



THE STUDY

An Institute for IAS

World History

Manikant Singh

World history

The Method of preparation- For pursuing the appropriate method of preparation it is imperative to know the basic essence of the subject. The basic essence of history is to record the change from past to present. This change should be underlined in every field political, economic, social and cultural fields.

It is an innovative method. In fact perceiving the changing nature of the questions you are supposed to adopt 'thinking out of the box series' method. It is for the sake of convenience and also for eliminating the misconception that world history should be divided into different chapters, such as American Revolution, French Revolution, Industrial revolution, colonization, World Wars, decolonization etc. Every chapter presents a very dominant trend in world history but each topic has backward and forward linkages. So, world history in itself is the organic whole of parts (chapters).

The syllabus starts with major events in 18th century. It gives a hint to great events like American Revolution and French Revolution. But I think if candidates start preparation directly from American Revolution, natural interest in history cannot be inculcated. Without the knowledge of the nature of colonization, commercial revolution mercantilism, changing class equation and enlightenment, one cannot do justice to the questions associated with American Revolution. In 2013, there was a question that 'American Revolution was an economic revolt against mercantilism'. Substantiate. Without proper understanding of mercantilism, justice cannot be done to this question. This formula can be applied to all the topics.

If candidates have a brief knowledge of ancient and mediaeval Europe they can easily internalize the process of modern west. It is after proper understanding of American Revolution and French Revolution, liberalism and nationalism can be understood in a wholesome manner. While underlining the elements of changes candidates can discover that commercial revolution, agrarian revolution, scientific revolution, French Revolution all culminated into industrial revolution. Likewise, they also realise the fact that commercial revolution and industrial revolution coupled with aggressive nationalism prepared the way for the First World War. Furthermore, two world wars should not be viewed separately rather a long war of 31 years. Following diagram gives a focus over internal linkages among different topics.

Now the question arises how can the elements of the change be underlined? For that, one should follow a formula-

Economic change > changing class equation > social change > ideological-cultural change > political change.

The formula is very simple. Material change or economic change is the prime mover. As there is change in economy so the hegemony of the dominant class faces challenge from newly emerging class. It brings changes in social structures. Naturally with the emergence of a new class, a new class ideology emerges and this new ideology brings political change and simultaneously it influences socio-economic structure as well. Thus is created a cycle of change. If someone is able to perceive the change, he is able to perceive and explain world history. So, in place of delving deep into selected topics candidates are expected to make a survey of all the prescribed topics horizontally. They should come out of cause-effect and merit-demerit syndrome. Particularly in GS part, it is very difficult to guess which topic, as a question the setter prefers to choose, from a long story of nearly three hundred years. But this method will enable the candidates to solve any question they confront in the paper. Apart from the method of change and continuity even a brief knowledge of historiography will help the candidates in taking stand on particular questions. For example, the following question 1. 'American Revolution was an economic revolt against mercantilism.' Analyse the statement. While in another question they can change the term 'analyse' for the term 'critically examine'. Then the nature of answer will change completely. But question 2 changes the keywords 'Critically analyse'. In question number 1 examine has to concentrate over simply the economic aspect of the revolution but question number 2, other aspects like political- constitutional aspect should be juxtaposed with the economic one and then conclusion should be drawn. Here Knowledge of historiography is imperative. Likewise, another question may be in the following shape 'Critically examine the role of Germany in two world wars'. Here, along with Germany the role of other parties should also be clear.

