

History from a Scientific and Persistent Research Outlook

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Research denotes to a study that brings about clear understanding related to any specific field. It can range from a clear surficial picture to a detailed lesson to reach towards a valid fact. Historical research is an evidential study that justifies an occurrence of any authentic, credible, reliable event. History is a factual scientific finding observed or speculated through museum, lab, inscriptions, fossils, lyrics, numismatics, which is followed by their study. History investigates about various phenomena of a social incident. As it is factual, and relies on valid data, it is a clear-cut scientific, result-oriented study. History is persistent dialogue of past, present and future. League might vary but what is consistent is history as it will always have regularity and continuity.

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1. Introduction

History evolves just as a human existence continuously evolves. History on one hand can unite through familiarity and common

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thinking whereas history can divide through diversity. History is a combination of facts and act of interpreting that interprets social, political, economic, geographical, religious, cultural, architectural event in a timely and contemporary manner and therefore, can be referred to as a technical subject. The experience of people, activities, roles, contribution, struggles and achievements combine to form an interrupting. These findings help for the holistic development of the society.

While conducting research in history we should not forget that history is an “unending dialogue between the present and the past”, and the chief functions of the historian is to master and understand the past as a key to the understanding of the present (Carr, 1962: 6).

History is a study of past, present and related the occurred incident to present scenario. History can also lead humanity predict a probable future through trend, pattern, self-revelatory, modelled event. However, it is to be understood that historical predictions may not be as precise as the calculation of the time of an upcoming lunar eclipse.

An individual’s experience or voice of people plays a significant role in sourcing history (Thompson, 1978 : 231). Oral history that is heard from an individual’s perspective is the vocalization of any incident that has occurred. Moreover, in today’s time, new generation can easily find about their precursor or history because of the prevalence and wide acceptance and usage of social media.

There is no subject that doesn’t co-relates history i.e., that doesn’t have a history. In fact, all living and non-living beings have their own history which is the main reason why history is the great subject that keeps track of time as well as incident (Cubitt, 2007 : 43).

History that plays a vital role in understanding mankind, interprets that is the study of all aspects of human society (Tosh, 1991 : 249). It is also considered as a branch of humanities, as it deals with the human experiences and thoughts in the past. In total history may be taken as a paternal discipline of all the subjects (Carr, 1962: 4). It feeds materials to all of them so that the other subjects can equip themselves in order to gain broad knowledge.

History is no more biography of the great personalities, rather it is a field of study that possesses a set of methods or concepts by which the historians collect evidence of past, evaluate that evidence, and offer meaningful suggestions on the subject (Vansina, 1885 : 103).

According to R.G Collingwood (1946 : 17-19), the historical research has following four characteristics :

1. that it is scientific or begins by asking questions.
2. that is humanistic or asks questions about things done by man at determinate times in the past.
3. that it is rational, or bases the answers which it gives to its questions on grounds namely appeal to evidence and
4. that it is self revelatory, or exists in order to tell man by telling him what man has done.

Historians and sociologists have an identical outlook. Since history is devoted to describing the behaviour of groups in economic, social, and political situations, it should be obvious that the accuracy and in sight of the historian would be materially enhanced by a knowledge of the elementary principles of sociology (Gottschalk, 1954 : 113). History is said to be the past politics and politics, the present history which is why it is claimed that the roots of history let the politics come into fruition.

2. Materials/Methodology

History is a social phenomenon that is scientific and unending as it is based on evidences. The study of history prioritizes the contemporary records and pays attention to instantaneous study. This article scrutinizes history based on finding fact and interpreting as per the records. The study is based on the sources that are categorized as original such as first-hand information that is unpublished, uncopied and untranslated; key informant interview; and compilation of outcome of the research relevant to the objective of the study. History has been referred to as a technical subject and the categorization of history are prehistory, ancient, medieval, modern, recent, natural as well as consistent source.

3. Force and Momentum of History as Facts and Interpretations

The basis of a historical research is a fact. This fact provides direction with the help of interpretation. That means the factual force provides a fruitful outcome which is bridged by the continuous acceleration of a logical interpretation. Therefore, history can be observed from a scientific approach as it is based on fact that valorizes fact to form a strong interpretation. This explains why fact

and interpretation are complementary to each other just as force and momentum are complementary to each other. The facts and interpretations are components of a same cause as fact without interpretation is directionless or meaningless whereas interpretation without a fact is invalid. Fact is ultimately a basis that points out a motion that triggers momentum through the aid of explanation towards an understanding.

