

8. Confrontation of Cultures

1. Compare the civilisation of the Aztecs with that of the Mesopotamians.

Answer:

The civilisation of the Aztecs:

1. Aztec society was hierarchical. Nobility included priests and other higher social groups.
2. Aztecs made *chinampas* (artificial islands) in Lake Mexico, by weaving huge reed-mats and covering them with mud and plants.
3. They cultivated corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, manioc root and potatoes.
4. Land was owned not by individuals but by clans. Peasants worked in the lands owned by the nobility.
5. Aztecs made sure that all children went to school.

The civilisation of the Mesopotamians:

1. Mesopotamia (land between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers) is known as the "cradle of civilization".
2. It was a fertile land and its agriculture produced surplus foodgrains. However, its mineral resources were few.
3. In southern Mesopotamia, Sumerians built big cities and developed the earliest-known writing called *cuneiform*.
4. In cities, there were schools, where students read and copied *cuneiform* tablets.

2. What were the new developments helping European navigation in the fifteenth century?

Answer:

1. Though the magnetic compass had been invented in 1380 itself, only in the fifteenth century did European explorers use it.
2. Gradually, larger ships were built for voyages; now explorers could carry a huge quantity of cargo and protect themselves from enemies in their strong ships.
3. Books on cosmography and geography were published. In 1477, Ptolemy's *Geography* was published. Europeans gained knowledge of the world from this book.

3. Give reasons for Spain and Portugal being the first in the fifteenth century to venture across the Atlantic.

Answer:

Spanish and Portuguese were the first in the fifteenth century to venture across the Atlantic, due to a combination of three motives: economic, religious and political.

Economic motives:

The decline of economy and long-distance trade from the mid fourteenth century, destruction of population by plague and wars, and shortage of gold and silver for minting coins compelled European explorers to search for new lands for raw materials and sea route for trade.

Religious motives:

Discovering new lands brought many more people into the fold of Christianity; devout Christian Europeans were ready to face adventure to convert the natives.

Political motives:

Due to the beginning of the 'Crusades' (religious wars) against Turks, Europeans started trading with Asia, and had developed taste for Asian goods, especially spices. In order to control their trade politically, the European countries established colonies and exploited natural resources.

4. What new food items were transmitted from South America to the rest of the world?**Answer:**

Food items such as tobacco, potatoes, canesugar, cacao and rubber were transmitted from South America to the rest of the world.

Answer in a short essay**5. Write an account of the journey of an African boy of seventeen captured and taken to Brazil as a slave.****Answer:**

1. Slaves who were captured from the areas of Goree, Senegambia and Boland in Africa were taken to Europe in slave ships.
2. Their journey towards Brazil was long and cruel. Their hands, legs and necks were shackled together; many died of fatal diseases, and without water and food, before reaching the destination. Some of slaves committed suicides by jumping into the ocean.

6. How did the 'discovery' of South America lead to the development of European colonialism?**Answer:**

(i) After the 'discovery' of South America, surplus gold and silver was shipped to Spain from South American mines between 1560 and 1600. It resulted in the growth of international trade and industrialisation.

(iii) However, Spain and Portugal did not benefit from it because they did not invest the resources in further trade.

(iv) Instead, it was the countries bordering the Atlantic, particularly England, France, Belgium and Holland, that took advantage of the 'discoveries'.

(v) Their merchants formed jointstock companies and sent out trading expeditions, established colonies and introduced Europeans to the products of the New World, including tobacco, potatoes, canesugar, cacao and rubber.