History of Britain - I

COURSE CODE: SGB24HS102MI

Minor Course – History
For FYUG Programmes

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

History of Britain - I

Course Code: SGB24HS102MI

Semester - II

Minor Course - History
For Four Year Undergraduate Programme
Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

History of Britain - I

Course Code: SGB24HS102MI
Semester- II
Minor Course- History
For FYUG Programmes

Scan this QR Code for reading the SLM on a digital device.

Edition
January 2025

ISBN 978-81-984516-8-2

www.sgou.ac.m

Visit and Subscribe our Social Media Platforms

Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear Learner,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Four Year UG Programme offered by Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Established in September 2020, our university aims to provide high-quality higher education through open and distance learning. Our guiding principle, 'access and quality define equity', shapes our approach to education. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards in our academic offerings.

Our university proudly bears the name of Sreenarayanaguru, a prominent Renaissance thinker of modern India. His philosophy of social reform and educational empowerment serves as a constant reminder of our dedication to excellence in all our academic pursuits.

The course History of Britain - I is offered as a Minor course for the BA English (Honours) programme. It provides learners with a comprehensive understanding of Britain's historical evolution, focusing on key political, social, literary and cultural developments. The course explores significant events that shaped British society, offering valuable context for the study of English literature. Minor courses offer valuable supplementary knowledge that complements your major field of study. These allied subjects broaden your academic perspective, enhance interdisciplinary understanding, and develop versatile skills. By exploring related disciplines, you gain a more comprehensive education, preparing you for diverse career opportunities and fostering well-rounded intellectual growth throughout your academic journey.

Our teaching methodology combines three key elements: Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling, and Virtual modes. This blended approach aims to provide a rich and engaging learning experience, overcoming the limitations often associated with distance education. We are confident that this programme will enhance your understanding of management principles, preparing you for various career paths and further academic pursuits.

Our learner support services are always available to address any concerns you may have during your time with us. We encourage you to reach out with any questions or feedback regarding the programme.

We wish you success in your academic journey with Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Best regards,

Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.
Vice Chancellor

01-01-2025

Contents

BLOCK - 01

Early History

UNIT ONE

British Isles

Learning Outcomes

By learning this unit, the learners will be able to:

- become aware of the key historical events shaping the United Kingdom's formation
- recognise the significance of territorial annexation in British history
- evaluate the impact of Welsh incorporation in English politics
- discuss Scotland's complex relationship with England post-union
- examine Ireland's conflict and eventual partition in the UK

Prerequisites

The British Isles, an archipelago with a rich tapestry of geography and culture, have played a vital role in shaping the history of Europe and the world. Situated off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe, the Isles include Great Britain, Ireland, and numerous smaller islands. The United Kingdom, comprising England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, occupies a central place in this region. To understand the formation of the United Kingdom, we must trace its roots back to the early medieval period, particularly the reign of King Athelstan of Wessex, whose efforts to unite the various kingdoms of the British Isles laid the foundation for centuries of conquest, consolidation, and cultural blending.

Throughout its history, the British Isles have experienced constant power struggles, invasions, and cultural exchanges. While Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were often drawn into English control, they maintained unique identities and resisted domination. Over time, through military campaigns, treaties, and acts of union, these disparate regions were gradually united, eventually forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in the early 19th century. The partition of Ireland in the 20th century further shaped the political landscape, leading to the modern-day United Kingdom and the independent Republic of Ireland.

The diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage of the British Isles are integral to its history. From the rolling hills of England to the rugged highlands of Scotland and

the lush fields of Ireland, the natural beauty of these islands has shaped their cultures. The distinct identities of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland persist, each region contributing its own traditions, languages, and customs. As we explore the history of the British Isles in this unit, you will learn more about how these regions have navigated their cultural diversity and political unity, and how this history continues to influence discussions on identity and autonomy today.

Keywords

United Kingdom, Great Britain, Geography, History, Annexation, Islands

Discussion

Tracing the origins of the United Kingdom would take us back to the Anglo-Saxon period, particularly the period of the West Saxon King Athelstan (died in 939). By the early 10th century AD, the King succeeded in annexing and consolidating his kingdom by overcoming the other Saxon and Celtic rulers in the neighbourhood. He controlled more territory than any previous Anglo-Saxon king. Through subsequent efforts and conquests over the following centuries, kingdoms in the northern and western parts of the Island—Wales, Scotland and Ireland also came under English domination. Efforts were made to conquer Wales in the middle of the 11th century, even before the Norman Conquest. It was in 1284 that England finally annexed Wales but it was only during the period of the Tudor ruler, Henry VIII that Wales was legally incorporated into England by the Act of Union of 1536 and 1542.

When Queen Elizabeth I of England died childless in 1603, she was succeeded by her cousin James VI, who was the reigning King of Scotland. From that year onwards, the two nations were unified under a single monarch. But it was only in 1707 with the Act of Union that England and Scotland were unified under the name the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The term "British" came into use at this time to refer to the people of the entire Kingdom. Scotland's relationship with England before and after the merger has been problematic.

Ireland had a history of a long conflict with England starting at least from 1166 when King Henry II invaded it. Ever since that year, the control of England over Ireland waxed and waned, interspersed with constant rebellions by the Irish people. It was only during the 17th century that the UK was able to establish some control. Despite bitter resistance from the Irish people, the British Government enacted an Act of Union with Ireland in 1801 which created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Following the Irish War of Independence (1919-21), the British Government was forced to accept the creation of an Irish Free State from 1922 onwards. Only 6 counties (territorial division) of the northern province of Ireland remained with the UK. At the moment, the island of Ireland consists of an independent Republic of Ireland which came into existence in 1949 and a smaller Northern Ireland.

Britain started growing in prominence in Europe only during the second half of the 16th century during the reign of Queen

Elizabeth I (reign from 1558-1603). It was also the golden age of English literature and drama exemplified by the presence of William Shakespeare. With the Industrial Revolution that appeared in the second half of the 18th century, Britain rose to great prosperity. It was probably the most powerful and prosperous country in the world by the time Queen Victoria died (reign from 1837 to 1901). Britain lost its dominant position in the world after the end of the Second World War when the United States of America emerged as the most important political, military and financial power. The UK has seen its position further diminished in the third decade of the 21st century. Perhaps Britain's great contribution to the world has been the English language, now spoken in every corner of the world as one of the leading international mediums of political, cultural and economic exchange. The fact that English is the language spoken in the USA has considerably helped in this regard.

It is difficult to say exactly whether England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are countries or states in a country. Foreigners are confused, for instance, by the sight of separate teams fielded in Football by England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. But in cricket separate teams appear only from England, Scotland and Ireland. But then again in cricket, Cricket Ireland contains players from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the players from Wales are available for selection in the team fielded by the England and Wales Cricket Board. Perhaps the United Kingdom can be better understood as a federation of countries that have considerable autonomy in some areas but do not enjoy full autonomy. It has to be noted that England does not exist as a political unit and does not have a legislative assembly of its own unlike the other constituent units which enjoy varying degrees of autonomy. Thus it is evident that all the institutions in England have been subsumed into those for the UK. Following referendums held in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the UK Parliament passed three devolution acts: the Scotland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the Government of Wales Act 1998. The Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales (Senedd Cymru in Welsh language) and the Northern Ireland Assembly have consequently came into existence. Further powers have been devolved since these original acts, most recently through the Scotland Act 2016 and Wales Act 2017. Ever since Britain broke away from the EU, there have been growing demands for full independence for Scotland.

1.1.1 The British Isles

The British Isles are a group of islands in the North Atlantic Ocean off the north-western coast of mainland Europe. The United Kingdom is situated on an archipelago known as the *British Isles*, which includes the main islands of Great Britain and Ireland, and several surrounding island groups, such as the Hebrides, the Shetlands, the Orkneys, the Isle of Man, and the Isle of Wight. The Channel Islands are also sometimes included in this grouping. Not all the islands are part of the United Kingdom. Although the term 'British Isles' has been used for a long time, many, particularly in Ireland, object to the use of the term.

The United Kingdom is located between the North Atlantic Ocean in the west and the North Sea in the east, north of the English Channel, and off France's northern coast. The only land border the UK has is with the Republic of Ireland. Since 1994 the Channel Tunnel beneath the English Channel links the UK with France. The country shares maritime borders with Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the Faroe

Islands (Denmark). With an area of 242,900 km², the United Kingdom is about half the size of Spain, or slightly larger than half the size of the U.S. state of California. The kingdom has a population of 66.8 million people (in 2019). The capital, largest city, and the country's political and financial centre is London.

British Isles comprise two large islands and over 5,000 smaller ones like, Isle of Man, Isle of Scilly, Isle of Arran and Isle of Wight, etc. Politically, the British Isles are divided into two independent countries namely the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Geographically, the British Isles are divided between highlands to the north and west, and lowlands to the south and east. Low rolling hills, high moorlands, and small fields with high hedges are all typical of the British Isles. Ireland is known as the Emerald Isle, because heavy rainfall gives it a green appearance. The United Kingdom is surrounded by sea. To the south of England and between the UK and France is the English Channel, a narrow strip of water which separates England from the mainland.

The UK's official language is English; recognized regional languages are Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Irish, and Cornish. The official religion of the United Kingdom is Christianity, but churches of all denominations can be found throughout the country. As mentioned earlier, the UK comprises four geographical parts - England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Let's have a brief description about the people and livelihood of the United Kingdom.

1.1.2 Geographical Features

Geography and chronology are the two important and inevitable elements for the studying of history. Famous English writer Richard Hakluyt rightly remarks that "geography and chronology are the sun and the moon, the right eye and the left eye of history" (Richard Hakluyt, *Principal Navigation, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*). This statement indicates the importance of geography in studying the historical antecedents. The evolution of British history and culture cannot be properly understood without a proper appreciation of the part played by the geographical factors. The often-quoted statement "geography governs history" is clearly manifested in the trajectory of Britain and its people.

The United Kingdom is surrounded by sea on all sides except for Northern Ireland which shares a land border with the Irish republic. The English Channel, a narrow arm of the Atlantic Ocean, separates the south of the United Kingdom and the north of France. The North Sea, a part of the Atlantic Ocean, lies to the east, separating it from countries like Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany on the south-east and Norway, Sweden and Denmark on the east. The Irish Sea, another part of the Atlantic Ocean separates Great Britain from the island of Ireland; it lies on the west of Wales and northern England and to the south-east of Northern Ireland. Southwestern England, western Scotland and the northwestern coast of Northern Ireland face the Atlantic Ocean. At its widest, the United Kingdom is 300 miles (500 km) across. From the northern tip of Scotland to the southern coast of England, it is about 600 miles (1,000 km). No one in the UK lives more than 120 kms (75 miles) from the sea. The capital, London, is situated on the river Thames in southeastern England.

1.1.3 England

England is geographically the most important part of the United Kingdom and occupies more than half of the island of Great Britain. It shares land borders with

Wales to its west and Scotland to its north. It is possible to identify a division between southern England and northern England on the basis of the geographical features. The southern parts of England, particularly Greater London, (Greater London is an administrative area combining the city of London, city of Westminster and 31 other London boroughs, formed in 1965) are the most densely populated areas of the British Isles. More than seven million people live in Greater London. England has one of the highest population densities in the British Isles, with 380 people per square Km. There are more industries and more jobs here than anywhere else in the UK. London is one of the world's top financial centres and is also a leading centre for other service industries including insurance, the media and publishing. Several cities including Cambridge and Swindon are centres for the hi-tech industry. Thousands of tourists visit the historical and cultural centres in southern England every year. Due to fertile soils and reliable rainfall a wide range of crops are cultivated in southern England. The landscape of southern England exhibits a wide variety. Cornwall in the far west has rough hills and an unevenly cut coastline shaped by the Atlantic Ocean. Southern England has a warm temperate climate.

The Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries began in northern England. The area is abundant in rich minerals and resources needed for industry. South Wales was once a major coal-mining and heavy industrial area. The region is reputed for traditional industries, such as iron, steel, coal mining and textiles. The eastern lowlands have an ideal climate for arable crops. Oats and potatoes grow in the north and west. The southwest is mainly used for grazing cattle and sheep. Forestry is important in mountain areas. The weather of northern England is cooler and wetter than the south. Important industrial cities of Northern England are Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Bradford.

1.1.4 Wales

Wales is an important geographical unit of the United Kingdom. It is bordered by England to the east, the Irish Sea to the north and west, Celtic Sea to the south west and the Bristol Channel to the south. It had a population in 2021 of 3,107,500 and has a total area of 20,779 km^2 (8,023 sq. miles). Wales has a big coastline of over 2,700 km and is largely mountainous with its higher peaks in the north and central areas, including Snowdon as its highest summit at an altitude of 3560 feet. Wales lies within the north temperate zone and has a changeable, maritime climate. Cardiff is the largest city and administrative centre of Wales.

Wales was traditionally an agricultural society. But at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, development of the mining and metallurgical industries transformed the country from an agricultural society into an industrial nation; the South Wales Coalfield's exploitation caused a rapid expansion of Wales' population. Two-thirds of the population live in South Wales, including Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and the nearby valleys. The eastern region of North Wales has about a sixth of the overall population with Wrexham being the largest northern town. The remaining parts of Wales are sparsely populated. Now that the country's traditional extractive and heavy industries have gone or are in decline, the economy is based on the public sector, light and service industries, and tourism. In livestock farming, including dairy farming, Wales is a net exporter, contributing towards national agricultural self-sufficiency.

1.1.5 Scotland

Scotland lies off the northern part of Britain. Scotland covers 32 percent of the United Kingdom's land area but has only 9 percent of the population. It is the least populated area of the United Kingdom. Scotland has one of the lowest population densities in Western Europe, with only 65 people per square km. The eastern side of Scotland has a drier climate than the west and is suitable for growing cereal crops and vegetables. Most of the mountain areas are too wet and barren for arable farming, but people use it for a variety of purposes which include sheep and deer farming, forestry, tourism and recreation. Edinburgh is the chief centre of administration and almost two-fifths (five million) of Scotland's people live in four main cities namely, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. The lowlands of Scotland have a temperate climate and plenty of rain. Highland areas experience heavy cold winters with heavy, drifting snow.

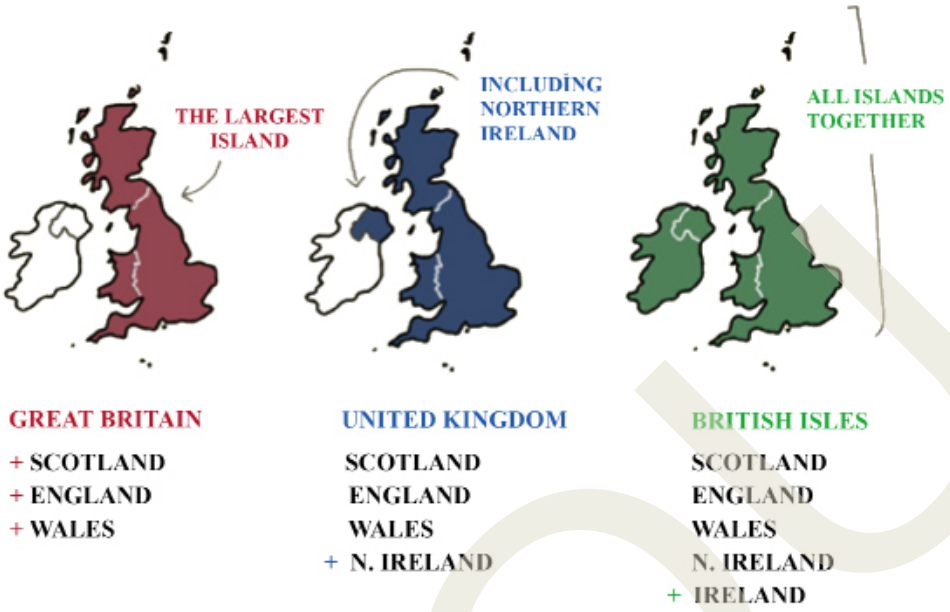
1.1.6 Northern Ireland

The island of Ireland, located in northwestern Europe, has as its borders the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Irish Sea in the east, the St. George Canal in the southeast, and the Celtic Sea in the south. Irish Sea separates the island of Ireland from Britain. From 1801 onwards Ireland became a constituent part of the United Kingdom by an Act of Union passed by British parliament. Following the Irish Easter Rebellion of 1916 which was crushed and the Irish War of Independence (1919-21), the British were forced to conclude the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, They accepted the partition of Ireland into two- Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland and the northern part was given the options for opting out or remaining in the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland with its Protestant majority opted to remain in the UK. Southern Ireland with its Catholic majority was recognized as the Irish Free State by the UK with dominion status in 1922. Only about one sixth of the island of Ireland, remained within the UK with the nomenclature Northern Ireland.

Geographically, the eastern side of the island has more people and industry than any other part. In the west, traditional ways of life based on farming remain strong and the native Irish language is still spoken by some people. Potatoes were once the staple food of the Irish. Potatoes and cereals flourish in the drier east. The climate of Ireland is too wet for many types of crops, particularly in the west, where the soils are thin and the land is mostly used for sheep grazing. In bog areas a type of soil called peat is cut from the ground and dried to be burned as fuel. Ireland's location in the path of the Gulf Stream ocean current produces warm, moist air masses which pass over the country from the west. Rainfall is abundant, which allows many plants to grow, giving Ireland the name the "Emerald Isle".

1.1.7 Cultural relics

The cultural history of the United Kingdom is very unique. But the cultural diversity can be seen in the cultural history of Britain as much as in its geographical features. The individual cultures of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are diverse and have varying degrees of overlap and distinctiveness. English culture was undoubtedly the predominant culture but in course of time, it has assimilated the cultures of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. At the same time, the traditions, heritage, language, festivals and cuisine of the three countries are also preserved. This has contributed to the uniqueness and richness of the culture of the UK. However, some unique cultural relics can be found in the history of Britain.



Stonehenge is a prehistoric stone circle monument, cemetery and archaeological site on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England, three kilometre west of Amesbury. It is believed to have been a pre-Christian or pagan religious place. It consists of an outer ring of vertical sarsen standing stones, each around 13 feet high, seven feet wide, and weighing around 25 tons, topped by connecting horizontal lintel stones. Inside is a ring of smaller bluestones. Inside these are free-standing trilithons, two bulkier vertical sarsens joined by one lintel. The whole monument, now ruinous, is aligned towards the sunrise on the summer solstice. The stones are set within earthworks in the middle of the densest complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in England. The monument evolved between 3,000 BC and 1,600 BC and aligned the rising and setting of the sun on the solstices, but its exact purpose remains a mystery. Stonehenge was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

Fig 1.1.1 Stonehenge

The Tower of London is a 900-year-old castle and fortress in central London that is notable for housing the crown jewels and for holding many famous and infamous prisoners. It was founded just after the Norman Conquest in 1066. The White Tower in the centre of the fortress was built by William the Conqueror in 1078. Used as a prison since the 12th century, the Tower has played an important part in the history of England Throughout its history, the tower has served

many purposes: it housed the royal mint (until the early 19th century), a menagerie (which left in 1835), a records office, an armoury and barracks for troops. Until the 17th century, it was also used as a royal residence.

Fig 1.1.2 The Tower of London

Warwick Castle is another castle built by William the Conqueror, in 1068. Warwick was later remodelled in stone in the 12th century. Warwick Castle was home to the powerful Earls of Warwick, including Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick, nicknamed 'The Kingmaker' for his role during the Wars of the Roses. Over the centuries several of the Earls of Warwick met with untimely and violent deaths, including one executed for high treason in the Tower of London.

Fig 1.1.3 Stratford-Upon-Avon

Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire. Located on the banks of the river Avon, Stratford-upon-Avon is one of the most popular places in England. Stratford became famous as the birthplace of William Shakespeare. He was born in a lovely half-timbered house in 1564 and his descendants continued to live there until the 19th century. Stratford is situated 146 km to the north-west of London. Although Shakespeare had a prolific dramatic career in the city of London, he stopped writing plays and returned to Stratford around 1613. He died in 1616 and was buried in the city of his birth. Every year April 23- his date of death and possibly his birth as well- is celebrated from March till October in a festival when his plays are presented in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford. Stratford is one of the most important tourist destinations in the UK.

