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*By: Kshyama Sagar Meher, M.A., P.G.D.J.*



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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

M.H.I.-3

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions out of the following selecting at least two questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

### SECTION-I

**Q. 1. Write a note on the Greco-Roman traditions of history-writing.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 22, 'Introduction' and 'The Contexts of History-Writing'.

**Q. 2. What is objectivity? Discuss the relationship between objectivity and interpretation.**

Ans. Ref.: Chapter-3, Page No. 11, 'What is Objectivity?' and Page No. 14, Q. No. 1.

**Q. 3. Write a note on the positivist view of history.**

Ans. Ref.: Chapter-12, Page 64, 'Positivist/Empiricist View of History and Critiques'.

**Q. 4. What do you understand by oral history? Discuss its relationship with the mainstream historiography.**

Ans. Ref.: Chapter-11, Page No. 56, 'Oral History' and Page No. 59, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 5. Discuss the important features of Indo-Persian tradition of history-writing under the Mughal rule**

Ans. Ref.: Chapter-10, Page No. 50-52, 'Historiography under the Mughals'.

### SECTION-II

**Q. 6. Describe the important points of the nationalist view of Indian history. Compare it with the communalist view of Indian history.**

Ans. Nationalist historiography includes works which provide a nationalist feeling and tend to contribute to the growth of nationalism and unify people in the face of religious, caste and linguistic differences.

In the 19th century, nationalist Indian historians followed the footsteps of colonial history-writing, with emphasis on political history and that too of ruling dynasties.

Also Ref.: Chapter-20, Page No. 111, Q. No. 2 Page No. 116, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 7. Analyse the various writings on the economic history of India.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-26, Page No. 143, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 144, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 8. Write a note on the Post-War Marxist historiography in the West.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 84, Q. No. 3.

**Q. 9. Discuss the historical writings on religion and culture in India.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-29, Page No. 156, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:**

(a) *Kalhana and Rajatarangini*

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 37, Q. No. 3.

(b) *History from Below*

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-24, Page No. 134, Q. No. 1.

(c) *Race as a political and social construct*

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 97, 'Race as Political and Social Construct'.

(d) *Arabic Historiography*

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 44, Q. No. 1.

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# QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

M.H.I.-3

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions out of the following selecting at least two questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

### SECTION-I

**Q. 1. Write a critical note on the Rankean tradition of history-writing.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 62, 'Rankean Tradition'.

**Q. 2. Discuss the historiographical traditions in early India.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 33, 'Introduction', 'Earliest Histories—The Vedic Danastutis', 'Are the Epics Historical Narrative?', Page No. 34, 'Puranic Genealogies and What they tell us?' and Page No. 35, 'Other Traditions of Historical Writing'.

**Q. 3. What is causation? Discuss the methods followed in historiography for establishing causality.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 6, 'What is Causality?' and Page No. 7, 'Historians and Causation'.

**Q. 4. Discuss the distinctive features of traditional Chinese historiography.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 29, 'Distinctive Features of Traditional Chinese Historiography'.

**Q. 5. Give the names of any five Marxist historians in the West. Discuss the works of any two of them.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 81, 'Some Important Marxist Historians in the West'.

### SECTION-II

**Q. 6. Write a note on the Subaltern Studies in India.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 139, Q. No. 1 and Q. No. 2.

**Q. 7. What is colonial historiography? Discuss three important historians and their works associated with this trend.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-19, Page No. 104, 'Introduction' and Page No. 107, Q. No. 1.

**Q. 8. Critically analyse the main arguments of the Cambridge School on Indian Nationalism.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-23, Page No. 125, 'Introduction', Page No. 126, 'The Major Works of the Cambridge School' and 'Features of the Cambridge Interpretation'.

**Q. 9. What is Postmodernism? Discuss the Postmodernist views on history.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 89, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 90, Q. No. 4.

**Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:**

(a) Role of Generalisations in History-writing

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 5, Q. No. 1 and Q. No. 2.

