



HISTORY- A WORTHWHILE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

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Abstract:

History is the study of the past, principally how it relates to human beings. The term relates to past events as well as the remembrance, discovery, collection, organization, presentation and understanding of information about the events. The study of history has been condemned as a stumpy intellectual activity that encourages meager regurgitation of names, dates, places and events. It is regarded as dead, dusty and buried. This is a parody of Elton. Elton affirms, "The future is dark, the present burdensome. Only the past, dead and buried, bears contemplation." Others have dismissed it as all relativist.

KEY WORDS:

History , collection, organization, presentation .

INTRODUCTION-

A character namely Catherine Morland said of the discipline history in one of Jane Austen's novels, "I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention." Henry Ford articulated one of the most humiliating remarks about history- "I don't know much about history and I wouldn't give a nickel for all the history in the world. History is more or less bunk. It is tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we make today." These sort of careless and unreasonable statements have had a deep impact in bringing into disregard the study of history.

The discipline history trains the intellect in very helpful and thoughtful ways. These encompass reading and research, thesis formulation, data analysis and the writing up of findings. Studying history makes enthusiastic, careful and critical readers out of its students.

As compared to their counterpart of other disciplines, the historian must read and research widely, not only to grasp the content of historical writing but also to discover the lines of argument, the kinds and ranges of sources, the style of writers and to carve out original spaces as well, within the historical dialogue. Censure of sources, an important dimension of historical enquiry, can engage the application of complicated and sophisticated methodologies.

One of the key and rationally challenging objectives of history is the need to analyze historical data. When it is taken for granted that the historian will be vigilant enough to be perfect about the separate

and particular issues with which his or her investigation deals, the basic responsibility is to obtain meaning through exhaustive and exhausting interrogation of the odds and ends of the past.

Proper care and attention are required for the accurate insertion of references like footnotes and bibliographies, in chronological writing. The golden rule of historian is 'no sources, no history', so referencing is important in history.

An expert historian is usually involved in a highly complex balancing act in terms of the kinds of writings used in presenting historical conclusions. Three kinds of writing are involved at work at the same time. First of all, there is historical narration, which supplies the necessary details of an experience of the times of yore, thereby providing context for the work under study. Then, historical explanation, having nothing at all to do with metaphors and similes, systematizes the discussions into suitable dividers and sign posts like themes, periods and geographical and other spaces. At last, historical scrutiny applies interpretation to the data being investigated.

So, the historians are to be conscious of the requirements to balance these three kinds of writing. Lack of sufficient narrative will create a vacuum. Without adequate description, the reader, lacking sign posts, can become lost, as developments and phenomena lose characteristic location, form and context. The work will become worthless chronicles without interpretation. Thus historical writing demands the fusion of multiple kinds of writing in the true proportions.

The interpretative dimension of history reading and writing is a vital feature valued by historians. Keith Jenkins a renowned British historiographer identifies interpretation in history as its key epistemological weakness. However, he persists that history ought not to be dismissed as being all relativist. According to Jenkins, different historians may reach different and sometimes contradictory conclusions by using the same sources. However, the fact remains, that what had happened is permanent, it be altered by any researchers.

History is an important route that connects the past to the present and the future. So, the study of history will be always applicable. However, it does not mean that the past explains the present in its true form or foresee the future accurately as it will occur. History emphasizes on the individuality of the events. It also acknowledgement that, no two activities of the past are exactly identical. Thus, the clichés that the past repeats itself and that those who do not hear from history are damned to repeat it, must always be placed in proper context.

The past equips perceptive explanations about the at hand. In due course, all things change, but bits and pieces of the past always "walk into" the present because of the abiding principle of continuity. If the past puts forth influence on the present which is tomorrow's past, then it will confidently affect the future which is tomorrow's present.

Numerous writers have offered emotional defenses for studying history by underlining its role in linking past, present and future. Edward Hallett Carr- renowned historian affirms that "History is an unending dialogue between past and present." Again according to H. P. R. Finberg "... the present is only an indivisible dividing line between the future and the past." The novelist William Faulkner wisely affirms "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Another novelist in his well-known novel, Nineteen Eighty Four, George Orwell warned, "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past". Marwick suggested one of the most significant implications, "Without history we shall not begin to understand the problems of the present, and will be without the basic knowledge essential for grappling intelligently with the future." These statements hold the critical significance of historical understanding with regards to its interconnectivity with moment in time.

A band of the past's influence on the present and the future is the crucial role that the history plays in crafting for a people their sense of self. History serves as memory bank. Where there is no history, there is no memory and hence, no identity. According to Keith Jenkins, "People in the present need antecedents to locate themselves now, and legitimate their ongoing and future ways of living ... Thus people literally feel the need to root themselves today and tomorrow in their yesterdays." In the absence of historical understanding, people experience virtual loss of memory and find no waterfront in time; a hazardous, psychologically disturbing situation.

Through the study of history, a sense of belonging, national pride, patriotism, understanding and approval of present circumstances, especially relations with others, can take root and flourish, and can be used by leaders to inspire people to move in one direction or the other. Marwick points out these reasons, why nations take extraordinary care and pride in maintaining museums, archives and libraries, devoted to the preservation of sources and leftovers of the past.

History is the one and only evidence that a group of people did exist in the past. This function alone equips the discipline with the esteem it justifies. It is a precondition for giving and shaping the identity of all peoples of the globe.

In antique times i.e. between the 4th and 7th centuries, the father of history Herodotus his

colleagues viz., Thucydides, Polybius, Livy, Tacitus and Plutarch, wrote history with the intention not just to teach the discipline but also to provide a leadership manual for those assigns for power. Sometimes they overstated their records to meet this purpose. Though their methodology was not sound in total, they did succeed in making history required reading for those selected for political and military leadership.

In the contemporary time, the career opportunities are quite wider to the history students. History graduates get entry into the professions of teaching and lecturing. They can forward with the careers in law, politics, journalism, the diplomatic and Foreign Service. According to G. N. Brooke, since history touches on other academic disciplines such as art, literature, philosophy etc., it is not surprising that a history graduate is both well rounded and marketable.

The entertainment value of history makes it both endearing and alluring. The intellectually alert and inquisitive are enthralled by the varied and widespread data base history stores and generates; which, over the years, has led to the emergence of multiple variants of the discipline such as social, economic, gender and family history. The multiplicity of branches of history makes it capable to ask big as well as small questions of the world and produce answers that other fields of academic enquiry cannot possibly ask or answer.

History makes it realistic to enter vicariously into the lives of the rich, powerful, famous as well as the lives of the deprived and browbeaten. Biographies and autobiographies and countless categories of historiography, continue to gratify the inquisitive gaze with which historians as well as non-historians stare into the lives of those who lived in the times of yore.

Both reading and writing history is a challenging and scrupulous craft. History taxes and trains the mind as well. It reduces the gap between the past, present and future. History also accumulates and purifies collective memories of the people. History satisfies the starvation of the intellectually curious and guides to the doorway of multiplicity of professions. Everyone is likely to find history highly functional and entertaining. It has bestowed, will continue to bestow numerous and vital meanings to a large section of people.

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