Fig 1.1.4 Warwickshire.

Hadrian's Wall. After the Roman invasion in Britain in AD 43, the Romans quickly established control over southern England. The conquest of the people in the North however was not going to be so easy. In the AD 70s and 80s the Roman commander Agricola led a series of major assaults on the tribal people of northern England and the Scottish Lowlands. Despite a successful campaign into Scotland, the Romans failed in the long term to hold on to any lands gained. Forts and signal posts were built back in the lowlands linked by the Stanegate road which ran from the waters of the Tyne in the East to the Solway estuary in the

West. Some four decades later in around AD 122, with the indigenous still untamed, these lowland forts were again under intense hostile pressure. A visit by the Emperor Hadrian that year to review the border problems at the boundaries of his empire led to a more radical solution. He ordered the building of an immense barrier stretching over eighty Roman miles from the west coast of Britain to the east. Built of stone in the east and initially of turf in the west (because lime for mortar was not available), Hadrian's Wall took at least six years to complete. This impressive structure was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988.

Domesday book is Britain's earliest public record. It contains the results of a huge survey of land and landholding commissioned by William I in 1085. Domesday is by far the most complete record of pre-industrial society to survive anywhere in the world and provides a unique window on the mediaeval world.

St. Paul's Cathedral, London. This famous dome dominates London's skyline, and is England's architectural masterpiece and place of national celebration. The present cathedral was designed and built by Sir Christopher Wren and completed in 1710 but a cathedral has stood on this site since 604 AD.

Fig 1.1.5 Hadrian's Wall

Fig 1.1.6 St. Paul's Cathedral

Recap

- Britain started growing in prominence in Europe only during the second half of the 16th century during the reign of Queen Elizabeth
- Irish Sea separates the island of Ireland from Britain.
- In the Industrial Revolution that appeared in the second half of the 18th century, Britain rose to great prosperity.
- The only land border the UK has is with the Republic of Ireland
- The recognized regional languages of UK are Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Irish, and Cornish.

- England is geographically the most important part of the United Kingdom and occupies more than half of the island of Great Britain.
- The Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries began in northern England

Objective Type Questions

1. In which year England finally annexed Wales?
2. During whose period Wales was legally incorporated into England by the Act of Union of 1536 and 1542?
3. When Queen Elizabeth I of England died childless in 1603 who succeeded her?
4. Mention the time period of Irish War of Independence
5. In which year onwards British Government was forced to accept the creation of an Irish Free State?
6. Which is regarded as Britain's greatest contribution to the world?
7. Identify the Geographical position of The United Kingdom
8. Which are the major islands of British Isles?
9. Which channel, a narrow arm of the Atlantic Ocean, separates the south of the United Kingdom and the north of France?
10. Which is the least populated area of the United Kingdom?
11. Scotland lies in which part of Britain?
12. What is the geographical position of the island of Ireland?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. 1284.
2. Tudor ruler, Henry VIII.
3. Her cousin James VI.
4. (1919-21).
5. 1922 onwards.
6. English language.
7. Between the North Atlantic Ocean in the west and the North Sea in the east, north of the English Channel, and off France's northern coast.
8. British Isles comprise two large islands and over 5,000 smaller ones like, Isle of Man, Isle of Scilly, Isle of Arran and Isle of Wight, etc.
9. The English Channel.
10. Scotland.

11. Northern part of Britain.
12. Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Irish Sea in the east, the St. George Canal in the southeast, and the Celtic Sea in the south.

Assignments

1. Geography and chronology are the two important and inevitable elements for the studying of history. Explain this statement in the background of the unit.
2. Write five important events in the history of Great Britain

Suggested Reading

1. Carter EH, RAF and Mears *A History of England,* Stacey International, 2012.
2. Trevelyan, G. M. *A Social History of England, Vol.1,* Books Way, 2014.
3. Hollister, Warren. *The Impact of Norman Conquest,* Wiley, 1969.
4. Brown, Allan. *Origins of English Feudalism,* Routledge, 2020.

UNIT TWO

Roman Conquest

Learning Outcomes

Through this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain the Roman conquest's impact on British culture
- analyse Boudicca's rebellion against Roman imperial authority
- discuss Roman roads' role in societal transformation
- identify Christianity's introduction through Roman occupation efforts
- assess Agricola's contributions to Britain's Romanisation process

Prerequisites

The Roman conquest of Britain, beginning in 43 CE under Emperor Claudius, marked a turning point in the history of the British Isles, forever altering its cultural, social, and political landscape. Initially met with fierce resistance from the native Celtic tribes, particularly under the leadership of Caractacus, the Romans gradually overcame the opposition. By 50 CE, after Caractacus' surrender, Roman rule in Britain was solidified, and the Romans began integrating the island into their empire. This period of Roman occupation saw profound changes as the Romans introduced a new system of governance, built infrastructure, and reshaped the fabric of British society.

One of the most significant aspects of Roman rule was the process of Romanisation. Under leaders like Agricola, the Romans constructed roads, built cities, and introduced new technologies, all of which transformed the way the Britons lived. The establishment of urban centres such as Camulodunum (modern-day Colchester) brought Roman political and cultural influence to the forefront. The Britons adopted Roman customs, language, and even clothing, marking a significant cultural shift. Additionally, the Roman legal system was introduced, and by the 6th century, Christianity began to spread across the island. The Roman occupation laid the groundwork for future transformations in Britain, shaping its identity for centuries to come. In this unit, you are going to learn more about the lasting legacy of Roman rule in Britain and how it set the stage for the cultural and political developments that followed.

Keywords

Romanisation, Resistance, Boudicca, Christianity, Pax Romana

Discussion

In 43 CE Roman Emperor Claudius decided to lead a military expedition to Britain. He prepared a well-equipped army. Claudius' legions marched through France and crossed over to Britain. The British tribes that opposed Roman occupation, united under their chieftain Caractacus. Though his army was no match for the Romans, he fought bravely, near the Thames, in the Battle of Medway (43 AD). Shortly after this desperate battle Caractacus surrendered and was forced to give up control of a large region south of Thames to the Romans. Romans set up a provisional government and more British territory was won over gradually. The final resistance of Caractacus was seven years after Medway in 50 AD. But this was also crushed by the Roman army. Caractacus was captured and thus ended the organised resistance against Roman domination.

The Romans faced serious resistance from the indigenous Celtic people of Britain. The rebellion of Boudicca against Roman rule was one of the remarkable events in the annals of British history. Boudicea was a brave Celtic queen of Iceni. Ten years after the final defeat of Caractacus in 60 CE a massive rebellion was launched by Boadicea, who along with her daughters was badly abused by Roman soldiers. She inspired entire Britons to rebel against Roman rule and collected a good army. Her army attacked several Roman towns and killed thousands of Roman loyalists. Roman writer Cassius Dio (150-235 CE) speaks of the heroic deeds of Boadicea thus: *"Two Cities were sacked, eighty thousand Romans and of their allies perished, and the island was lost to Rome. Moreover, all this ruin was brought upon the Romans by a woman, a fact which in itself caused them the greatest shame."* But Suetonius, the Roman governor, severely suppressed the rebellion of Boudicca with a strong Roman legion. The army of Boudicea was completely routed and slaughtered. With these harsh measures ended all the threat against Roman rule. Subsequently, Agricola became the governor of Britain and he implemented many reforms to Romanize the Britons.

1.2.1 Romano British Culture: Romanisation of the Britains

Roman rule was established in Britain after the conquest, it made drastic social political and cultural changes in Britain. They had put in place a systematic administrative system. The consolidation of the region was brought about by Agricola. He became the governor of Britain in 77CE. He was one of Britain's most successful and competent governors. Initially, Agricola gave prime importance to completing the invasion. He conducted an expedition to Wales and at last brought the whole of Wales under Roman control. Then he conquered Anglesey and Brigantes in Northern England. He established many new forts to keep the conquered region safe and secure. He enacted a series of policy changes to improve the day-to-day affairs of the Province. He lowered the prices of the goods and changed tax policy for the benefit of the common man.

He believed in extending the concept of *Pax Romana* or Roman Peace, (which was a peace imposed by the Empire with the use of force) as he tried to make peace a more

appealing prospect than warfare. During his reign Britons enjoyed peace, and quite naturally peace brought affluence. Agricola began a programme of educating the children of British leaders to integrate them into the Roman Empire. His efforts at Romanization were successful. The natives started wearing Roman garb and even speaking Latin. A number of building projects were initiated at the behest of Agricola. The Roman settlements and towns gained features of civilised life. Baths proved to be particularly popular among the native population. In this way Agricola started the process of the Romanization of the Britons.

The Roman conquest of Britain had a profound impact on the history and culture of Great Britain. Rome did not want to simply conquer the British island. They wanted to integrate it into the Empire and to do so they had to 'civilise' the Britons. Britain had successfully become a functional province of the Roman Empire by the end of the first century AD. The writings of Tacitus, one of the greatest Roman historians, deal with many aspects of the first century AD. Tacitus' *Biography of Agricola*, the Roman governor, gives a detailed account of the Roman invasion and its impact on the British Isles. Rome established their first colony on the British island at the site of Claudius' great victory, Camulodunum (now Colchester in Essex). Camulodunum served as a Roman base and was constantly operated by experienced soldiers. It became the first capital of the Roman province and the centre of Roman power on the island. A temple was built at the site to commemorate the victory of Claudius over the 'barbarous' native population. The military strength and foundation of the colony allowed for the introduction of Roman law and commencement of the Island's process of Romanization. The British people were subjected to Roman laws. Through the writings of Tacitus it is known that the Britons were encouraged to adopt their culture through participation in activities, such as going to the baths, wearing Roman style dress and speaking Latin. Famous English historian Francis Haverfield in his book Romanization of Roman Britain argues that *"Roman culture was actively imposed upon most of the British population resulting in a hybrid culture named Romano-British"*. The usage of Roman brooches, pots and coins has been seen as evidence for the British population adopting Roman culture. The construction of Roman style Villa amongst the Celtic aristocracy received special attention. During the Roman period British trade with the European continent developed considerably. Important items exported from the British island during the period were gold, silver, iron, cattle, wheat and hides (animal skin). Britain imported luxury goods, such as bracelets, necklaces, and glassware. Slaves, essential to the enormous workforce for the Roman Empire, were also exported to Rome. This lucrative trade network thrived throughout the entire Roman era. Christianity in Britain was also introduced during the Roman period. Before Roman rule the native Britons were pagans. They believed in lots of different gods and spirits. But introduction of Christianity to the British Isles was one of the important effects of Roman domination.

The cultural changes were reflected in Britain after the establishment of the Roman rule. It was well- reflected in the constructions and language and literature. Britain had no proper roads before the establishment of Roman rule. There were only muddy tracks. Establishment of the Roman rule
was followed by construction of a wide network of new roads all across the landscape, extending over 16,000 kilometres in length. They were primarily made for military purposes. Soldiers and carts used these

cobbled roads (cobble- stone) to travel between Manchester and Yorkshire. Later some Roman roads were converted into motorways and main roads. Remains of Roman roads can be seen even today. Of all the Roman remains in Britain Hadrian's Wall is the most famous. In AD 122 Roman Emperor Hadrian ordered the building of a wall to protect the Province from the Picts and Scots of the Northern region. The wall ran 118 kilometres from Wallsend on the River Tyne in the east to Bowness on the Solway Firth in the West. Another important wall was the Antonine Wall built by Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius in Scotland in CE 140. It stretched for 59 km.

The new city living culture was established by the Romans who preferred to live in big cities and towns. Roman towns were laid out in a 'grid' (grid is a rectangular array of squares or rectangles of each size). Streets crisscrossed the town to form blocks called 'insulae'. In the middle was the 'forum', a big market square where people came to trade. Some important British towns and cities have their origin in Roman times. If a place name has Chester, Caster or Cester in it, it is almost certainly of Roman origin. The word Chester comes from the Latin word 'Castrum' which means a fort. Colchester, Gloucester, Doncaster, and Manchester are some important British towns and cities that testify the Roman influence. London was pre-Roman, but it gained prominence during the time of Roman rule. Earlier it was called 'Londinium'. When the Romans invaded, they built a fort beside the river Thames. Traders from all over the Roman Empire flocked here to exchange their goods. London became the most prominent city in Roman Britain.

Another effect of the Roman rule was reflected in the language and literature. Before the Romans came very few people could read or write in Britain. Instead information was usually passed from person to person by word of mouth. The Romans wrote down their history, their literature and their laws. Their language was called Latin. It spread in the newly built Roman towns. Britain adopted plenty of words and phrases from Latin. Words like 'exit', 'pedestrian' are some examples. British coins are based on Roman design and some of the lettering is in Latin. For example, words written around the edge of some British Pounds is the phrase *deus et tutamen* which mean 'glory and protection'.

In short, Roman rule played a pivotal role in changing all aspects of British life and culture. Even after they were gone, the Romans left their mark all over the country. The Romans left behind new towns, forts, plants, animals, a new religion and ways of reading and counting.

1.2.2 Advent of Christianity and the Gregorian Mission (597 CE)

The emergence of Christianity from a persecuted sect to a global religion is a remarkable story. In the first century AD, Britain had its own set of religious beliefs; a kind of paganism like *Druidism* prevailed there. Into this superstitious world, came a new belief from the east called Christianity. In the 1st century there was no organised effort to convert the British into Christianity. The organised attempt began when the Roman traders and artisans arriving in Britain started propagating the story and teachings of Jesus Christ among the British. After the Roman conquest of Britain and the subsequent legalisation of Christianity in the Roman Empire, individual Christian Romans came to Britain for the purpose of conversion.

The first organised attempt of the propagation of Christianity was The Gregorian Mission in 597 AD. It was a very significant event in the religious history

of England. The Gregorian mission was despatched by Pope Gregory the Great. The purpose was to convert Anglo-Saxon Britain into Christianity. Gregory chose Augustine, a Benedictine Monk, to lead a mission to Kent. During that time Ethelbert was the ruler of Kent. The mission was a great success as it set up the future course of Christianity in Britain. Ethelbert, the ruler of Kent was converted to the new religion, and the missionaries were allowed to preach freely and convert people. Most of the information relating to the advent of Christianity into England comes from Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Bede remarks thus: "So Augustine, strengthened by the encouragement of the blessed father Gregory, in company with the servants of Christ, returned to the work of preaching the word, and came to Britain". The Gregorian Mission caused two major effects. The main effect was the conversion of the Kentish Kingdom and the establishment of the Episcopal Church at Canterbury. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 597. He is considered as the "Apostle to the English" and founder of the English church. Another effect was that the Mission planted the seed of Christianity in England. It caused the conversion of the whole British Isles in less than a century.

Recap

- Roman conquest of Britain - Julius Caesar and Claudius
- Roman conquest of Gaul (Modern France) - 55 BCE - Caesar's plan for an expedition to the British Isles
- Resistance of British army - withdrawal of Romans
- Retaliation of British tribes under Cassivellaunus - siege to the fortress of Cassivellaunus- defeat of Britons and surrender- Sudden withdrawal of Caesar -rebellion in Gaul
- Claudius' military expedition to Britain in 43 CE
- Battle of Medway (43 CE) - Surrender of Caractacus- setting up of a provisional Roman government
- The final resistance of Caractacus in 50CE- capture of Caractacus
- Resistance of the indigenous British Celtic people towards Roman conquest
- The rebellion of Boudicca - rebellion suppressed by Suetonius
- Agricola as the governor of Britain -Agricola's reforms- Romanization of the Britons.
- Romano -British Culture - establishment of Roman rule in Britain - subsequent social, political and cultural changes
- Impact of Roman conquest on Great Britain - Tacitus' Biography of Agricola
- Establishment of the first Roman colony in Camulodunum- first capital of the Roman province
- Introduction of Roman law
- British trade with the European continent - export of gold, silver, iron,

cattle, wheat and hides - import of luxury goods such as bracelets, necklaces, and glassware- Export of slaves to Rome

- Cultural changes - language and literature - Latin language- Hadrian's Wall – Antonine Wall - City living culture - grids- 'insulae' - 'forum' – London
- Introduction of Christianity in Britain - Gregorian Mission (597 CE)- Propagation of Christianity - Conversion from Druidism
- Augustine of Canterbury- mission into Kent- Conversion of Ethelbert - Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People
- Effects of Gregorian mission - conversion of the Kentish Kingdom - the establishment of the Episcopal Church at Canterbury

Objective Type Questions

1. When was the first Roman conquest of Britain occurred?
2. What was the reason for the immediate withdrawal of Julius Caesar from the first Roman conquest?
3. Who was the chief of the British tribes, united against the invasion of Claudius?
4. In which battle, Caractacus was forced to subdue a large region south of Thames to the Romans?
5. Which was the remarkable rebellion faced by Romans from the indigenous celtic people of Britain?
6. Which Roman governor suppressed the rebellion of Boudicca ?
7. Which British governor implemented the reforms to Romanize the Britain?
8. Mention the work which provides a detailed account of the Roman invasion and its impact on the British Isles.
9. Where did Rome established their first colony on the British island?
10. What was the first capital of the Roman province in Britain?
11. What was the earlier name of London?
12. What was the kind of paganism followed by the British tribes in the first century CE?
13. Who organized the first attempt of the propagation of Christianity in Britain?
14. Mention the account which provides much information relating to the advent of Christianity into England.
15. Which were the two effects of the Gregorian Mission?
16. Who became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 597 and known as the 'Apostle to the English' and founder of the English church?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. 55 BCE
2. A major rebellion broke out in Gaul
3. Caractacus
4. Battle of Medway (43 CE)
5. The rebellion of Boudicca
6. Suetonius
7. Agricola
8. Tacitus' Biography of Agricola
9. Camulodunum
10. Camulodunum
11. 'Londinium'
12. *Druidism*
13. The Gregorian Mission in 597 CE
14. Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
15. The conversion of the Kentish Kingdom and the establishment of the Episcopal Church at Canterbury
16. Augustine of Canterbury

Assignments

1. Analyse the impact of Romanization on British culture.
2. Discuss the role of Gregorian mission in the propagation of Christianity in Britain
3. Describe the heroic deeds of Boadicea
4. Give a brief account of the Roman invasion and its impact on the British Isles.
5. Give a brief account of introduction of Christianity and its propagation in British society

Suggested Reading

1. A.L. Rowse, *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Emilie Amt, (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader,* University of Toronto press, 2000.
4. Eric Brown, *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from*

Start to End, Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Kenneth O Morgan (Ed), *The Oxford History of Britain,* OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. R.E. Pritchard, *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Richard Bailey, *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language ,* Cambridge University Press, 2009.

UNIT THREE

Anglo-Saxons

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able,

- familiarise with the Anglo-Saxon Era in British History
- analyse key characteristics shaping the Anglo-Saxon kingdom
- learn about Anglo-Saxon administration and kingdom formation
- explore Anglo-Saxon society and culture during this period
- identify historical sources revealing Anglo-Saxon period history

Prerequisites

The Anglo-Saxon period, often referred to as the age of the Heptarchy, provides a fascinating glimpse into early English history, where seven distinct kingdoms-Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Wessex- vied for power and dominance. This era, spanning from the 5th to the 9th century, was marked by territorial conflict, but also by the rise of ambitious leaders who sought to unite the kingdoms. The most prominent of these figures was Alfred the Great of Wessex, renowned for his military successes against Viking invasions and his contributions to legal reform, literacy, and learning. His efforts redefined kingship and helped pave the way for the eventual consolidation of England into one unified kingdom. As we explore this period, we will explore into the development of early English governance, legal systems, and cultural advancements, which laid the foundation for the medieval England that followed.

