

# UNIT 1

## DEFINITION

- History is the study of the past – specifically the people, societies, events and problems of the past – as well as our attempts to understand them. It is a pursuit common to all human societies.
- In fact the term history itself is derived from the Greek word “istoria” which means enquiry, research, exploration, information or learning. The Arabic word “tarikh” stands for chronology. The Sanskrit word “itihasa” refers to legend.
- History teaches us what it means to be human, highlighting the great achievements and disastrous errors of the human race. History also teaches us through example, offering hints about how we can better organise and manage our societies for the benefit of all.
- History has been defined differently by different scholars. Following definitions indicate the meaning and scope of History.
- Burckhardt: “History is the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another.”
- Henry Johnson: “History, in its broadest sense, is everything that ever happened.”
- Smith, V.S: “The value and interest of history depend largely on the degree in which the present is illuminated by the past.”
- Rapson: “History is a connected account of the course of events or progress of ideas.” NCERT: “History is the scientific study of past happenings in all their aspects, in the life of a social group, in the light of present happenings.”
- Jawaharlal Nehru: “History is the story of Man’s struggle through the ages against Nature and the elements; against wild beasts and the jungle and some of his own kind who have tried to keep him down and to exploit him for their own benefit.”

## NATURE OF HISTORY

1. A study of the present in the light of the past: The present has evolved out of the past. Modern history enables us to understand how society has come to its present form so that one may intelligently interpret the sequence of events. The causal relationships between the selected happenings are unearthed that help in revealing the nature of happenings and framing of general laws.

2. History is the study of man: History deals with man’s struggle through the ages. History is not static. By selecting “innumerable biographies” and presenting their lives in the appropriate social context and the ideas in the human context, we understand the sweep of events. It traces the fascinating story of how man has developed through the ages, how man has studied to use and control his environment and how the present institutions have grown out of the past.

3. History is concerned with man in time: It deals with a series of events and each event occurs at a given point in time. Human history, in fact, is the process

of human development in time. It is time which affords a perspective to events and lends a charm that brightens up the past.

4. History is concerned with man in space: The interaction of man on environment and vice versa is a dynamic one. History describes about nations and human activities in the context of their physical and geographical environment. Out of this arise the varied trends in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres of man's activities and achievements.

5. Objective record of happenings: Every precaution is taken to base the data on original sources and make them free from subjective interpretation. It helps in clear understanding of the past and enables us to take well informed decisions.

6. Multisided: All aspects of the life of a social group are closely interrelated and historical happenings cover all these aspects of life, not limited only to the political aspect that had so long dominated history.

7. History is a dialogue between the events of the past and progressively emerging future ends. The historian's interpretation of the past, his selection of the significant and the relevant events, evolves with the progressive emergence of new goals. The general laws regulating historical happenings may not be considered enough; attempts have to be made to predict future happenings on the basis of the laws.

8. Not only narration but also analysis: The selected happenings are not merely narrated; the causal relationships between them are properly unearthed. The tracing of these relationships lead to the development of general laws that are also compared and contrasted with similar happenings in other social groups to improve the reliability and validity of these laws.

9. Continuity and coherence are the necessary requisites of history: History carries the burden of human progress as it is passed down from generation to generation, from society to society, justifying the essence of continuity

10. Relevant: In the study of history only those events are included which are relevant to the understanding of the present life.

11. Comprehensiveness: According to modern concept, history is not confined to one period or country or nation. It also deals with all aspects of human life-political, social, economic, religious, literary, aesthetic and physical, giving a clear sense of world unity and world citizenship.

### **SCOPE OF HISTORY**

The scope of History is vast. It is the story of man in relation to totality of his behavior. The scope of history means the breadth, comprehensiveness, variety and extent of learning experiences, provided by the study.

History is a comprehensive subject and includes-History of Geography, History of Art, History of Culture, History of Literature, History of Civilization, History of Religion, History of Mathematics, History of Physics, History of Chemistry, History of Education, History of Biology, History of Atom, History of Philosophy-in fact history of any and every social, physical and natural science we are interested in. History today has become an all-embracing, comprehensive subject with almost limitless extent.

