

5/1/26

- Anglophone — Humanities AND Social Sciences

Francophone — Human Sciences ↛ combining under the same term.

→ 'Pre-Modern Knowledge':

- i.e., knowledge before the scientific revolution, where people started questioning everything.
- knowledge wasn't classified into disciplines.
- Predominant Assumption behind the world — All creation was considered emanating from one divine power and interlinked in a divine law or plan. (Prominent in the Abrahamic religion)
- Purpose of humans — Interpretation of the divine plan/will. If this interpretation is done, then one would know everything about the world.

- Geocentric Idea:

The notion that the Earth is the center of the universe, since the divine will is played out on Earth and all creation is due to the divine will.

- Copernicus's Heliocentric model tried to overturn this idea, and therefore the entire history of knowledge making, since heliocentrism tried to disconnect knowledge from the divine will.
- Now, the job of knowledge gathering is not to just interpret the divine will; it is the scientific method.

- Disenchantment:

The rejection of the idea that nature is divine, where we give explanation for how nature operates and for the different human-nature relation.

- Detracting of divine will as the primary source of knowledge.

- Centring the Human :-

Studying the individual as an independent being, not as an agent of divine will.

- Primary change in the Enlightenment period.
- Human Sciences are devoid of divine will.

→ Discipline and Disciplinary Boundaries :-

- How did different disciplines develop?
- Milestones: Scientific and Industrial Revolution, Enlightenment, Colonialism, Decolonialism, Structuralism, etc.
- Colonialism gave a certain structure of knowledge to the colonies, albeit under the influence of certain biases held by the colonizers.

Decolonialism is a process that removes those colonial biases and looks into other sources of knowledge to form a new structure of knowledge, that can break the framework of interpretation laid by the colonizers.

- These different structures of knowledge gave us the different disciplines of knowledge in the modern society.
- Each of the discipline may try to study the same fundamental question, but they approach it in different ways. ex:

History - Analyses the clues of the past to come up with a logical recreation.

(School-level History - Emphasis on Chronology)

A historian analyses an image from the context of the situation during the image's creation.

Sociology - Focuses on the processes and institutions behind social change (ex: effect of urbanization on the family unit)

Korba - Coal Mine, with a lot of illegal coal mining. It is not found in the Manuguru Coal Mine.

Historian : Korba is a very old mine compared to Manuguru. So local communities are more dependent in Korba on the coal.

Economist : Difference in access to LPG, economic situation.

A sociologist analyses the societal norms that lie behind the creation of image.

★ Modules:-

- 1) History
- 2) Production and Consumption
- 3) Addressing these themes in literature
- 4) Governing and Power in Society
- 5) Social Organization
- 6) Philosophy.

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★ Module 1: History :-

→ Aims :-

- What does it mean to think historically ?
- How do we know what really happened ?
- How to use history to understand the current world ?

→ What is History ? :-

- Similar to the decentering of Earth . It gives us perspective .

- History begins when our understanding of the past shifts from interpreting the divine to understanding human actions.
(God's story → Man's story)
- Understanding Human and Natural Causes of Past Events.
- Human Actions - Entirely Unpredictable.
One can never really be sure.
 - Why history is challenging to do
- History is preoccupied with the fundamental processes of change
— EH Carr
- To understand change, we need to find what is not changing.
They might change in a different rhythm.
- Where is History — Everywhere, Everything
- History is innate to us. We are implicitly aware of our history.
We can see and assess ourselves in Time.

- Every object, image, sound, etc. moves in time and has an effect on its surroundings.
- Explicit History :-
- Need protocols for doing history. It cannot tell us everything. Facts often don't link up based on what we know. The evidence needed to prove something may be massive.
- These can be no objectivity, no certitude — EH Corrol, Only levels of possibilities, degrees of probability.

→ ex: Till this evidence pops up, we can assume that this event occurred with high probability

- Fact :-
Something that is known and proved to be true.
- But what is or what is not a fact, and their relevance, is a matter of interpretation.

- Fact was supposed to be truth, WITHOUT interpretation. Supposed to be building blocks of knowledge.
- History of the Fact :
 - Originated in Ancient Greece, derived from Latin "factum"
 - Herodotus :
 - Wrote on the history of war b/w Greece and Persia.
 - Collected evidence, ask questions, form systematic narrative of events.
 - Thucydides :
 - Was critical of Herodotus.
 - Said that Herodotus needed to evaluate evidence and create a neutral position and find cause and effect.
 - Realism : Evaluate behavior and outcomes without emotion and self-interest.
 - We do not have evidence that such fact-based history was happening anywhere else. It was forgone in favor of Revelation (divine will based history)

- Reborn later by Ibn-e-Khaldu (1332-1406)

Kitab al-Ibn : History of the world

Principles to evaluate evidence

Categorised errors and mistakes in historical investigation

- Partisanship, lack of context, belief, lack of knowledge

- Edward Gibbon (1734 - 1794) (The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire)

Made distinctions b/w the primary and secondary evidence.

