**Lecture Eight : History**

1. **Definition**

History is a term used to describe the occurrence, study, recording and interpretation of human and other events with particular reference to the dimension of time. History encompasses everything that has happened, is happening and will happen. All knowledge is its province. The study of history is not merely informative; it is also potentially instructive for it enlarges our range of human experience.

In other words, History is the study of the human past; it refers to the study and interpretation of the record of humans, societies, institutions, and any topic that has changed over time. It is a field of research which uses a narrative approach to examine and analyze the sequence of events and it sometimes attempts to investigate objectively the patterns of cause and effect that determine events.

1. **The Nature of History**

In general, the sources of historical knowledge can be separated into three categories: what is written, what is said, and what is physically preserved. It means that historians have attempted to answer historical questions through the study of written documents and passed down oral accounts, historians have also used sources such as monuments, inscriptions, and pictures. They often consult all three.

Historians debate the nature of history and its usefulness. Traditionally the study of history has been considered a part of the humanities, but in modern times it enjoys an ambiguous status. It is at present designated as a social science more often since it started using the methodology of Social Sciences.

1. **The Importance of Studying History**

Often history is taught as part of primary and secondary education, and the academic study of history is a major discipline in university studies. The study of history helps make sense of humankind. It also helps people understand the things that happen today and that may happen in the future.

The study of Historyhelps us to know our roots, strengths and achievements and gives us a sense of pride as well as direction. What we call progress would be non-existent if we do not have proper knowledge and understanding of our past. There is a general belief that history deals with the past, which we think is dead. In reality, our past has important lessons for the present and the future. History records this legacy that has an important bearing on our lives.

Hence, the study of history provides an acquaintance with a much greater range of human experience than would be possible simply by reference to the contemporary world. People would gain an enlarged understanding of Man experience which may promote an enlarged understanding of one’s own potential and possibilities. Despite the fact that human experience is not always transferrable across situations, knowledge of previous experiences may promote the capacity to better interpret other situations – both historical and contemporary. Besides, a more sophisticated awareness of the nature of knowledge and of truth can be developed.

1. **Prehistory and Historiography**

The history of the world is the memory of the past experience of Homo sapiens around the world, as that experience has been preserved, largely in written records. By "prehistory", historians mean the recovery of knowledge of the past in an area where no written records exist, or where the writing of a culture is not understood. By studying painting, drawings, carvings, and other artifacts, some information can be recovered even in the absence of a written record.

Historians in the West have been criticized for focusing disproportionately on the Western world excluding other civilizations. Consequently, since the 20th century, the study of prehistory is considered essential to avoid history's implicit exclusion of certain civilizations, such as those of Sub-Saharan Africa and pre-Columbian America.

Historiography is the study of the methodology – data collection from different sources, techniques, and theoretical approaches- used by historians in developing history as an academic discipline. It may further refer to anybody of historical work on a particular subject. Scholars discuss historiography by topic; for example: the "historiography of the British Empire", the "historiography of early lslam"...

1. **Archaeology**

Archaeology is the study of the ancient times with respect to society and culture. The traces of those events can be found in material remains i.e. the artifacts, burials, ruined buildings, monuments, etc. and are studied by archaeologists. They interpret them to provide knowledge about the times to which these artifacts belong. The study of Archaeology also includes the written records that are very ancient and cannot be easily deciphered or understood. These sources give more reliable and authentic information. Most of the time, such traces are found buried underground and have to be dug out. This is called archaeological excavation. Archaeological sources also include inscriptions, pillars, metal plates, coins, seals, monuments, tools, pottery, toys, pictures, etc. Works of art like paintings, sculptures, architecture, etc. tell us about the culture of particular periods.

In essence, history relates the story of cooperative actions of a large number of men and women in their quest for a better life. When we think of how we can know about our past, we get connected to Archaeology. Often these past activities and achievements bring a sense of pride for us and for our future generations.

There is a long-standing tradition that considers archaeology a branch of history. However, European archaeology sprang out of philology. American archaeology followed a different development, being always considered as part of anthropology, even though it has also often been interpreted as a discipline bound to collect data to be interpreted by the anthropologist. Most recent students of the discipline would, however, agree that “archaeology is a social science in the sense that it tries to explain what has happened to specific groups of human beings in the past and to generalize about processes of cultural change”(Trigger, 1990,p. 19). It is considered an independent discipline closely related to history and other social. Archaeology becomes increasingly historical in orientation.

In practice, history and anthropology converge as archaeologists and anthropologists express the need for a more historically based human science, and historians realized that anthropological and archaeological enquiry has become crucial for history. Hence, a dialogue between archaeology and history is obligatory. Some archaeologists would go up to the point of defining archaeology as a historical discipline, or a special kind of social. There is an acknowledgment that history is a vital element in archaeological interpretation and that archaeologists must rely on both written and material evidence.

1. **The History of Education**

Historians of education have a particular responsibility to draw conclusions from their study because the subject of education is not neutral but includes a concept of value or merit. Education is a prime agent in increasing culture and civilization and in diminishing anarchy and barbarism. Thus, key questions about education and educational reforms today can only be understood, and answered, by reference to history.

Historical study shows the complexity of human events, including the co-existence of continuities and changes. Continuities are represented by values, practices and institutions that have stood the test of time. And changes overtime give insights about the current situation and future prospects.

**Practice**

1 -What lessons can be drawn from the study of History?

1. - What lessons can be drawn from the history of education?

3 - Discuss the following statement: ‘nothing delights more than history’

4 - The British historian E. H. Carr (1961) wrote:

'The line of demarcation between prehistoric and historical times is crossed when people cease to live only in the present and become consciously interested both in their past and future. History begin with the handing down of tradition and tradition means the carrying of the habits and lessons of the past into the future. Records of the past begin to be kept for the benefit of future generations."

* Explain and illustrate.