

UNIT

8

The Beginning of the Modern Age



Learning Objectives

The objectives of this lesson are to acquaint ourselves with

- Cultural, religious and economic changes that shaped the modern world
- Humanism as an idea transforming the outlook of the people of the Middle Ages
- Protestant Reformation that emphasised more faith than rituals
- Discovery of America and new sea routes to the East leading to commercial revolution and establishment of colonies



Introduction

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Western Europe underwent dramatic changes in the political, social, cultural, religious and economic spheres. The Italian humanist Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, German theologian Martin Luther's 'Ninety-five Theses' and Portugal Prince Henry's Navigation School heralded the dawn of the modern era. The Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Church became weak and discredited. In their place nation states, new Churches that emphasized individual faith, and a commercial revolution

based on mercantilism emerged. The modern era was characterized by freedom of thought, individualism, rationalism, and economic and scientific progress. In this lesson let us look at the changes ushered in by the **Renaissance, Reformation and Geographical Discoveries.**

8.1 Causative Factors

8.1(a) Growth of Trade and Rise of Towns

With the decline of Feudalism, Europe was gradually moving towards urbanisation. This process started first in Italy because

of its prosperous Mediterranean trade. The Arabs brought spices from the east and then transported them by land to the ports of the Mediterranean region. Italian city-states such as Venice and Genoa profited immensely from this trade. Following the expansion of trade, a strong network of banking and financial institutions too developed in Italy. In this context, new ideas leading to the Renaissance, Reformation and Exploration through sea voyages were born.

8.1(b) Invention of the Printing Press

The invention of the printing press accelerated the process of modernisation. Earlier, manuscripts were written by hand on animal skin called *Vellum*. Only the privileged few could access them. Johannes Gutenberg (1394-1468 A.D. (C.E.)) invented the printing press in Germany in the middle of the fifteenth century. The printing press enabled the production of multiple copies of a manuscript and their spread all over Western Europe. In less than fifty years after the invention of the Gutenberg printing press, about six million books had been printed. The invention of printing press not only spread knowledge widely, but also promoted critical thinking.



Gutenberg's Printing Press

8.1(c) Fall of Constantinople

In 1453 A.D. (C.E.), Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, was captured

by the Ottoman Turks. This acted as a catalyst for the birth of Renaissance. It also led to the discovery of new land routes. Following the Turkish occupation, a number of scholars, artists and artisans left Constantinople, which was for many centuries the cultural capital of the Western world, to the Italian city states.

8.2 Renaissance

With the coming of the scholars and artists from Constantinople there was a surge of enthusiasm and interest in studying classical literature and art of Greeks and Romans in the Italian city states. This creative upsurge was reflected in their writings, art, architecture and music. This cultural florescence is known as the *renaissance*. The origin of the word renaissance is from the Italian word *renascita* meaning *rebirth*. Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras who taught Greek classics in Italy, Guarino and Giovanni Aurispa, to name just a few, visited Constantinople several times to collect Greek manuscripts. Later they printed what they collected. This provided stimulus to the flowering of renaissance.

8.2(a) Why Italy became the birth place of Renaissance?

Italian city-states such as Florence, Milan, Venice, and Rome profited immensely from the Mediterranean trade. This led to the emergence of a rich and vibrant urban culture. The rich families of these city states such as Medicis of Florence patronized literature, art and music. The highpoint of this period was between 1475 A.D. (C.E.) and 1525 A.D. (C.E.). Italian universities taught humanities viz., linguistic, grammar, rhetoric, history, science and ethics, which prepared the students for public life, commerce and administration. The study of humanities was so popular in the Italian Universities that students from all over Europe flocked there. Classical Greek and Latin literature introduced the idea of *Humanism* which got reflected in the paintings, sculptures, architecture, music and writings of that period.

