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F.No.1-1/2007/MS/ICHR/Historiography Workshop

15 May 2008

To
Head of the Department of History

Sub:- Request for nomination of young history teachers and Ph.D students to participate in a two week workshop on “**Historiography and Research Methods**” conducted by the ICHR in Delhi from 23.6.2008 to 6.7.2008.

Sir,

The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India, proposes to organize a workshop on the theme mentioned above. In order to encourage sound methodology in historical research the ICHR is going to organize workshop on the ICHR premises in Delhi. An outline of the lecture series (**Annex.I**) and guidelines in respect of selection of participants, travel allowance, accommodation, etc. are enclosed (**Annex.II**). The ICHR will also provide a set of reading materials on different aspects of historical research to the participants.

2. You are requested to nominate young history teachers and research scholars for the workshop. The Curriculum Vitae of the applicants (as per enclosed proforma in **Annex.III**) may kindly be sent latest by 10.6.2008. You may also circularize this letter to your colleagues and research scholars who may also apply independently. The selection of participants by the ICHR will be final.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

(P.K. Shukla)

Encl: As above

**AN APPROACH TO HISTORIOGRAPHY
AND RESEARCH METHODS:
A Scheme for an ICHR Workshop Lecture Series**

There is a certain amount of resistance or apathy to the idea of teaching or learning research methodology in history, and there are a number of universities where it has found no place in the syllabi. And yet correct application of research method is essential for Ph.D students and other researchers. Further, outside the academic world one often notices the absence of any notion that there exists a methodology of writing history; hence all kinds of distortions of history are originated and find acceptance. Such distortions are reflected in some uninformed public debates in recent times. What is the method underlying the construction of history? How does one narrative of what happened compare with another? What are the sources of knowledge about the past and how does one arrive at what is true? Is it possible to arrive at a final truth? What are differences in the approach to history in different social and cultural formations? How has that approach changed from antiquity to modern times? Attempts to answer such questions constitute the core of historiography. In the following pages we focus upon some selected areas of historiography which seem to be relevant to historians in India in our times.

A Preliminary Outline:

We begin with the pre-modern traditions of writing history. We may select for study three such traditions in ancient civilizations: Greco-Roman, Chinese and Indian. The early development of history as an art of presenting the past in ancient Greece and Rome is important because that deeply influenced European approach to history in later times. We also take a look at the Chinese tradition since the oldest continuous historical accounts and records were to be found in the imperial center of the Chinese civilization. Finally we turn to India and enquire into the forms of history, somewhat different from the European tradition, produced in ancient India. We pass on to the mediaeval age to study in outline the European, Arabic-Persian, and Indian traditions of writing history and the popular local traditions as the means of representing and transmitting a society or community's past. A comparison of the different traditions suggests that a notion, often voiced in the West, that some countries like India did not have a sense of the historical is a mistaken notion. A generalisation that can be made is that different notions of history existed in different cultures and not all of them approximated to the pattern that Europe held up as the model.

What were the dominant trends in modern times in Europe? We begin with the Positivist approach: from philosophers like Auguste Comte to empiricist historians like Leopold von Ranke, great many intellectuals in Europe created the foundations of an outlook that believed in the possibility of developing 'social sciences' as well as historical narratives which present 'history as it actually happened'. While Positivism was ascendant in professional historians' circles, assuring the world of totally objective history, Marxism offered a critique of class bias inherent in the ideology and world-outlook of classes which dominated and exploited the oppressed and the proletariat. The advent of Marxism made history a contested terrain because to Karl Marx history held the key to the transformations which class societies had

undergone as well as the dynamics of class struggle which would eventually lead to the birth of a class-less society. While historical materialism and the interpretation of history in terms of class struggle exercised influence over socio-political thinking all over the world, academic historical work was more directly influenced by the '*Annales*' school from the 1930s. The works of Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel and others of that school of history emphasized the integration of economic, social and political history into a 'total history' and their emphasis on long-term structures initiated a new trend in professional historians' writings. For all these reasons we focus attention on these three approaches in historiography. In order to cover some of the more recent trends we also address the issues arising out of the later evolution of Marxism, Post-modernism, gender studies. These were the sites some of the most influential ideas and debates in the later half of the twentieth century all over the world. While the position adopted by the proponents of Post-modernism has been widely questioned and the neo-Marxist approach to history has had its share of detractors, acquaintance with these systems of analyzing history is useful to a student of history in our times. Writings on gender history merits attention as developing areas study.

