

TEXTBOOK IN HISTORY
FOR CLASS XI



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FOREWORD

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the Advisory Group in Social Science, Professor Hari Vasudevan, *Chief Advisor*, History, Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya and the Advisor for this book, Professor Narayani Gupta, for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations, which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially

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grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G. P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

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20 December 2005

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ON READING WORLD HISTORY

How is it possible, you may ask, to study the history of the world within one year? There is so much that has happened in different countries and so much that has been written about each country. How can we choose a few themes for study from a vast and boundless corpus?

These are valid questions. Before we read any book on world history we need answers to such questions. A syllabus needs to make clear how it is organised. A book should explain what it is seeking to do.

We need to remember that in studying or writing history the historian is always involved in a process of selection. This is a point that E. H. Carr made many decades ago in a wonderful small book *What is History?* After wading through an enormous pile of records in a musty archive, a historian notes down those facts which appear important to him. He relates them to other evidence that he has similarly collected from some other archive, from some other place. He cannot possibly copy down everything he has read, nor use all the evidence he has collected. The evidence that does not make sense to the historian goes unnoticed. At a later date, some other historian reads the same records with new questions in mind. She now discovers evidence that had earlier gone unnoticed. She interprets this evidence, makes new connections, and writes a new book of history.

History writing cannot do away with this element of selectivity. So in reading history we need to see what events a historian chooses to focus on and how he interprets them. We need to understand the larger argument the historian is developing, the broader framework through which he makes sense of particular events.

Till recently the history of the world that we read was often a story of the rise of the modern West. It was a story of continuous progress and development: the expansion of technology and science, markets and trade, reason and rationality, freedom and liberty. Individual histories of specific events were very often structured within this larger story of the triumphal march of the West. Imperial domination of the world was premised on this conception of the past. The West saw itself as the bearer of progress: civilising the world, introducing reforms, educating natives, expanding trades and markets.

Should we not question this perception today? To do that we need to re-look at world history, travel across continents and long chronological periods, and see whether we can think of this history in a new way. *Themes in World History* will help you in this journey.

It will do so in three different ways.

First: it will introduce you to the darker histories that lie behind the glorious stories of development and progress. You will see how the arrival of explorers and traders in South America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not simply open up the place for western commerce and culture; it led to the spread of disease, destruction of civilisations and the decimation of populations (Theme 8). Later, when white settlers moved into North America and Australia, what we had was not just progress (Theme 10). Behind the history of the development of modern capitalist societies in these places lie the disturbing stories of displacements of indigenous populations, and even genocide.

Second: when you read about the making of states and empires in Section II, you will see that the drama unfolds not only in Rome (Theme 3), that is in Europe, but in the Central Islamic states (Theme 4), and the land of the Mongols (Theme 5). These chapters will tell you about the very different ways in which society and polity are organised in these places.

Third: in reading Section IV you will see that there are different paths to modernisation. There was a time when it was believed that industrialisation first occurred in Britain and other countries tried to replicate this model in various ways. So the developments of all countries were judged in relation to the British model. Such an argument once again sees the West as the centre of the world. But we know today that it is certainly not true that all creativity flowed in only from the West. In opposition to this, however, we cannot simply assert that the West had no influence on what was happening elsewhere, or that historical developments in each country have to be seen in isolation, that we should only look at the indigenous roots of all developments. That would be a narrow and limited perspective, a form of parochialism. Instead we need to recognise that in different countries people act creatively to shape the world in which they live, and these developments in turn have impact on other countries and continents, including Europe. Theme 7 will help you see how even the cultural developments in Renaissance Europe were so significantly influenced by developments in other parts of the world.

Your journey will begin with the evolution of early human societies (Theme 1) and the early cities (Theme 2). You will then see how large states and empires developed in three different parts of the world, and how these societies were organised (Section II). In the next section, you will have a close look at how European society and culture changed between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries, and what European expansion meant for the people of South America (Section III). Finally, you will read about the complex history of the making of the modern world (Section IV). Many of the themes will introduce you to the debates in the field and show how historians continuously rethink old issues.

Each section begins with an Introduction and a Timeline. These timelines are not for you to memorise for exams. They are meant to give you some idea of what was happening in different places at any one point of time. They will help you situate the history of one place in relation to another.

Constructing a timeline is always difficult. How do we choose the dates to focus on? Not all historians would agree on the choices made. In fact, if you compare different timelines, given in different books, for the same period, you may find that the issues highlighted in them are different. So we need to read each timeline critically, see what it tells us and what it does not. Timelines frame history in particular ways.

This year you are not reading about the history of South Asia. The book you read next year will be on 'Themes in Indian History'. Over these two years (Classes XI and XII) you will learn not only about some of the critical events and processes in the history of the world, you will also discover how historians come to know about the past. You will see what sources they use and how they make sense of these; you will see how historical knowledge develops through re-interpretations and debates.

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