

# UNIT 7 RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

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## 7.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with a very momentous period of European history which initiated major changes not only in economy, society and polity but in overall outlook towards human beings and nature. After reading this Unit you should be able to learn about:

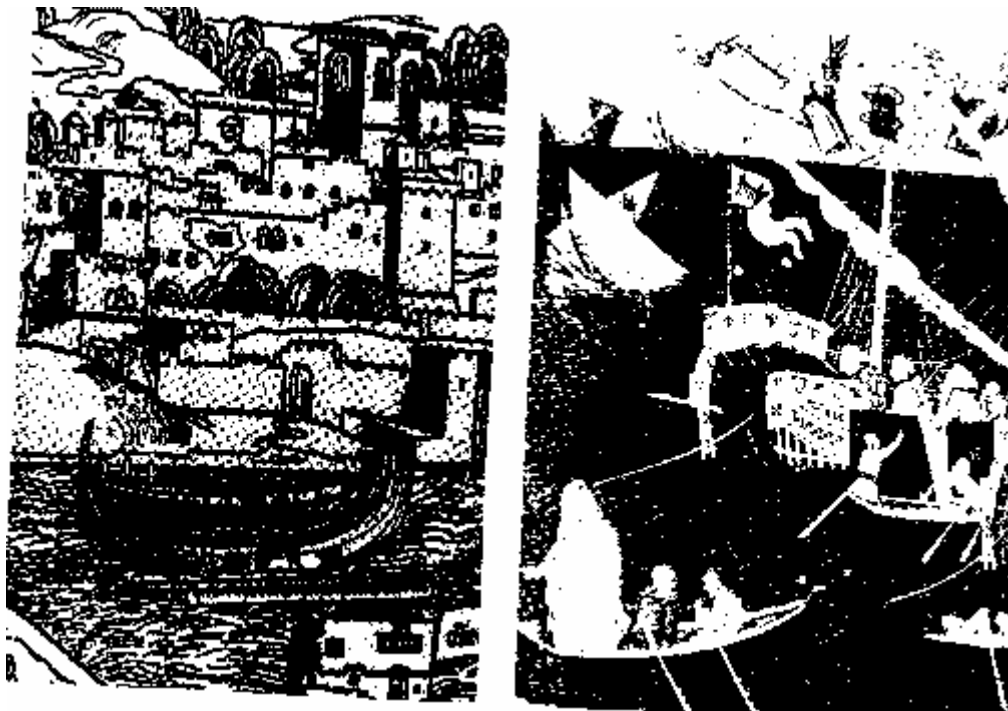
the economic and social factors which contributed to the processes of Renaissance and Reformation.  
the ideas, values and institutions associated with Renaissance and Reformation,  
the art and culture of this period,  
the process which led to the rise of modern-state in Europe, and  
the expansion of European powers to other regions of the world which led to colonisation.

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we introduce the study of a very crucial period in human history in which the foundations of the modern world were laid. A number of inter-related developments took place in the period from about the fourteenth to the seventeenth century A.D. There were certain major developments in Europe which had their impact on the entire world. In certain aspects, the impact was felt more or less immediately, while in others it took a much longer time.

The terms 'Renaissance' and 'Reformation' are generally used to describe this period of transformation. The word 'Renaissance' means rebirth, and it was used to refer to the revival or interest in the learning of ancient Greece and Rome. But it was much more than the revival of ancient learning. It embraced ideas and achievements in philosophy, religion, art, literature, politics and science which had little in common with the ancient heritage. At times, they were also against the Catholic Church and the authority of the Pope which led to the rise of Protestantism in the early sixteenth century as well as to the Catholic Reformation known as 'Counter-Reformation' in the later sixteenth century.

The Reformation had a profound impact on the history of Europe which extended beyond the sphere of religion. Both Renaissance and Reformation had common social and economic causes. In their impact, they coincided, and together, they brought about the collapse of the feudal order and laid the foundations of a new social order. A series of inter-related developments accompanied these changes in society and economy. There were fundamental changes in the thinking of human beings about the world and their place in it, and in the content and style of art and literature. There was a decisive shift away from divine matters to the study of human matters and an invincible faith in the tremendous creative potential of human beings. The foundations of modern science were laid in this period. The period also saw the emergence of nation-states with new forms of political system and new political theories. This period was also the age of discovery when the voyages of exploration brought for the first time in history, all parts of the world into contact with one another



#### **14. Ships of that age**

All these developments must be seen in their mutual inter-relationship. It may be useful to first have a look at the general and economic background of the period in which these changes and development took place.

## **7.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND**

You have already studied about feudalism which characterised European societies in the Middle Ages and the factors which caused their decline. The revival of trade was accompanied by the growth of towns. Old towns became larger and many new towns emerged, mainly as centres of manufacture and trade. Towns, often walled, gradually freed themselves from feudal control. They had their own governments and the townsmen elected their officials. They had their own militia and their own courts. Unlike the serfs in feudal estates, there were no restrictions on the movements of citizens in the towns. They could come and go as they pleased and buy and sell property. "Town air makes a man free", is an old medieval proverb. Towns provided asylum to serfs who escaped from feudal oppression. The towns encouraged the cultivation of cash crops needed for manufacturers, and peasants received their payments in money. The Peasant could now pay his dues to the lord in cash rather than by labour. Money had little use in feudal societies. A feudal manor was more or less self-sufficient for its needs. There was very little of buying and selling and whatever there was, was done through barter. With the growth of trade, there was increasing use of money. The use of money indicated far-reaching changes in economy.

### **The Capitalist Economy**

The privileged people did have money, in the form of gold and silver, but it was idle money. It could not be used to make more money. With the growth of trade and manufacture, this changed, marking the beginning of the transition from a feudal economy to a capitalist economy in which wealth, generally in the form of money, could be used to make a profit. This was done by investing money in business, trade and industry. The profits made were reinvested to make further profits. Such wealth or money is called Capital. Money increasingly became the measure of a man's wealth. In feudal societies, other than the feudal lords, there were three classes of people, the prayers-the clergy who prayed, the soldiers-the knights who fought and workers-the peasants who worked for both the clergy and the soldiers. With the growth of trade, a new class emerged, the middle class comprising mainly the merchants. Even though small in number, they began to play an important role in society because of the wealth they possessed.



### **15. A Market Scene**

Initially, international trade was largely in luxury goods from the East and was controlled by merchants in the Italian cities of Venice, Genoa and Pisa, and towns in southern Germany. With the great geographical discoveries of the last decade of the fifteenth century-the discovery of a sea route to the East and the discovery of the Americas-the pattern of trade changed. It was dominated by Portugal and Spain and later by Holland and Britain.



#### **16. Resistance of American Indians to Columbus**

Simultaneously, with these developments, changes took place in the system of manufacture goods. In the early medieval period, most of the non-agricultural products required by the peasant were produced in the household of the peasant and for the serfs who were skilled in particular crafts and had organised themselves guilds. There were for example guilds of bakers of weavers and of and of dyers. Each craft guild had a master of craftsmen, apprentices and journey-men. To learn a craft, a person joined a master as an

apprentice or learner. After having learn a craft, he worked as a journey-man with the master on a wage or, if he had mastered the craft, would himself become a master craftsman.

The units of production were small, consisting of three or four people and each unit had a shop to sell its produce. There were no inequalities within a unit or between units of the same guild. The guild prevented any competitors from practising the craft but it ensured the quality of the produce as well as fair business practices and stable prices.