European history versus world history

Up to the recent period world history was largely understood to be European history. Unfortunately, the histories of other continents were excluded by western scholars. These scholars were guided by Eurocentric view. In this kind of historiography American-Indians, aboriginals of Australia and New Zealand and the Orientals of Asia, Africa and Latin America did not find a proper place. They were dubbed as racially and culturally inferior. Western scholars also tried to prove that pre-colonial Africa did not have its own history. They were uncivilized and barbarous. Although Asians could not be projected in the same manner but even Asian institutions and the people were dubbed as inferior who needed western support for their upliftment. So up to early 20th century in the study of world history, other continents did not have a separate personality and they were presented under the umbrella of European history. It is after decolonization of Asia-African countries that the critical revision of historiography started and since then it has been established that both the process of colonization and decolonization was guided strongly by interest of the Metropolitan state. So such claim as benevolence

and good government were propagandas to cover colonial motive. Furthermore, it was emphasized that from west to the rest, the unilateral transfer of ideas and institution was a false claim. In true sense it was a two-way traffic. Even west borrowed a lot from the rest. So, the old imbalance in writing world history has been corrected now to a certain extent. At least the relationship between west and the rest has been revised, although in the syllabus of world history European history has a dominant role.

According to new research other continents have had separate personalities from Europe right from the ancient period. It is really surprising that the earliest civilizations appeared not in Europe rather in west Asia, Africa and India which were known as Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Harappan civilization. All these civilizations appeared a bit plus or minus of nearly 3000 BCE, then a bit later, Greek Civilization appeared. Not simply that, ancient India and China made larger contributions to world civilizations. India contributed to the use of decimal system, Zero, geometry etc and China to the development of competitive exam, use of paper, gunpowder etc so did Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilization. A matter of great surprise is that one of the earliest civilizations in the world, Egyptian one, originated in North East Africa. Likewise America could showcase Maya Civilization much earlier. So different continents were having separate identities and personalities before the advent of Europeans. From no angle the advent of Europeans was a boon to them, as was the claim of liberal thinkers of Europe. These continents spent their ancient period and mediaeval period in their own respective way but so called modern period was imposed on them through the process of truncated westernization.

Ancient and Medieval Europe – an antecedent

After giving a cursory look on relationship between Europe and other continents now we have to move forward and give a brief introduction to ancient and mediaeval Europe and it's changing perspective. We cannot deny the fact that even today the syllabus of world history remains to be Eurocentric to a certain extent and we are bound to go through the syllabus. But the bright side is that it is not being done at the total neglect of other continents. That's why we will prefer to focus on Europe in relation to other continents. That's why the term world history in place of European history appears to be more relevant.

Syllabus create region of Greece showcased earliest chalcolithic culture in the region but the classical age in Greek Civilization appeared something between 500 BCE to 338 BCE. Ancient Greece covered the region of south east Europe it was Aegean sea which separates it from the region of Asia Minor. Due to its specific geographical location Greek region developed into city- states.

Persian Empire –

Greek city-states like Athens and Sparta successfully resisted Persian invasion. Actually nearly in 700 BCE Persian Empire emerged to be a world empire under the great monarchs like Cyrus and Darius first. It is characterised as the first world empire. It covered a vast region, Aegean sea to North West India including North-west Africa and a part of central Asia. As a Greek scholar Herodotus noted that Indian region was 20th kshatrapy (province) of Persian empire and this region used to provide to Persian government 360 talent of gold per annum as tax.



Greek Empire -

Up to 4th century the decline of the empire set in and it created a political vacuum in the region which could be filled up by the rise of a Greek empire under Philip and his illustrious son Alexander. In fact, among Greek states Macedonia emerged to be a powerful state under an ambitious king Philip. He conquered Italian city-states. In 336 BCE, he was succeeded by his son Alexander the great, who created a Greek empire on the ruins of Persian one. His empire included the vast area of Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Afghanistan, some parts of Central Asia and a part of North West India upto the river Vyas, beyond which Alexander's soldier refused to move further. Just parallel to it, Magadh Empire was being created in India. It expanded from the river Beas in the west to Bengal in east to the river Godavari in South India. Then just after Alexander's exit from India Magadhan empire took a formidable size after seizing even the Greek region in north-west. This empire stretched upto Hindukush in north-west to Brahmgi in Karnataka. If we are moving further east in China under Qin

dynasty empire-building started, although Qin dynasty quickly disappeared. Then appeared Han dynasty which unified a vast region under an empire and maintained it for coming four centuries.