8.2(b) Humanism in Literature

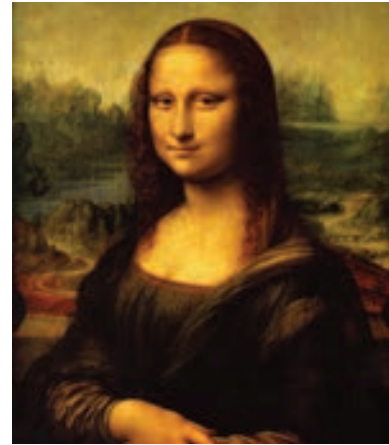
The idea of humanism was first expressed in literature. The humanists were critical of medieval ideas and institutions and criticized them satirically in their writings. They argued that man was endowed with reason and the ability to attain true knowledge and greatness. **Petrarch** (1304-1374 A.D. (C.E.)) was the first to adopt ideas of classical humanism in his works and is therefore called the **Father of Humanism**. **Dante**, influenced by the classics, wrote *Divine Comedy*. **Machiavelli** wrote a political treatise called *The Prince*. In this book, he wrote about the virtues that a ruler should possess. He declared that a ruler should be Lion and Fox in one. For him, the end was more important than means. Erasmus (1466-1536 A.D. (C.E.)), known as the *Prince among Humanists*, wrote *In Praise of Folly*, a satirical work on the activities and rituals of the Church. Sir Thomas More of England wrote *Utopia*, a satire on the political evils of his time. Cervantes of Spain wrote *Don Quixote*, another satire on medieval chivalry and valour.

Humanism

The idea of humanism was a central feature of renaissance. It laid emphasis on human dignity and nature. In the medieval period, man was considered a mere agent of the God on earth to do his will. Renaissance humanism promoted the view that humans are endowed with attributes that are to be used to achieve greatness. It turned the gaze of the people from the other world to this world, from spiritual world to material world. The focus shifted from life after death to life in this world.

8.2(c) Impact on Art

Renaissance paintings and sculptures were realistic and naturalistic. They improved over medieval paintings and sculptures which were stylized, unrealistic and two dimensional. They portrayed natural landscapes, human anatomy, emotions and ideas.



Mona Lisa

In the field of art, great artists like **Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael** dominated the scene and produced some of the finest artistic works. Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519 A.D. (C.E.)) was a versatile genius. He was a painter, sculptor, architect, military engineer, anatomist, and poet. His paintings of *Mona Lisa* (*La Gioconda*), *The Last Supper* and *The Virgin on the Rocks* are illustrious examples of his talent.



Madonna

Michelangelo (1475-1564 A.D. (C.E.)) was a painter, sculptor, architect and poet. His marble sculpture of David depicts the youthful strength and energy of the giant slayer. He is also famous for his paintings in the ceilings of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Raphael (1483-1520 A.D. (C.E.)) painted beautiful *Madonnas* (Virgin and the Child). His painting of *the*

School of Athens reveals the ideological debate of his times, namely, the conflict between spiritualism and humanism.

8.2(d) Science during Renaissance

The advances in science were inspired by **Ptolemy, Archimedes, Euclid** and others of the classical period. In the medieval period the Aristotelian view that earth was the centre of the universe strengthened the Church's view of creation and its own centrality to mankind. However, the influence of Plato and other classics challenged it, laying the foundations of modern science. William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood. Copernicus proved that earth revolved around the sun through a mathematical model. Galileo provided further astronomical proof with the aid of the telescope he invented. However, he was forced by the Inquisition to withdraw his findings on the threat of death penalty. The Church thus continued to prevent the growth of science as it undermined its importance. Nevertheless, scientific discoveries and inventions continued apace leading to the Scientific Revolution.

8.2(e) Effects of Renaissance

The impact of renaissance was profound and far-reaching. Its most important contribution was the idea of humanism. It marked a definite shift towards individualism, secularism and nationalism.

The introduction and practice of writing in the vernacular, starting from Dante, enriched the growth of vernacular languages which in turn provided the intellectual basis for the rise of nation-states. Renaissance made a beginning in criticizing the corrupt and worldly practices of the Church. Erasmus and Thomas More indirectly encouraged the reformation movement.

The curiosity kindled by the renaissance played a decisive role in the discovery of new land routes and remapping of the world. The spirit of adventurism and quest for knowledge

impelled the mariners to sail into the high seas.