Anglo-Saxon society was hierarchical and structured, blending both pagan and Christian traditions. At the top were the king and royal family, supported by the nobility and clergy, while the lower classes, including freemen (ceorls) and slaves (laets), made up the social pyramid. Despite the rigid structure, Anglo-Saxons valued personal rights, with legal codes such as King Ethelbert's Law emphasising the role of women in society, depending on their marital status. Daily life was primarily rural, with families living in small agricultural settlements. The Anglo-Saxons also experienced a religious transformation as Christianity spread through the work of missionaries like St. Augustine. This shift from paganism to Christianity marked a significant cultural change,

fostering a golden age of Anglo-Saxon literature. Works like the epic *Beowulf* and the poetry of Caedmon and Cynewulf offer us a rich legacy of heroic and devotional narratives in Old English. In this unit, you are going to learn more about the fascinating world of the Anglo-Saxons and their profound impact on the history of England.

Keywords

Anglo-Saxons, Formation of Kingdom, Administration, Society, Culture Sources

Discussion

The word Heptarchy is used to designate the period between the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in England towards the end of the 5th century AD and the destruction of most of them by the Danes in the second half of the 9th century. The Heptarchy is a collective name applied to the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southeast and Central England. The term Heptarchy is derived from the Greek words for "seven" and "rule", which means the rule of "Seven Kingdoms". As a consequence of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain, the country was broken up into a large number of tiny local kingdoms, each with its own king or sub-king. The seven Kingdoms that emerged after the Anglo-Saxon conquests in Britain were Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex and Wessex. There were frequent wars with one another for supremacy and leadership, in which various rulers tried their best to conquer and dominate their neighbours. Kings who achieved overall dominance came to be called "Bretwalda" or "Ruler of Britain". In 828, Egbert of Wessex was recognised as the most powerful "Bretwalda" as "the overlord of the Seven Kingdoms of the Heptarchy". In the late 9th century King Alfred of Wessex achieved a special status whereby he was the first king to be called a true national leader. Ultimately, Wessex gained the upper hand over the other six Kingdoms.

Alfred the Great (871-899 CE) was the famous King of Wessex, a Saxon kingdom in south western England. He had to take over as king of Wessex in the middle of a year of nine major battles between the Wessex and Vikings (Danes). In 878 he achieved a decisive victory against the Danes at the Battle of Edington. He prevented England from falling to the Danes and promoted learning and literacy. What makes Alfred 'great' is that he was interested in learning, and in the promotion of English as a written language.

1.3.1 Administration and the Formation of the Kingdom

Well- defined administrative system was followed during the Anglo Saxon period. *Hundred* and *Shire* were the administrative divisions during the Anglo-Saxon period. In the Anglo-Saxon society, an ordinary prosperous freeman generally owned an area of about 60 to 100 acres of land. This land was called a *hide*, which was sufficient to maintain the owner's household and family in comfortable circumstances. It was the basic unit of administration. A hundred hides formed a unit known as *Hundred*. This unit had to supply a sufficient number of trained soldiers to the King when needed. These

Hundreds were presided over by a headman known as a *reeve*. The *'reeve'* settled local disputes in the Hundreds and had the right to punish for offences against the law. Thus these *Hundreds* became Hundred Courts. In later days when the large shires or counties began to appear there was a shire-reeve. He was a senior official with local responsibilities functioning under the Crown, and the word has now become *"sheriff"*. Shire was an administrative division above the Hundred and existed in the time of Alfred the Great and fully developed during the reign of Edgar (959-975 CE). It was administered by an ealdorman and by a *Shire-reeve. Shire-reeve* presided over the shire court. Witan was the council of the Anglo-Saxon Kings. King ruled through a sort of parliament called Witan *or Witenagemot*. Members of the royal family, ealdormen and the thegns (Ministers) constituted the witan. Its main duty was to advise the king on all administrative and judicial matters like grants of land to churches or laymen, implementation of new laws, territorial conquests, etc. Sometimes the *'witan'* proved quite strong enough to depose the king and elect a successor of their own choice.

Alfred the great, the distinguished Anglo Saxon ruler, was successful both in government and in war. He was a wise administrator. He scrutinised the administration of justice and took measures to ensure the protection of the weak from oppression by the corrupt officials. He promulgated an important code of law. He carefully studied the principles of law given in the Book of Exodus and the Codes of Ethelbert of Kent. He gave special attention to the protection of the weak and dependent while preparing Codes. He limited the practice of blood feud and imposed heavy penalties for the breach of oath or pledge.

1.3.2 Anglo-Saxon Society, Religion, Culture and Literature

Anglo-Saxon society was hierarchical. At its top stood the King and members of the royal family followed by the nobility, bishops and other church men. The nobles were called world. The next group in the hierarchy was ceorls or freemen. The last group in the hierarchy includes unfree members of society, or slaves called laets. Substantial details about the organisation of Anglo-Saxon society were obtained mainly from two sources: 1) Ethelbert's *Law Code* (Ethelbert was king of Kent who died in 604 AD) 2) *Domesday Book*. Ethelbert's law set out a complex system of compensation and punishment, based on the status of the offender and the injured party. The *Law Code* reveals that women had rights and privileges in the Anglo-Saxon society. But these were dependent on the individual's marital status. Compensation wouldn't be paid to a woman directly, but would instead be given to her father, husband or brother. Anglo-Saxons were not interested in town life. They preferred to live in valleys. They built huts of 'wattle and daub' (A construction of interwoven branches and twigs plastered with mud, clay or dung), or mud and straw. The names of Saxon settlements often contained -ing (group of settlers from the same family) or -ton (enclosed agricultural settlement). Examples of such place names originating from the Anglo-Saxon settlement are Hastings, Kensington, and Nottingham. The Anglo-Saxon men spent their days hunting and ploughing. They were expert farmers and when they were not at war they were busily occupied upon the land. Their women stayed at home and engaged in spinning and weaving. The men wore garments like kilts and cloaks fastened onto their shoulders by a brooch. The women wore long tunics down to the ankle and mantles with hoods. Their

heads were covered with a light wrap and wore a considerable amount of jewellery like necklaces, bracelets and rings. The wealthy Anglo-Saxon usually wore over his shirt a linen or woollen tunic reaching nearly to the knee. The warrior chiefs were buried with gold-embroidered clothes and gilt buckles and cups. The common man was buried with everyday things like workboxes, beads and knives.

The Anglo-Saxons were polytheistic pagans when they first came to Britain. The evidence about the religious practices comes from their burial customs, and from later Christian writings. Excavation of the earliest Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Sutton Hoo (Sutton Hoo is the site of two 6th and 7th century AngloSaxon cemeteries excavated in 1939) shows they favoured cremation over inhumation (burial). But their dead were sometimes buried with grave goods. It suggests that they believed in an afterlife. Woden (Chief God), Tiw (the God of War), Thor (God of Thunder), Freya (Goddess of Love) and Saturn (God of fun and feasting) were the prime Anglo-Saxon deities. Temples to Woden or Thor were built by kings or rich landowners. Oxen, horses and pigs were sacrificed and people sprinkled themselves with their blood. After the Gregorian Mission in 597 AD (see Advent of Christianity), conversion of Anglo-Saxons into Christianity started. It was a major turning point in their life. They changed their way of life and became less war-like and more domesticated.

The Anglo-Saxons spoke the language we now call Old English. It is the ancestor of modern-day English. Old English was spoken and written in Anglo-Saxon Britain from AD 450 until 1150 AD. Surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts show that there were different dialects spoken in different parts of the country, such as West Saxon, Northumbrian and Mercian. The oldest English poem, Caedmon's Hymn, was written in Northumbrian dialect of Old English. During the time of Alfred the Great, there was a conspicuous development in the field of Anglo-Saxon language and literature (see Literary contributions of Alfred). Evidence for a central language is first seen during the period of King Ethelred around 1000 AD. During his reign there was a spurt in literary creativity in Latin and Old English.

The Anglo-Saxons brought a specific poetic tradition, the formal character of which remained surprisingly constant until the termination of their rule by the Norman-French invaders six centuries later. Of the origins of Old English poetry we know nothing; the fragments that we possess are not those of a literature in the making, but of a school which had passed through its age of transition from ruder elements. Some thirty thousand lines of English poetry have survived, nearly all of them contained in four manuscripts.

The poetry of the Old English period is generally grouped in two main divisions, national and Christian. The line of demarcation is not, of course, absolutely fixed. The early national poems can be classified in two groups, epic and elegiac. With one or two exceptions they are anonymous. For the most part, they seem to be the work of minstrels (religious singers) rather than of literary men. Much of Old English poetry was probably intended to be chanted, with the accompaniment of a harp, by the Anglo-Saxon bard. This poetry generally emphasises the sorrow and ultimate futility of life and the helplessness of humans before the power of fate. Almost all this poetry is composed without rhyme, in a characteristic line, or verse, of four stressed syllables alternating with an indeterminate number of unstressed ones. Another unfamiliar but equally striking feature in the formal character

of Old English poetry is structural alliteration, or the use of syllables beginning with similar sounds in two or three of the stresses in each line.

All these qualities of form and spirit are exemplified in the epic poem *Beowulf* written, probably between 700 and 750. It is a poem of 3183 lines, which has been preserved in a manuscript of the tenth century. Beginning and ending with the funeral of a great king, and composed against a background of impending disaster, it describes the exploits of a Scandinavian hero, Beowulf, in destroying the monster Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a fire-breathing dragon. The poem opens with a short account of the victorious Danish king Scyld Scefing, whose funeral is described in some detail. His grandson Hrothgar builds a splendid hall, called Heorot. His happiness is destroyed by Grendel, a monster who attacks the hall by night and devours as many as thirty knights at a time. No one can withstand him and when Grendel's ravages have lasted twelve years, Beowulf, a man of enormous strength, determines to go to Hrothgar's assistance. The king gives him and his companions a feast and Beowulf announces his determination to conquer or die. Grendel bursts into the hall and devours one of the knights. Beowulf, however, seizes him by the arm, which he tears off after a desperate struggle, and the monster takes to flight, mortally wounded. Hrothgar congratulates Beowulf on his victory and rewards him with rich gifts. During the night Grendel's mother appears and carries off the king's chief councillor. Beowulf plunges into the water and reaches a cave, where he has a desperate encounter with the monster. Eventually he succeeds in killing her with a sword which he finds in the cave. He then comes upon the corpse of Grendel and cuts off its head. The head is brought in triumph to the palace, and Beowulf describes his adventure. In these sequences Beowulf is shown not only as a glorious hero but as a saviour of the people.

Beowulf and his companions return to their own land. Beowulf succeeds to the throne and reigns gloriously for fifty years. In his old age his land is ravaged by a fire spitting dragon. Beowulf orders his men to wait as he confronts the dragon which attacks him. One of his companions rescues him but the rest, in spite of his exhortations, flee. As the dragon darts forward Beowulf strikes it on the head; but his sword breaks, and the dragon seizes him by the neck. His follower succeeds in wounding it, and Beowulf finishes it off with his knife. But the hero is mortally wounded and he gives directions with regard to his funeral. The poem ends with an account of the funeral. The Old Germanic virtue of mutual loyalty between leader and followers is evoked effectively and touchingly in the aged Beowulf's sacrifice of his life and in the reproaches heaped on the retainers who desert him in this climactic battle. The extraordinary artistry with which fragments of other heroic tales are incorporated to illuminate the main action, and with which the whole plot is reduced to symmetry, has only recently been fully recognized.

It is generally thought that several originally separate lays (narrative poems) have been combined in the poem. Another feature of Beowulf is the weakening of the sense of the ultimate power of arbitrary fate. The injection of the Christian idea of dependence on a just God is evident. The extent to which the Christian element is present varies somewhat in different parts of the poem. The Christian element is about equally distributed between the speeches and the narrative. While the poet's reflections and even the sentiments attributed to the various speakers are largely, though not entirely, Christian, the customs and ceremonies described are, almost without

exception, heathen. This fact seems to point, not to a Christian work with heathen reminiscences, but to a heathen work that has undergone revision by Christian minstrels. It is likely that large portions of the poem existed in epic form before the change of faith and that the appearance of the Christian element is due to revision. The Christianity of *Beowulf* is of a singularly indefinite and non doctrinal type, which contrasts somewhat strongly with what is found in later Old English poetry. Beowulf can be read in many ways: as myth; as territorial history of the Baltic kingdoms in which it is set; as forward-looking reassurance. Questions of history, time and humanity are at the heart of it: it moves between past, present, and hope for the future, and shows its origins in oral tradition.

Apart from *Beowulf,* the only remains of epic poetry are a short but fine fragment (50 lines) of *Finnsburh* and two still shorter fragments (32 and 31 lines respectively) of *Waldhere. Widsith* though not an epic itself, contains much matter in common with poems of that type. A Christian element is present but it is very slight and may be removed without affecting the structure of the poem. The poem seems to be the work of an unknown fourth century minstrel. The elegy of *Deor* is a much shorter poem than *Widsith* (42 lines in all) and in its general tone presents a striking contrast to it. While *Widsith* tells of the glory of famous heroes and, incidentally, of the minstrel's own success, *Deor* is taken up with stories of misfortune, which are brought forward in illustration of the poet's troubles. *The Wanderer* is a rather long elegy (115 lines), depicting the sufferings of a man who has lost his lord. *The Seafarer* is a poem of about the same length as *The Wanderer* and resembles it in several passages rather closely. The other elegiac poems that have survived include *The Wife's Lament*, *The Husband's Message* and *The Ruin*.

Most of the poems of the period are preserved in the *Exeter Book,* one of the four preserved manuscripts. Almost all of what survives in Old English poetry was preserved by monastic copyists. Most of it was actually composed by religious writers after the conversion to Christianity. Only two names emerge from the anonymity which shrouds the bulk of Old English Christian poetry, namely, those of Caedmon and Cynewulf; and in the past, practically all the religious poetry had been attributed to one or other of these two poets. But the majority of the poems should be regarded as the work of singers whose names have been lost.

Caedmon, a humble man of the late 7th century was described by the historian and theologian Saint Bede the Venerable as having received the gift of song from God. Beyond the fact that his name seems to imply that he was of Celtic descent, we have no knowledge of the historical Caedmon other than that to be derived from the often-quoted passage in Bede. Bede reports that Caedmon sang first of the earth's creation and the beginning of man and all the story of Genesis, and afterwards about the departure of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt and their entry into the land of promise and about many other narratives of the Scripture. Bede's detailed enumeration of Caedmon's other achievements must be held responsible for the attribution to Caedmon of a large number of religious poems of a similar character. The most important of the religious poems at one time attributed to Caedmon are *Genesis, Exodus, Daniel. Genesis*, the most interesting of these, opens with the praise of the Creator and proceeds to relate the revolt and fall of the angels (which, according to ancient theology, necessitated the creation of man to fill the vacant place in heaven), and then the creation of the earth. *Exodus* is a paraphrase of a portion only of the book from which it takes its name, *i.e.,* the passage

of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians. The poem entitled *Daniel* versifies selected portions of the book of *Daniel. Creation-Hymn* is the only poem that can safely be attributed to Caedmon.

Cynewulf appears to be the author of at least four well-known poems, since he marked them as his own by the insertion of his signature in runes(carved with alphabets of ancient Germanic). The poems are *Crist, Juliana, The Fates of the Apostles* and *Elene. Crist* is the first poem in the *Exeter Book. Crist* falls into three clearly defined parts: the first dealing with the advent of Christ on earth, the second with His ascension, the third with His second advent to judge the world. The second part contains Cynewulf's signature. *Elene* is, undoubtedly, Cynewulf's masterpiece. The story is that of the discovery of the true cross by Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine. It is written in a simple, dramatic style, interspersed with imaginative and descriptive passages of great beauty. With Cynewulf, Anglo-Saxon religious poetry moves beyond biblical paraphrase into the didactic, the devotional, and the mystical.

But the poem which, above all others, betrays the spirit of tender yet passionate veneration, of awe and adoration for "the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died," is *The Dream of the Rood.* The poem is sometimes attributed to Cynewulf. *The Dream of the Rood* is the choicest blossom of Old English Christian poetry; religious feeling has never been more exquisitely clothed than in these one hundred and forty lines of alliterative verse. It is full of imaginative power and enters deeply into the mysteries of sin and of sorrow. The poet dreamt a dream and in it saw the holy rood decked with gems and shining gloriously. As he watched, it spoke, and told the story of the crucifixion, the descent from the cross, the resurrection. This conception of the cross as being gifted with power of speech lends a charm to the poem. The address is followed by the poet's reflection on what he has seen: the cross shall be henceforth his confidence and help. *The Dream of the Rood* is a highly visual text, full of joy and suffering, light and darkness, earthly reality and heavenly bliss.

The work of Cynewulf and his school marks an advance upon the writings of the school of Caedmon. In Cynewulf the personal note is emphasised and becomes lyrical. Caedmon's hymn in praise of the Creator is a sublime statement of generally recognised facts calling for universal acknowledgment in suitably exalted terms; Cynewulf's confessions in the concluding portion of *Elene* or in *The Dream of the Rood,* or his vision of the day of judgement in *Crist,* are lyrical outbursts, spontaneous utterances of a soul which has become one with its subject and to which self-revelation is a necessity.

Anglo-Saxon poetry exhibits the limitations of a culturally early age, but it manifests also a degree of power which gives to Anglo-Saxon literature unquestionable superiority over that of any other European country of the same period. It is the personal relation of the soul to God the Father, the humanity of Christ, the brotherhood of man, the fellowship of saints, that the Celtic missionaries seem to have preached to their converts; and these doctrines inspired the choicest passages of Old English religious poetry, passages worthy of comparison with some of the best work of a later, more self-conscious and introspective age. This subjectivity is a new feature in English literature. When Christianity became the source of poetic inspiration, we find the purely epic character of a poem modified by the introduction of a lyric element. The early Christian poet does not sing of earthly love.

There is no evidence of the Anglo-Saxons possessing any literary prose tradition. The development of Old English prose took place wholly in England, and largely as a result of the Christianization of England. The imposing scholarship of monasteries in northern England in the late 7th century reached its peak in the Latin work *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731) by Venerable Bede. This history is divided into five books and the first book records events in Britain from the raids by Julius Caesar (55–54 BC) to the arrival in Kent (AD 597) of St. Augustine as a missionary. The last four books take the history up to 731 AD. The great educational effort of King Alfred of Wessex inspired an Old English translation of this important historical work. The finest passage in the English version is the account of Caedmon, an excellent piece of early prose, and Caedmon's hymn is inserted in a West Saxon form. English prose begins in the reign of Alfred in an attempt by the King and his associates to bring within the range of the people the most significant aspects of earlier thought. Alfred, known in political history for his achievement in stemming the Danish conquest of England, is even more important in the history of English literature.

Of the many translations attributed to Alfred, the earliest appears to be the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, a collection of the lives of saints, intended to provide his people with a literature of exemplary Christian conduct. It is now believed that his friend Bishop Waeferth of Worcester translated it. Gregory's *Pastoral Care* which describes the moral and spiritual qualities required of those who govern others was another work that Alfred translated. He also brought out a *Code of Law* to make his people aware of the laws of the land. It was prefaced by a translation of Chapters 20 to 23 of *Exodus*, which tell of the giving of the law to Moses and this represents the earliest surviving attempt to translate *The Bible*. Alfred also translated *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius. It deals with the fundamental problems of God's government of the world, the nature of true happiness, and good and evil. It is in the form of a dialogue between Boethius and Philosophy, which explains the consolations associated with the contemplative state of mind. Alfred's literary achievement is of immense importance. The prominence given to the vernacular during his reign made it possible for English literature to develop on its own lines. He was wise enough to limit himself to the work of translation, since he had not, apparently, great creative genius in letters. But he was able to produce a body of writings impressive in quantity, sufficiently readable and gave prestige to prose writing in English.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (891-1154) is a major prose work of the period. It is a record of contemporary national events and thus an important source of information for Alfred's and subsequent reigns. It is also referred to sometimes as The *Old English Annals* and begins with an outline of English history from Julius Caesar's invasion to the middle of the fifth century and continues (in one of its seven manuscripts) up to 1154. The different manuscripts, each of which was kept and continued at a different locality, diverged considerably after the beginning of the tenth century, often including material of local interest. The beginning of the *Chronicle* is usually credited to the influence of Alfred. Owing to the number of hands employed in its composition, the literary merit is very unequal. While the narrative rarely rises to the level of literary interest, it is remarkable for its simple style. The continuity of English prose from the Old English period to the Middle English period is demonstrated very clearly by the *Chronicle*.