Once again returning to the west we can underline the demise of Alexander's empire just after his death in 323 BCE. It was divided among his three ambitious military commanders. One of them Seleucus Nikator got the empire of Syria which was situated in the neighborhood of Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta Maurya. As an Empire works as a carrier of culture, so Alexander's imperialistic project was accompanied by the spread of Greek language, Greek script and Greek culture including Hellenistic art. Later eastern expansion of Roman Empire was supported by the same Greek cultured world created earlier by Alexander.



Roman Empire -

Nearly three hundred years after Alexander, there appeared a new empire, Roman Empire. During ancient period Roman Empire was the largest and the longest empire. Its nucleus region was Italy but quickly it covered whole Mediterranean region. In 509 BCE Roman state was established as a republic. Earlier than that even Greek city

- states were founded as tiny republics. But from modern standard, the term republic should not be applied either to ancient Greece or ancient Rome, as there the actual power was being enjoyed by a handful of elites. Under the Roman states these elites were known as patrician. Apart from that in ancient Greece and Rome slavery system was prevalent. Their economy was based on slave labour. In fact Greek and Roman society presented a model of an inegalitarian society. Even great cultural and philosophical heritage of Greek and Roman civilization catered to the taste of aristocratic class and it legitimized the deep seated inequality in society. Aristotle declared that only educated people are true citizens and for securing education, wealth and leisure are essential pre-conditions. In this way, the ancient republic of Greece and Rome were beset with inegalitarian norms.

But whatever was the nature of the republic later republican form of government gave way to monarchy under ambitious rulers like Augustus and Tiberius. Upto early Christian century, Roman empire became formidable in size particularly when it came to conquer Carthage Empire in northern Africa. Then, at the time of Diocletian, the empire was divided into two - Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman empire or Byzantine Empire. The capital of Western Roman Empire was Rome while that of Eastern Roman Empire was Constantinople. In Roman Empire Greek and Latin both languages were officially encouraged. Eastern part of the empire more directly inherited the legacy of Greek civilisation.

From 3rd century onwards, Western Roman Empire came to face the onslaught of German invasion as a result of which, Western Roman Empire broke into pieces while eastern Roman empire continued for the next 1000 years, till the Turkish invasion eclipsed it in 1453. Disintegration of Western Roman Empire resulted in a new type of political-economic formation in Europe known as feudalism.

Whenever we are studying about ancient world empires we can underline two important features about these empires: - Firstly these empires represented a very complex economic structure. In other words, the process of empire building was deeply linked to the initiative of having control over important trade routes. These are true of almost all empires i.e. Persian Empire, Greek Empire and Roman Empire. All were inclined to have control over the main trade routes in West Asia, Central Asia and also the routes leading to the east. Not simply that, to a greater extent even their survival depended over their ability to control these routes.



Ancient religious sects -

Secondly, multiplicity and diversity are inherent in fabric of the empire. Generally the empire is multi-regional, multilingual, multi religious, multiracial etc. in character. So these empires used a particular religion as a binding force, for example Persian Empire used Zoroastrianism as state religion. Later the same religion would be used by Sassanian empire during the medieval age. The exponent of Zoroastrianism was Zarathustra. He preached that two principles are in eternal conflict: good and evil, truth and lies. Good is incarnated in the impersonal deity Ahurmazda and evil in its twin Ahirman.

In West Asia, two important sects- Judaism and Christianity originated in Syria-Palestine region. The second one was particularly important as it was soon established as world religion. Judaism became popular among Hebrews or Jews. It propagated monotheism (Belief in a single god). Monotheism was so rare at that time that we know of only one pre-Jewish monotheistic experiment, that was Akhnaton in Egypt. Jews were settled in Palestine-Israel region. Later this region fell under the control of Roman empire. So, there Judaism was subjected to religious persecution as well as monotheism was a great oddity to Roman religious world view in which idol worship of King's idols was consciously encouraged. Later in the same region Jesus Christ was born. He was born at Bethlehem in Jerusalem. At the age of 30 after receiving a message from God he continued to propagate his ideas. Even Christian theology was based on monotheism.