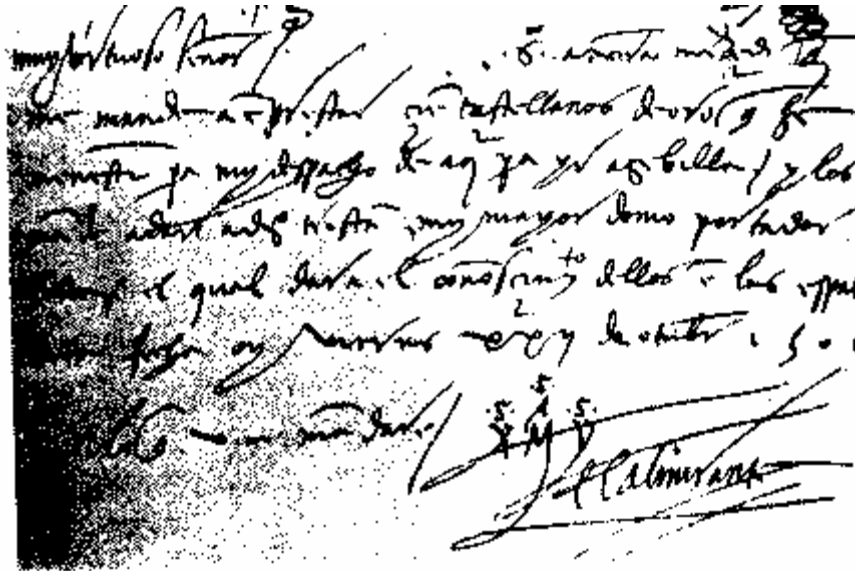
The guild system was not suited to the requirements of large scale production necessitate by an expanding demand for goods, and the system began to decline giving place to a capitalist system. Inequities appeared within the system, with masters refusing to let journey-men become masters and paying them low wages. With the introduction of the Putting Out system, their independence declined. The merchant, under this system, would bring the master craftsmen the raw materials, the craftsmen would work with their tools as before in their homes, and the produce would be taken away by the merchant who had supplied them with the raw materials. Thus, in effect, unlike before, the craftsmen did not own what they produced. They were increasingly reduced to the position of wage-eainers, except that they still owned the tools used by them and worked at home.

Subsequently, this system gave way to the factory system under which production was carried out in buildings owned by the capitalist with the help of machines owned by the capitalist. The workers, owning nothing, worked only for wages. In industries which required large investments such as mining and metal-working, the capitalist system in which some people owned the raw materials, the tools and machines and the products and the workers worked only for a wage came into being early. This period saw a tremendous expansion of manufacturers. It was accompanied by a growing social differentiation in towns and the emergence of the working class. Just as there were peasant revolts in different parts of Europe towards the decline of feudalism, there were also uprisings by the city poor in this age of rising capitalism.

## **7.3 RENAISSANCE**

The term 'Renaissance' literally means rebirth, and is, in a narrow sense, used to describe the revival of interest in the classical civilisations of Greece and Rome. This deeply influenced Europeans. The Renaissance, however, was not a mere revival of ancient learning. It was marked by a series of new developments in the fields of art, literature, religion, philosophy, science and politics.

The intellectual and cultural life of Europe for centuries had been dominated by the Catholic Church. The Renaissance undermined this domination. The revival of pre-Christian Classical learning and of interest in the cultural achievements of ancient Greece and Rome was, in itself, an important factor in undermining the domination of the Church. The Renaissance, of course, went beyond mere revival and gave rise to a new way of thinking.



17. A royal letter authorizing Columbus to undertake voyage to India

### 7.3.1 Humanism

The chief characteristic of the Renaissance way of thinking was humanism. Basically, it meant a decisive shift in concern for human as distinct from divine matters. Humanism controlled man, stressed his essential worth and dignity, expressed invincible faith in his tremendous creative potential, and proclaimed freedom of the individual and his inalienable rights. It was centered on a notion of man that did not reject earthly joys, recognised the beauty and dignity of the human body, opposed religious asceticism, and defended man's right to pleasure and satisfaction of earthly desires and requirements. It meant the glorification of the human and the natural disposition and rejected the other-worldliness of Catholic belief that human existence has its origin in sin: therefore, it is tainted. The humanists rejected or even ridiculed religious mortification of the flesh and withdrawal from the world. They urged man to seek joy on this earth rather than, an after-life which the church advocated. Their works were permeated with the faith that a man with an active mind and body was capable of knowing and controlling the world, and fashioning his own happiness. These ideas increasingly narrowed the domain of the divine and extended the domain of man.

Pico della Mirandola, an Italian humanist of the fifteenth century who had travelled widely and had studied various systems of philosophy, published a list of nine hundred theses. The Renaissance belief in the limitless potentialities of man may be seen in the following excerpts from his writings:

"There is nothing more wonderful than man." This is what I have read in some record of the Arabians. A famous Greek said, "A great miracle a man is. What is the reason behind these sayings"? Human beings are Kings of all beings below God and the angels because of the ability of their reason and the light of their reason and the light of their intelligence. But these reasons are not enough.

"Man is the most fortunate of creatures." Why? Because of all creatures, God did not limit the potential of man. Only humans have freedom of choice and can fashion themselves in whatever shape they prefer. They have the power to degenerate into a brutish form of life, like the animals. Secondly, physical strength or

instinct helps them to survive. Or, they have the power to use their intelligence to turn themselves into a higher form of life that is god-like.

"The ancient Babylonians said, Man is a being that has a varied nature". Why do we stress this? Because we say that we human beings can become what we will".

"Know thyself". By this rule we are encouraged to investigate all of nature. The person who knows himself or herself knows all things."

## 7.3.2 Secularism

If we compare the contemporary view of the world with the medieval view, we will recognize the great transformation of thought that had taken place from religious 'other-worldliness' to humanistic 'this-worldliness'. The humanist is more interested in the material world around, in the contents of the physical universe than in gods, angels or demons, whereas the medieval men of religion were more interested in god, angels or demons. The humanist is concerned to make the most of his brief life, whereas the medieval men regarded life as a painful preparation for a happier life which, they thought, would come after death. This transformation which the Renaissance inaugurated may be termed as marking the passage from religion to secularism. The new intellectual and cultural climate which the Renaissance created influenced even the Church hierarchy, particularly its upper levels, who were wealthy. For example, Leo X who was the Pope from 1513 to 1521 said on becoming the Pope, "Let us enjoy this Papacy which God has given us".

### Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss in brief the factors which helped in the introduction of capitalist economy in Europe.

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Find out whether the following statements are True or False. ( Mark T or F )

- i) Severe restrictions were imposed on the citizens in Europe during the Renaissance period
- ii) The feudal society was a class-less society.
- iii) 'Humanism' was a great contribution of Renaissance.
- iv) Renaissance contributed to the development of secular ideas.
- 2) Write in about five lines what you understand by humanism'.

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## 7.4 RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

The humanist ideas of the Renaissance found artistic expression in literature, painting, architecture, and sculpture. Some of the greatest writers, poets, and dramatists of the Renaissance were Patriarch and Boccaccio in Italy, Rabelais in France, Erasmus in Holland, Von Hutten in Germany, Cervantes in Spain and Shakespeare in England. The themes of their writings had little to do with religion or piety or asceticism and were often reful and anti-clerical.

The most significant feature of the literary output of the Renaissance, and since, has been the use of vernacular languages, or the languages spoken by the people of a region or country. Until about the fourteenth century, there were hardly any writings in any of the languages spoken by the people of different countries of Europe- Italian, Spanish, French, German. English, etc. The language of scholarship and literature for centuries had been Latin which only the educated, who constituted a very small part of the population, could understand. The Renaissance marks the emergence of modern European languages as languages of literature and the beginning of the development of these languages. In a short period, these languages almost completely replaced Latin as the language of poetry, drama and fiction. Latin continued, however, to be the language of philosophy and science for some more time.



