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## Microhistory Writing is A Stream of History Writing

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**DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.14784834**

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### **Abstract:**

*Micro history is a historical research approach that focuses on a small, specific area or event rather than a broad, general topic. It involves detailed, in-depth analysis of a specific topic, often using primary sources and interdisciplinary methods. Micro history writing is the study of history in a local area. Micro history writing is the study of the political, social, economic, administrative, cultural, religious aspects of a local area. Micro history writing attempts to understand the intentions and goals of historical actors in a local area.*

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### **Microhistory:**

History is the study of what happened in the past and how it happened. Human actions cause events, which are reflected in documents. Therefore, in the twentieth century, the concept of scientifically studying original documents in archives and structuring human histories was clear among historians. They wrote the history of wars, events and monarchies reflected in these documents. The question of whose history exactly is the history of the documents preserved in the archives and the history reflected in those documents did not occur to historians of this time. However, in the 1970s, historians around the world were faced with this question, which later gave rise to the microhistory writing movement.

### **Meaning of Microhistory:**

This trend in history writing did not emerge alone. Microhistory emerged from the reflection and analysis that while writing biographies of great people, the events of the common people and the common people should be highlighted.

Microhistory writing truly emerged in the 1970s. The English word 'Microhistory' is

used in Marathi as 'microhistory' or 'micro history'. Many historians have defined the history writing trend in their own ways. However, Giovanni Levi, an Italian historian, while interpreting microhistory, has emphasized on microanalysis and in-depth study of documents in history writing by reducing the amount of observation in history writing.

### **The Rise of Micro-Historiography movement:**

British historian E.P. Thompson explained the role of writing the history of the exploited class or the Shudra people, who have been forgotten by history. To write the history of the common people, he proposed the concept of writing history from below. Thompson's unconventional Marxist thought gave rise to new concepts in history. The first concept is 'Subaltern Studies' or 'History of the Disadvantaged'. A group of historians of this thought, in the context of India, started writing historiography from the perspective of the disadvantaged in the 1980s by Ranjit Guha and his colleagues. Historians of the subaltern group undertook the project of writing history with the aim of

giving a voice to the disadvantaged groups who had no voice in history through their writings. Historian Thompson's historiography and his thoughts also influenced some historians in Italy. These same historians later developed the perspective and theoretical role of 'microhistory', i.e. micro-history writing. The historians in this group in Italy included the 'Quaderni Storici' (Quaderni Storici) such as Carlo Ginzburg, Edoardo Grandi, Giovanni Levi and Carlo Poni. This group began to theoretically organize micro-history. The theoretical method, thoughts, organization and perspective of the micro-history writing method of the Italian group of Quaderni Storici became famous. And from here the tradition of writing micro-history began.

Historical matters that are far removed from traditional historiography should be addressed in microhistory. Microhistory is a historical writing method that studies the interrelationships of individuals and small groups. It involves the study of various ideas, customs, traditions, beliefs and various actions. In the early 1980s, this trend emerged against the larger social group, which aimed to study small events and incidents. Micro-events prove the changes and transformations in history. Due to these changes and transformations, the history of the common people is known. The subtle nuances of history are understood by everyone and it is through them that the historical work done by the common people in the true sense comes to light.

### **Features of Microhistory:**

The features of microhistory can be seen in the article 'On Microhistory' published in 1991 by Italian historian Giovanni Levi. The salient features of the microhistory movement can be explained as follows:-

Traditional historiography studies important events that have occurred in human history.

However, the microhistory movement studies events that seem very small. Its specialty is to study very small and less important events in a serious manner. There is a definite role behind this. The role is not to study trivial and bizarre events or incidents and interpret them and give them a place in history writing, but to enter into a larger historical question by analyzing trivial events.

Microhistory involves studying seemingly meaningless events. The study of important events and incidents is mainly done in history. Small historical events that seem less important. Events that seem meaningless are deliberately ignored. However, microhistorians understand the traditions of society by analyzing very small, bizarre and meaningless events or incidents. In a sense, they try to present the less meaningful aspects of the opposite side by studying them. They argue that meaning can be created by studying seemingly meaningless events, and that unity can be presented by studying contrasts. In a sense, they study seemingly meaningless events through contradictions.

Traditional historiography mainly focuses on the study of a broad region or period. However, microhistory focuses on a specific topic related to a group of people, a family, or an individual living in a particular place. Just as a scientist uses a microscope to identify a different world of bacteria, the role of the microbiologist is the same here. The 'microbialization' in microhistory is not only limited to reducing the area or size of the study, but it also makes the period under study smaller. Microhistory studies a family or an individual for a specific short period of time. Its subject of study is short-term, contextual.

Historians in the micro-historiography stream try to shed light on general events. However, the micro-study of a small group, family, or individual is not done because these subjects are special, but rather their

main purpose is to shed light on the history of the general public. Historians in this group believe that the micro-study of a special or specialized subject will pave the way for discussing broader questions of historical analysis. In micro-history, researchers choose a seemingly trivial or simple event and then explain the complexity or intricacies within it. Regarding this, Giovanni Levi says that the historian should always pay attention to the counter-narrative in the story told by an individual.

The historian who writes micro-history is influenced by the anthropological ideas of Clifford Gertz. Gertz's "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" article, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," has been adopted by microhistorians in his study of the indigenous people of Bali, Indonesia. Gertz used this method to closely observe the game of cockfighting among these indigenous people and describe it in detail. He deciphered the symbolic code used in the ritual of cockfighting. Later, Gertz's student at Princeton University, Robert Darnton, used it effectively in his microhistory, "The Great Cat Massacre." He addressed the question of why workers in a printing house in Paris slaughtered their owners' cats in the 1730s. Darnton examined the evidence and described the ritual of the workers while slaughtering the cats and explored their mentality, in other words, this was an attempt to explain the complexity behind a superficial and simple event. The first to use the micro-history method was Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg. In 1976, Ginzburg published a study of a strange incident in 16th-century Italy under the title 'Cheese and Works'.

### **Limitations of Micro-History Writing:**

Although the main purpose of micro-history writing is to study very small events and enter into big historical questions, many historians do not feel comfortable dealing with big historical questions.

In micro-history writing, the historian studies short-term events or incidents, in which case he cannot study the changes that have occurred over time and analyze the process of why and how they happened. Since the period of study is short, it cannot show the long-term changes in society.

### **Historical Importance of Micro Historiography:**

Micro historiography brings history with a human face to the reader. It includes ordinary people. The reader gets information about the events in the lives of real ordinary people in history. Micro history involves a detailed analysis of evidence, which helps in understanding the history of the disadvantaged. Its main attraction is the study of the deprived, exploited and ordinary people and even trivial events or incidents.

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