Carr writes “The facts do not speak for themselves. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them” (Ibid, 5). Fact is like a human skeleton which neither speaks nor moves. A historian’s interpretation of facts puts life in the skeleton. However, one has to remember that the skeleton is a must to put life in it. Fact and interpretation are the two sides of a coin, which we call the external and internal aspects of history.

The external objective of history is to give details of facts and examines certain facts, whereas its internal objective is to make a critical analysis of that particular fact (Jordana, 2007 : 169). For example, Prithvi Narayan Shah made an attack on Kirtipur on a certain day of the certain year and such forces is the external aspect of history. What was in the mind of Prithvi Narayan Shah when he made this attack in its internal aspects?

Discovery of facts should be the first and for most target of a historian or a researcher in history. Until the facts are discovered, there is no room for interpretation and if the facts discovered proved to be wrong, the whole interpretation process would go in opposite direction (Kothari, 1997: 2). To give an example from the history of Nepal, Babu Ram Acharya discovered one document related to the military preparations made by Jaya Prakash Malla against Prithvi Narayan Shah. By mistake he read the word “Kirtipur” instead of “Kantipur” in the document and gave his long interpretations as to why and how Jaya Prakash Malla chose “Kirtipur” as his head quarter to make military preparation. Later on when it was found that the word concerned “Kantipur” and not “Kirtipur”. Babu Ram Acharya’s whole analysis and interpretation proved to be wrong because of alteration in a factual data.

For a developing country like Nepal, the mere presentation of the facts and figure is also an achievement in the process of history writing. Yogi Narahari Nath, Samsodhan Mandal and Department of Archaeology presented new facts and figure (on the basis of

original documents) in their Journals or books and it provided a solid ground for others to advance the process. The only thing needed is that the author should be unbiased, impartial, Judicious and dispassionate in presenting the facts and figures. His motto should be the exploration of truth and he should make no compromise with the truth (Majumdar, 1970 : 56).

To quote a famous Indian historian (Ibid) :

“I would not care whether truth is pleasant or unpleasant and in consonance with or opposed to current views. I would not mind in the least whether truth is or is not blow to the glory of my country. If necessary, I shall bear in patience the ridicule and slander of friends and society for the sake of preaching truth. But still I shall seek truth, understand truth and accept truth. This would be the firm resolve of a historian”.

The aforementioned interpretation plays a vital role in writing the history. Facts are the raw materials which could be utilized to form different shapes by a historian or a researcher through his rational interpretations. The quality of work is determined not by the facts presented but by the interpretations the writer make on them. However, a researcher should be quite conscious while interpreting the facts and events. *First*, his interpretations should be substantiated by concrete evidences; *second*, he should be unbiased and dispassionate in his interpretations, and *third*, he should maintain consistency in his interpretations. However, the writer should not hesitate to revise his interpretations, if the new evidences otherwise proved, or to abandon the same, if his statements proved to be faulty. In the same interpretation, one should not act to suit the current time and situation. For example; we can cite a book on the history of Nepal having contradictory interpretation in its three editions published on the eve of the general elections (1959), during the Panchayat rule, and after the introduction of the multiparty system respectively.

History can be evolving towards the spirals of past, present and future through the fact data and addition of data consistently.

4. Historical Objects

Authentic source materials are indispensable in historical research whether it is a presentation of facts or a question of interpretation. It could be based on concrete documents or papers or other

sources materials. History is such a subject for which the sources materials are lying everywhere (Carr, 1962 : 7). A historian gets materials in every item which he takes into consideration. To quote an American writer Fraderick Jackson (Sterm, 1970 : 201-204) :

“To the historian the materials for his work are found in all that remains from the ages gone by in papers, roads moans, customs, languages; in monuments, coins, medals, names, titles, inscriptions, charters, in contemporary annals and chronicles; and finally in the secondary sources, or histories in the common acceptance of the term. Wherever, there remains a chipped a piece of pottery, a pyramid, a picture, a poem, flint, a spearhead, a coliseum or a coin there is history.”