18. An early printing press

It may also be remembered that the total number of books available in Europe till the late fifteenth century was very small. The first printed book, the Gutenberg's Bible, was brought out in 1456. Until the invention of printing, books were hand-written (manuscripts). They were copied in hand by scribes and were mostly available in libraries of the monasteries. Even people who could read had thus very little access to books. But most people could neither read nor write. It has been estimated that during the first half of the fifteenth century, there were only about 100,000 manuscripts in Europe. In fifty years' time, after the introduction of the printing press, there were nine million books. This was a significant development, but its impact took a long time to be felt. The printed books were also expensive and only the moneyed people could afford to buy them. Although the number of people who could read was limited yet printing opened up immense possibilities for the future. This inevitably had an impact on society.

The Renaissance literature in modern European languages was marked by significant changes in style and theme. Initially, the tendency was towards copying the Latin literary style. Its first impact was felt in poetry where the imitation of court poets was given up and new rhymes were adopted with themes which were increasingly secular. There were significant developments in drama, and increasing use of satire. A major development was in the field of prose writings. Earlier prose was a medium only for scholarly writing. Stories were told through poems. Now, the prose-story emerged as an extremely important literary form. Boccaccio's 'Decameron', basically a collection of stories in Italian, was a pioneering work and influenced the Renaissance prose writings all over Europe.

## **7.5 ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

Some of the greatest achievements of the Renaissance were made in the realm of painting, sculpture and architecture. The humanism of Renaissance found brilliant expression in these art forms. The Renaissance artists made use of biblical subjects but the interpretation that they gave of these subjects had little to do with the traditional religious attitude. Art as an independent activity assumed a status which was unknown in the medieval times. The purpose of medieval art was to express moral values and impart religious teachings. The people portrayed were not men and women of flesh and blood. The artists, mostly anonymous, had a low position in society. They worked in groups as craftsmen and had no individuality. The Renaissance marked the rise of artists, each with his unique individuality and style, who enjoyed great prestige in society. The wealthy merchant, the princes and the Church competed for their patronage. Art was freed from religious or ritualistic overtones. Now artistic creations were admitted for their intrinsic aesthetic value, and were seen as evidence of achievements of the individual artists.



**19 (a) Monalisa by Leonardo de Vinci**



**19(b) Raphael's Madonna**



**19 (c) Michelangelo's frescoes on the Sistine Chapel**

Of all the art forms, Renaissance's supreme achievement was in painting. The Renaissance artists looked upon art as an imitation of life. This required close observation of nature and of man, of mountains, trees, and animals and of the anatomy of man. The artists studied optics and geometry and used their knowledge to develop perspectives, including aerial perspectives, in their paintings. They studied human anatomy to find the mechanism underlying gestures and expressions. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, studied not only the

anatomical structure of the human body, but also in order to represent movement, the way different parts of the body shaped when in a state of movement. Leonardo considered painting a science.

For an appreciation of the significance of the Renaissance art and the departure it marked from the medieval art, it is necessary to see the reproductions of paintings of the two periods in illustrated volumes of art history. No detailed reference has been made to any particular artist or work of art of the period. The reader may try to know about and see the reproductions of some of the following paintings of the Renaissance: Botticelli's *Allegory of Spring* and *Birth of Venus*, Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*, *Last Supper* and *Monalisa*, Raphael's *School of Athens*, *Sistine and Madonna* and Michelangelo's series of frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

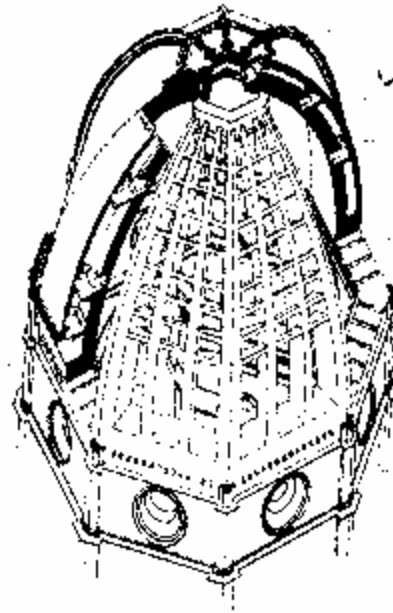
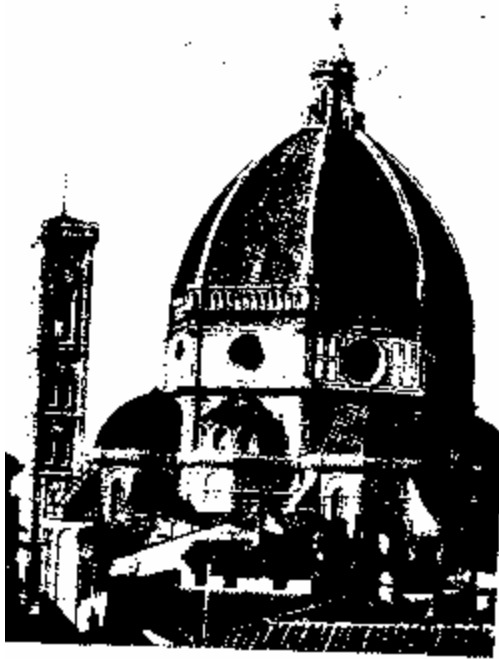
The sculpture of the Renaissance period developed along the same lines as the painting. The medieval sculpture used images of saints and depicted religious themes as part of architecture. One of the



**20. The Battle of Ute Centaur by Mtebel0gelo, 1492, on Marble relief is an excellent expression of humanism in sculpture**

significant developments now was the emergence of the free-standing sculpture. Architecture emerged as an art itself and ceased to be a religious medium. As in the case of painting, the growing knowledge of anatomy and the new standards of beauty also influenced the developments of sculpture.

The Renaissance period thus, also marks the beginning of the decline of Gothic architecture which had dominated the architecture of cathedrals and churches from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The basic features of this architecture were rib vaults, sharply pointed arches and buttresses. The Gothic structures had lofty spires. They had stained glass windows and carved facades and were decorated with representations of mythical creatures. The Renaissance architects considered Gothic architecture as ascetic and other worldly and used the word 'Gothic' to disparage it as barbarian. New styles of architecture began to be developed, first in Italy and later in other parts of Europe. These were based on the study of the ancient Roman architecture. The finest specimen of the new style was St. Peter's Church in Rome. The buildings in the new style, many of which were churches, have been described as expressing ideals which were purely secular, joy in this life and pride in human achievement.