If Old English poetry flowered in the late 7th and 8th centuries, Old English prose flowered in the late 10th and 11th centuries and was capable of dealing with any subject. The lucid, powerful sermons of Aelfric and Wulfstan reveal a complete mastery of the medium and show how fifty years before the Norman Conquest southern England especially had, along with a remarkable body of poetic achievement, the most advanced prose literature of any region in Europe. The most notable work of Aelfric is the 120 sermons, written in rhythmical prose in three cycles of 40 each. His Latin *Colloquy* gives a charming picture of everyday life in Anglo-Saxon England. He also produced an abbreviated version in Anglo-Saxon of the first seven books of the *Old Testament* (the *Heptateuch*) and this is the first genuine attempt to translate the Bible into English. Aelfric wrote with lucidity and astonishing beauty and his alliterative prose, which loosely imitates the rhythms of Old English poetry, influenced writers long after the Norman Conquest. The most important of the homilies written by Wulfstan is 'Sermon to the English'. Delivered in 1014, it is a ferocious denunciation of the morals of his time and a desperate sense of the imminence of doomsday pervades the sermon. Wulfstan's eloquent and passionate prose is capable of stirring the heart. By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period English had been established as a literary language with a polish and versatility unequalled among European languages.

Recap

- Anglo-Saxon period which ushered in the 5th century CE ushered in a new era in the history of Britain.
- The period witnessed a series of political and geographical ever since their advent.
- Anglo-Saxon kingdom and its administration were unique and uniform in their functioning.
- Rule of this invading community inflicted far-reaching changes in their society and culture.
- Most of the history pertaining to this particular period was re-constructed using sources spanning not only from history but also from other disciplines.

Objective Type Questions

1. Name the tribes who conquered and controlled Britain in the Anglo-Saxon Period?
2. Which were the three tribes that constituted the inner core of the Anglo-Saxon community?
3. What was the name used to denote the period between the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom and the destruction of the same in the second half of the ninth century?

4. What is the meaning of the term Heptarchy?
5. Which are the seven kingdoms that emerged after the Anglo- Saxon conquests in Britain?
6. What was the name given to the administrative divisions in the Anglo-Saxon period?
7. Which is considered the basic unit of administration under the Anglo-Saxon reign?
8. Name one famous ruler among the Anglo-Saxons who made definitive contributions to the formulation of a code of laws in this period?
9. Provide the name of two sources often referred by scholars and historians to know more about Anglo-Saxons?
10. What was the religious affiliation of Anglo-Saxons even before they set foot in the lands of Britain?
11. Name the language used by Anglo-Saxons.
12. Who wrote the magnum opus work of " Ecclesiastical History of English People" in Latin from the Anglo-Saxon era?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Germanic Tribes
2. Angles, Saxons and Jutes
3. Heptarchy
4. The rule of 'seven kingdoms'
5. Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex and Wessex
6. Hundred and Shire
7. Hide (Land)
8. Alfred the Great
9. Ethelbert's Law Code and Doomsday Book
10. Polytheistic Pagan Religion
11. Old English
12. Venerable Bede

Self Assessment Questions

1. Describe the formation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom and the peculiarities of its administration.
2. Write down the basic characteristics that played a predominant role in shaping the then British kingdom.

Assignments

1. Make a comparative analysis of the situations that persisted in Britain prior to the arrival of Anglo-Saxons and those changes that came forth after their arrival.
2. Bring out the territorial expansions that occurred during the Anglo-Saxon period and explain the same with the help of a map.

Suggested Reading

1. Morris, Marc. *The Anglo-Saxons: A History of The Beginnings of England*, Hutchinson,2021.
2. Allen, Grant. *Anglo Saxon Britain*, El Paso Norte Pr,2007.
3. Stenton, Frank M. *Anglo Saxon England*, OUP, 2001.
4. Ryan, M.J. *The Anglo Saxon World*, Yale UP,2015.
5. Blair, John. *Building Anglo Saxon England*, Princeton UP, 2018.
6. Fleming, Brian. *Britain After Rome: Fall and Rise 400 To 1070*, Penguin Books, 2011.
7. Williams, Thomas. *Viking Britain: A History*, William Collins, 2018.
8. Bede, D.Farmer, Sherley Price (ed.), *Ecclesiastical History of The English People: With Bede's Letter to Egbert and Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede* , Penguin Classics,1990.

UNIT FOUR

Norman Conquest

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- become aware of the political and social effects of Norman Conquest
- analyse changes in Anglo-Saxon governance under Normans
- describe feudalism and its evolution post-Conquest
- explain the significance of the Oath of Salisbury
- discuss the Domesday Book's fiscal and political importance

Prerequisites

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was a turning point in English history, reshaping the nation's political, social, and administrative structures. William the Conqueror's victory at the Battle of Hastings ended England's Scandinavian connections and tied the kingdom more closely to France and the broader European continent. One of the most transformative outcomes of this conquest was the introduction of Norman feudalism, which reorganised land ownership and military service. By redistributing land among his Norman followers, William displaced the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy, establishing a new power structure centred on loyalty to the crown. This shift laid the foundation for a hierarchical system that would define England's political landscape for centuries to come.

Under William's reign, governance at the local level largely preserved Anglo-Saxon divisions of Hundreds and Shires, though the feudal system was introduced to strengthen control, tying land tenure to military service and allegiance. The Oath of Salisbury in 1086, where all landholders swore loyalty to William, solidified his rule and centralised authority. Additionally, the creation of the Domesday Book provided an exhaustive survey of land and wealth, aiding in tax collection and governance. This document remains an essential historical resource, offering valuable insights into the economic and social structure of medieval England. In this unit, you are going to learn more about the far-reaching effects of the Norman Conquest on the development of England.

Keywords

Norman Conquest, Feudalism, Oath of Salisbury, Domesday Book, Anglo-Saxon governance

Discussion

The Norman Conquest had profound political, administrative and social effects on the British Isles. In political terms, William's victory destroyed England's link with Scandinavia and brought the country into close contact with the Continent, especially France. Another major change was the introduction of land tenure and military service. William reorganised the upper ranks of English society by dividing the region among about 180 Norman tenants-in-chief and innumerable intermediate tenants. This caused almost a total replacement of the English aristocracy with Norman ones.

1.4.1 Government

Anglo-Saxon England had developed a highly organised central and local government and an effective judicial system. All these were retained and used by William. The old administrative divisions such as *Hundreds* and *Shires* were retained with minor changes. In them (Hundreds and Shires) and in King's court, the Common law of England continued to be administered.

A consequence of William's land policies was the development of feudalism. Feudal practices prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon period. But William made drastic changes in it to suit his needs. William let the Anglo-Saxon Earls of Mercia and Northumbria keep their lands because they had not fought against William at Hastings. The only condition was that they accepted William's authority as king and as their feudal lord. William transferred land ownership from the Anglo-Saxon nobles who hadn't supported him to the Normans. These were men he could trust and rely on. Norman feudalism was different from the Anglo-Saxon system in one important way- King William was the owner of all the land. The system of giving land in exchange for duties had existed before the Norman Conquest but William confiscated land from Anglo Saxons, which created a whole new power structure. Norman feudalism was based on royal strength. Feudalism was based on contracts made among nobles. In feudal society, the ownership of land was vested in the king. King was theoretically placed at the apex of an imaginary pyramid. Immediately below him were his vassals, a hierarchy of nobles, who held fiefs, a piece of land, directly from the king and were called tenants-in-chief. The Normans split up the English land and retained and maintained their power by building castles as power bases to control the English population.

Common law of England is the legal system of England which is applicable to the whole land, not limited to any locality. It arose from the customs and traditions which were approved by royal judges. It is mainly unwritten.

Feudalism became a way of life in medieval England and remained so for many centuries. William needed a way of controlling England so that the people remained loyal to him. William considered all the land in England his own personal property, gave out fiefs to nobles who in return had to give military service when required. William divided up England into very large plots of land. These were given to those noblemen who had fought bravely for him in battles, especially at Hastings. The land was not simply given to these nobles. They had to swear an 'oath of loyalty' to William. Then they had to collect taxes in their area for him and they had to provide the king with soldiers if they were told to do so. The men who got these pieces of land (fief) were called barons, earls and dukes. Within their own area, they were the most important persons. In the terms of the feudal system, these men (barons, earls, dukes) were called tenants in-chief. The tenants in-chiefs further divided up their land and these were given to trusted Norman Knights. Each knight was given a segment of land to govern. The Knights had to swear an oath to baron, duke, or earl, collect taxes and provide soldiers from their land when they were needed. These lords worked to maintain law and order in their area.

The lords had to do their jobs well as unsuccessful ones could be removed from their position. At the bottom of the ladder were the conquered English (serfs) who had to do what they were told or pay the price for their disobedience. They were treated harshly and there was always the constant threat of Norman soldiers being used against the English people wherever they lived.

1.4.2 Oath of Salisbury (1086)

The Oath of Salisbury refers to an event of 1086 AD, when William I summoned his tenants-in- Chiefs and land-owning men to Old Sarum (Salisbury) where they swore allegiance to him. It was an important measure of William to assert his power over the English and Norman aristocracy. The prime aim of this oath was to affirm the power and prestige of the sovereign. Through this oath William made "all the landowning men of property all over England swear fealty to him". The oath was demanded at a time of crisis when William faced revolt and invasion.

Scholars always connect this event in relation to English feudalism. Some regard this "striking event" as the formal introduction of feudalism in England. But W. Stubbs, in his book *Constitutional History of England* denied this argument and proved that the Salisbury oath was an act of 'homage' by all nobles and aristocrats. (Homage in feudalism denotes the complete surrender and submission of a vassal before his lord). Through this oath of allegiance, all nobles and landowners were asked to pledge homage before William. Thus Stubbs believed that the event was a deliberate measure by William to decrease the power of landlords. So the oath by landlords was clearly an anti-feudal measure of William to promote the centralization of administration.

1.4.3 Domesday Book (Doomsday Book)

Domesday Book is a manuscript record of the "Great Survey" of much of England completed in 1086 prepared as per the orders of William the Conqueror. It was written by William of Calais, a French lawyer. The purpose of William to conduct such a huge census was to strengthen his hold on the feudal lords and their subordinates. William wanted to raise taxes to pay for his army and to meet the administrative expenses. He therefore conducted a survey to assess the wealth and assets of his subjects throughout the land. This survey also helped to assess

the economic condition of his subjects. The result was the *Domesday Book* which contains records for 13,418 settlements in the English counties south of the rivers Ribble and Tees. The book served two purposes –fiscal and political. Politically it helped William I to make himself supreme. At the same time the survey helped the king to ascertain the tax that was due to him from every land holder in his realm. Assessment of the tax of his kingdom was based on the finds of the surveyors. The information in the survey was collected by "Royal Commissioners" who were sent out around England. These Royal Commissioners carried with them a set of questions and put them to a jury of representatives from each 'county'. This fascinating document gives a valuable insight into land use at the time, the life of local landowners, and even disputes between neighbours.

The *Domesday Book* consists of two volumes. Volume I, known as "Great Domesday", contains the final summarised record of all 'counties' surveyed except Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. Volume I gives details about a roll of holders of land in each county, list of feudal manors with names of their holders from 1066 until 1086, ploughing capacity of the land, number of agricultural workers, their mills, fishponds and other amenities, and finally their value in pounds. In short "there was no single 'hide' nor a yard of land, nor indeed one ox nor one cow nor one pig which was left out in *Domesday Book*."

Volume II is known as "Little Domesday", contains a detailed survey of the counties of Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk. For most English villages and towns Domesday is the starting point of their history. For historians of Anglo-Norman England, the survey is of immeasurable importance. It acquired the name *Domesday Book* because of the huge amount of information that was contained in it and compared to the "Last Judgement", or "Doomsday", described in the Bible. Currently it is kept in a specially made chest at London's Public Record Office, Kew, London.

Recap

- William's victory severed England's ties to Scandinavia and brought it into close contact with the Continent, particularly France.
- William retained the highly organised central and local governments and an effective judicial system developed by Anglo-Saxon England.
- William divided up England into very large plots of land.
- The land was then granted to those noblemen after they swore a "oath of loyalty" to William.
- The men who got these pieces of land (fief) were called barons, earls and dukes.
- In the terms of the feudal system, these men (barons, earls, dukes) were called tenants in-chief.
- Tenants-in-chief further divided their land, which was given to trusted Norman Knights.
- Each knight was assigned a plot of land to govern. The Knights were

required to swear an oath to a baron, duke, or earl.

- When the Tenants in Chief were needed, the knights would collect taxes and provide soldiers from their land.
- The Oath of Salisbury is regarded as William's anti-feudal measure to promote administration centralisation.
- Domesday Book is a manuscript record of the "Great Survey" of much of England completed in 1086 prepared as per the orders of William the Conqueror.
- Domesday Book Politically helped William I to make himself supreme.
- The Domesday Book aided the king in ascertaining the tax.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who were Normans or 'Northmen'?
2. Who became the Duke of Normandy after the death of Edward, the Confessor?
3. Who fought against each other in the Battle of Hastings?
4. Who ascended the throne of England after the Battle of Hastings?
5. What was one of the major results of William's land policies?
6. What was one of the major features of "Norman feudalism"?
7. What is the significance of the 'Oath of Salisbury'?
8. Who claimed that the Salisbury oath was an act of 'homage' by all nobles and aristocrats?
9. What is the Domesday Book?
10. What was the purpose of William conducting a huge census on the economic condition of his subjects?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Pagan barbarian pirates from Denmark, Norway, and Iceland, who engaged in destructive plunders on European coastal settlements in the 8th century CE
2. William, the Conqueror
3. William and Harold
4. William, the Conqueror
5. The development of feudalism
6. King William owned all the land.
7. Tenants-in-chief and land-owning men swore allegiance to William at Old Sarum (Salisbury)
8. W. Stubbs
9. A manuscript record of the "Great Survey" of England, written as per the order of

William the Conqueror by William of Calais

10. To strengthen William's hold on the feudal lords and their subordinates by raising taxes to pay for his army and to meet the administrative expenses.

Assignments

1. Briefly describe the political, administrative and social changes happened in the British Isles with the Norman Conquest
2. What are the changes brought forth by the new regime, especially in the field of feudalism by using the Tenants-in chief?
3. Examine the new ruler's strategies for maintaining the new social set based on the then-existing feudal structure.

Suggested Reading

1. Carter EH, RAF and Mears *A History of England,* Stacey International, 2012.
2. Trevelyan, G. M. *A Social History of England, Vol.1,* Books Way, 2014.
3. Hollister, Warren. *The Impact of Norman Conquest,* Wiley, 1969.
4. Brown, Allan. *Origins of English Feudalism,* Routledge, 2020.

Reference

1. Trevelyan, G.M. *English Social History*, Books Way, 2014.
2. E.H. Carter, Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain,* Stacey International, 2012.
3. Jenkins, Simon, *A Short History of England*, Profile Books, 2018.
4. Morgan, Kenneth O (ED). *The Oxford History of Britain,* OUP, 2010.
5. Churchill, Winston. *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury, 2015.
6. Bucholz, Robert and Newton. *Early Modern England* 1485-1714, Wiley–Blackwell, 2003.

BLOCK - 02

Feudalism and Rise of Urban Centres

UNIT ONE

Manorial System

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- familiarise with the evolution of feudalism.
- analyse the stages of feudal and manorial system.
- identify the factors that led to the decline of feudalism and manorialism.

Prerequisites

The church once stood as a pillar of authority in England, its influence woven deeply into the fabric of the English psyche. Yet, the tides of history brought conflict, as the church's dominance clashed with the ambitions of the state, giving rise to tension during the medieval era. It was within this crucible of discord that the Magna Carta, or "Great Charter," emerged—not merely as a document but as a revolutionary force shaping the very foundations of constitutional law in the English-speaking world. In 1215, King John of England, notorious for trampling ancient laws and customs, was confronted by a resolute people who demanded accountability. What followed was the birth of a charter that would resonate through the ages, enshrining ideals that came to be cherished as human rights: the church's liberation from state interference, the sacred rights of citizens to property and inheritance, and the shield against oppressive taxation. In this unit, we delve into the transformative journey that led to the Magna Carta and its enduring legacy in the fight for civil liberties across Europe.

Keywords

Feudalism, Fief, Serf, Vassals, Manor, Knights, Dukes, Peasants, Manorialism

Discussion

As mentioned in the previous block, the Norman invasion had enormous economic, social and political consequences for the English. After William's victory, England changed completely, and a new social, political and economic trend emerged, Later historians gave it the name feudalism.

2.1.1 Debates on Norman Feudalism

Medieval historians have been discussing the origins of feudalism in England and the impact of the Norman Conquest on English society. Opinions vary as to whether elements of feudalism existed in England in pre-Norman England and to what extent the conquest fundamentally transformed English society. Debates related to the question of feudal practices before the Norman conquest of Britain have been analysed by a famous historian of medieval England named Warren Hollister. Hollister has written a book, *The Impact of Norman Conquest* (1969), and an article titled, '*The Norman Conquest and the Genesis of English Feudalism*' (1961). These works give us extensive bibliographical references about the ongoing debates concerning the origin of feudalism in England.

A theory about Norman feudalism was formulated in 1891 by J.H. Round, who, in his book *Feudal England,* claimed that "William I introduced the feudal system in England, where it had not previously existed." Round also postulated that the Norman Conquest resulted in a cataclysmic break with the Anglo-Saxon past.

F.W. Maitland questioned the arguments of J.H. Round [*Domesday Book and Beyond: Three Essays in the Early History of England*, F. W. Maitland (1897)] and maintained that "a form of feudalism had existed in pre-Norman England". But most historians in the first half of the 20th century, like F.M. Stenton, agreed with the postulations of J.H. Round. (*The First Century of the English Feudalism 1066- 1166,* F.M. Stenton, published in 1932.) This group of scholars are considered an "orthodox" school.

In recent decades many historians have challenged the so-called "orthodox" interpretation. They claimed that Norman feudalism had some pre-Norman or Anglo-Saxon roots. They strongly believed that the changes occurring in English society between 1050 and 1200 were caused not simply by the Norman conquest but also by more general factors that transformed much of western Europe during the same period.

Allen Brown, in his book, *Origins of English Feudalism* (1973), tries to establish the validity of the orthodox interpretation. Brown regards the conquest as a cataclysm that destroyed a "pre-feudal society" and created a feudal one and maintains that English feudalism had no pre-Norman origins. Brown says - "of the many characteristic features of feudal societies, only four are fundamental or essential: 1) the knight, 2) Vassalic Commendation 3) the fief, and 4) the castle. He argued that these fundamentals of feudalism were absent from pre-Norman England but present in England soon after the Norman conquest. Thus Brown concludes that "the introduction of feudalism into England by the Norman rulers moulded the English society into a feudal pattern which was to last for centuries."

From the above discussions, it is clear that the origins of feudalism in England can only be traced back to the period from the Norman conquest. Now let us discuss the important features of Norman feudalism.

2.1.2 Features of Norman Feudalism

A consequence of William's land policies was the development of feudalism. William made drastic changes in the existing system of land in England to suit his needs. William let the Anglo-Saxon earls of Mercia and Northumbria keep their lands because they did not fight against him at Hastings. The only condition was that they had to accept William's authority as king and as their feudal lord. William transferred land ownership from the Anglo-Saxon nobles who didn't support him to the Normans who came with him from Normandy. These were men he could trust and rely on. Norman feudalism was different from the Anglo-Saxon system in one important way - King William owned all the land. The system of giving land in exchange for duties had existed before the Norman Conquest, but William confiscated land from the Anglo-Saxons, which created a whole new power structure. Norman feudalism was based on royal strength.