Primary - Of the event itself

Secondary - Of an interpretation of the event

Historian's aim - Objectivity

Said that the institutions of Christianity are not gifts of God,
They are consequences of history.

- Leopold von Ranke

Fact is the king of History

History - Only the primary source

Interrogate the source and build credibility of facts.

No interpretation allowed by historians.

History of the Catholic Popes :

frank, objective treatment. without bias, without enthusiasm

Should not be able to make out the nature of the person writing.

- But facts cannot exist without interpretation.
 - facts are not value-free
 - facts do not exist outside our seeing - we recognizing something makes that fact.
 - The fact depends on our perspective, interpretation and assumption.

ex: If we try to study how cold a place is, by looking at the number of people wearing hoodie, then we are assuming that some one wearing a hoodie is only dependent on temperature.

- The facts that we select, depend on our unspoken interpretation and assumptions.
- Modern Definition of a Fact :-
 - There is no neutral, objective fact
 - Something is recognised as a fact only within the world of meaning created by humans.

- All facts are created and constituted by human action. They are a human creation.
- Can distinguish between fake facts using probabilities and possibilities.

- Framing Question :-

Who, What, When, Where, How → Why



Tells us about the fundamental power of change.

- How To Find and Preserve Facts :- *facts and their importance change.*

- Evidence which can be cross-checked
- Methods which can be scrutinized
- Open and accessible standards for verifiability and falsifiability.

*Can be used to
find fake facts*

Anything that does not fit into these checks is not academic knowledge.
 ex: The presence of God cannot be falsified, therefore it is not academic knowledge.

- False Facts :

- Historians often misread the meaning and intent of facts of the past.
- There is always another interpretation possible.
- Can arise due to deliberate wrongs - Malice / Trying to hide the truth.
→ fabrication

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→ Historical Time :

- Past is not History.

Past - Refers to the time elapsed. Amorphous and catch-all term.

History - Story / Narrative about something in the past.

Has a beginning and an end. Implicit in our Narrative.

History uses facts to build a narrative. The facts are given by the past.

- History is the story of human society. Anything before that is termed as prehistoric.

History deals with civilizations of settled life, writing / script, cities and states. (Classical Definition)

→ communication

→ non-nomadic, long-term architect

- Wu.

Prehistoric humans - Mobile / Nomadic life, Oral knowledge and Preliminary Art and Crafts.

→ Mesopotamian

Example of early civilization - Fertile Crescent (Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian), Indus Valley, Nile Valley, Yangtze River.

Need for a Broadened Definition:

- People with oral knowledge can still be structured. ex: Vedic knowledge
The Rigvedic society was also mobile.

Periods of History:

- Historians divide their narrative into periods: Pre-History, Ancient, Medieval, Modern. Sometimes we incorrectly associate these periods with some values. Ancient - Golden, Medieval - Dark, Modern - Structured.

- Based on the conception of the arrow of time. But a lot of different perceptions of time considered it as spiral / circular.

- Common Markers of Historical Time :-

- BC and AD

Before Christ and Anno Domini (In the year of our Lord)

- BCE and CE

Before Common Era and Common Era.

- Circa

Approximation

- Decade, Century, Millenia.

- Historical Eras and Ages :-

- Prehistoric Period :

Stone Age (Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic)

- Historic Period :

Chalcolithic Age. (Age of Charcoal) Gold was also found here.

Bronze Age

Iron Age

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→ How we Study History :-

◦ Itihasa :-

- The Myth of the Eternal Return :

People meditated on visser, did not rationally investigate.

- Shruti : Oral tradition, Authoritative but Authorless, e.g.: Vedas, Upanishads

- Smrithi : Written, Author known but the work is derived from the original stuff, i.e. e.g. Mahabharata, Ramayana,

◦ Lokayak : Belief that Events are due to natural causes and human action, no predestination or supernatural (divine action).

Knowledge obtained via perception and logic - ex: Charkva

No direct source remained, destroyed by the followers of other method.

> What we know is from hostile references by those followers, references

- ex in the Vedas, Puranic, Buddhist and Jaina literature.

Ried Out and merged into itihasa / myths. Only records of family genealogy and court chronicles remained (Swayambhu, Chandramushi)

- Orientalists :-

European historians interested in Indian / Asian history.

- First to use modern historical methods in India. Thought highly of Indian society.
- But they were connoisseurs.
- Asiatic Society : Founded by William Jones (1784, Fort William, Calcutta).