(b) Medieval Western Historiography

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 38, 'Introduction', 'Christian Historiography' and Page No. 40, Q. No. 1.

(c) Microhistory

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 57, 'Micro History'.

(d) Colonial Perception of Caste

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-28, Page No. 149, 'Introduction' and 'The Discovery of Caste'.





# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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# HISTORIOGRAPHY

UNDERSTANDING HISTORY

1

## Generalisation

### INTRODUCTION

Generalisation plays a vital role in history-writing. Making generalisations, historians present the facts of history in a simple way for better understanding.

In this chapter, the following aspects of generalisation will be discussed:

- (i) The meaning of generalisation and its different levels.
- (ii) Why generalisation is inevitable and objections to it?
- (iii) Role and benefits of generalisation in history-writing.
- (iv) Different sources of generalisation.
- (v) How to improve capacity to generalise?

### CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

#### WHAT IS A GENERALISATION?

A generalisation is a linkage of different facts with each other. It is through generalisation, historians analyse and interpret their materials—data, facts or events—to provide an historical account.

For example, a generalisation is made when the caste, religion, period and political and economic situation related to former US President George W. Bush are mentioned. By connecting these facts with him, it is suggested that these data are important to say about his personality and administration.

**Different Levels of Generalisation:** Generalisations can be divided into three levels—low level, middle level and wide level.

**Low Level:** A low level generalisation is made when a fact or event is labelled, classified or periodised. For example, labelling certain facts as political, certain person as belonging to a caste, region or religion or

profession, or pointing out that certain event occurred in a particular period is a low level generalisation.

**Middle Level:** A middle level generalisation is made when efforts are put to find out interconnections among different elements under a subject. For example, finding out backward and forward connections under the topic the Cold War is middle level generalisation. Middle level generalisation is required in a research work to test themes such as class consciousness, interest group, capitalism, colonialism, nationalism and feudalism, like relating to workers in the 1920s, growth of industrial capitalism in India in the 1930s and labour legislation in India in the 1930s.

**Wide Level:** Wide generalisation, also called systematising or schematising generalisation, it is made when the largest possible, significant linkages or threads that link a society or period are found out. Through wide generalisation, a nation-wide, society-wide or world-wide picture is drawn through linkages under a narrow theme. For example, if a scholar is studying the economic history of India, a wider understanding of British colonialism lies at the back of his mind. The best example of wide generalisation is the study of a social system like capitalism or socialism, or stage of society like feudalism or colonialism, or the transition of one system to another.

**Metahistory:** Metahistory is an approach to organise history by imposing a principle that is from outside history and does not emerge from the concrete study of history itself. Thus, Metahistory is often unhistorical. Sometimes all historical developments are explained by using a single cause or 'philosophy of history'. Hegel, Toynbee, Spengler and recent writers on '*The Clash of Civilizations*' have used this approach.

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Marxist or Weberian approaches to historiography are not Metahistory because they are theories for analysing concrete history, society, politics, ideologies, etc. These theories can be right even if Marx's or Webser's own statements and analysis of concrete historical events are found incorrect. On the contrary, if Spengler's analysis of any historical event is proved wrong, his entire approach is a failure.

### INEVITABILITY OF GENERALISATION

Generalisation is inevitable in history writing and every historian makes it or uses it. There is a notion, however, that the historian should gather the data and arrange it in chronological sequence and meaning would emerge from it. And the historian's task is only to test the validity of data or to certify their authenticity and not to interpret them. On the contrary, it is argued that sources or a pile of data cannot reveal their meanings on their own, nor tell the historian what to write. The material has to be organised as per the relevance and significance to infer a meaning.

Generalisation is inevitable for following reasons:

- (i) Selection is necessary since facts are too many and the historian has to search for them and made the selection on the basis of some principles. It is assumed that every historian selects to collect facts to present the history.
- (ii) Gathered facts have to be arranged and grouped to get a meaning. Arranging and grouping involve explanation and causation, motivation and impact. Thus, analysis is basic to history as a discipline. For example, census statistics, they look like facts, but are the results of generalizations by the people who decide the headings under which statistics are to be collected by the census worker.
- (iii) No analysis, interpretation or narration is possible without generalisation. It is not possible for a historian to delve deeper than the surface phenomenon in understanding events without generalisations.
- (iv) Analysis and causation already involve theories or principles of causation. Every fact which a historian establishes pre-supposes some theoretical construction.