Similarly, inquisitiveness and empiricism of renaissance combined with knowledge of the classical science led to new inventions in science – Copernican revolution in astronomy and William Harvey's contribution to human anatomy.

8.3 Reformation

The Roman Catholic Church was a powerful institution during the Middle Ages. The Church enjoyed both spiritual and temporal powers (apart from religious control it also exercised political control in certain areas such as the Papal States). The Pope was its head. His office was known as Papacy. The Pope wielded spiritual authority over the Christians of Europe cutting across the territorial boundaries. He lived a luxurious life like a prince. Many of his officials were corrupt and the offices of the Church were sold for a price. The Church made the people believe that they would suffer in purgatory because of their sins. The people were further told that if they repented their sins and did penance, they would be absolved from sins and go to heaven. Otherwise they would suffer in hell. The Church prescribed a number of penances for various sins. People were made to believe that participation in the Mass (a ceremony in Christianity) would reduce the sins. The Church even began to grant pardon known as the sale of indulgences, (payment to the catholic church)

Inquisition

Inquisition was an institution of the Catholic Church to deal with heresies beliefs in opposition to the Catholic faith. Those found guilty and who recanted were awarded milder punishments and imprisonment, and those who refused to recant were burnt at the stake. The most infamous inquisition was the Spanish Inquisition.

8.3(a) Martin Luther (1483–1556 A.D. (C.E.))

Martin Luther, a monk of the Augustinian Order and a Professor of Theology in the University of Wittenberg, was a devout Christian and a scrupulous follower of the Catholic



faith. However, on his visit to Rome he was shocked by the luxurious life of the officials of the Church. At about this time, a church official Johann Tetzel came to Wittenberg to sell indulgences and Church offices at an auction. Martin Luther wrote a pamphlet against the sale of indulgences, sale of offices and other corrupt practices. He listed out ninety five points and pasted them on the Church door of Wittenberg. Later the points he raised became the famous Ninety Five Theses. Soon they were printed and circulated widely. When attempts of the Church to make him withdraw his criticisms failed, Pope Leo X issued a Papal Bull excommunicating him. Martin Luther signalled his revolt by publicly burning the Papal Bull. He was then summoned to the Diet that met at Worms in 1521 A.D. (C.E.). Luther attended the Diet to defend himself, despite his friends' cautions. He was fortunately saved by his patron Frederick, the Wise, the Elector of Saxony. Frederick hid him in his Wartburg Castle, where Martin Luther translated the Bible into German.

Luther further elaborated his differences with the Church. He rejected the belief that ceremonies and penances would lead to salvation. He argued, that by faith alone that one could attain salvation. He put forward the doctrine of *justification by faith*. The grace of God would be bestowed by the divine will alone and not by the deeds of the people. Further, the Bible could be read and interpreted by all and not by the Church alone. Thus, he rejected the role of the Church as an intermediary between the individual and God. His teachings became popular throughout Germany. Not only many Princes but the peasants also supported Luther's

cause. Thus, Luther's reformation marked the first successful break from the Church and establishment of the Protestant Church. When some of the German Princes protested against the imposition of faith on them in the Diet of Speyer or Spires, they came to be known as the Protestants and the reformation that followed also came to be known as the **Protestant Reformation**.

8.3(b) Other Protestant Reforms

The Lutheran reformation opened the gates for other Protestant reformations. Though inspired by the very same reasons as that of the Lutheran reformation, they showed differences in their doctrinal approach.

Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531 A.D. (C.E.)) of Switzerland and John Calvin (1509-1564) of Geneva followed Martin Luther in protesting against the Church. Like Luther they were also unhappy with the functioning of the Church and questioned the sale of indulgences and ecclesiastical offices. Zwingli worked from Zurich and was against all forms of rituals. Like Zwingli, John Calvin too opposed all forms of display of wealth. Calvin codified his views in his book *Institutes of Christian Religion*. He controlled the government of Geneva between 1541 A.D. (C.E.) and 1564 A.D. (C.E.).