As mentioned above, feudalism was based on contracts made among nobles. The King theoretically occupied the apex of an imaginary pyramid, and the ownership of land was vested with him. Immediately below him were his vassals, a hierarchy of nobles who held fiefs, a piece of land, directly from the king and were called tenants-in-chief. The Normans split up the English land and retained and maintained their power by building castles as power bases to control the English population. William needed a way of controlling England so that the people remained loyal to him. William considered all the land in England his own personal property and gave out fiefs to nobles who, in return, had to give military service when required.

William divided up England into very large plots of land. These were given to those noblemen who had fought bravely for him in battles, especially at Hastings. The land was not simply given to these nobles. They had to swear an 'oath of loyalty' to William. Then they had to collect taxes in their area for him, and they had to provide the king with soldiers if they were told to do so. The men who got these pieces of land (fiefs) were called barons, earls and dukes. Within their own area, they were the most important persons there. In terms of the feudal system, these men (barons, earls, dukes) were called tenants-in-chief. The tenants-in-chiefs further divided up their land, and these were given to trusted Norman Knights. Each knight was given a segment of land to govern. Knights had to swear an oath to the baron, duke, or earl, collect taxes and provide soldiers from their land when they were needed. These lords worked to maintain law and order in their area. The lords were required to do their jobs well, and those who failed were removed from their position. At the bottom of the ladder were the conquered English (serfs) who had to do what they were told or pay the price for their disobedience. They were treated harshly, and there was always the constant threat of Norman soldiers being used against the English people wherever they lived.

2.1.3 Manorialism

From the 9th to the 15th century, the manorial system was an important feature of the medieval society of Europe. This system came into existence in England after the radical transformations brought by William I after the Norman Conquest. The manorial system was also an important system that determined the socio-economic, political and cultural life of this period. One of the important peculiarities of this period was a social and economic system called feudalism. The basic feature of a feudal society was its agrarian character and petty production based on the peasant family. Closely related to feudalism emerged

a particular system of agricultural production and social formations in large estates, known as feudal manors. The manorial system was part of the wider feudal order.

Feudalism and Manorialism are two systems that existed in medieval Europe. Both of these systems were based on land and involved the exchange of land for services. Manorialism was primarily an economic and social system which described how the land was managed. It primarily concerned the peasants who provided the labour on the land and their relationship to the lord of the manor who was required to provide them security. Feudalism, on the other hand, was a social, political and economic system based on the exchange of land for military services. It involved the relationship between the King and the feudal lords and that between the lords, the knights and ultimately, the serfs who toil on the land. Feudalism determined how the lords gained the land, while Manorialism illustrated how it was maintained by the labour of the peasants. Manorialism appeared to have predated Feudalism in medieval Europe.

Throughout most of Medieval Europe, agriculture was organised around the manorial system. The manorial system was the system that existed in Medieval England, where rural society was arranged around a manor house or castle in an estate. The manor was a self-sufficient landed estate or fief that was under the control of a lord who enjoyed a variety of rights over it and the peasants attached to it by means of serfdom. The system of manorialism continued throughout most of the Middle Ages. Within the estates, free and unfree labourers (serfs or villeins) worked the land of the landowner in return for protection and the right to work a separate piece of land for their own basic needs. The hub of the community in the manorial system was the manor or castle. It was the landlord's private residence and place of communal gatherings for purposes of administration, legal matters and entertainment. Regulations, customs and traditions varied from one manor to another. The distinguishing aspect of the Lord of the Manor was that he was both a political leader and an employer. These two important roles of a lord in a manor were clearly characterised by Marc Bloch in his famous book *Feudal Society*: "The lord did not merely draw from his peasants valuable revenues and an equally valuable labour force. Not only was he rentier of the soil and beneficiary of the services; he was also a judge, often protector, and always a chief."

A manor estate covers nearly a hundred acres. It is quite enough to meet the needs of those who lived on it. The manor estate includes a small river or streams running through it. A church, mill, barn and an area of woodlands were also part of a manor. The land of the estate was divided into two main parts. The first part was the demesne (domain) which was reserved for the exclusive use of the landowner. The demesne land was 35-40% of the total land on the estate. The second part was the land of the dependent tenants who lived and worked for their own daily needs. Around 12 acres of land are possessed by each family. The labourers on the estate farmed that land reserved for their use and the demesne.

The manor estate was almost entirely economically self-sufficient. In feudal manors, all production for the local community was performed. The manors produced their own food, raised livestock, milled their own grain for bread, spun thread to make their clothing, and produced and maintained their own farm and manufacturing implements. Consequently, there was not very much official or commercial contact with the outside world, and its community became similarly self-contained. The relations between its members were more

specifically determined by the unique customs and traditions of that community, with the lord of the manor presiding at its head.

2.1.4 Serfs in a Feudal Manor

The economic system of the Middle Ages was founded on feudalism, supporting the overlords with the work of serfs using compulsory labour. Serfdom was a type of servile bondage occurring mostly among manors across Europe. A serf is a form of an unfree peasant. A serf could not move from place to place because they were essentially tied to the land of the lord they served (Judith Bennett, *A Medieval Life*). Serfdom was determined by birth, meaning if one's parents were serfs, one would become a serf, and so would one's sons and daughters. The serfs were not slaves, but they had no right to free movement and payment for their labour. The serfs worked the demesne land of their lord two or three days each week, more during busy periods like harvest time. On the other days, serfs could farm that land given to them for their own family's needs. The personal property of a serf and his simple thatched house of mud and straw all belonged to the landowner. A serf was obliged to pay fines and customary fees to their lord, such as on the marriage of the lord's eldest daughter etc. From morning to night, the serfs were closely watched, supervised, and ordered to do various tasks. The serfs were born on the land and lived out their lives there. If a feudal lord sold his manor to another nobleman, it included not only the land, livestock, and working tools but the serfs on the land as well.

2.1.5 Decline of Manorial system

Both feudalism and manorialism declined due to several developments in the late Middle Ages. One particular blow came from the sudden population declines caused by wars and plagues, particularly the Black Death (which peaked between 1347-1352). Another frequent risk to everyone's livelihood was crop failures. Such crises caused a chronic shortage of labour and the abandonment of estates because there was no one to work them. The growth of large towns and cities also resulted in labourers leaving the countryside in large numbers in search of a better future, and many succeeded in getting new jobs available there, working for a new and wealthy merchant class. Another reason for the decline was the number of revolts by the peasantry against their lords. England, for instance, witnessed a peasant revolt in 1381 CE, which caused a strong blow to the manorial system.

Finally, the increase in the use of coinage in the late Middle Ages resulted in many serfs making a payment to their lord instead of labour, paying a fee to be absolved from some of the labour expected of them, or even buying their freedom. Across Europe, all of these factors weakened the traditional set-up of unfree labourers being tied to the land and working for the rich so that by the end of the 14th century, more agricultural labour was done by paid workers than unpaid serfs.

Recap

- The origins of feudalism in England can be traced back to the period from the Norman Conquest.
- William I introduced the feudal system in England.
- Norman feudalism was different from the Anglo-Saxon system in one important way- King William owned all the land.
- Feudalism was based on contracts made among nobles.
- In feudal society, the ownership of land was vested in the king.
- The men who got the pieces of land (fief) were called barons, earls and dukes.
- Feudalism and Manorialism are two systems that existed in medieval Europe.
- Throughout Medieval Europe, agriculture was organised around the Manorial System.
- The hub of the community in the manorial system was the manor or castle.
- Serfdom was a type of servile bondage occurring mostly among manors across Europe.
- England witnessed a peasant revolt in 1381 CE, which caused a strong blow to the manorial system.

Objective Type Questions

1. Name the social system formed on the basis of land ownership in medieval Europe.
2. Which system was replaced by Norman Feudalism?
3. Which conquest led to the origin of feudalism in England?
4. Who introduced the feudal system in England?
5. Which were the two systems that existed in middle Europe?
6. Mention the system under which agriculture was organised in medieval Europe.
7. Identify the four stages of the feudal system.
8. Which period was the peak of the Black Death?
9. What was another word for a peasant under feudal System?
10. Who dominated the feudal system?
11. Who represented the bottom of feudal society?
12. Who held the fiefs under the feudal system?

13. What was the hub of the community in the manorial system?
14. Who were 'villeins' in Feudalism?
15. Which year did the peasant revolt occur in England?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Feudalism
2. Anglo-Saxon system
3. Norman Conquest
4. William I
5. Feudalism and Manorialism
6. Manorial System
7. King, Vassals, Knight and Serf
8. 1347-1352
9. Serf
10. Kings and Lords
11. Vassals
12. Serfs or peasants
13. Manor or castle
14. Peasant farmers or serfs
15. 1381 CE

Assignments

1. Describe the four stages of a feudal system with the help of a flow chart. Explain the role of nobles under each stage.
2. Examine the features of Norman Feudalism.
3. Explain the factors that led to the decline of the manorial system.
4. Discuss the role of dukes and knights in a feudal system.

Suggested Reading

1. Brown, Reginald Allen. *Origins of English Feudalism,* Allen and Unwin, 1973.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.

4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Maitland, F.W. *Domesday Book and Beyond: Three Essays in the Early History of England*, Sagwan Press, 2018.
6. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
7. Warren, Hollister C. *The Impact of the Norman Conquest*, Wiley, 1969.
8. Round, J.H. *Feudal England*, Outlook Verlag, 2018.
9. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.

UNIT TWO

Political Developments

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be:

- introduced to the role of the Church in the Middle Ages, particularly in medieval England.
- aware of the background of drafting the Magna Carta.
- able to identify the features of the Magna Carta and its impact on British history.

Prerequisites

The church once stood as a pillar of authority in England, its influence woven deeply into the fabric of the English psyche. Yet, the tides of history brought conflict, as the church's dominance clashed with the ambitions of the state, giving rise to tension during the medieval era. It was within this crucible of discord that the Magna Carta, or "Great Charter," emerged—not merely as a document but as a revolutionary force shaping the very foundations of constitutional law in the English-speaking world. In 1215, King John of England, notorious for trampling ancient laws and customs, was confronted by a resolute people who demanded accountability. What followed was the birth of a charter that would resonate through the ages, enshrining ideals that came to be cherished as human rights: the church's liberation from state interference, the sacred rights of citizens to property and inheritance, and the shield against oppressive taxation. In this unit, we delve into the transformative journey that led to the Magna Carta and its enduring legacy in the fight for civil liberties across Europe.

Keywords

Church, Middle Ages, King, Barons, Magna Carta, Rights

Discussion

As we know the Church in the Middle Ages had huge power over people's lives and monarchs as well. The Pope claimed authority over all kings and bishops. If a cleric was accused of a crime, he was not tried at the King's court. Instead, he was tried in a Church court where the punishments were not so strict. The church stood outside royal jurisdiction and defied the king in many ways. This situation created a long-lasting quarrel between the church and the state in medieval England, especially during the time of Henry II (Reign from 1154 to 1189).

Henry II was not ready to accept the decrees of the Church. Henry II strongly believed that the church and clergy should be subject to the same standards of law and justice as everyone else. In 1164, he introduced the Constitutions of Clarendon, a code of 16 rules designed to increase the King's influence over the bishops and the Church Courts. Henry demanded that, if the Church courts found a cleric guilty, they had to hand him over to the King's court to be punished properly. Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury (The Archbishop of Canterbury was the head of the church in England), refused to sign the Constitutions of Clarendon. This provoked Henry II, and he summoned a Great Council at Northampton in 1164 to discuss the matter. The Council found Becket had committed a great crime against the state and demanded to punish him for treason. Hearing this news, Thomas Becket escaped to France. But the Pope interfered in the issue and threatened to excommunicate Henry. Finally, in 1170, Becket was allowed to return back to England. This event created many setbacks to the power and prestige of Henry II. Back in England, Becket excommunicated three bishops who supported Henry. On hearing of the ex-communications, Henry shouted "will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?" He ordered the arrest of Thomas Becket. Henry's soldiers rushed to Canterbury and murdered Becket at the altar of the Cathedral on 29 December 1170.

The murder forever eclipsed the legacy of Henry II. He was forced to make great shows of repentance and sorrow for the murder of the archbishop. His plan for restricting the jurisdiction of the Church court was abandoned. Thomas Becket was made a saint by the Pope and pilgrims flocked from all over England and Europe to pray at his tomb. In short, during the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church played a central role in the lives of people and monarchs in England. More than just a religious institution, the church acquired great political and economic power.

2.2.1 Church Mechanism

Let us explore the influence of the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages in Western Europe. Initially, the Romans persecuted Christians for their beliefs. But it continued to spread. In 313 CE, Roman Emperor Constantine issued a decree that allowed Christians to practise their religion freely. In 395 CE, Christianity became the recognized religion of the Roman Empire. Christianity became so widespread during the Middle Ages that historians sometimes call this period the "Age of Faith". The church was the centre of medieval life in Western Europe. Almost every village and the town had a church building. Larger towns and cities had a cathedral. Church bells rang out the hours, called people to worship, and warned of danger. The church building was the centre of community activity. Religious services were held several times a day. Town meetings, plays, and concerts were also held in churches. Merchants had shops around the square in front of the church. Farmers

sold their products in the square. Markets, festivals, and fairs were all held in the shadow of the church's spires (towers).

During the Middle Ages, the church acquired great economic power. By the year 1050, the church was the largest landholder in Europe. Some land came in the form of gifts from monarchs and wealthy lords. The medieval church added to its wealth by collecting a tax called *tithe*. Each person was expected to give one-tenth of his money, produce, or labour to help support the church. The church also came to wield great political power. The increasing influence of the church brought it into conflict with many English monarchs. The conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has already been discussed.

2.2.2 King John and Magna Carta (1215)

John was the king of England from 1199 until he died in 1216. During his own time, King John's reputation lowered due to his misrule. England lost many territories in a war with France, and he failed to reconquer those territories. He demanded heavy and unnecessary taxes from his subjects to meet his luxurious life and unnecessary wars. John was not on good terms with the barons of his realm. He curtailed many privileges enjoyed by the barons. The barons lamented that King John disregarded their traditional privileges. He also quarrelled with Pope Innocent III over an Episcopal appointment. John refused to accept Pope Innocent's nominee for the post of Archbishop of Canterbury in 1208. But Pope Innocent excommunicated the king (1209), declared the throne vacant, and invited the French to invade England. John finally recognised Pope Innocent as his superior in 1213. All these events show that John was a very unpopular ruler. The Church and barons wanted John to be removed from power or to put strict control on him. This was the background of the signing of a great charter of liberties known as the Magna Carta by King John in 1215. John signed Magna Carta after many quarrels with barons and the Church.

2.2.3 Magna Carta

Magna Carta is a Charter of Rights signed by King John at Runnymede, near Windsor, on 15th June 1215. The charter was drafted at the persuasion of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton and some discontent barons of England. It contains 63 clauses (promises) about what the king could and couldn't do and important clauses designed to bring about reforms in judicial and local administration. It also set up a Council of barons to make sure John kept his promises. It was originally written in Latin. Magna Carta promised to grant the following demands of the church and feudal barons: protection of the rights of the English Church and that there shall be no royal interference; protection for the barons from illegal imprisonment; access to quick justice and limitations on feudal payments to the King; assurance that no freeman shall be arrested or imprisoned without a proper trial by a jury of peers.

The following clauses of the Magna Carta had profound importance in the history of the British Constitution:

Clause 1:-"…..the English church shall be free and shall have her rights entirely, and her liberties inviolate; and we will that it be thus observed….."

Clause 12:- No scutage (a tax paid in lieu of military service) shall be imposed on our kingdom, unless by common counsel of our kingdom….."

Clause 39:- No freeman shall be imprisoned or exiled or in any way destroyed nor will we

go upon him nor send upon him, except by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land.

Clause 40:- To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right or justice.

Clause 54:- No one shall be arrested or imprisoned upon the appeal of a woman for the death of any other than her husband. (This clause certainly can be looked upon as a reactionary clause against women as it prevented women from filing petitions except in the case of the death of their husbands.

2.2.4 Impact of Magna Carta

Historians generally consider Magna Carta as the Keystone of English liberties. The power of the king had been permanently restricted, and no king of England was ever again able to rule with unrestricted or absolute power. Magna Carta established the principle that no one, including the king or lawmaker, is above the law. Within half a century, England had a permanent parliament to represent the wishes of the barons to the king. The dominance of the English church over monarchs has also been asserted after the signing of the Magna Carta.

Throughout English history, provisions of the Magna Carta were quoted by both reformers and rebels to achieve their demands from autocratic monarchs. In the 17th century, the lawyer Edward Coke used Magna Carta to oppose Charles I's demand for the tax to pay for his foreign wars. Coke claimed that Magna Carta guaranteed specific freedoms to Englishmen, including no taxation without the consent of parliament and no imprisonment without trial. In the 18th and 19th centuries, British historians, especially followers of the Whig party, saw Magna Carta as the basis of English democracy.

One of the major drawbacks of the Magna Carta was it assured fundamental rights only to the freemen and nobles of the kingdom while continuing to negate the rights of the majority of people who were peasants. In other words, it was largely a feudal agreement to protect the prestige and privileges of the nobles and the barons. Thus in 1904, the lawyer and writer Edward Jenks wrote an iconoclastic essay titled 'The Myth of Magna Carta'. In it, he argued that "Magna Carta's reputation as a guarantee of civil liberties and human rights is misleading and even false". Historians nowadays postulate that Magna Carta was just a negotiation between King John and the barons over feudal rights and the justice system, not a statement of human rights. Despite all its drawbacks, the Magna Carta has been considered the most renowned constitutional document in British history.

Recap

- Historians referred to the Middle Ages as the "Age of Faith" as the Church became the centre of medieval life in Western Europe.
- The Church acquired great economic and political power in the Middle Ages.
- King John had a bitter relationship with the Church and Barons of his realm.
- Magna Carta was signed by King John in 1215.

- Magna Carta is a Charter of Rights and is considered to be the keystone of English liberties.
- Magna Carta contains clauses regarding what the king could and couldn't do and important clauses designed to bring about reforms in judicial and local administration.
- Important clauses of the Magna Carta are Clause 1, 12, 39, 40, and 54.
- The power of the king was permanently restricted after Magna Carta.
- History shows that the Magna Carta was quoted by both reformers and rebels to achieve their demands from the autocratic monarchs.
- The major drawback of the Magna Carta is that it negated the fundamental rights of peasants, who comprised the majority of the population, and gave importance to nobles and feudal lords only.
- The Magna Carta is considered the most renowned constitutional document in British history despite its drawbacks.

Objective Type Questions

1. When did the Roman Emperor issue the decree to practise Christianity freely?
2. Give the other name of the Middle Ages coined by historians.
3. When were the 'Constitutions of Clarendon' introduced?
4. Name the tax imposed by the Church in the Medieval period.
5. Name the Archbishop who had a conflict with King Henry II.
6. Which King of Britain signed the Magna Carta?
7. When was the Magna Carta signed?
8. In which year did Christianity become the recognized religion of the Roman Empire?
9. What is Magna Carta?
10. How many clauses are included in Magna Carta?
11. Who wrote 'The Myth of Magna Carta'?
12. Name some of the important clauses of the Magna Carta.

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. 313 CE
2. 1164 CE
3. Age of Faith
4. Tithe

5. Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury
6. King John
7. June 15, 1215
8. 395 CE
9. Charter of Rights
10. 63 clauses
11. Edward Jenks
12. Clause 1, 12, 39, 40, 54

Assignments

1. The Church was the centre of medieval life in Western Europe. Explain the statement.
2. List out the major Charter of Rights signed across the world and compare them.
3. Evaluate the relationship between religious institutions and the State in the present world.
4. Write a brief note on the relation of King John with the Church and barons of his realm.
5. Elucidate the important clauses of the Magna Carta.
6. Explain the impacts of the Magna Carta using examples.

Suggested Reading

- Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
- Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
- Round, J.H. *Feudal England*, Outlook Verlag, 2018.
- Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.

UNIT THREE

Crusades

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be:

- introduced to the history of the Crusades and the role of Britain in the crusades.
- made aware of the impact of the Crusades on Europe.
- familiarised with the effects of the Hundred Years' War between France and England.