This has positive consequence for historians. Even in the absence of new facts sources, historians can work on the same subject or theme. Fresh generalisations can produce fresh research.

### OBJECTIONS TO GENERALISATION

Critics have raised objections to generalisation and following are some of them:

- (i) Facts themselves are meaningful and the generalisations should come from facts. The answer to this objection is that facts become meaningful through generalisations.
- (ii) Next objection is that every phenomena or event is unique and needs no generalisation. The answer to it will be uniqueness cannot be pointed out without comparing with other events.
- (iii) Finally, critics say generalisations are priori in nature and super-imposed on historical reality. This is true if the generalisation is inadequately tested and based on oversimplification of data.

To make the generalisations more authentic in history writing, the following points can be taken into consideration:

- (i) The level of generalisation and its kind.
- (ii) Generalisations should be made explicit and so they can be openly debated.
- (iii) The kind of proof to validate generalisations.
- (iv) The principles and technical skills used in generalisations.

### ROLE OF GENERALISATIONS

Generalisations play the following role and advantages:

- (i) Generalisations provide a meaning to a mass of untidy facts which are otherwise a pile of notes.
- (ii) They improve a historian's perception and broaden his gaze into his materials. They increase his ability to grasp an ever-increasing area of reality and make more and more complex interconnections.
- (iii) They enable historians to analyse, interpret and explain data and facts. They enable historians to draw inferences and establish chain of causation and consequence or effect.
- (iv) They motivate historians to look for new facts and sources. Quite often new sources can be properly grasped only through new generalisations.
- (v) They bring out new points and meaning of known and old facts. When it is said that a historian has thrown new light on old facts, it

means that the historian has used new generalisations to understand the new facts.

- (vi) They enable historians go beyond the face value and literal meaning of facts. They lead him to establish their significance and relevance in his narrative. They help the historians to avoid 'empiricism' or 'literalism'.
- (vii) They help historians critically look at what they are saying. At the theoretical plane, when a historian consciously classifies or categorises events to examine their meaning or relevance he makes generalisations. The next step is the historian starts looking for facts which are contradictory. Here again he makes generalisations to look for facts which might contradict his views.
- (viii) They enable history students to find out which of his notes are significant and relevant to his research topic. In fact, a student of history's essay or thesis has to be a series of generalisations to be tested, whether he puts them as statements or questions.
- (ix) They lead to debate among historians. Generalisations lead historians to pose issues for discussion and debate.

#### SOURCES OF GENERALISATION

There is no any rule or standard procedure exists for deriving generalisation. However, there are several sources from where generalisations can be derived. Following are some of them:

- (i) Previous writings on any subject which often contain different generalisations are a major source.
- (ii) Social sciences and linguistics are some key sources. For examples, generalisations regarding individual behaviour and motivations, mass behaviour, role of tradition, functioning of political systems, etc.
- (iii) Theories of history, society, culture and politics of major social scientists are another major source of generalisations. Examples can be theories of Marx, Weber and Freud.
- (iv) Study of the present throw up generalisations. For examples, historians can derive generalisations from the study of movements of dalits and other anti-caste groups.
- (v) Generalisations are also derived from life-common sense and personal experience. Many

historians, who do not accept the need for a conscious process of acquiring generalisations, apply their common sense as their usual source of generalisations. Personal experience is, however, limited by various factors such as area of one's activity, quality of one's life and one's status or position in one's life.

- (vi) Generalisation is derived while collecting data by asking questions constantly or from systematic analysis of the sources.

An active mind can derive generalisations by asking questions like a child with an aim to get a connection. A historian has to be like a child. Thus, generalisation is basically a connection and that can come to one's mind at any time.