In England, the reformation was brought about due to the personal reasons of the King Henry VIII. Henry VIII longed for a son who would succeed him to the throne. For this purpose Henry wanted to marry again and therefore appealed to the Pope to annul his marriage with Catherine. However, the Holy Roman Emperor was Catherine's nephew and he pressurized the Pope not to agree to his request. As the Pope kept evading his decision, King Henry VIII grew impatient and broke his ties with Rome. By a series of Acts he established a separate Anglican Church. He confiscated the properties of the Catholic Church and monasteries in England and declared himself the Supreme Head of the Anglican Church.

8.4 Counter Reformation

The Protestant reformation posed a threat to the Catholic Church. In order to meet the challenge Pope Paul III and his successors introduced a number of rigorous reforms in the Church. They dealt with corruption severely and stopped the sale of offices. The Council of Trent reemphasized the importance of ceremonies and the significance of the *mass*. It also pronounced that only the Church could interpret the scriptures. Further, it revitalized the Inquisition to deal with opposition to the Church. It also gave official sanction to the Society of Jesus. This reformation of the Catholic Church from within is known as **Counter Reformation**.

St. Ignatius Loyola and Society of Jesus

St. Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus to propagate Christianity. Its main work was through education and service to the destitute. It started a number of educational institutions, orphanages and homes for the destitute. Soon their missionaries were present in all parts of the world to spread the Catholic religion.



St. Ignatius Loyola

8.5 Geographical Discoveries

8.5(a) Causes

Henry the Navigator of Portugal laid the foundation for long distance sea voyages. He established a navigation school to train sailors. In his school, he taught them how to use

navigational instruments such as the mariner's compass and the astrolabe.

The impulse for seafaring and adventurous spirit to explore uncharted sea waters was kindled by the curiosity generated by the Renaissance and the travel accounts of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. This was further fuelled by the crusading spirit of the Missionaries who dared to undertake dangerous voyages to spread the gospel to the non-believers in distant lands.

But the primary factor was economic. When the Ottoman Turks blocked the land route between the East and the West, spices and other goods became costlier. The European traders were deprived of the huge profits they were earning out of their trade in spices. This intensified the urge to discover a new sea route to Asia.

A breakthrough was made in the fourteenth century when a copy of Ptolemy's *Geography* was brought from the Byzantine Empire to the West. By the middle of the fourteenth century, thanks to the printing press, multiple copies were made and circulated widely. It greatly increased the knowledge of the sea routes.

8.5(b) Portuguese Explorations

The sailors of Prince Henry had travelled into Atlantic upto the islands of Azores and Madeira. They explored the west coast of Africa. **Lopo Gonzalves** was the first sailor to cross the equator. Till then



Henry the Navigator

sailors did not dare to venture beyond, as they harboured fears about boiling waters and sea monsters. **Bartholomew Diaz** ventured further down the African coast reaching cape point or the southern tip of Africa in 1487 A.D. (C.E.). He named it the *Cape of Storms* as he encountered fierce storms there. However, King John II of Portugal renamed it as *Cape of Good Hope* as it provided hope to reach India by sea.



Sea Routes

The Portuguese established trading posts along the west coast of Africa dealing in lumber, ivory and slaves. The establishment of trading posts enabled them to buy slaves and transport them directly to Portugal. The slaves were employed in the sugarcane plantations, and sugar was exported to Europe. Slaves were purchased from the African slave market and transported to the colonies under inhuman conditions in slave ships. They were chained and cramped into narrow spaces with insufficient air to breathe. Many died during the journey. For those who survived, the suffering continued in the plantations. Slave trade increased with the discovery and colonization of America.

8.5(c) Spain and Discovery of the New World

In 1492 A.D. (C.E.), **Columbus**, with the support of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, set sail in three ships. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean and reached the Bahamas Island, Cuba and Haiti. Columbus thought he had reached the frontier areas of Asia. Hence, he called the natives he encountered as Indians. **Amerigo Vespucci**, another sailor, made three or four voyages and landed on the American mainland. He realized that it was not Asia and

that they had stumbled upon a new continent. Hence, he called it the New World. Later, a German cartographer, while preparing a map of the world, named the new world after Amerigo Vespucci and called it America.