Historical sources can be broadly divided into two categories primary and secondary. A primary source is the testimony of an eye witness or mechanical device which was present at the time of the occurrence of an event, and by secondary source, we mean the testimony of someone who was not present at the time of the occurrence of the events (Rowse, 1963 : 34). Though the secondary source is dependent on primary source, the research in history only on the basis of primary source is rarely possible (Burke, 2005 : 183).

The primary source is the raw materials more meaningful to the expert historian than to the laymen, and the secondary source is the coherent work of history in which both the intelligent laymen and the historian will look for what they want (Adhikari, 1995 : 34). Both the primary and secondary source may be biased and it is the duty of a researcher to examine them critically and find the truth. Inscriptions, contemporary records, confidential reports, government documents are the primary sources and the books articles, thesis and dissertations belong to the category of secondary source.

It's neither possible nor desirable to consult all the available source materials. One should carefully scrutinize the source materials to save time and money, but one should be equally vigilant that not a single document or paper relevant to his research topic is left out. The relevance of source materials may differ from topic to topic and a particular source may be useful only for a particular topic. To give examples from the history of ancient Nepal Inscriptions along with foreign accounts and coin from the chief source of information for the study of the history of some chronicles is considered as the chief source materials for the study of early medieval period.

Similarly for the study of later medieval period the Thyasapus (diary in folded form) along with inscriptions and coin are the chief source materials. Coming to the history of modern Nepal (1768-1950) the archival records deposited in India office Library Landon, National Archives of India New Delhi and foreign ministry of Nepal Kathmandu provide sufficient materials for research, whereas inscriptions and coin play significant role in it. The chronicles are also rarely used only to fill the gap left out by the Archival sources.

The nature of source materials is a gain changed if we undertake research on the history of Nepal since 1951. Apart from the archival sources, interviews, newspapers, memories and questionnaire play major role in it (Agrawal, 1983 : 7).

5. Preference of a Certain Topic

The degree is a secondary thing when it comes to conducting a resourceful research. There is no doubt that the immediate aim of the researcher is to fulfil the degree. However, it is to be understood that the research will be significant in contributing to the society. Therefore, the researcher has to be committed to give solid contributions to his field or research. Instead of choosing a subject on which many have contributed a lot in the past, he should select a unapproached topic which has a gap of valuable finding.

Time has come for the researchers to select topics from social and economic history. Till now, the researchers have neglected the regional history of Nepal. It is high time for them to undertake research in this field. If one is really interested in foreign relations, instead of limiting himself in Nepal's relations with India and Tibet, he should select topics like Nepal's relation with Sikkim, Bhutan or native states of India. In this political history also the researcher may develop problematic themes so as to give new approach to the subject. While selecting the topic for research, one should take into consideration the availability of source materials, usefulness of the topic (In the nation's text) and the manpower to supervise his works.

6. Steps of Research

The research begins with the effective training of the research methodology so that he could collect and analyze his source materials in a proper way. Some theoretical knowledge on his area of research is also essential. At the second stage, he should consult secondary

source i.e. books, articles, thesis, dissertations etc., relevant to his research. Then comes the third and most sensitive stage of research in which the researchers collect primary sources, develop questionnaires and take interviews of the persons concerned. After that the researcher applies the principle of criticism to the collected data and finally, the presentation of the fact is done along with his interpretation and conclusions in the form of research works.

7. Conclusion

History is a mirror that casts the actual incidents of past through a strong scientific research basis that is interpreted owing to the certainty or the reality. History is an ongoing procedure of the interaction among historians and the realities of the social events. The data or the documents are the ground for the importance of the evaluation that compares to the scientific study. The research result is finalized through gathering of data, tabulation of data and analyzation of data. History is inescapable and ever proceeding. Therefore, for rational interpretation of the fact, historians should point out the direction of the factual force is such a scientific way that opens doors to conduct research towards precise and absolute finding.

In no way, historians should conduct false interpretations. Honest interpretations yield absolute finding that reflects what the reality is. The actual incident can be awakened through the proper communication and channelization of real incidents. Above all, the scientific history is a combination of science and art that accommodates to the global world through unending conversation between the past and the future.

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