Prerequisites

During the 1300s, the Latin Roman Catholic Church spearheaded numerous military campaigns, known as the Crusades, led by fervent crusaders committed to defending the church at all costs. These campaigns, driven by a promise of heavenly salvation, sought to reclaim land deemed sacred, particularly Jerusalem. In 1095, the pope launched the first crusade to recover the holy city, igniting a series of clashes between Christian crusaders and Muslims that would define the Middle Ages. These conflicts not only shaped religious dynamics but also paralleled other significant events, such as the Hundred Years' War. Beginning in 1337 and lasting until 1453, the House of Plantagenet of England waged relentless battles following mounting tensions. Both the Crusades and the Hundred Years' War left indelible marks on European history, influencing regions far beyond the continent. These upheavals signaled the stagnation of the feudal order and reshaped the trajectory of the Middle Ages. This unit examines the transformative impact of these events on the European landscape.

Keywords

Crusades, Holy Land, Hundred years war, Seljuk dynasty, Byzantine Empire, Jerusalem, Bretigny treaty

Discussion

2.3.1 Crusades

The Crusades were a series of Christian military expeditions fought against the Muslims for Holy Lands, especially for Jerusalem, between the years of 1095 and 1291. There were eight crusades fought between the Christians and the Muslims. The word "crusade" comes from the Latin word 'crux' meaning cross, and "to take up the cross", meant to become a crusader. To identify themselves, crusaders sewed symbols of the cross of Christ onto their clothing and painted crosses on their shields.

Three major religious groups all claimed Jerusalem, in the land of Palestine, as their holy city - Jews, Christians and Muslims. To the Christians, Jerusalem was the place where Jesus was crucified, arose from the dead, and ascended to heaven. To the Jews, Abraham was given this land by God, and to the Muslims, it was from Jerusalem that Prophet Muhammad ascended into heaven to meet God.

The three religions intersect and intertwine in the maze of streets that run through Jerusalem's Old City. The Temple Mount, a large stone plaza in the Old City, is the site of Judaism's First Temple, built by King Solomon and destroyed in 587 BCE. It is now the site of the Dome of the Rock, the iconic gold-domed Islamic mosque completed in 691 CE, and the whole complex is referred to by the Muslims as Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Christian sites in the city include the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which broke ground in 236 CE on the site of Jesus's burial and resurrection.

2.3.1.1 Background

Muslims occupied Jerusalem in 638 CE, during the time of Caliph Umar, after a strong battle with the Byzantine Empire. By the time of the First Crusade (1095), Muslims had tremendous territorial possessions throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and even Europe itself. The Muslim rulers had allowed Christians and Jews to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and they enjoyed religious freedom. But by the end of the 11th Century CE, a new group of Muslims called Seljuk Turks took control over the Holy Lands, including Jerusalem, and closed it to all Jewish and Christian pilgrims. The closure of Jerusalem for the Christian pilgrims by the Seljuk Turks had a profound impact on the Christian world. The turmoil of these years disrupted normal political life and made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem difficult and often impossible. It was against this backdrop that the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus appealed for help against the Seljuk Turks to Pope Urban II in 1095 CE. Now let's examine some of the important Crusades.

2.3.1.2 First Crusade (1095-1099)

In November 1095, at the Council of Clermont in France, Pope Urban II gave a public speech calling on Western Christians to give aid to their Eastern Christian brethren. The Pope exhorted for the liberation of the Holy Lands, which had been under Muslim control for 400 years. In various letters written after the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II explained his reasons for launching the crusade. One such letter goes thus: "We know you have already heard from the testimony of many that the frenzy of the barbarians has devastated the churches of God in the east, and has even - shame to say- seized into slavery the holy city of Christ, Jerusalem. Grieving in pious contemplation of this disaster, we visited France and strongly urged the princes and people of that land to work for the liberation of the Eastern Church."

In August 1096, a vast Crusader army began the arduous journey from Europe

to Constantinople. The army was led by prominent leaders like Godfrey of Bouillon (Duke of Lower Lorraine), Raymond (Count of Toulouse), Robert (Duke of Normandy and son of William the Conqueror) and Robert II (Count of Flanders). In 1097, the Crusader army captured Nicaea, the capital of the Seljuk Sultan, Kilij Arslan. They captured Antioch and many parts of Syria in 1098. The following year (1099), the crusaders captured the greatest prize of all, Jerusalem. In the first crusade, the western force could achieve a crucial victory over the Muslims. After this tremendous victory, the Crusaders established four Christian Kingdoms in the Holy Lands.

2.3.1.3 Second Crusade (1145-1148)

The immediate reason for the second crusade was that the Muslim forces had recaptured most of the territories that they had lost in the First Crusade. On December 24, 1144, the Turkish army seized the city of Edessa and murdered all of the inhabitants. It was the first major loss of a territory won by the Crusader armies in the First Crusade. In 1145, Pope Eugenius III appealed for a second crusade. But the response from the western world was lukewarm. However, Bernard of Clairvaux, the greatest churchman of his era, began preaching and writing in favour of the new crusade. Up to 50,000 volunteers responded to the call from France alone. What the Pope Couldn't do, Bernard was able to - the second Crusade was born. The two important military leaders of the Second Crusade were Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany. Due to the disunity between them, they couldn't achieve victory in this war. Their army was thoroughly beaten in 1147 and 1148. So the Second Crusade was considered an ignominious failure for the Crusaders.

2.3.1.4 Richard I of England and Third Crusade (1187- 1192)

The Third Crusade was very important in the history of Britain. It was in the Third Crusade that England first joined the Crusade. Richard I, the king of England, actively participated in the war and achieved commendable early victories over the Muslim troops. In the 1170s, the greatest enemy of the Crusaders, namely Saladin (Salahuddin Ayyubi), became the ruler of Egypt and the Holy Lands. In 1187, Saladin defeated crusader armies at the Battle of Hattin and captured many provinces. On October 2, 1187, Saladin seized Jerusalem. In two years, Saladin took 50 crusader castles. The Christian world was alarmed. They wanted to retaliate against Saladin and recapture Jerusalem. Pope Gregory VIII and the archbishop of Tyre issued appeals for help against Saladin. Three of the most famous Christian figures of Crusaders responded to that appeal - Richard I of England, Philip Augustus II of France, and Frederick Barbarossa of Germany. This crusade had an unfortunate start for the Westerners. In June 1190, Frederick Barbarossa drowned in a river on his way to the Holy Lands.

Richard and Philip captured Acre (Acre is a city in Israel) in 1191 after a long siege. As part of the negotiated settlement, the Muslims were forced to give back the relic of the 'True Cross', seized by Saladin's troops in 1187, and some Christian prisoners. In the meantime, Philip II returned to France due to some problems with Richard. Now Richard became the sole representative of the Christian world and fought bravely. Richard quickly went on to capture Arsuf (Sept.1191), where he gained the nickname the Lion Heart. Richard moved to Jerusalem. But there, he received the news that his brother John was plotting with King Philip II of France against

him. Immediately Richard signed a three-year truce with Saladin on September 2, 1192. The truce with Saladin resulted in great achievement for the Christian world. Although Jerusalem remained under Muslim control, the treaty allowed the Christians permission for trading and pilgrimage. After the treaty, Richard started back for England. On the way, he was captured by Leopold, Duke of Austria, and handed over to the Holy Roman emperor Henry VI. Richard was kept in captivity until 1194 when he was released for ransom and returned to England. He died in a battle in France at the age of 41.

The Third Crusade, while not as effective as the First Crusade, was the first significant gain of territory by the Christian crusaders after 1000 years. Richard I cemented his place in history as the greatest of the Crusader Kings.

2.3.1.5 Results of the Crusades

The Crusades kept Europe tumultuous for two centuries. It resulted in the death of a lot of people. Some estimate this loss of life at a minimum of one million over the two centuries. The Crusades affected English society in many ways. The exhortation of holy war by the Pope had a great influence on the people. From the Third Crusades onwards, most English people, from kings to serfs, actively participated in the war. To meet the war expenses, English monarchs collected special taxes from the subjects; one such tax realised during the time of Henry II was called Saladin Tithe.

The crusades had an unfavourable impact on feudalism. The crusades helped to undermine feudalism. Thousands of barons and knights sold their lands in order to raise money for going on the crusading expedition. Thousands of feudal lords were killed in the Crusades, and their estates were confiscated by the crown. Their decline in both numbers and influence caused the growth of royal authority and power. All these contributed to the decline of feudalism in England.

One of the most important effects of the crusades was on trade and commerce. The crusades created a constant demand for the transportation of men and supplies. It encouraged shipbuilding and extended the market for eastern goods in Europe. The products of Damascus, Mosul, Alexandria, Cairo and other important eastern cities were carried across the Mediterranean to the Italian seaports, from where they reached all European lands. The east was abundant in luxury goods. The luxurious goods of the east, like silks, tapestries, precious stones, perfumes, spices, pearls, and ivory, had great demand in Western Europe during the course of the Crusades.

The influence of the Crusades on the intellectual development of Europe was also very important. The East, at the time of the Middle Ages, surpassed the West in civilization. The crusaders enjoyed the advantages which came from travelling in strange lands and among unfamiliar peoples. They went out from their castles or villages to see great cities, marble palaces, superb dress, and elegant manners of the East. The crusaders returned to their land with finer tastes, broader ideas, and wider sympathies. The crusades opened up a new world. The knowledge of the science and learning of the East gained by the crusaders during wartime greatly stimulated the Latin intellect. It helped to awaken Western Europe and finally resulted in the great intellectual outburst known as the Revival of Learning and the Renaissance period.

2.3.2 Hundred Years' War

2.3.2.1 Causes of the War

The Hundred Year's War was an intermittent military conflict between England and France, lasting from 1337 to 1453. It had a profound impact on the futures of the countries on either side. It originated in a dispute regarding English monarchs' claim over certain territories in France. The question of the legitimate succession to the French crown also led to the war between France and England. From the 12th century onwards, the Norman kings of England focused primarily on expanding their hold on the continent, especially in France. The complicated political relationship that existed between France and England in the first half of the 14th century had a long history. It can be traced back to the period of William the Conqueror, the first King of England to hold the title of the Duke of Normandy and thus was a vassal of the French King. When Henry II became the King of England in 1154, he was also the Duke of Normandy, Duke of Anjou and Duke of Aquitaine, all provinces in France. This resulted naturally in a long but intermittent armed conflict between the two nations in which the French kings succeeded in weakening the English possessions in France. The struggle involved several generations of English and French claimants to the crown and occupied more than 100 years. Long before the start of the Hundred Years' war, England had thus lost many of her territories in France. In 1204, King John lost Normandy to Philip II of France and in 1214 and almost all of his possessions were in France. The war ended with the Treaty of Paris ratified by Henry III and Louis IX of France in 1259. As per the treaty, Henry III was allowed to retain the Duchy of Guyenne, which was a considerably reduced territory carved out from Aquitaine but had to give up his claim on Normandy, Anjou and other territories that his ancestor Henry II possessed. By this treaty, Henry III was forced to acknowledge that he was a vassal of France. While Louis IX and Henry III were ready to respect the terms of the treaty as they admired each other and were married to sisters. But it was clear that this would pose problems in the future. Throughout the 13th century, the kings of England paid homage to the kings of France. It preserved peace but established French supremacy over English monarchs.

2.3.2.2 Course of the War

After the accession of Edward III as English monarch in 1327, the problem between France and England worsened. It was against the backdrop of a conflict over the French succession after the death of Charles IV. Charles IV, the French king, died on February 1, 1328, leaving no male heir. The two principal claimants to the throne were Edward III of England, who derived his claim through his mother, Isabella, sister of Charles IV, and Philip, count of Valois, son of Philip IV's brother Charles. The French assembly decided to favour Philip, the count of Valois, who became king as Philip VI. Relations between France and England soured quickly. Edward III protested vigorously and threatened to defend his rights by every possible means. A battle broke out, and as his rival got some early success, Edward withdrew his claim and was obliged to renew his homage on the French king's terms in 1331.

Anglo-French relations remained cordial for more than two years. But in 1334, Edward III offered refuge to Robert III (grandson of Philip IV's cousin), who had quarrelled with French King Philip VI and claimed the throne. Philip, who was provoked, threatened to attack the duchy of Aquitaine. Edward III proclaimed he was the rightful King of

France and declared war against the French monarch. When Edward III declared war on France to begin the Hundred Years' war, his goal was to obtain full sovereignty over the duchy of Aquitaine. He wanted to eliminate French interference in its governance. Edward concluded an alliance with landowners from Flanders and Germany and started the Hundred Years' War on a strong English footing. The war was started on May 24, 1337, with the capture of the English-controlled duchy of Guyenne by French King Philip VI. Meanwhile, Edward's ships defeated the French fleet at sea, followed by a crucial victory in the Battle of Sluis on June 24, 1340. After this victory, a treaty was signed between France and England on September 25, 1340, and both monarchs temporarily suspended hostilities. In September 1356, Edward the Black Prince (son of King Edward III) and King John II of France fought at Poitiers (Poitiers Campaign). The battle was an astonishing win for the English. The English army captivated King John and three of his sons. At Brétigny, peace talks were held, and an agreement was reached on May 8, 1360. By this treaty, France ceded the whole of the old Aquitaine and also, in northern France, Calais and Guînes in full sovereignty to the English.

The Treaty of Bretigny provided English monarchs with a great political and military triumph. After the death of King John, his son Charles V became the French monarch in 1364. He was not ready to agree to the provisions of the Treaty of Bretigny and wanted to recapture the lost territories. His armies recovered much of the territory held by the English and successfully reversed the military losses of his predecessors. This created a war situation between England and France again during the reign of Henry IV, and Charles VI. Henry IV wanted to resume the Hundred Years' War and take advantage of Charles VI's mental illness and France's civil war. His successor Henry V achieved overwhelming victories against France at Agincourt in 1415 and Verneuil in 1424. However, the emergence of Joan of Arc boosted French morale and prevented the victory of England. The siege of Orleans in 1429 marked the beginning of the end of English hopes of French conquest. The siege of Orleans was the watershed of the Hundred Years' War. The French royal army's first major military victory after the crushing defeat at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. After Orleans, the French army achieved a series of crucial victories against the English army at Formigny in 1450 and Gascony in 1453. In 1453 the Hundred Years' War concluded in favour of the French monarchs. England permanently lost most of its continental possessions, with only Calais remaining under her control.

2.3.2.3 Impact of Hundred Years' War

The Hundred Years' War made England almost bankrupt and left the victorious French Crown in total control of all of France except Calais. War destroyed the English dream of a joint monarchy comprising the whole of Great Britain and France. England suffered a devastating defeat in the Hundred Years' War. The post-war period witnessed a series of civil wars in England. A brutal civil war occurred between the houses of Lancaster and York, both claiming the English throne. In this civil war (1455-1485), Lancastrian nobleman Henry Tudor defeated the Yorkist King Richard III at Bosworth and started the Tudor dynasty. The war produced long-lasting and iconic national heroes, notably Henry V of England and Joan of Arc in France. The most lasting impact of the war in England was the emergence of a greater sense of patriotism and national identity.

England suffered a decline in trade, especially wool and Gascon wine. The war

also witnessed developments in weapons technology, such as cannons and English-Longbows. English common people suffered a lot during wartime. The monarchs imposed heavy taxes to meet the war expenses, especially under Richard II. English Peasants' revolt in 1381, during Richard II's administration, was the direct impact of heavy taxes imposed at the time of the Hundred Years' War. The most obvious result of the Hundred Years' War was that both France and England were determined to avoid a revival of such a conflict in which both sides wasted their manpower and resources without much benefit. The English defeat in the Hundred Years' War seems to be a blessing in disguise really. In England, rulers and the populace alike eagerly turned their energies to other projects. England turned her attention to becoming a sea power and gave up her attempts at expansion on the Continent. In the course of time, England became a great naval and colonial power. England's control over seas and international trade expanded at great length in the forthcoming centuries.

The revival of the English Language was another important impact of the Hundred Years' War. Famous writer Rosanna E. Lortz (The author of *I Serve: A Novel of the Black Prince*, a historical adventure/romance set about the Hundred Years' War) through her article titled 'English v/s French: The Hundred Years' war and its effects on Language' argued that "the change in language effected by the Hundred Years' War was radical". Before the war began in 1337, French was the language of literature and the language of the aristocracy in England.

Historian Elizabeth Hallam writes that "Although in 14th century England everyone spoke some form of English, French was still the language of polite society, the country gentry and the middle class continued to use French. There are almost no extant English letters before 1400. Proclamations in London were still made in French, which was also the language of the law…." (Elizabeth Hallam, *Chronicles of the Age of Chivalry*) This situation changed during the Hundred Years' War, and the English language gained ascendancy over the French. This can be identified with the emergence of a greater sense of patriotism and national identity in England during the war period. Hallam hypothesised that "the transformation was almost certainly a result of the surge of patriotism and nationalism associated with the Hundred Years' war: the French language came to be associated with the enemy". During the same period, schools in England began to use English in the classrooms as a medium with which to teach Latin. And in 1363, "parliament was opened by a declaration of summons in the native tongue.", something that had previously always been done in French.

According to the philologist Oliver Farrar Emerson, "soon English petitions to parliament, English wills, letters, and gild statutes appear." (Oliver Farrar Emerson, English or French in the Time of Edward III, Romanic Review). Because of the war with France, the English language was used by all levels of English society for all purposes. In short, the revival of the English language in 14th century England-replacing French-was due to the national and patriotic feeling generated by the Hundred Years' War.

Recap

- There were eight crusades fought between the Christians and the Muslims.
- Three major religious groups all claimed Jerusalem, in the land of Palestine, as their holy city - Jews, Christians and Muslims.
- First Crusade (1095-1099): In November 1095, Pope Urban II - called on Western Christians to aid their Eastern Christian brethren - the Crusaders established four Christian Kingdoms in the Holy Lands.
- Second Crusade (1145-1148): The Muslim forces had recaptured most of the territories that they had lost in the First Crusade - the Turkish army seized the city of Edessa on December 24, 1144 - failure of the crusaders.
- Third Crusade (1187- 1192): England first joined the Crusade -Saladin seized Jerusalem - the Muslims were forced to give back the relic of the 'True Cross - Victory of the Christian crusaders.
- Hundred Years' War: intermittent military conflict between kingdoms of England and France, lasting from 1337 to 1453 - the question of the legitimate succession to the French crown.
- By the Bretigny treaty, France ceded the whole of the old Aquitaine and also, in northern France, Calais and Guînes in full sovereignty to the English, political and military triumph for English monarchs.
- After his father's death, Charles V became the French monarch in 1364.
- Impact of 100 years' war - the revival of the English language.

Objective Type Questions

1. When did Pope Urban II call on Western Christians to aid their Eastern Christian brethren?
2. When did the Crusader army begin the arduous journey from Europe to Constantinople?
3. What was the crusaders' greatest prize during the first crusade?
4. What was the time period of the first crusade?
5. In which crusade did England first join?
6. When did Saladin conquer Jerusalem?
7. Who was regarded as the greatest crusader king?
8. Who became the French monarch after King John's death?
9. Who defeated the Yorkish King Richard III during the civil war (1455-1485)?
10. When did the Hundred Years' War end?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. 1095
2. 1096
3. Capturing of Jerusalem in the year 1099
4. 1095-1099 CE
5. Third crusade
6. October 2, 1187
7. Richard I
8. Charles V
9. Henry Tudor
10. 1453

Assignments

1. Discuss the economic consequences of the Crusades on Europe.
2. Examine the consequences of the hundred years' of war on England.
3. Describe the role of Britain in the crusades and the hundred years' war.

Suggested Reading

1. Dale, Stephen.F, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and the Mughals*, CUP, 2010.
2. Faroqhi. Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire: A Short History,* Princeton, 2004.
3. Bennet , Judith. *Medieval Europe, A Short History*, Mc-GrawHill, 2010.
4. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*, CUP, 1987.

UNIT FOUR

Decline of Feudalism

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- familiarize with feudalism and the major causes of its decline.
- get acquainted with the social structure of medieval Europe.
- comprehend the economic and political impact of the decline of feudalism on European history.
- explain the debates regarding the decline of feudalism.
- examine the Black death as a major event of the Middle Ages.