#### HOW TO IMPROVE ONE'S CAPACITY TO GENERALISE?

Capacity to grasp the underlying deeper connections in data and facts and not rely on surface or superficial connection can be improved. Following are some of the ways:

- (i) One should constantly try to improve his capacity to handle ideas since all generalisations are grasped as ideas. Even while narrating, one should see one's materials as an illustration of the general, at however a low level.
- (ii) One should learn to use logical principles. Logical fallacies, like circular reasoning have to be avoided. Restatement of a question in a positive way is not a solution to it. The answer to the question why Ashoka was a great ruler because he knows how to rule is no answer.
- (iii) One should use clear language in thinking and writing as obscurity in language does not represent depth or clarity of thought.
- (iv) One should study and examine in a systematic manner the things historians talk about.
- (v) Conversation and discussion are important in the development and refinement of concepts and ideas. Conversations lead to conceptualisation.
- (vi) One should acquire the quality to critically examine ideas before accepting them. One should be willing to discuss them, examine them, argue about them, and accept them if found useful or reject them, as the case may be.

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- (vii) One should be familiar with prior generalisations in his area of study and develop the capacity to use them after critical examination.
- (viii) One should take suggestion from comparative history, social sciences and natural and physical sciences as they are the rich sources of generalisations. Studies of national movements in China, or France, or Germany. For example, enable one to develop generalisations about the national movement in India.
- (ix) One should acquire better knowledge of the present to better know the past. The capacity to understand the living enables one to better understand the dead. Therefore, a historian must expand the limits of his common sense.
- (x) One's position in life also impacts one's capacity to generalise the historical events. This does not mean that one's position in life would determine one's historiographic position, but the nature of its influence will be determined by the extent to which one is aware about the issue.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. What is generalisation? Discuss various types of generalisations.**

**Ans.** Generalisation is a connection and interpretation of different facts, data or events to bring out a meaning or give an explanation. For example, a generalisation is made when the British referred to medieval period as period of Muslim rule. Here it is generalising the facts that the religion of the rulers determine the nature of the rule.

Generalisations can be of three levels – Low level, Middle level and Wide level.

A low level generalisation is made when a fact or event is labelled, classified or periodised. For example, when it is said that Jahangir was a king during Mughal period it is a low level generalisation.

A middle level generalisation is made when interconnections among different elements under a subject are found out. For example, finding out forward and backward connections under the topic the Quit India Movement is a middle level generalisation.

Wide generalisation is made when the largest possible, significant linkages or threads that link a society or period are found out. For example, if a

historian is studying the economic history of Russia, a wider understanding of USSR lies at the back of his mind.

**Q. 2. Do you think that there is a need for generalisation in history-writing? Discuss the various objections to generalisation.**

**Ans.** Generalisation is required in history-writing and every historian and research scholar makes it or uses it. Making generalisation of facts, data or events, historians provide their understanding in a simple way.

Generalisation is inevitable because selection of facts needed as they are too many facts and the historian has to search for them and made the selection on the basis of some principles and set procedure.

Secondly, historians need to make generalisation because collected facts have to be arranged and grouped to analyse and interpret.

Thirdly, historians need to use generalisation as no analysis, interpretation or narration is possible without generalising them.

However, there are some objections to generalisations.

There is a notion that facts are meaningful on their own and generalisations should come from the facts. So there is no need to make generalisation of collected data.

Second, objection is that every event is unique and needs no generalisation. There is no need to analyse or interpret the event as it has the uniqueness and says for itself.

Third, objection is that generalisations are superimposed on historical reality. Generalisation is inadequately tested and based on over-simplification of data.

**Q. 3. What are the different stages in which you may generalise about your work? What are the sources on the basis of which you can generalise even before starting empirical work?**

**Ans.** We can generalise facts, data or events at different stages of our work because generalisation is linking, comparing and analysing the data.

The first stage of making generalisation is while collecting facts from different sources. Gathering and arranging facts and classify them is low level generalisation.

The next stage of making generalisation is looking at the facts for a common understanding and comparing them with some others.