□21 (a) Cathedral Dome Florence (1420-36)

21 (b) A diagram showing the construction of the Cathedral Dome, Florence

## 7.6 PHILOSOPHY

The dominant philosophical system of the pre-renaissance medieval Europe was scholasticism. It was an attempt to harmonize reason and faith, basically to serve the interests of theology. It was based on logic and rejected experimental science and experience. The sense perceptions, according to this philosophy, could lead to a knowledge of the appearance of things but not of the reality which could be discovered by reason alone without reference to sensory perceptions. Its purpose was to give a systematic account of the Christian doctrine and to free it of any internal contradictions. For this, reason alone was not enough. Another criterion was the authority of the scriptures. The acceptance of the doctrine was not based on its correspondence with facts, but on its legitimation by the scriptures or by an authoritative person. Some scholastics of course, stressed the importance of doubt and ceaseless interrogation for perceiving the truth and laid emphasis on reason more than on faith, but their number was limited. The Renaissance thinkers attacked scholasticism saying that it fed on itself, with its circular reasoning within a close system in which the basic premises bore no relation to reality. They asserted that knowledge could be gained by going out and studying mentally and manually the Book of Nature. Leonardo da Vinci, to whom reference has already been made, condemned the reliance on authority as a source of knowledge and advocated the use of the inductive method. Empiricism arose as a reaction to scholasticism and its speculative methods. Empiricism may be defined as an approach which holds that the sensory experience is the only source of knowledge. It affirms that all knowledge is founded on experience and is obtained through it. Francis Bacon, one of the pioneers of empiricism, emphasized the inductive method against the speculative method of the scholastic. This method relied for knowledge on observation, experimentation, collection of data and their classification for discovery of general laws. For such purposes, preconceived notions, personal prejudices and rhetorical inaccuracies should be discarded and no ideas, however time-honoured they may be, held as eternal truths. The founding of the best effective scientific society, the Royal Society in England, was directly the result of

his ideas. Empiricism, despite some limitations, marked a break with the past and paved the way for the advancement of modern science. It was held that the physical universe was subject to natural laws which could be discovered and used for the benefit of mankind. The empiricists also held that human affairs could be similarly understood.

Another system of philosophy which helped in ending the domination of scholasticism (and of the church) in intellectual life and aided the growth of science is associated with the name of Descartes. Descartes advocated that with clarity of thought it was possible to discover everything that was rationally knowable. He emphasized the importance of deductive thought and experiment as an aid to it. Deductive method begins with logical formulation of premises, their internal rational connections, and then proceeds to observation and experiments with facts to establish the validity of those premises. Inductive method begins with observation of facts to arrive at such logical sets of premises as a final result of inquiry. The purpose of his philosophy was, however, similar to that of Bacon's. Referring to his conclusions, he wrote:

"They showed me that it is possible to arrive at knowledge very useful to life: and that instead of this speculative philosophy that is taught in the schools, one can find a practical philosophy by which knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens. and all other bodies that surround us as distinctly as we know the different trades of our craftsmen, we could employ them in the same way to all uses for which they are appropriate and thus, become the masters and possessors of Nature".

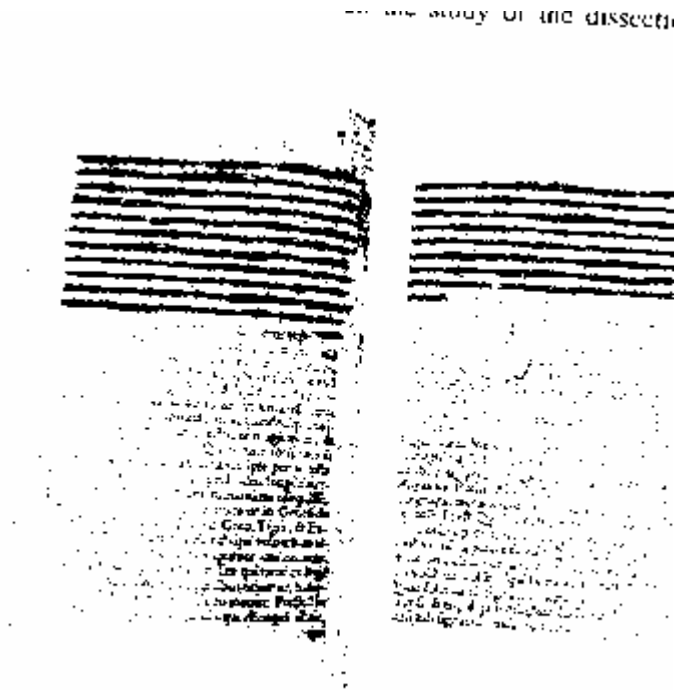
## **7.7 BEGINNING OF THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION**

The Renaissance marked the beginning of modern science. One of the first achievements was in astronomy. This was an exposition by Copernicus of the rotation of the earth on its axis and its motion around the sun. This marked an important break with the ancient system of thought. For, over a thousand years, it was believed that the earth was the centre of the universe. It was a cardinal dogma of scholastic philosophers, and its refutation meant an attack on the theological conception of the universe. It was therefore, to be condemned as a heresy and punished. Copernicus's book, *On the Revolution of the Celestial Orbs* was published in 1543, the year in which he died. He had hesitated from publishing it for fear of the hostility of the Church. While the theory awaited final confirmation by Galileo later, the very idea of an open universe of which the earth was but a small part was shattering to the theological view of a close universe, created and maintained in motion by God. About half a century after the publication of Copernicus's book, in 1606, Giordano Bruno was burnt for heresy which the vision of an infinite universe had inspired.

The decisive proof of the new conception of the universe was made possible by the invention of the telescope which has been called the greatest scientific instrument of the age. Galileo, born eleven years after the death of Copernicus, used this instrument in his study of the heavenly bodies and the Copernicus theory was confirmed by Galileo's observations. Galileo was tried in his old age and was condemned and forced to recant his views. He was awarded nominal imprisonment and allowed to carry on his scientific work which was not directly connected with astronomy. Galileo's trial marked the end of a period in the history of science. The condemnation of Galileo was not a popular one, and attempts to enforce the acceptance of the old conception of universe were quietly dropped.

Significant discoveries were made in the study of the human body and circulation of blood which helped to combat many superstitions. We have already referred work of the Renaissance artists relating to the study of

anatomy. In 1543, the year in which Copernicus's book was published, Versailles, a Belgian, published his profusely illustrated *De Hunan Corporis Fabrica*. Based on the study of the dissections



**22 (a) A group of geographers from the school of Athens. 22 (b) A group of Astronomers from the school of Athens. 22 (c) A navigation book where copernicus's views have been blackened due to Churches censorship.**

of the human body, this book provided the first complete description of the anatomy of the human body. Servetus, a Spaniard, published a book explaining the circulation



**23 (a) Study of bones & Tendons, a drawing by Leonardo Da vinci**

of blood. He was condemned to death for questioning the Church belief in Trinity. A complete account of the constant process of circulation of blood, from the heart to all parts of the body and back again was given by Harvey, an Englishman, in about 1610 in his Dissertation upon the 'Movement of the Heart'. The period produced many other giants in science and great discoveries and inventions were made.

## Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Write in about 100 words the impact of humanism on art and architecture during the Renaissance. Discuss this theme with your Counsellor at the Study Centre.
- 2) Which of the following statements are correct? (Mark  $\sqrt$  or X)
  - i) The use of vernacular languages became popular during the Renaissance.
  - ii) During the Renaissance art was only a method to express religious ideas.
  - iii) Empiricism paved the way for advances in modern science.
  - iv) Galileo was honoured by the Church for his invention.
- 3) Give a list of the advances made in the field of modern science during the Renaissance.

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## 7.8 POLITICAL THEORY



In the early medieval period, a view supported by the Church was that the state was established by God and therefore, people must render faithful obedience to the ruler even if he was a tyrant. Later, the question of the right to kill a tyrant was debated by philosophers. A number of popular uprisings had broken out in the fourteenth century, and later. These had created a revolutionary spirit in Europe. Many leaders of these uprisings were fired by a religious zeal and through their activities and ideas expressed a longing for a better world. The question of the rights of the people against depotic rule or against social and economic exploitation long remained a live issue. The view that Christians must obey their rulers absolutely, because they were the representatives of God on earth, was strong. Medieval philosophers also generally held the view that all of Western Europe should be under one supreme ruler or overlord, while there may be other kings and princes under him. This overlord may either be the Pope or the Holy Roman Emperor.