## VALUE OF HISTORY

1. **Identity.** History nurtures personal identity in an intercultural world. History enables people to discover their own place in the stories of their families, communities, and nation. They learn the stories of the many individuals and groups that have come before them and shaped the world in which they live. There are stories of freedom and equality, injustice and struggle, loss and achievement, and courage and triumph. Through these varied stories, they create systems of personal values that guide their approach to life and relationships with others.
2. **Critical Skills.** History teaches critical twenty-first century skills and independent thinking. The practice of history teaches research, judgment of the accuracy and reliability of sources, validation of facts, awareness of multiple perspectives and biases, analysis of conflicting evidence, sequencing to discern causes, synthesis to present a coherent interpretation, clear and persuasive written and oral communication, and other skills that have been identified as critical to a successful and productive life in the twenty-first century.
3. **Vital Places to Live and Work.** History lays the groundwork for strong, resilient communities. No place really becomes a community until it is wrapped in human memory: family stories, tribal traditions, civic commemorations. No place is a community until it has awareness of its history. Our connections and commitment to one another are strengthened when we share stories and experiences.
4. **Economic Development.** History is a catalyst for economic growth. People are drawn to communities that have preserved a strong sense of historical identity and character. Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and an essential component of any vibrant local economy, providing an infrastructure that attracts talent and enhances business development.
5. **Engaged Citizens.** History helps people craft better solutions. At the heart of democracy is the practice of individuals coming together to express views and take action. By bringing history into discussions about contemporary issues, we can better understand the origins of and multiple perspectives on the challenges facing our communities and nation. This can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, open people to new possibilities, and lead to more effective solutions for today's challenges.
6. **Leadership.** History inspires local and global leaders. History provides leaders with inspiration and role models for meeting the complex challenges that face our communities, nation, and the world. It may be a parent, grandparent or distant ancestor, a local or national hero, or someone famous or someone little known. Their stories reveal how they met the challenges of their day, which can give new leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.
7. **Legacy.** History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. History is crucial to preserving democracy for the future by explaining our shared past.

## **HISTORY AS SCIENCE AND ART**

History is both a Science and an Art History is a unique subject possessing the potentialities of both a science and an art. It does the enquiry after truth, thus history is a science and is on scientific basis. It is also based on the narrative account of the past; thus it is an art or a piece of literature. Physical and natural sciences are impersonal, impartial and capable of experimentation. Whereas absolute impartiality is not possible in history because the historian is a narrator and he looks at the past from a certain point of view. History cannot remain at the level of knowing only. The construction and reconstruction of the past are inevitable parts of history. Like the work of art, its wholeness, harmony and truth are inseparable from a concrete and vivid appreciation of its parts. History, in fact, is a social science and an art.

### **Arguments against History as a science**

1. No forecasting: Rickman has rightly said, "History deals with sequence of events, each of them unique while Science is concerned with the routine appearance of things and aims at generalizations and the establishment of regularities, governed by laws." A historian cannot arrive at general principles or laws which may enable him to predict with certainty the occurrence of like events, under given conditions. A scientist on the other hand, looks at knowledge from a universal angle and arrives at certain generalizations that help him to control the present and predict the future.
2. Complex: The facts of history are very complicated and seldom repeat in the real sense of the term.
3. Varied: The underlying facts of history have wide scope. They are so varied that they can seldom be uniform.
4. No observation and experimentation: Historical data are not available for observation and experimentation.
5. No dependable data: Historical data are the products of human thoughts and action which are constantly changing. They therefore cannot provide dependable data for the formation of general principles and laws.

## **HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

History is composite in character and inclusive in its scope. It is a central and pivotal social science. It is indeed a feeding ground for all social sciences and humanities. Since history is a study of the different facets of human life and experience all social sciences depend on and draw heavily from history.

### **History and Politics**

Politics is the part of the whole of history. Politics is concerned with one aspect of history, namely organized state and its governance. History provides necessary raw material for political science and historical knowledge is necessary for proper understanding of the evolution of political institutions and exercise of political power.

### **History and Geography**

Geography and Chronology are still considered to be the right eye and left eye of history. Geography is indispensable to fix an historical event in space. "An historian should always have a map at his elbow", said Renier. The indelible influence of geographical factors on history has always been recognized.

### **History and Economics**

Economic activities of man have a positive correlation with historical developments. History also deals with the economic experience of man from age to age. Karl Marx found unity of history in economic factors. The other political, social, artistic and religious factors have no continuity of their own but reflections of the basic economic configurations.

### **History and Sociology**

History is the study of the deeds of men living in societies. Sociology is a scientific study of society. History and Sociology were closely inter-linked till Auguste Comte made the latter a separate science. Eminent sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Max Weber profoundly influenced history by their studies of social institutions. The sociologists worked on the same historical facts and tried to discover causal connections between them.

### **History and Literature**

The relationship between History and Literature has been close and continuous. There was a time when history itself was considered as a branch of literature. Literature depends on history for themes, plots and characters.