8.5(d) Portuguese–Spanish Rivalry

The Portuguese claimed the territories discovered by Columbus. The dispute was referred to the Pope Alexander VI who drew an imaginary line north to south west of Azores and declared that the territories to the west of that line belonged to Spain and that of the east to the Portuguese.

In 1497 A.D. (C.E.) Vasco da Gama sailed from Portugal as the head of four ships to find a sea route to India by going around Africa. After reaching the Cape of Good Hope, he set sail to India with the help of an Arab navigator. On 20th May 1498 A.D. (C.E.) he reached Calicut on the Malabar Coast. At Calicut Vasco da Gama was astounded to find pepper and other spices, a precious commodity in Portugal, available at low prices. He bought as much spices as possible. Back home he earned huge profits.

Later the Portuguese navy defeated the Zamorin of Calicut and captured Goa and made it its headquarters for all its possessions in the East. Thus the foundation of the Portuguese Empire in the East was laid.



Vasco da Gama

In 1519 A.D. (C.E.), Ferdinand Magellan sailed westward and crossed the Straits, which later came to be known as Magellan Straits. As the sea was calm he called it the Pacific Ocean. On reaching an island he named it as Philippines after the Spanish Prince Philip. He was killed in a war with the locals. However, the ship in which he had travelled returned to Spain. Thus the first circumnavigation of the world had taken place.

8.6 Impact of Geographical Discoveries

The geographical discoveries transformed the European understanding of the world. It led to the redrawing of the world map. As a result of the discovery of new lands and new sea routes, the economic centre of Europe shifted from the Italian city states to Spain and Portugal. Both Spain and Portugal established colonies that led to their economic prosperity.

One of the most important outcomes of the conquest of Americas by the European colonial powers was the movement of plants, animals, technology, culture and strange diseases between the Americas and Europe or between the **New World** and the **Old World**. This is known as **Columbian Exchange**.

Plants such as maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, pineapple, beans and cocoa, and animals such as turkey and guinea pigs, were transported from America and introduced in Europe. And from Europe went sugarcane, wheat, rice, horses, cattle, sheep and goats to America. Europe also exported deadly diseases such as small pox, measles, chicken pox, malaria, typhus, etc. Apart from guns and horses, the most dangerous weapons the natives had to encounter were these deadly diseases against which they were defenceless. It led to the near annihilation of the natives in most parts of the Americas.

The introduction of sugarcane led to the establishment of sugarcane plantations in the Caribbean islands and South America. These plantations initially employed natives. The mass extinction of the native population led to the import of slaves from Africa. Gambia, Senegal, Goree, El Mina and Congo became important centres of slave trade in Africa. The Trans-Atlantic Trade was a triangular trade. The European countries purchased slaves from Africa who were transported to America. In return they got sugar and other raw materials from America. The European countries profited immensely from this trade.



Ship carrying slaves

Geographical discoveries led to Commercial Revolution. The chief features of commercial revolution were the emergence of banking, joint-stock companies and growth of trade.



As a result of geographical discoveries, the seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of various East India Companies such as the English East India Company, the Dutch East India Company, and the French East India Company.

The Portuguese, after discovering a new sea route to India, enforced its monopoly on the spice trade of East Indies, eliminating competition of the Arabs, Egyptians and Venetians by use of military force. The Spaniards established monopoly over the mining and transportation of gold and silver in its colonies in the New World.

The English East India Company had monopoly trade in India and amassed huge wealth. Thus, the chief feature of mercantilism was exploitation of the resources of the colonies for the benefit of the colonisers. It represented an important stage in the development of modern capitalism.

Recap

- The Renaissance, Reformation and Geographical Discoveries are heralds of the modern age.
- The new ideas of humanism, individualism, rationalism and nationalism provided the basis for the beginning of an era of enlightenment.
- Scientific development led to invention of new instruments and discovery of new sea routes to the east.
- There were revolutionary changes in political, economic and cultural spheres.