The medieval political theorists believed that the authority of every ruler was limited. There was no conception of state sovereignty. The ruler did not make the laws according to his will; he only implemented the laws. There was no conception of democracy or popular sovereignty. With the rise of despotism, theories of state divorced from 'moral' or religious considerations began to grow. The most outstanding political philosopher of this period was the Italian Nicolo Machiavelli who gave a realistic, original and bold exposition of political theory, totally shorn of the prevailing hypocrisy. The term 'Machiavellianism' has come to mean "the view that politics is normal and that any means, however, unscrupulous can justifiably be used in achieving political power" Machiavelli's views reflected his 'hard-headed reaction' to the political realities of the day. In the dedication of his book *The Prince*, he proposed to do for politics what the painter of the day was doing for landscape art i.e. examine the scene from a good vantage so as to depict the nature of his subject appropriately. Machiavelli held the view that the state was an end in itself. He favoured absolutism as necessary to solidify and strengthen the state. He was completely opposed to any limitations on the authority of the ruler. It was the supreme obligation of the ruler to maintain the power and safety of the state, and it was his duty to use all possible means to fulfil that obligation.

## **A Period of Growing Absolutism**

It was a period of growing absolutism and there was much opposition to this from those who were affected. The middle class, while supporting the ruler against the feudal lords, also resisted the power of the ruler. Wherever parliamentary institutions existed, the upper classes represented in them, were able to claim and exert special rights. A theory of popular sovereignty was advocated by Marsilius of Padua in early fourteenth century. He contended that sovereignty extended from God to the people and from them to their government and therefore, the government should remain responsible to the people. By 'people' what was meant was the upper classes, and if at all any limitations were imposed on the authority of the ruler, they were for and by the upper classes. 'Popular sovereignty' was rarely used to denote democracy and republicanism. There were a number of republican city-states in Italy, Germany, Holland and Switzerland, but none had a popularly elected government. Only in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia), for a short while, the followers of John Huss established a republic. The theory and practice of popular sovereignty belongs to a later period of history.

## **7.9 REFORMATION**

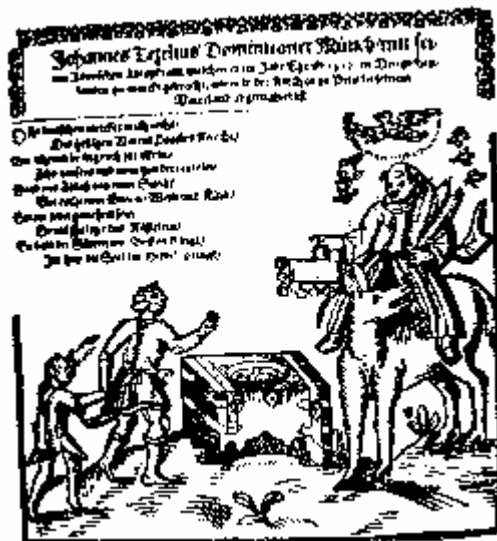
The term Reformation implies two major developments in the history of Europe towards the latter part of Renaissance. First, the Protestant Revolution which resulted in a split in Christendom and secondly, the secession of a large number of countries from the Roman Catholic Church by establishing separate Churches in those countries, generally along national lines. This triggered reforms within the Roman Catholic Church,

generally referred to as the Catholic Reformation or Counter Reformation. But Reformation was not merely a religious movement. It was intimately connected with, and was in fact, a part of the social and political movements of the period which brought about the end of the medieval period and the emergence of the modern world. As in the case of Renaissance, Reformation must be seen in the context of the social, economic and political changes in Europe.

The Catholic Church, during the early medieval period, had become a vast hierarchical organisation headed by the Pope in Rome. The Pope was the supreme authority over the entire hierarchy, and he exercised this authority directly. The position of the Pope is often described as 'Papal Monarchy'. Systematic efforts were made to extend the authority of the Church over everyone, high or low. Making an oral confession of his sins to a priest at least once a year and suffer punishment imposed, was made obligatory for everyone. The recalcitrance were ex-communicated. A person who was ex-communicated was supposed to have been temporarily consigned to hell. If he died, his body could not be buried with the prescribed rituals. Other Christians were forbidden from associating with him.

## **7.9.1 Doctrinal Debates in the Church**

Almost from the beginning of the establishment of the Church, there were differences among Christian scholars on questions of doctrine. These differences persisted over the centuries. By the thirteenth century, some of the questions of the Christian doctrine were taken out of the purview of philosophical discussions. They had to be accepted as faith. An important feature of the Catholic Church was the 'Theory of Sacrament'. A sacrament was defined its an instrument by which divine grace is communicated to man. Seven sacraments were accepted -- baptism, confirmation, penance, the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, marriage, ordination and extreme unction. These sacraments were regarded indispensable for securing God's grace and there was no salvation without them. Associated with the theory of sacraments was the theory of Priesthood. It was held that the priest who was ordained by a bishop (who was confirmed by the pope), was the inheritor a part of the authority conferred by Christian Saint Peter (Popes derived their authority from Saint Peter). For the laymen, the three most important sacraments were baptism, penance and the Eucharist. The priest, according to this theory, had the power to cooperate with God in performing certain miracles and in releasing sinners from the consequences of their sins. There were also the veneration of the relics of Christ and saints and these were often faked. The rule of celibacy of the priests and the belief in purgatory was also implemented. By the thirteenth century, the Church, which had been founded for the purpose of saving ,souls had become a vast and efficient engine of control and exploitation. Protestant Revolution is often .described as a revolt against abuses which had grown in the Catholic Church. Some of the priests and higher-ups in the Church hierarchy received their appointment through corrupt means. Many such appointees were utterly ignorant. They led lives opulence and immorality, running gambling houses and keeping mistresses. Religious offices were sold LU the highest bidder and those who bought positions after spending money made good by charging high fees for the services they performed. Dispensations which exempted people from certain laws of the Church such as with regards' marriage and imposition of penance were sold. The Popes and the higher clergy lived like princess. A relatively new abuse was the sale of indulgences which remitted punishments in this life and in purgatory for sins. The sale of indulgences which began to be considered as passports to heaven became one of the major immediate issues which provoked the Protestant Revolution.



**No. 24 (a) sate of Indulgences 24 (b) Sale Or Indulgences**

Any opinion or doctrine contrary to the Church dogma was considered heretical and was punished. The Church had established a vast machine to suppress heresy. Inquisition or a tribunal had been instituted for the discovery and punishment of heresy. All deviation and dissent from dogma and protest against the abuses of the Church was sought to be suppressed and heretics began to be burnt at the stake. Two orders of nuns, the Franciscan and the Dominican, had been founded in the early thirteenth century. The wandering monks of these orders soon degenerated into a system of espionage and blackmail. The inquisitor, who wore black garments and a black cowl over the head, would enter a village or town with his staff and summon the inhabitants to report any heretics or any person they suspected of heresy. Some people settled old scores and made false accusations.

From the fourteenth century, opposition to some of the Church doctrines and protests against the abuses began to grow. There was also an advocacy of the return to the Scriptures and early Christianity instead of relying on the Catholic Church as an organization. John Wycliffe in England advocated the supreme authority of the Scriptures. The language of the Catholic Church was Latin, which, the common people did not understand. The Scriptures then were not available in any of the modern European languages. Latin, Hebrew and Greek were considered the three sacred languages. Translation of the Scriptures into other languages was believed to destroy the sanctity of the sole repository of the faith; of true Christianity, which offered the sole criterion of righteousness. Then the salvation of people lay in their knowing what the Scriptures said. For this it was necessary that the Scriptures were translated into the languages of the people. Wycliffe inspired the first English translation of the Bible. He condemned the Pope as the leader of the army of the devil. He denounced the clergy, condemned the indulgences and denied certain doctrines such as the Eucharist. He recruited what were known as Poor Preachers to spread the knowledge of the Scriptures among the common people. After his death in 1384, some of his followers went even beyond his ideas and condemned many doctrines and practices.