Prerequisites

The breakdown of the feudal system was driven by multiple factors that reshaped medieval society. In England, political changes in the 12th and 13th centuries played a pivotal role in weakening feudalism. The advent of new military technologies diminished the significance of castles and feudal lords, while the Black Death disrupted trade and commerce, undermining the agricultural foundation of the feudal economy. As peasants gained more opportunities, the rigid hierarchical structure of feudal society began to crumble. War and disease further empowered the common people, challenging traditional power dynamics. Events such as the signing of the Magna Carta and the Hundred Years' War accelerated this transformation. In this unit, we delve into the critical events that contributed to the decline of feudalism and engage with scholarly debates surrounding this pivotal era.

Keywords

Feudal economy, Crusades, Serfdom, Merchant guild, Black Death, Peasant Revolt

Discussion

The terms feudalism and feudal system generally applied to the early and central Middle Ages – the period from the 5th century to the 12th century. In the 5th century, central political authority in Western Europe collapsed due to the barbarian invasions, and in the 12th century, strong monarchs and Kingdoms began to emerge as effective centralised units of government. Feudalism was the dominant system in medieval Europe, in which the nobility held lands from the King in exchange for military service. The vassals were tenants of the nobles, while the peasants (Villeins or Serfs) were obliged to live depending on their lords and give them homage, labour and share of the products. The feudal economy was a natural economy, i.e., a "subsistence economy". The peasants produced mainly for their own consumption and rarely exchanged commodities. Karl Marx used the term feudalism to describe a "whole social order whose principal feature was the domination of the rest of the society, mainly peasants, by a military landowning aristocracy". The essence of the feudal mode of production in the Marxist sense is the exploitative relationship between landowners and subordinate peasants. According to Rodney Hilton, "the basic feature of feudal society was its agrarian character and petty production, based on the peasant family. The surplus produced by the peasantry was appropriated by a class of landlords who did not fulfil any economic function".

2.4.1 Causes for the Decline of Feudalism

Scholars like Maurice Dobb (*Studies in the Development of Capitalism*), Henry Pirenne (*Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*), Marc Bloch (*Feudal Society*), and Rodney Hilton (*A Crisis in Feudalism)* have given various reasons for the decline of feudalism in Western Europe. They attributed the breakdown of feudalism to commercial expansion, the revival of long-distance trade from the 12th century onwards, the decline of serfdom etc. Let's examine some important general factors that contributed to the decline of feudalism in Western Europe, especially in England. In England, political developments during the 12th and 13th centuries helped to weaken feudalism. William the conqueror took many measures to curtail the power of feudal lords. He wanted to establish royal supremacy over feudal lords. By the famous "Oath of Salisbury," he brought all feudal lords and barons in England under his control and strengthened the power and prestige of the royal authority. His measures clearly paved way for the weakening of feudal tendencies in England. The Legal Reforms of Henry II (1154-1189) also helped to undermine the power of feudal lords. Henry II made legal reform a central concern of his reign. His legal reforms strengthened the power of royal courts at the expense of feudal lords.

Another reason for the decline of feudalism was the Black Death caused by the bubonic plague, which affected all of Europe. The bubonic plague first struck Europe in 1346 and continued till 1351. It returned in waves that occurred about every decade till the 15th century. The plague took a terrible toll on the population of England. Historians estimate that around 24 million Europeans died of the plague - about a third of the population. The deaths of so many people accelerated changes in Europe's economic and social structure, which contributed to the decline of feudalism. After the plague, there was a shift in power from nobles to the common people. One reason for this was the extremely intense demand for workers because so many people had died. The workers who survived the plague could demand more money and more rights. Many

peasants and some serfs abandoned the feudal manors and moved to the towns and cities, seeking better opportunities. This led to the weakening of the manor system and a loss of power for feudal lords. After the plague, a number of peasant rebellions broke out. The most famous of these revolts was the English Peasants' Revolt in 1381. All this helped to weaken the power of feudal lords in England.

The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) also helped in the decline of feudalism in England. The War contributed to the decline of feudalism by helping to shift power from feudal lords to monarchs and common people. During wartime, the monarchs of England collected taxes and raised large professional armies. As a result, Kings no longer relied as much on nobles to supply knights for the army. The most permanent impact of the war in England was the emergence of a greater sense of patriotism and national identity. This new sense of identity also shifted power away from feudal lords. After the war, many English peasants and common people felt more loyal to their monarchs than to their feudal lords.

The Crusades also greatly contributed to the decline of the feudal system. During the Crusades, a large number of feudal lords lost their lives which gave a setback to the feudal system. Some of the feudal lords who returned back from the Crusades were forced to sell charters of liberties to towns which they once controlled. As a result, a large number of serfs attained freedom.

The growth in commercial expansion and the revival of long-distance trade from the 12th century onwards also caused the decline of feudalism. The commercial expansion created a market for luxury goods among the elite class. This commercial expansion also introduced a money economy. With the growth of trade and commerce a number of new cities and towns emerged in Europe which provided new job opportunities. Thus the serfs could smash the shackles of feudal bondage. The revival of long-distance trade broke down the self-sufficient manorial economy of feudal Europe.

2.4.2 Emergence of Trade and Urban Centres

James Masschaele in his magnum opus *Peasants, Merchants, and Markets: Inland Trade in Medieval England, 1150-1350* aptly remarks about the development of trade and commerce in medieval England thus: "By the end of the thirteenth century England had developed a sophisticated commercial economy that embraced all levels of society." This statement shows the importance gave the rulers, merchants and commons of England for the development of trading activities in the country, that resulted in England becoming a tycoan in the international markets. The medieval English economy was completely dominated by markets and market activities. One of the most important peculiarities of the medieval English town was that it was owned by kings and feudal lords. Thus, the towns were part of either the lord's manor or the king's domain. So a feudal relationship existed in the town just like in the countryside. Towns like London, Winchester, Gloucester, Sandwich, Derby and Whitby became the centres of inland and overseas trading activities. The occupants of medieval towns engaged in a wide variety of specialised commodity production. Important commodity productions were leather making, textiles, clothing, vending and metalworking. Some peasants produced a substantial surplus of grain and animal products which were sold in the town markets. Many peasants thus also became part and parcel of the town market. The great cash crop of Medieval England was wool and it was produced on peasant holdings. The owners of the markets defended their

rights strongly and tried to limit competition. Markets generated significant incomes for their owners through market tolls. Toll rates were generally seldom more than one per cent of the value of the goods traded. But some groups of people and some commodities were exempted from the toll. The goods brought for household consumption were exempted from paying toll. Similarly, small goods such as apples, or butter in earthen pots, produced by peasant households were also exempted from toll.

During the early 13th century, English kings had granted exemption of tolls in all the markets to most Church Corporations. This exemption was also applicable to their manorial tenants. Refusing to pay a toll without necessary reasons was considered a great offence. One such example was, in 1315 the town of Sandwich seized the almonds, figs and raisins of a merchant from London who refused to pay a toll to the market authorities. It is evident that an effective system of administration existed in medieval England to monitor and regulate trading activities.

Wool became the backbone and driving force of the medieval English economy between the late thirteenth century and late fifteenth century. At that time the wool trade was described as "the jewel in the realm". A major source of English wealth in the Middle Ages was the profit acquired from the lucrative wool trade with the Continent. Wool was the most important industrial raw material and it was the first industrial occupation to transform whole parts of Europe into specialised manufacturing regions, as in Florence, Champagne, and Southern France. England was the most important source of raw wool and some of this wool was exported to Italy, while most of it was worked into cloth in Northern Europe, in the Low Countries [Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands] and later in England itself.

The English predominance in the wool trade was a result of political and fiscal measures brought about by the successive acts of royal policy and by a bargain between the king and the merchants. Meenaxi Phukan, in her book *Rise of the Modern West: Social and Economic History of Early Modern Europe* has stated this fact. T.H. Lloyd has written a well-versed work titled *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages* to analyse how the economy of medieval England achieved a great boom due to the wool trade. He says "By the end of the twelfth-century English wool was essential to the Low Countries and by threatening to cut off supplies the King of England could influence the allegiances of those provinces." This observation not only shows the importance of English wool in the Continent but the use of wool trade as a diplomatic lever.

The notions of the fellowship have the largest impact on the creation of the guilds. According to Joseph Strayer's Dictionary of the Middle Ages, guilds were considered "an association of merchants or artisans primarily intended to promote the interest of its members…the guild usually enjoyed legal recognition and social permanence". There is no official written evidence of guilds existing in England prior to the ninth century. But the word Gildan, or gild brethren, had been widely used in Anglo-Saxon laws, especially during the time of King Alfred. This made the historians hypothesis that a "fraternal association", resembling later guilds had prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon period itself. London, as well as other towns and cities of the twelfth century, acted as the epicentre for guilds. The guilds created a regulated authority over members, monopolies, and outside merchants. One of the three most influential guilds of twelfth-century England (the other

two guilds were the Craft Guild and Religious Guild) was the Merchant Guild. A merchant Guild was an association of traders. These Merchant Guilds had monopoly overtrade in their town and also enjoyed economic and political influence.

Merchant Guilds began to flourish after the Norman invasion of 1066. The unique feature of the Merchants Guild was their involvement in long-distance commerce and local wholesale trade. "The members of the guild were guaranteed rights and protection from outside traders and even rulers of other countries who would try to seize goods. With the capability to enforce codes of conduct on both rulers and members, guild merchants had an incredible ability to monopolise every aspect of trade within a town", says Katherine Payne in her book *Origin and Creation: London Guilds of the Twelfth Century*. Merchant Guilds were able to negotiate with the lords concerning the trade leveled and regulations imposed on individual traders or craftsmen to regulate the price and supply of goods. In short, Merchant Guilds played a very crucial role in the development of Medieval England's internal and external trade.

2.4.3 Black Death

The Black Death was one of the most devastating pandemics in human history. The death toll reached its peak in Europe between 1348 and 1350. It caused an outbreak of plague by the bacterium Yersinia Pestis. It began in Asia and spread throughout the Mediterranean and Europe through trading ships. The term "Black Death" probably came from the black-and-blue swellings that appeared on the skin of the victims. The unhygienic conditions in which people lived contributed significantly to the spread of the bubonic plague. The importance of hygiene was only recognised in the 19th century. Until then it was common for that the streets to be filthy, live with animals of all sorts around and human fleas and ticks abounding. Any transmissible disease will spread easily in such conditions. One benefit of the Black Death was the establishment of the idea of quarantine in Dubrovnik (a city in modern Croatia) in 1377 after continuing outbreaks.

The Black Death is estimated to have killed 30% to 60% of Europe's population. It reduced the world population from an estimated 450 million to 350 and 375 million in 1400. The Black Death created a series of religious, social and economic upheavals, which had profound effects on the course of European history. It took 150 years for Europe's population to recover. The plague returned at various times, killing more people until it left Europe in the 19th century.

2.4.3.1 Effects of the Black Death

Black Death had a profound impact on the lives of English people. It deeply affected the social, economic and religious spheres. Among the most important immediate consequences of the Black Death in England was a shortage of farm labour. The shortage of labour caused a corresponding rise in wages. Many arable lands in England lay uncultivated due to the lack of peasants caused by the Black Death. The prices of agricultural products also increased. But the landlords were not ready to agree to the increase in wage level. The landlord's viewed the rise in wages as a sign of social upheaval and insubordination and they reacted with severe suppressive measures.

It was in this backdrop that the parliament passed legislation called the Statute of Labourers in 1351 under the auspices of King Edward III. The legislation reads: - "Everyone under the age of 60, except traders, craftsmen, and those with private means, had to work for wages which were set at their various

pre-plague levels". The legislation also made an offence for landless men to seek new masters or to be offered higher wages. So, the legislation prohibited requesting or offering a wage higher than pre-plague standards and limited movements of workers in search of better conditions. Workers who violated the Statute of Labourers were fined and were put in 'stocks' (Stocks were used in medieval times as a form of punishment involving public humiliation. The stocks were often located in a public space, so that people who passed the victim would know he broke some law.) as punishment for disobeying the statute. In 1360, punishments became worse. Workers who demanded higher wages were sent to prison. The Statute was strictly enforced for several years and caused a great deal of discontent among the peasant labourers. This was the background of a strong and violent "Peasants' Revolt" in 1381. Thus, Black Death contributed indirectly to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Black Death weakened the feudal structure and the power of feudal lords in England.

Another immediate consequence of the Black Death was the temporary halt to the campaigns of the Hundred Years' War. The pandemic diverted the attention of monarchs from war efforts to secure lives. The inception of sheep farming in England was another impact of the Black Death. After the Black Death, much of England's arable lands were converted to pasture, mainly for sheep. Many workers were needed to grow and harvest grain, so some lords began to raise sheep instead. Raising sheep required fewer workers and there were more customers for the meat and for woollen clothing. This helped to boost the cloth and woollen industry. Production of these goods increased and the export of wool made England rich. Some serfs and peasants also reared sheep and obtained profit from the sale of wool. Peasants eventually became free to move away from estates owned by lords. Some peasants were even able to buy their own land.

Recap

- Causes for the decline of feudalism: political developments during the 12th and 13th centuries in England- the Legal Reforms of Henry II (1154-1189) - the Black Death - the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) - the crusades - growth in commercial expansion and the revival of long-distance trade
- Debate on the nature of decline of feudalism - theories of Maurice Dobb, Henry Pirenne, Marc Bloch and Rodney Hilton
- Impact of the emergence of trade and urban centres - Merchant Guilds- development of Medieval England's internal and external trade.
- The bubonic plague first struck Europe from 1346 to 1351, it returned in waves that occurred about every decade into the 15th century.
- Historians estimate that 24 million Europeans died of the plague - about a third of the population.
- Black death and its effects on European history: the most devastating pandemic in human history. The death toll reached its peak in Europe between 1348 and 1350.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who wrote the work, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*?
2. When did the bubonic plague first struck Europe?
3. When did English Peasants' Revolt happen?
4. Who wrote the book "*The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*"?
5. Which bacteria caused the outbreak of the Black Death Plague?
6. Who was the king when the Parliament passed the legislation of the Statute of Labourers?
7. How many people were killed due to the plague in Europe?
8. Who authored *A Crisis in Feudalism*?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Maurice Dobb
2. 1346-1351
3. 1381
4. T.H. Lloyd
5. Yersinia Pestis
6. Edward III
7. 24 million
8. Rodney Hilton

Assignments

1. Examine the major reasons behind the decline of feudalism in Europe.
2. Discuss the consequences of the Black Death Plague in 14th-century Europe.
3. Explain the socio-political background of the Peasant Revolt of 1381.
4. Discuss the role of merchant guilds in the growth of urban centres.

Suggested Reading

1. Brown, Reginald Allen. *Origins of English Feudalism,* Allen and Unwin, 1973.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.

4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Maitland, F.W. *Domesday Book and Beyond: Three Essays in the Early History of England*, Sagwan Press, 2018.
6. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
7. Warren, Hollister C. *The Impact of the Norman Conquest*, Wiley, 1969.
8. Round, J.H. *Feudal England*, Outlook Verlag, 2018.
9. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.

BLOCK - 03

Intellectual Developments in Medieval Britain

UNIT ONE

Role of Universities

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learners will be able to:

- discern the material and ideological background of the rise of universities in Britain.
- understand the significance of universities like Oxford and Cambridge in the intellectual growth of Great Britain.
- compare and analyse the role of educational and intellectual growth in the development of Britain.
- identify and recognize the literary figures who dominated the English literary realm.

Prerequisites

You might wonder, how universities connect to the rich, complex history of a nation? Well, think about this: universities have been at the heart of social, political, and intellectual life for centuries. From the medieval halls of Oxford and Cambridge to the rise of new educational institutions, British universities have not just been places of learning, they've been crucibles for ideas that shaped the very fabric of British society.

These institutions played key roles during crucial moments: from the Renaissance, where scholars sparked intellectual revolutions, to the Enlightenment, where new ways of thinking about governance, science, and the individual were born. Universities were also instrumental in the rise of social movements, political change, and even the industrial revolution. They influenced everything from government policies to literary movements, and even the evolution of British democracy.

As we explore the history of Britain, we'll see how universities were more than just places to earn degrees, they were places where ideas flourished, and change was often conceived. So, let's dig into this story of learning, power, and transformation that's deeply connected with Britain's history. Ready to explore how universities helped shape the nation? Let's begin!

Keywords

University, Oxford, Cambridge, Cathedrals, Monasteries, Curriculum

Discussion

University was a medieval European concept. In Medieval England, as it was in (Rome and Roman Britain) knowledge of Latin was inevitable for the conduct of any transaction associated with religion or academics. Therefore, literacy was attributed predominant consideration over anything else, at least among the elite classes and in the merchant community. Those who lacked proficiency in the Latin language sought the assistance of the literate persons whom they could rely upon. By the thirteenth century, the entire nobility became literate and by the fifteenth century, most of the cities in England had grammar schools under the sponsorship of the layman. The schools were generally attached to the Cathedrals[1], monasteries[2] and larger parishes[3]. Some clergies were engaged as private tutors, too. The right to grant licences to the schools rested with the bishops. Thus by the thirteenth century, at least one person in every village was able to produce a document in Latin.

The terms college and university originally had very similar meanings. Only with the passing of centuries did university come to signify an educational institution composed of more than one college. The word college means literally "union formed by law," or a group of people associated in some common function. During the Middle Ages students at the universities of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge found it convenient to rent houses and share expenses instead of living in private apartments.

During the Middle Ages the Latin word *universitas* referred to any type of community. The term that was normally used to describe a legally chartered school of teachers and students was *studium generale,* meaning a place of study open to students from all parts. The *universitas* was a group of teachers or students (or perhaps both) within the *studium*. Gradually certain schools—especially Bologna in Italy and Paris—gained international recognition, and students flocked to them. Their reputations allowed graduates of those schools to teach anywhere else. By the end of the 14th century the term *universitas*, which had displaced studium, was used to describe the better-known schools of Europe.

From contact with the Arab scholars in North Africa and Spain, Western educators learned new ways of thinking about mathematics, natural science, medicine, and philosophy. The Arabic number system was especially important, and became the foundation of Western arithmetic. Arab scholars also preserved and translated into Arabic the works of such influential Greek scholars as Aristotle, Euclid, Galen, and Ptolemy. Because many of these works had disappeared from Europe by

1. *Cathedral:* The principal church of a diocese, a church that is the official seat of a diocesan bishop
2. *Monastery:* A house for persons under religious vows.
3. *Parish:* the ecclesiastical unit of area committed to one pastor

the Middle Ages, they might have been lost forever if Arab scholars had not preserved them. In the 11th century medieval scholars developed Scholasticism, a philosophical and educational movement that attempted to reconcile Christian theology with Greek philosophy. Scholasticism reached its high point in the book *Summa Theologiae* written by Saint Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century Dominican theologian who taught at the University of Paris.

Aquinas reconciled the authority of religious faith, represented by the Scriptures, with Greek reason, represented by Aristotle. The famous European universities of Paris, Salerno, Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge, and Padua grew out of the Scholastics-led intellectual revival of the 12th and 13th centuries.

The first university in Europe was at Salerno, Italy. It became known as a school of medicine as early as the 9th century. As its fame spread, students were drawn to it from all over Europe. In 1231 it was licensed by Frederick II, Holy Roman emperor, as the only school of medicine in his Kingdom of Naples. The second university emerged at Bologna, Italy, during the 11th century at about the same time as the famed Muslim school, El Azhar University, in Cairo, Egypt. Bologna developed into a widely respected school of canon and civil law. At Bologna the masters formed themselves into organisations called *collegia* for the conferring of degrees. Other Italian universities founded from the 13th to the 15th century include Padua (1222), Siena (1241), Piacenza (1248), Rome (1303), Perugia (1308), Pisa (1343), Florence (1349), Pavia (1361), and Turin (1405).