Immersed themselves in Indian culture and participated in their way.
(The "Nawabs", or ridicule)

- Liberals and Utilitarianism :-

- Utilitarianism : Government should make the most people as happy as possible.
- James Mill : Knew none of the Indian languages, never set foot in India, therefore claimed objectivity on "The History of British India", published by him.
- Thomas Babington Macaulay : c. 1830,
 - > Minutes on Education : Ancient learnings inferior to Western Modern Education . ↗ (Recommended Reading)
 - > Indian Penal Code : Made the first draft : One law for every person (independent of caste, status, etc) . A Radical shift .
- Argued Indian society was brutish, savage, backward, uncivilized.
 - Rudyard Kipling : White Man's burden - To civilize their "savages".
 - > A vision of equality and liberty, which they claimed was absent in the ancient Asian societies.
 - > Ancient Asians : Savages, Animals instead of humans. Filled with superstition and unreasonable.
 - > Western Education will enable other societies to rule themselves effectively.

◦ British View :-

- Periodization : Hindu, Muslim, British.

> Hindu : Ancient, Beginning to Muslim Invasion (Ancient)

> Muslim : Medieval, 10th Century BCE till British Period (Dark/Tyranny)

> British : Modern, Progressive

- 1857 : Conservative Liberalism :-

> Conservative Liberalism : Conservative - Less interference and no large changes.
Liberalism - Freedom and Equality.

(Macaulay - Minister of Education - Radical . not Conservative)

> Rule by stressing British superiority , not by reform of Indian society.

- Axes of Indian Society :- Religion, Caste and Language.

> There started being interlinked. i.e., Bengali - Hindu language. Shudhi
- Muslim language.

> Any event in Indian history can be explained by Religion, Caste and
Language.

- Discovery of Kharosthi - Brahmi script , by James Prinsep.

> Devanampriya Piyadasi

- Archaeological Survey of India (1851 by Alexander Cunningham)
 - > Buddhist Tradition, Ashoka, Khajuraho.
 - Building historical departments in Calcutta and Bombay Universities.
(Indian History - Indology).
 - Discovery of Mohenjodaro and Harappa.
 - National Archives of India.
 - > Storing and Maintaining Records.
 - > Publicizing data.
 - Emerging of Indian Historians - Trained in the modern methods.
(RC Dutt, DD Kosambi)
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- o Main Schools / Perspectives :- British, Nationalist, Marxist, Subaltern.
 - British / Colonial :-
 - > India : Geographical moniker for the territories of British India. Only for convenience.

- > High Disparity between societies and no interdependence.
- > Oriental Despotism and the Village Community. Highly non-united.
 - ↳ The king is ultimate and subjects extremely loyal.
 - ↳ The village community is unchanged in its structure and livelihood, so no "history" in the villages.
- > British destroyed Oriental Despotism. Introduced free market.
 - ↳ Agent of Change and Unification is British.
- > India is one because of the British.
- > Freedom - Elite's self-interest and need of power. "Sedition babies", not the need of the average.
- > Cambridge School: John Gallagher, Anil Seal, PJ Marshall, CA Bayly.
 Bayly - Captured India because some communities found the British more favorable than the Oriental despot.

- Nationalist :-

- > India had a history and a tradition of history writing, as opposed to British claim.
- > Stressed the greatness of unifying empires (ex: Ashoka, Gupta, Mughal, Kushan)

- > Unifying Ideologies : Vedas, Shankaracharya, Bhakti, Religious tolerance
- Buddhism. A different type / sense of unity than the European sense of unity.
- > How was India conquered? : By British OR Muslims, depending on political tilt.
- > There exists ONE Indian history. - Jadunath Sarkar, Jawaharlal Nehru (Discovery of India), Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra.
↳ Importance of Ashoka
- Marxist :-

- > DD Kosambi established Marxist in India. Mathematician at TIFR.
- > Nationalist historians are not using scientific, material tools.
- > Critique physical and literary sources, not accept at face value.
 These texts were made by the elite, not the common man.
- > Questioning of British periodization. Existence of Hindu rule seen in the Muslim period of India.
- > Success of Ashoka is not due to shift to Buddhism - it is due to the development of iron tools. (Social and Economic cause)
- > Freedom struggle - Against British Rule and Indian Oppression (Tamil
- a, Naicker, etc)

- Subaltern :-

- > Based on the Subaltern - elite divide. Post Structuralist and Post Colonialism.
- > All records are made and preserved by the elite.
- > Birsa Munda - People of oral culture. Only exist now in British records. (Records of the conqueror)
- > The history of the common people is missing. Indigenous World View
- > Policies of the elite - Of no concern to the peasant.
- > Above 3 schools were all Western, Elite. Not Indigenous.
 - Macaulay's principles.
- > Need cultural history, psycho-social aspects.

Division of Classes - Marxist . Jati / Varna - Subaltern .

o History of India Today :

- Discouraging new sources, ideas, direction of studying environment, technology, mentalities.
- Methodology using computation
- Entirely Political.