## 7.9.2 The Protestant Revolution

The Protestant Revolution can be said to have begun in 1517 when Martin Luther, a Monk of the Order of St. Augustine, nailed his ninety-five theses or statements attacking the sale of the indulgences, on the door of

Church in Wittenberg in Germany. He challenged people to come and hold disputations with him on his theses and sent copies of his theses to his friends in a number of cities. Among the theses were the following: "Thus those preachers of indulgences are in error who say that, by the indulgences of the pope, a man is loosened and saved from all punishment... They preach man, who say that the soul flies out of the purgatory as soon as the money thrown in the chest rattles. It is certain that, when the money rattles in the chest, avarice and gain may be increased, but the suffrage of the Church depends on the will of God alone... Christians should be taught that, as it would be the duty, so it would be the wish of the Pope, even to sell, if necessary the Basilica of St. Peter, and to give of his own money to very many of those from whom the preachers of pardons extract money".

During the next two years, Luther wrote a series of pamphlets expounding his doctrines and came to the conclusion that his doctrines could not be reconciled with those of the Catholic Church and that he had no alternative but to break with the Catholic Church. In 1520, the Pope ordered him to recant within sixty days or be condemned as a heretic. He burnt the proclamation of the Pope in public. During all this period, he was protected by the ruler of Saxony who was his friend. Many rulers in Germany were hostile to the Church and when Luther was ex-communicated, he remained unharmed. During the next 25 years, he occupied himself with the task of building an independent German Church and in expounding his doctrine. He rejected the entire system of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, introduced German as the language of Church services, abolished monasticism and insisted on the right of priests to marry, abolished the special status of priests as representatives of God on earth, eliminated most of the Sacraments except baptism and the Eucharist, and emphasized faith rather than good works including pilgrimages and veneration of relics. The highest priority was given to the doctrine of predestination and the supreme authority of the scriptures. Another important change was to abandon the view that the Catholic Church was supreme over the state. The break with the Catholic Church was soon followed by revolts, first by the knights and then by lower classes, mainly peasants. These revolts, on the one hand, helped in eliminating opposition to Luther; on the other, they showed the limitation of Luther's movement as a movement of radical, social and economic reform. Luther sided with the rulers and the lords in suppressing the peasant revolt. He advocated the hunting down of rebels like "mad dogs". Among the rebels were people belonging to a sect called the Anabaptists who were considered the most radical reformers of the time. They advocated complete separation of the Church and state, denied the necessity of the priests, denounced the accumulation of wealth and distinctions of rank, and considered it the duty of a Christian to share their things with each other. Luther, denouncing them, said:

"There are heretics who hold that one should tolerate no authority... that one should own no possessions... leave house and home or should hold and keep all things common. Such are not only heretics but rebels, and therefore without doubt should be punished".

### **7.9.3 Economic and Political Changes**

In addition to the doctrinal disputes and decadence of the Church, the Protestant Revolution was also influenced by economic and political changes in society. This was a period when, in different countries of Europe, there was a rise of national consciousness among the people, that they were one people distinct from the other nationalities and must not be ruled over by foreigners. They should have their own governments and rulers, independent of any outside (church) control. Unlike the medieval period, nation-states were beginning to be formed in accordance with this consciousness.

The social and economic changes leading to the rise in importance of the merchants, had strengthened this process. The Roman Catholic Church asserted its supremacy over all nationalities in all matters, including in

the matter of appointments and deposition of kings. There emerged thus, a basic antagonism between the growing national consciousness and the Church. There could be no growth in nationalism without diminishing the powers of the Church.

While discussing the political theories in the period of the Renaissance, we have referred to the rise of absolutism or despotism. The rulers of states claimed total supremacy within their realms. They even claimed that their right to rule was a divine right. These rulers wanted complete authority not only over temporal affairs (which right the Pope also claimed) but also control over the churches and the priesthood within their kingdoms. Then there were various economic factors. The Church had a vast economic empire. The churches and the monasteries under the control of the Pope had enormous wealth and owned vast lands. The Church imposed various kinds of taxes, for example, the Peter's Pence and Tithe. Much of this wealth drained from different countries was sent to Rome. Similarly, the proceeds from the sale of indulgences were sent to Rome.

While the general population, disliked a large portion of their wealth being sent to Rome, the rulers saw vast prospects of increasing their resources by confiscating Church properties. It offered the resources they needed for their standing armies and for other purposes. The Church properties were exempted from taxes and, the burden of taxation within a state fell on the merchants and the new class of rising capitalists. While religious differences perhaps could be sorted out, these fundamental antagonisms could not. The Protestant Revolution did not, nor was it meant to, lead to the establishment of a universal Protestant Church under a single authority like the Catholic Church was under the Pope. It led to the establishment of separate national churches under the control of the state.

After the success of Luther in Germany, the Protestant Revolution spread to many other countries. The doctrines of the Protestants everywhere were not the same. In Switzerland, the Protestant Revolution was led by Zwingli and Calvin. In fact, Calvin's ideas gained much more support in different parts of Europe than those of Luther. In England, King Henry VIII was made the head of the Church of England which was declared to be an independent national unit subject only to the authority of the king.

The Protestant Revolution was followed by a realization by the Catholics, including the Popes, the clergy and Catholic rulers and scholars, that the spread of Protestantism could not be checked by persecution or by political and military means. What was needed was a moral regeneration of the Churches and Papacy. A series of measures were taken in the sixteenth century itself to introduce various reforms.

The Reformation brought about a split in Western Christendom and, along with it, for a long time an increase in religious conflicts and wars. In a period of about twentyfive years (from 1560s) eight religious wars ravaged France. The revival of evangelicalism, the religious crusading zeal of the rival Churches, led to the diminishing of some of the gains of Renaissance, particularly in shifting the focus from religious affairs to human affairs. The period from 1560 to 1630 was the worst period in the history of witch-hunting. It assumed the proportion of a craze.

### Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Which of the following statements are correct or wrong (Mark ✓ or X)
- i) Democracy was the leading political system of medieval times
  - ii) Marsilius of Padua advocated a theory of popular sovereignty.

- iii) Baptism, penance and the Eucharist were important sacraments.
  - iv) Luther supported the peasant revolt.
  - v) National churches emerged as a result of Reformation.
- 2) Write in about ten lines the methods adopted by the Church, dominate social and political life of the people in Europe.
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- 3) What do you understand by the term "Protestant Revolution" ? Answer in about five lines.
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- 4) List in about five lines some major consequences of Reformation.
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## 7.10 RISE OF NATION STATES

If we look at the political map of thirteenth century Europe, we will recognize few of the nations of modern Europe which was ruled by thousands of feudal lords, and the political entities that characterize modern Europe did not exist. We have read about the power and position of the feudal lords. There were kings but they had little power. To fight wars against other kings, they depended entirely on the levies provided by the feudal lords. The boundaries of the estates of the lords and of kingdoms had no rational basis and were fluctuating. There was nothing like a sense of common nationality which distinguished the people of one state from those of another.