India at the dawn of Modern Age in Europe

The Mughal rule had started since 1526 A.D. (C.E.). Vijayanagar state, founded in 1336, was a great power under Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29 A.D. (C.E.)). Portuguese established their empire in the East (India, Malacca, Ceylon) and controlled the sea with Goa as headquarters. In Tamilnadu Madurai Nayak rule began dividing the Pandya kingdom into seventy two *palayams*. The arrival of Jesuit Missions and the work of St. Francis Xavier, as a member of Society of Jesus, led to conversion of fishing community to Christianity (Catholicism) in Thoothukudi region.



Thirumalai Nayakkar Mahal



EXERCISE



I. Choose the correct answer

- Who among the following is known as the Father of Humanism?
a. Leonardo da Vinci b. Petrarch
c. Erasmus d. Thomas More
- The *School of Athens* was painted by
a. Raphael Sanzio
b. Michelangelo
c. Albrecht Durer
d. Leonardo da Vinci
- William Harvey discovered _____.
a. Heliocentric theory
b. Geocentric theory
c. Gravitational force
d. Circulation of blood
- Who wrote the *95 Theses*?
a. Martin Luther b. Zwingli
c. John Calvin d. Thomas More
- Who wrote the book *Institutes of Christian Religion*?
a. Martin Luther b. Zwingli
c. John Calvin d. Cervantes
- Which sailor was the first to cross the Equator?
a. Henry, the Navigator
b. Lopo Gonzalves
c. Bartholomew Diaz
d. Christopher Columbus
- _____ named the sea as Pacific Ocean as it was very calm.
a. Columbus
b. Amerigo Vespucci
c. Ferdinand Magellan
d. Vasco-da-gama

- The continent of America was named after _____.
a. Amerigo Vespucci
b. Christopher Columbus
c. Vasco da Gama
d. Hernando Cortez
- _____ was the headquarters of the Portuguese possession in the East.
a. Manila b. Bombay
c. Pondicherry d. Goa
- Which among the following plants were introduced from America to Europe?
a. Sugarcane b. Sweet Potato
c. Rice d. Wheat

II. Fill in the blanks

- In 1453 Constantinople was captured by _____.
- _____ was known as Prince among Humanists.
- _____ is famous for his paintings in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
- The reformation of the Catholic Church is known as _____.
- The chief features of Commercial Revolution were _____, _____ and _____.

III. Find out the correct statement

- a. Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic Church because he was discriminated.
b. John Calvin's government in Geneva was liberal and fun-filled.
c. King Henry VIII had deep theological differences with the Catholic Church.
d. Council of Trent reemphasized the importance of ceremonies and significance of the *mass*.



2. a. Discovery of new lands and sea routes shifted the economic centre from Italian city states to Spain and Portugal.
b. Horses were native to America.
c. During the beginning of the Modern Age, State did not interfere in economic activities.
d. The Portuguese collaborated with the Arabs in its trading activities in India.

IV. Match the following

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1. Feudalism | – | Monopoly Trade |
| 2. Humanism | – | Trial of Heretics |
| 3. Inquisition | – | Movement of goods between America and Europe |
| 4. Mercantilism | – | Hierarchical socio-economic structure |
| 5. Columbian Exchange | – | Human dignity |

V. Answer the following questions briefly

1. Explain how the invention of printing press influenced Renaissance, Reformation and Geographical discoveries.
2. Write a short note on the impact of Renaissance.
3. Outline the differences of Martin Luther with the Catholic Church.
4. Write a brief note on Counter Reformation.
5. What is Columbian Exchange?

VI. Answer the following in detail

1. Discuss how Renaissance, Reformation and Geographical discoveries heralded the modern age?
2. Examine the outcome of the geographical discoveries.

FUN WITH HISTORY

Activities for students

In an outline map of World, mark, the routes of Bartholomew Diaz, Vasco-da-Gama, Columbus, Magellan.

Collect pictures of European explorers.

Create a model of Mariner's Compass.

Construct a model ship of medieval Europe.

Assignment with teacher's guidance

Prepare an album with masterpieces of Italian art.

Write a brief biography of Martin Luther.

Visit the nearby printing press and compare it with the earliest printing device.



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INTERNET RESOURCES

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3. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history/magazine/2017/09-10/history-martin-luther-religious-revolution/>
4. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/role.html>