

# THEORIES OF HISTORY

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# CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

It has been developed from the nineteenth century.

Earlier history was regarded as a branch of history.

It was Vico who gave for the first time a philosophical depth of history.

He says that man can understand only what he himself has created, and therefore the study of civil society promises us more than the study of nature.

The proper subject of study for man is man.

It was Hegel who brought profundity to the critical philosophy of history, by his concept of idealism which distinguished between nature and history.

- History was grouped under spirit, and was regarded as a value judging rather than a fact-finding science.
- Certain very serious problems confronted the critical philosophy of history, such as the problem of historical explanation, the historical individual and historical objectivity.
- The basic issue involved in historical explanation is the causality question. Why have the events occurred? Why did the nation states emerge out of the feudalism of Western Europe?

- Many explanations were given .
- The first is that human nature is not purely physical, it is more than a biological entity.
- Secondly man has purpose, motives and intentions, and hence his actions have a goal.
- Thirdly, historians are not interested in nature which repeats itself, but in unique events that occur only once.

# SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

- If critical philosophy is of recent origin, speculative philosophy of history is as old as Plato and Aristotle, who advanced their own theories relating to forms of government.
- During medieval times the theologians did much to give meaning and significance to history.
- From the eighteenth century onwards several secular and scientific theories have been proposed.
- Christianity presented history as a drama with a divinely appointed beginning and end.

- Transcendental theory was the belief in fate, chance, accident and in supernatural things.
- Human intelligence and efforts were relegated to the background.
- This theory has been severely censured in the modern times.

# CYCLIC AND LINEAR HISTORY

- Some historians believe that the historical forces are linear.
- They agree that the historical events have continuity and that there is a link between the past and present, this continuity shapes linear nature of history.
- On the other hand some scholars hold that the nature of historical forces are cyclic. They believe that the history moves in a circle. Every event has a starting point, a climax and after that downfall. This process begins again and again.

## Nationalist theory

- It came in the early nineteenth century.
- There was a feeling of nationalism which found a solid ground during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Many battles and wars were held due to the feeling of nationalism of the mighty nations for dominating the weak nations.
- Though in the past there was feelings of nationalism in the states who fought each other to extend their boundaries of kingdoms.
- Besides this national character and institutions also play an important role in historical events.
- The national character are built as well as destroyed historically established social, economic and political institutions



## Orientalist

.The ancient history writing was based on the Vedas , the Puranas, inscriptions and folklores which affected them very much.

They were not very conscious of chronology also and generally used to describe historical characters in literary style.

Exaggerated account of the achievement of the rulers is also available in their inscription and plates.

Contemporary Indian scholars have given importance to history writing according to time, period and circumstance.

The scholars of oriental countries have actually adopted the styles of the Ancient Indian writers and described their views with slight modification in the Western style.

## Marxian Theory

- It was adopted by Karl Marx who presented a materialistic interpretation of historical happenings.
- His theories influenced the whole world. At present these are dominating the society.
- Karl Marx emphasised that the class which controlled means of production, dominated in the economic field.
- He argues that the existing struggle is only class struggle and a few powerful persons dominate all other classes.
- They have control over political social and economic powers. Marx held that the struggle among the class would end in the victory of the proletariat.

- Neo-Marxist theory
- Neo-Marxism developed as a result of social and political problems that traditional [Marxist theory](#) was unable to sufficiently address
- The starting point of the neo-Marxist theory of the state is Marx's analysis of class relations and the forms of exploitation found in history. Neo-Marxist theories of the state are built directly upon the class view of society. The state is not an impartial umpire balancing the demands of various groups in society but the vehicle by which one class maintains its rule over another”
- Since the interests of these two classes are diametrically opposite, conflict among them is inevitable. The dominant class controls the proletariat class and for that purpose it uses the state machinery.