In the twelfth century, there came into being the Holy Roman Empire. It claimed to be a universal empire (in the same way in which the Catholic Church claimed to be the universal Church). Though it included mainly Germany and Italy, but the Emperors' control even in these areas was limited. The process of political development, the culmination of which we see in the present day world in the form of independent and sovereign national states, started in the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation. This process started with the rise of national consciousness. It was the consciousness among people inhabiting a more or less

defined territory that as people they were distinct. It began with the emergence of national monarchies, two of the earliest being in England and France.

The Kings tried to establish their supremacy over the feudal lords and the conflicts between the two lasted over a long period of time. The Kings were helped in their designs by merchants and other urban population. The rise of trade and the middle class in cities had taken place already. To free themselves from interference by feudal lords and to further promote their interests, the cities needed a strong central authority which the kings by curbing the power of the feudal lords, were trying to establish. The interests of the merchants could be promoted by strong kings who would put an end to the feudal anarchy and local disorders, remove restriction on trade which resulted from political fragmentation, build roads and canals, and enforce law and order. They could, thus, facilitate trade by protecting traders in their countries from the competition of merchants from other countries, and support them with their armed power against their rivals. The Kings found in the merchants their allies who provided the money they needed for building their own independent armies totally under their command, for creating their administrative system, i.e. the courts and other paraphernalia of the state. Earlier, as we discussed, the kings were powerless against the feudal lords on whom they depended even for their soldiers. Now, a process of the disintegration of the power of the feudal lords started. This process was aided by the introduction in Europe of gunpowder against which the feudal castles and fortresses provided no defense.

The rise of national languages also helped the process of the emergence of strong national states by strengthening national consciousness. The process of central expansion which started with the discovery of new sea-routes and new lands was also connected with these developments.

The rise of nation-states which started in this period brought about the end of the political system of the middle ages which was characterized by decentralization of political power. In its place, emerged the nation-states which were characterized by despotic governments. In the following centuries, while the emergence of cohesive states on the basis of nationalism and strong government was to continue, the new feature in political development was the struggle against the absolutism of the rulers and the growth of political democracy.

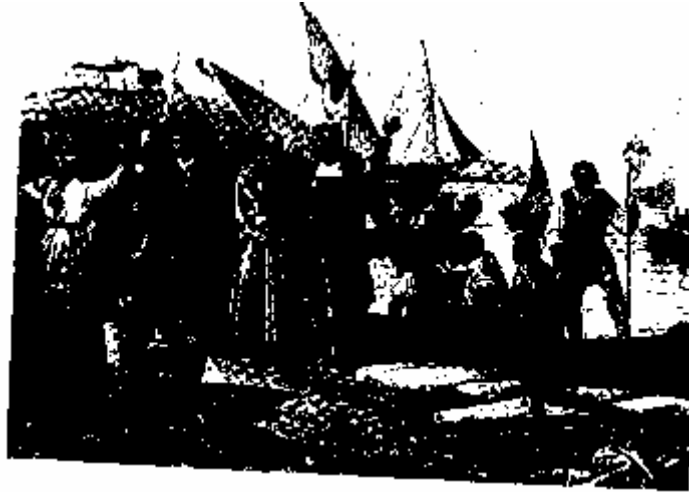
To comprehend the nature of political developments in this period, we should study the political developments in a few selected countries, e.g. in England and France. We must remember that the process of the formation of nation-states took a long time to complete and some European nations became independent states only in the twentieth century.

## **7.11 GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERIES AND COLONISATION**

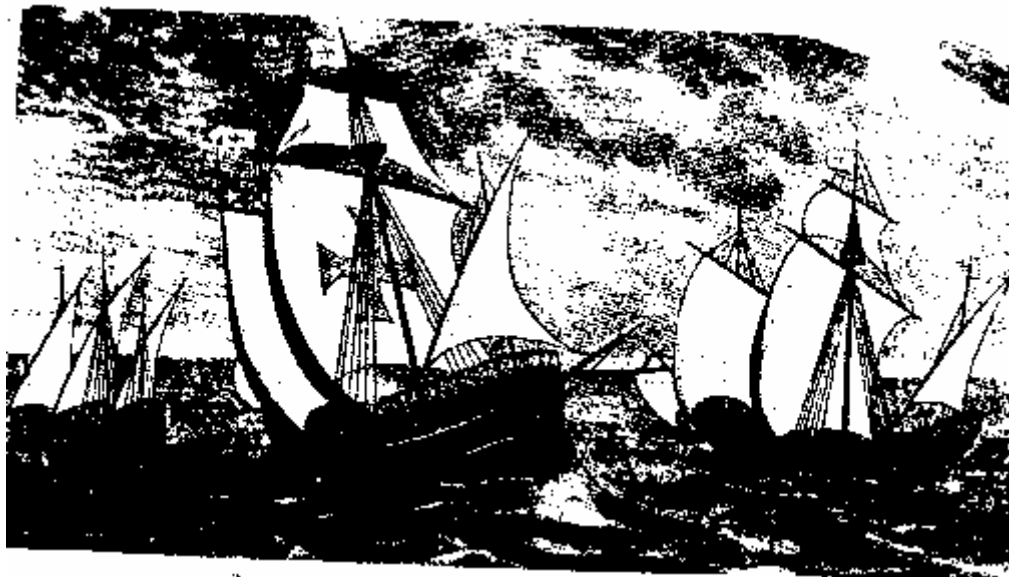
We have mentioned earlier that the growth of trade and of cities helped undermine the feudal order and provided the background for new intellectual, artistic, religious and political developments. The lucrative trade with the East was controlled by the Italians, mainly the Venetians. The desire to have a share in this trade, first in Portugal and Spain, and later in England, France and Holland, led from the late fifteenth century onwards to great geographical discoveries, important changes within Europe, and the establishment of new patterns of international relationships.

Until the later part of the fifteenth century, a large part of the world was unknown to the people living in any area of the world. The existence of the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and large parts of Africa and Asia was unknown to people living outside these areas. The vast Atlantic Ocean had remained uncharted and the

possibility of the existence of a vast land-mass on the other side of the Atlantic was rarely imagined. It was not known that one could circumnavigate or sail around Africa. Though many people had come to believe that the earth was a sphere, still most people did not rule out the possibility that the sailors who went far into the ocean might sail on forever in an endless ocean or might fall down from the earth when they reached its end.



**25 (a) Columbus leaving for his voyage**



**25 (b) Adventurous fleet that Columbus assembled**

The first great steps in the exploration of the earth were taken by the sailors under the patronage of Portuguese and Spanish rulers. The initial motive was to find a sea-route to the East and to have a share in the lucrative trade which was monopolized by the traders from Venice. The compass and the astrolab,

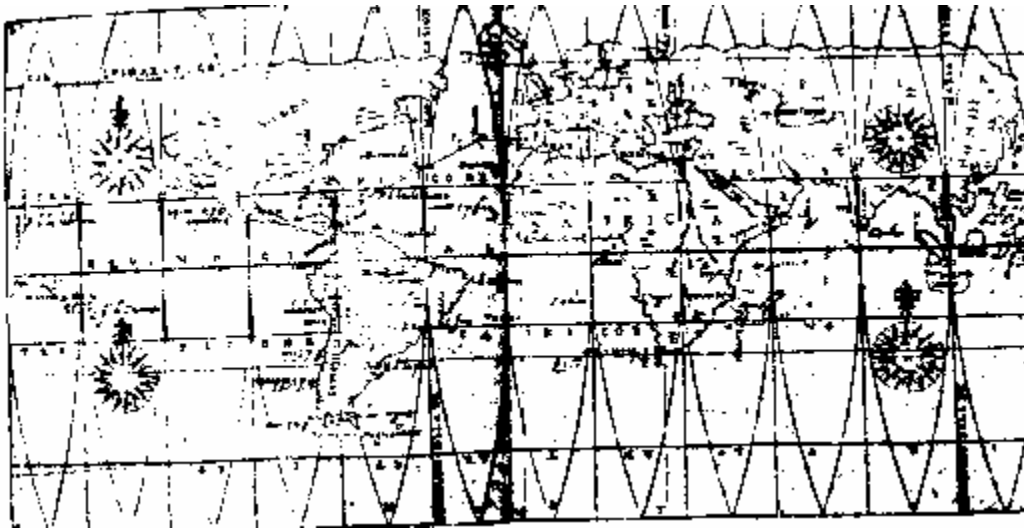


essential navigational instruments for long Journeys across the oceans, had become known, and astronomical tables and the art of mapping, essential for sailors, had been developing fast.

