

History repeats itself

POINTS TO DEVELOP

Events repeated in history.

Specific examples of repetition-wars, causes for war, revolutions, consequences.

Cycles of greatness and lowliness in every country's history.

Repetition of history has not helped humankind learn not to repeat mistakes.

History is a record of past, especially in connection with human race. It affords us a glimpse into acts, events, ideas, characters of the past, thus helping us to know more about those centuries gone by. When we trace history right from its beginning to the recent times, we cannot fail to notice that some events and characters have shown a repetitive quality. It is almost as if such acts and ideas were meant to occur over and over again in different centuries though in a slightly different manner each time. What is the significance of such repetition?

The ancient Greeks, for instance, regarded history as a cycle of events that repeated itself endlessly. Viewing history from where we stand today, we may find that there is no dearth of historical material to justify this view. Wars and destruction have lingered through history as factors responsible for creating many events. It is as if they have kept the wheel of time in motion. Causes for the origin of Wars have also been more or less the same-almost always a lust for power and greatness, or else to prove the Superiority of a set of values, be it social or political in nature, or for economic gain. Thus, if the Persian monarch, Darius I, invaded territories far and wide to establish his power over kingdoms large and small, thus extending the dominions of his empire, so did Alexander of Macedonia, the Roman monarchs, Chinghiz Khan and the Mughal Babar. The consequences of war and destruction have also been similar: the emergence of new powers, new rulers not very different from their predecessors as far as their goal of conquest is concerned.

Almost every century has seen the rise of a great leader-though as to what constitutes 'greatness' is a debatable matter. Messiahs, truly concerned about the welfare of mankind in general, have come and gone, almost always emphasising a similar set of values and virtues for the good of man. Reformers and leaders genuinely concerned about the condition of the society in their times have always stressed the importance of similar essential values for man. Thus,

the fundamental message delivered to humanity by the Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Nanak, and Mahatma Gandhi is very similar.

History is thus nothing but man's one long struggle for survival to preserve his existence, identity and values. The struggle has often borne more than a slight resemblance in the methods used and the manner adopted in each period. Such repetition of historical facts-events, ideas and acts sometimes makes us think that there is nothing coincidental about it; that it is a planned sequence leading towards a pre-destined goal.

However, in spite of history repeating itself time and again to reveal the mistakes and pains that have, it seems, worked against man's struggle for a better life, man has never actually learnt from his past experience. Wars continue to this day, rather on a global scale. Man's lust for ambition and power continues to destroy peoples and nations. All this points to only one thing-man's inherent nature and his basic approach or manner of responding to the historical experience has been the same ever since civilization began.