Having set the scene so to speak in the above set of essays on approaches to history which had a global impact in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we examine the trends in India in that period. While it is not justifiable at times to tag on to historians ready-made labels, in so far as it is possible to discern certain common features, often consciously displayed as marks of affiliation, one may detect certain tendencies or trends.. The essays on colonialist and nationalist historiography offer an account of the imperial vision of India's history and its contestation from the nationalist point of view, and this is followed by an essay on the communalist approach. New interpretations of imperial rule in India, initiated by some British historians at Cambridge have 'revision' on the agenda in this approach while Marxist historians have remained true to their original moorings, distinct from the colonialist and nationalist standpoints. In the discussing these so-called 'schools' of history one should bear in mind the fact that any such endeavour is subject to the qualification that the common habit of grouping historians into 'schools' encourages us to ignore differences in nuances and complexities in their argument.

The same caveats apply to our attempt to survey thematic orientations and theoretical predispositions which have emerged in recent years. We shall attempt to get an over-view of the current historiographic trends in areas known commonly as 'history from below', 'subaltern history', labour history, the 'culturalist' turn in writing history, etc. However, our close proximity to the developments thus surveyed may not allow us an adequate perspective on their long-run significance.

After this survey of historiographic trends, we shall pass on to a second set of issues: how does historiography relate to some neighbouring social sciences. This is where we take a look at developments in the area of economic history, anthropological and social history, cultural studies and study of popular mentality, interpretation of archaeological data, and historical geography.

In the third group of lecture topics we address some basic methodological questions: these are issues such as objectivity in historiography, how causality is established in historical explication, the scope and limits of generalization and interpretation of facts and documents, etc.

And finally we shall turn to the actual tasks involved in the process of writing history today: how to collect data, the resources available, the art of presentation of an argument and a narrative, the conventions which govern documentation or citation of sources, the bibliographic protocol, etc. These are essential aids in transforming the researchers' inputs into professionally competent and conventionally acceptable contributions to the advancement of historical knowledge today.

(Sabyasachi Bhattacharya)
Chairman, ICHR
Dated: 15.05.2008

**GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS WORKSHOP SERIES ON
HISTORIOGRAPHY AND RESEARCH METHOD**

1. A series of *Workshops on Historiography and Research Methodology* will be organized by the ICHR in different regions during the present Five Year Plan Period and expenses have been already budgeted for in the Plan proposal sent by ICHR to MHRD earlier this year.
2. The First workshop of the series will be New Delhi between 23 June and 6 July 2008 and it is expected that it will provide the model which will be followed in other venues later.
3. The participants will be invited from the degree colleges and universities in Delhi Union Territory, Punjab and Haryana.
4. At the workshop participants will be about 30 in number, to be selected by ICHR from amongst applicants who will provide in their application their bio-data.
5. The participants will be provided by ICHR free board and lodging and T.A. according to government rules.
6. Further, the participants will also be provided by ICHR free of charge a reading kit consisting of selected readings (extracts from books and articles).

**PROFORMA FOR APPLICATION FOR PARTICIPANT:
ICHR WORKSHOP ON “HISTORIOGRAPHY AND RESEARCH METHODS”**

Name: Shri/Smt./Kumari/Dr.

Date of Birth:

**(Academic Record (B.A.,M.A. only with
division and percentage of marks)**

**Designation: (College/University)
lecturer/Reader/Research scholar**

**Date of first continuous appointment as
teacher**

Research Degree/Publications

**Course being taught by the applicant as
teacher**

**Subject of research (in case of Research
scholars)**

**Supervisor’s name and date of registration
(in case of research scholar)**

Specialization at MA, if any

**Any other information which the applicant
may consider relevant**

**Note: The applicant may put a cross
against entries which do not apply to
him/her.**