Bartholomew Diaz sailed, in 1487-88 across west Africa. crossed the Cape of good Hope and reached the eastern coast of Africa. In 1492 Columbus, sailing West to find a new route to the East reached the Americas, though he himself, even after three more successful voyages died ignorant of his great discovery. In 1497- 98 Vasco da Gama finally discovered the route to India.

Magellan (1519-22) was the first to successfully circumnavigate the world. His ships crossed the Atlantic ocean, sailed across the Pacific Ocean and the survivors reached Spain after crossing the Indian Ocean. Though much of the world still remained unexplored, including large parts of Africa and Australia, these voyages laid the foundations for almost the complete geographical knowledge of the world. Following these discoveries, almost all areas of the world were for the first time brought into regular physical contact with one another.

The new geographical discoveries had far-reaching consequences for the entire world. The discovery of the sea-route to India led to the end of Venetian control and the establishment of the Portuguese monopoly over European trade with Asia. The Portuguese were, however subsequently supplanted by the British, the Dutch and the French. There was a tremendous increase in the volume of trade as well as in the articles of trade. It marked also the beginning of the colonisation of Asia, which in the following centuries was almost entirely subjugated by the European countries.



**26. An Old Map**

The colonisation of Africa also began, though it was confined to the coastal areas. The large scale conquest of Africa by the imperialist countries of Europe took place only in the nineteenth century. In the Americas, the geographical discoveries were followed in a period of few decades with the destruction of the civilizations of the Incas and the Aztecs and the subjugation of the large indigenous population by a small number of Europeans. The Europeans plundered the gold and silver of the Incas and the Aztecs and exploited the mines in Peru, Mexico and Bolivia for precious metals. Vast supplies of gold and silver reached Europe.

Commodities totally unknown or unavailable in Europe such as potatoes, tobacco and maize became available there and vast resources of the Americas for the production of sugar, coffee, rice and cotton began to be exploited for the benefit of the Europeans. One of the significant developments following the conquest of the Americas by the Europeans was the introduction of the plantation system in North America, West Indies and Brazil, mainly for the production of sugar-cane, tobacco and cotton. These plantations were worked by slave labour drawn from Africa. The continents of Africa and the Americas were brought together by a brutal system of exploitation. While the indigenous population of the Americas (the American Indians as they are called) were reduced to the status of serfs who worked on the estates of the European colonists, the plantations were worked by slaves.

Slave trade was started in the late fifteenth century by individual merchants, sailors and pirates but by the end of the sixteenth century, it passed into the hands of regular slave-trading companies officially approved by the governments of the European countries. For about 300 years, people of Africa were hunted, first in the coastal areas and then further in the interior, by slave traders and their agents, captured, transported across the Atlantic Ocean and sold to work in the plantations. Millions of Africans were captured and exported.



**27. Merchants at a harbour in America**

Hundreds of thousands died during the journey because of the extremely unhygienic conditions in the ships. It is estimated that in the British colonies in the West Indies alone, more than two million slaves were imported in a period of about a hundred years. The prosperity of the European colonizers in the Americas was based on the serf and slave labour of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and African slaves respectively.

This had a great impact on the development of Europe, particularly of those countries which were in the forefront in establishing their colonies and control over other parts of the world and in international trade. These developments furthered the process of the growth of capitalism.

We have said before that as a result of the geographical discoveries, the entire world for the first time became known and, also, that for the first time all areas of the world were brought into regular physical contact with one another. However, as we have seen, this regular physical contact was accompanied by brutal exploitation of the people of some parts of the world.

## Check Your Progress 4

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Which of the following statements are correct or wrong (Mark ✓ or X)

- i) Nation-states emerged in a very short time in Europe.
- ii) Bartholomew Diaz sailed to America in 1492.
- iii) People from America were as old as slave in America.
- iv) Compass is used to measure distance.

2) Discuss in about ten lines some of the major consequences of geographical discoveries.

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## 7.12 LET US SUM UP

Renaissance and Reformation set into motion a process that revolutionised the outlook of human beings on religion, society, political systems and culture. This process was the product of several socio-economic changes, such as the emergence of civic freedom in towns and cities, formation of occupational guilds, development of sea borne trade, geographical discoveries, etc. The Renaissance marked the rise of humanism which shifted the focus from divine principles to human beings. The human body was no more treated as a symbol of sin. It was now considered a thing of beauty, dignity and pleasure. This outlook generated new writings and literature, art and architecture where the emphasis was on beauty and aesthetic standards in relation to human conditions.

With the promotion of secular ideas and rational thinking, the doors for the development of modern science were thrown open. The conflict between Church and science ultimately resulted in favour of science. The

sanction of the Church was no more required for the promotion and recognition of scientific discoveries. The forces of Reformation challenged the abuse of authority by the Church. This not only resulted in the emergence of national churches, but also compelled the Church hierarchy to introduce reforms, i.e. the Counter Reformation.

This was also a period which marked the emergence of nation-states in Europe alongwith new political theories. Merchants and other professional groups supported political consolidation under monarchies. They played a vital role in colonisation and ultimately in the establishment of colonial regimes.

## 7.13 KEY WORDS

**Absolutism:** despotism, a government in which the ruler has absolute power.

**Ambaptist:** a 16th century Swiss Sect of reformation.

**Baptism:** rite for admitting a person into Christian faith (by dipping him into water or sprinkling sacred water over him).

**Capitalism:** an economic system of production of commodities for profit.

**Deductive:** to infer by logical reasoning.

**Empiricism:** method of proof based on observations.

**Fresco:** a method of painting in water-colour on wall before plaster is dry.

**Gothic:** a style of architecture of flying buttresses and pointed arches, etc.

**Guild:** union of craftsmen in medieval times.

**Heretic:** holding belief opposed to the church, especially by its members.

**Humanism:** a system of thought holding man to be ethical, giving dignity to man.

**Journey-men:** skilled workers qualified by apprentices to work in his trade.

**Sacrament:** a set of rites observed by Christians as ordained by Jesus

**Scholasticism:** a system of thought based on Aristotelian logic.

**Tithe:** One-tenth of annual produce from land paid as contribution to Church.

## 7.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sec. 7.2
- 2) i) X ii) X iii) ✓ iv) ✓
- 3) See Sub-sec. 7.3.1

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 7.5
- 2) i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) X
- 3) See Sec. 7.7

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) X ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) X v) ✓

- 1) See Sub-sec. 7.9.1
- 2) See Sub-sec. 7.9.2
- 3) See Sub-sec. 7.9.3

#### **Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) i)Xii)Xiii) ✓ iv)X v) ✓
- 2) See Sec. 7.11