North of Italy the first great universities were those at Paris in France and at Oxford and Cambridge in England. The University of Paris grew out of theological schools associated with Notre Dame Cathedral. Shortly after 1100 William of Champeaux, a theologian and philosopher, opened a school in the cathedral for teaching dialectic—a type of logical argumentation. The University of Paris as a formal institution actually emerged between 1150 and 1170, though its written statutes were not set down until about 1208. Recognition as a legal corporation came in 1215 from Pope Innocent III. About 1253 the theologian Robert de Sorbon began teaching at Paris. In about 1257 he founded the Maison (house) de Sorbonne as a theological school for poor students. His school received the pope's official recognition in 1259, and it soon became one of the colleges around which the University of Paris grew. The Sorbonne is still one of the chief schools of the university. Other noted French universities were founded at Montpellier (1220), Toulouse (1229), Orléans (1306), Aix-en-Provence (1409), Poitiers (1431), and Caen (1432). The first university in Scotland was St. Andrews, founded in 1411 followed by the ones at Glasgow (1451), Aberdeen (1495) and Edinburgh (1583). The University of Heidelberg (1386) was the first university in Germany.

3.1.1 Oxford University

As the oldest English-speaking University in the world, Oxford lays claim to eight centuries of continuous existence. There is no clear date of foundation, but teaching has existed in some form at Oxford since 1096 AD. By 1170, Oxford, which was dominated neither by the Catholic Church nor by the monastic orders, had become a recognised centre of higher learning. In 1167 King Henry II forbade English students and scholars from going to Paris for learning following his quarrel with Thomas Becket. This might be the reason for the rise of Oxford. In 1188, renowned historian Gerald of Wales gave a public reading to the people gathered. By

the end of the same century, Oxford started recruiting students from abroad. By the end of the 12th century, Oxford university was well established. Oxford university was established after the style of the University of Paris. The subjects taught in the beginning were theology, law, medicine and the liberal arts. Oxford is situated 50 miles (80 kms) away from London beside the River Thames.

In the early stages of its existence, the university did not have permanent buildings. It functioned in the hired halls of churches and monasteries. With the establishment of *Dominican* and *Franciscan* orders, the study of theology gained more impetus. In the 13th century, rioting between gown and town (students and townspeople) hastened the establishment of primitive halls of residence. These were succeeded by the first of Oxford's colleges, which began as medieval 'halls of residence' or endowed houses under the supervision of a Master. University College (1249), Balliol College (1263) and Merton College (1264) were the early colleges established at Oxford. Oxford's reputation increased in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Fig 3.1.1 Oxford University

During its early days, the reputation of Oxford was based on theology and the liberal arts. But it also started focussing more on the physical sciences than the University of Paris. The mathematical and scientific tradition of Oxford positively influenced other universities like Vienna which was founded in 1365 and was started with teachers having Master's Degrees from Oxford. The scientific temper developed by Oxford led to its popularity in meteorological studies. However, it could not progress much as the renowned alumnus Roger Bacon's work was condemned by the Church. By the beginning of the 13th century, the number of students increased to 1500. It seems to have doubled by the end of the medieval period. A significant scholar contributed by the university was the religious reformer and heretic John Wycliffe (1330-1384) who campaigned vigorously for a Bible in English against the wishes of the Roman Catholic Church. Renaissance scholars like the Dutch humanist Erasmus (1469-1536) carried new learning to Oxford. The scholars like William Grocyn (1446-1519), John Colet (1467-1519) and Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) enhanced the reputation of the university. Since then Oxford University has had a high reputation for the scholarship and learning in classical learning, political science and theology.

The students of Oxford university first attached themselves to those tutors who had a hired room for lectures. Mostly the students stayed in private houses or a hall under a principal elected by themselves. Only a few students were supported by their parents. The notion generally held was that the poor students were to be looked after by charity.

Yet, life in university was marked by violence and drinking. Violence was not confined to the students alone, on the other hand, it also engulfed others related to the university like the warden and sometimes the teachers, too. In the case of a murder by a student, it was considered manslaughter and the culprit was convicted for a short term imprisonment. The most infamous dispute

between the Oxford university students and the citizens occurred in 1355. It started as a brawl in a town tavern but worsened into a riot between the scholars and the townsmen with bows and arrows and ultimately led to the death of several students from the University. The king punished the townspeople and the control of the city went to the university.

3.1.2 Cambridge University

Cambridge is located on the bank of River Cam, flowing 50 miles north of London. The early history of Cambridge is not so much known as that of Oxford. By 1200, Cambridge was a county town with a thriving commercial community. There was a school taught by clergy at Cambridge after 1112, but the elements of a university did not appear until scholars taking refuge from hostile townsmen in Oxford migrated to Cambridge and settled there in 1209. The students who flocked to Cambridge soon arranged their scheme of study after the pattern followed by the Universities in Italy and France, and which they were following at Oxford. They were numerous enough by 1226 to have set up an organisation, represented by an official called a Chancellor, and seem to have arranged regular courses of study, taught by their own members. King Henry III took them under his protection as early as 1231 and arranged for them to be sheltered from exploitation by their landlords. At the same time he tried to ensure that they got enough teaching, by an order that only those enrolled under the tuition of a recognised master were to be allowed to remain in the town. In 1231 and 1233 letters from the king and the pope indicated that Cambridge was a university with a chancellor at its head.

Gradually the students were permitted to stay at Cambridge and the first college at Cambridge was in fact established by Walter De Merton who had set up Merton college at Oxford. This college, also known as Pythagoras Hall, was created to accommodate the students from Oxford and to prevent their migration elsewhere. However, the first recognised college was founded at *Peterhouse* in 1284 by *Hugh Balsham*. The church handed over to the college was that of St Peter and the College later became known as Peterhouse. Henceforward, Oxford and Cambridge advance on parallel lines, Oxford enjoying the advantage of a start of fifty years.

Fig 3.1.2 Cambridge University

Within the next three centuries, another fifteen colleges were founded and in 1318, Cambridge received its formal recognition from the Pope. However, it was not before 1502 that the university became popular. It was with the arrival of Erasmus that the spirit of Renaissance was inculcated into the learning of University. It was in 1546 that Henry VIII founded Trinity College which remains the largest of Cambridge's all colleges. In 1571 the university was formally incorporated by the Parliament. In 1669, Isaac Newton received the Lucasian professorship of mathematics which he held for 30 years. His tenure as an instructor of Maths brought great fame to the university.

3.1.3 Curriculum

Medieval universities like Cambridge and Oxford were centred on higher learning in several subjects which were in practice during the early medieval period. However, with the advent of Renaissance thinking, the curriculum and subjects seem to have undergone gradual changes and evolved to become pre-modern educational systems. Students were trained for future jobs. Yet, due to the existing social order with a high preference given to ecclesiastical jobs, many of them became associated with the Church. Naturally, it affected the curriculum taught in the universities. The liberal arts education was provided by the university. The seven areas of study were divided into two sections called *'Trivium' and 'Quadrivium'.*

3.1.3.1 The Trivium

The *Trivium* consisted of *Grammar, Rhetoric* and *Logic or Dialectic*. More than learning the construction of speech the study of grammar was concerned with the derivation of meaning from words. The goal of learning grammar was to master the language skills and understand the features of the language. Through learning rhetoric, the learner was expected to comprehend persuasion in communication. The persuasive argument was centred on the arrangement of words and their presentation. Logic as a philosophy is based on the principle that debating is an important aspect of the learning process. Therefore, the debate was the most common teaching and learning technique prevalent in Oxford and Cambridge universities as in any other universities of Europe during the medieval times. A Bachelor's degree was given to a student who completed four years of *Trivium.* It could be followed by a Master's Degree.

3.1.3.2 The Quadrivium

The Quadrivium consisted of *Arithmetic*, *Astronomy*, *Geometry* and *Music.* More than computation, learning *Arithmetic* was related to the philosophy of numbers. It also included the study of ratios and relationships. Renaissance thinking must have prompted the universities to include Astronomy focusing on Plato's model of the universe and the study of relationships between the planets and their movements in space. Divine theories essentially influenced the teaching of Geometry in the universities. It was based on the concept that the universe was created based on some geometric calculations of the Supreme and therefore learning Geometry is the way to understand God's creation. Learning of music was purely for aesthetic, spiritual and personal reasons, though it was believed that it was related to maths.

3.1.4 Life of a Student

The students attending university classes often thrived to have an atmosphere of freedom from parental and social control. Due to this reason, several students often got messed up with new habits like excessive drinking and rowdy behaviour. This eventually led to a bad reputation for the students in the nearby towns. In the universities, pastimes like gambling, music and chess were permitted. However, there were students who were well engaged in scholarly pursuits. Only religious holidays were exempted from regular class days. The student accommodations had minimum facilities in universities like Oxford. Students were often short of money and troubled their parents for money.

A student in the normal course entered university between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Before entering the universities, they were likely to have received primary education from the local churches. Only the boys were educated and the girls did not enjoy the privilege of education during the Middle Ages. However, girls from well-to-do families were educated by private tutors. Many students

who did not come from wealthy families often struggled to survive.

The establishment of universities resulted in the general enhancement in matters of discipline and decorum. In Medieval England, university education was considered a priority for social advancement. A University degree was important in the appointments of the Church. During the medieval period, bishops were recruited from among the clergy who had a university degree. The universities were funded by the patrons in the hope of getting an 'educated servant' useful for their enterprises. The students did not only get intellectual advancement in the university other than their degrees, but ample political and social contacts for their future careers also. Many a time, intellectual growth of a student seemed secondary to the practical skills gained in the university advancing a graduate's status. The popular culture of the gentleman-bureaucrats, lay persons and merchants were less sophisticated when compared to the graduates from the universities. Universities gave birth to a new reading public which eventually led to the trade of books. Emergence of universities necessitated the need for secular academic texts and reference works which were not produced by the clergy or the Church. Both Oxford and Cambridge Universities became the symbol of intelligentsia in the medieval world and contributed several well-known personalities to the modern world.

Recap

- Early medieval education was centred on the monasteries and Church institutions.
- Oxford and Cambridge universities represent a shift of education from the Church to the secular agencies in Britain.
- Though teaching existed at Oxford from the eleventh century onwards, it became institutionalised only in the following centuries.
- A dispute between the students of Oxford and the townsman led to the beginning of learning at Cambridge.
- The Curriculum in medieval England consisted of the *Trivium* and the *Qudrivium*.
- Initially the graduates from the universities were recruited to the Church offices.
- The graduates led a more sophisticated life when compared to the other sections of the society in Britain.
- The students who entered the university for education often were attracted by the carefree lifestyle rendered by the newly given liberty.

Objective Type Questions

1. Which was the language used for business transactions in medieval Britain?
2. Which historian gave a public reading at Oxford in 1188 for the first time?
3. Which early reformer of England graduated from Oxford?
4. Which scholar carried Renaissance learning to Oxford?
5. What was the first college of Cambridge known ?
6. Who founded Trinity College?
7. Which great scholar received Lucasian professorship in 1699?
8. What was the area of learning consisted of *Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic* known?
9. Which area of learning consisted of Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music?
10. Where was the first recognised college of Oxford founded at?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Latin
2. Gerald of Wales
3. John Wycliffe
4. Erasmus
5. Pythagorus Hall
6. Henry VIII
7. Sir Isaaac Newton
8. Trivium
9. Quadrivium
10. Peterhouse

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of Oxford and Cambridge universities in enabling a shift of education from the Church to the secular agencies in Britain?
2. Elucidate the circumstances that led to the inception of Cambridge.
3. Discuss the role of medieval universities in the intellectual development of England.

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* , Cambridge University Press, 2009.
9. Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* ,Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
10. Jenkins, Simon. *A Short History of England,* Profile Books, 2018.
11. Churchill, Winston, *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

UNIT TWO

Anti-Clerical Movement

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learners will be able to:

- dissect the forces that led to the emergence of the anti-clerical movement in Britain.
- compare the features of clerical movement with Reformation in England.
- discern the features of the Lollard movement.
- evaluate the anti-clerical features of modern times with that of early medieval or medieval times.

Prerequisites

Now, imagine a time when the Church held incredible power over not just the spiritual lives of people, but their everyday existence. The clergy were often the ones making decisions about everything, from education to politics, creating a society where religion and authority were almost inseparable. But as you might expect, not everyone was happy with this arrangement. Over time, a growing sense of frustration led to the Anti Clerical Movement, a pushback against the church's overwhelming influence.

This movement didn't just emerge out of nowhere, it was fueled by many factors: corruption within the Church, abuses of power by the clergy, and the rise of new ideas challenging traditional authority. Think about it, when people begin to question the very institution that's been shaping their lives for centuries, it sparks a fire of change.

In this unit, we'll explore the roots of the Anti Clerical Movement, its key players, and its impact on British society. How did it pave the way for political and social reform? And what role did the rise of Protestantism and the shift towards secularism play in challenging the Church's dominance?

Keywords

Anti-clericalism, Lollards, Transubstantiation, Indulgences

Discussion

In medieval Europe, the common man was never in direct contact with the Holy See (the government of the Roman Catholic Church under the Pope) or the King. They were related to the local clergy in the town and when these clergymen failed to fulfil their duties, it was viewed as a failure of the system. The word anticlericalism is used to denote the attitudes and mentalities which produce mild criticism against the clergy and may lead to loud protest and violence. It was a reaction of the people against the church involvement in social, economic and political matters of the country in excess. It sometimes contained ideas based on theology, philosophy and history. A notable feature of the movement was that it was not launched by the laymen alone, instead, the members of the lower clergy also were a part of it. The goal of anti-clericalism was to make religion a strictly private activity.

Many a time anti-clericalism has led to violent attacks against the clergy, destruction of religious sites, and seizing of church property. As a part of the movement there occurred violence and attacks against the local clergy in England. There were examples of local people entering the church and manhandling the vicar in many places as seen in the case of Pawlett in Somerset in 1540. In the medieval period, both the clergy and the laymen expressed anti-clerical attitudes irrespective of the religious sects they belonged to. The anti-clerical movement was often based on theology, philosophy and history. The movement at a later stage gave birth to the Reformation movement across Europe beginning with the Lutheran dissent. In England, the earliest form of anti-clerical movement was expressed by the Lollards, who were the followers of John Wycliffe. They severely criticised the institutional church and anticipated the English Reformation. The obvious source of early anticlerical sentiment arose long before the actual launching of Reformation in England by Henry VIII. Anti-clericalism existed throughout the Christian history. However, it was prominent in the transitional period between the medieval and modern period, i.e., the period that just followed the Renaissance. Later, during the Enlightenment period, scholars like Voltaire strongly opposed the rampant corruption in the Catholic Church. The most obvious source of early anticlerical sentiment arose long before the formal establishment of the Reformation, beginning in the 14th Century with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, where satire was used to hint at underlying frustration amongst the masses.

John Wycliffe: John Wycliffe represents the early example of the anti-clerical movement in Britain. He was an English theologian, philosopher and reformer who lived between 1330 and 1384 AD. He was a product of Oxford university. He was a member of the deputation sent by the English King Edward III to solve the differences between the papacy and the crown. He vehemently criticised the church policies and argued that the church itself was corrupt and sinful. He called for a return to evangelical poverty, and simple living. He stated that the Church was already wealthy enough and it was the English authorities and not the Church authorities who should tax the people. He pointed out that Christ exhorted his disciples to lead a life of poverty and not a life in the pursuit of wealth. As his views attracted considerable attention, Pope Gregory XI issued five papal bulls (an official papal letter or document) against Wycliffe and callied him 'the master of errors' by asking for his arrest in 1377 AD.

After two years he started attacking the church systematically through his arguments mainly against transubstantiation (the change

by which the substance of the bread and wine used in the Eucharist, ie. Holy Communion, becomes the body and blood of Christ) and denied the doctrine that the church hierarchy possessed a direct succession from Jesus. He also departed from the church doctrines of indulgences, and confession and emphasised the learning of the Holy Bible as the sole authority. In 1382 he translated the Bible into English which was till then available only in Latin. He was alleged to have instigated the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. His followers were known as Lollards. His works were banned by the Church. His teachings, though suppressed, continued to spread. His steps of systematically attacking the base of the Catholic Church were later adopted by Martin Luther who initiated Reformation in Germany and began the Protestant Movement in Europe. Therefore, Wycliffe is hailed as the 'Morning Star of Reformation' in England.

3.2.1 Lollard Movement

The first heretics of England are popularly known as the Lollards. They were the followers of John Wycliffe. The name Lollard, used with disapproval, was derived from Middle Dutch, meaning 'mumbler.' The first group to be called Lollards were some of the colleagues of Wycliffe at Oxford. The group was led by Nicholas of Hereford. Gradually the movement gained followers outside Oxford. The townspeople, merchants, gentry and sometimes even the lower clergy followed Lollard's ideals. Several of the royal households and a few members of the House Commons extended their support to the movement. With the accession of Henry IV in 1399, a wave of suppression broke out against the Lollards. William Sawrey, the first martyr of the Lollard movement was burned alive in 1401. After a few years there broke out a revolt by the Lollards under Sir John Oldcastle, which was suppressed by the king. The movement started working underground from then on mainly among the artisans and the tradesmen.

It was not a systematic organisation in the modern sense. They were bound together by a set of beliefs. These beliefs varied in focus and intensity from person to person. Following ideas were associated with the Lollards.

1. The pope had no part to decide worldly affairs.
2. The church was too engrossed in worldly affairs.
3. Monasticism had deviated from the path of spiritualism.
4. The Bible should be made available to all in local languages.
5. It is wrong to use divine power for individual gains.
6. All are brothers and equals.

Although the Lollards started as a movement to reform the Roman Catholic Church, the state and nobility viewed it as a threat to their existence and an incitement to upheaval or rebellion. Initially, the crown of England used the movement as a tool to attack the Catholic Church. Later on, especially after Henry IV (Reign from 1399 to 1413) came to power, the crown suppressed the Lollards. When the anger of the working classes erupted in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, it was seen as a result of the work of the Lollards. It has to be pointed out that the work of Wycliffe was available only to the educated classes but we can assume that he sympathised with the lot of the peasants. In the coming century, the term Lollard came to be used to castigate political opponents.

The Lollard movement could be seen as a spontaneous movement that came up in

England. It was neither officially founded by Wycliffe nor had any organisational setup. The members of Lollard movement preferred to continue the anti-clerical propaganda held by Wycliffe and utilised every single opportunity to attack the establishment of the Catholic Church. Though in the initial stages the Crown used the movement as a weapon against the Catholic Church in the power struggle, at a later stage they were apprehended for their radical views. The most important impact of the movement was the mode of criticism they inaugurated against the Church which was adopted by the later reformers like Martin Luthur. Their views on transubstantiation, confession, authoritative succession and indulgences were accepted by the latter during the formation of his ninety-five theses. Thus Wycliffe has been appropriately described as the Morning star of Reformation in England.

Recap

- In medieval Europe, the term anti-clericalism stood for criticising the clergy and the Catholic Church for its corruption and moral decay.
- Often the members of the clergy themselves were critical of the corruption and worldly spirit of the structural aspects of the Catholic church.
- People even became martyrs as a result of the suppression of the movement by the kings and the Catholic Church because it basically pointed towards egalitarian ideas.
- The movement was also based on philosophical, theological and historical ideas.
- John Wycliffe was one of the early leaders of the ant-clerical movement in Britain.
- The followers of Wycliffe were called Lollards.
- The Lollard movement laid the foundation for the future religious reformation in Europe.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who was called the 'the master of errors' by the pope in the 14th century?
2. What was the name given to the followers of Wycliffe?
3. Who was the first martyr of the Lollard movement?
4. Who led a revolt of the Lollards?
5. Who was known as the Morning Star of Reformation in England?
6. Who led the Lollard movement in England after the period of Wycliffe?
7. Who is the author of the book 'The Canterbury Tales'?
8. Who led the Lollard movement in England after the period of Wycliffe?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. John Wycliffe
2. Lollards
3. William Sawrey
4. John Oldcastle
5. John Wycliffe
6. Nicholas of Herefold.
7. Geoffrey Chaucer
8. Nicholas of Hereford

Assignments

1. Analyse the factors that led to the rise of the anti - clerical movement in England.
2. Briefly discuss the Lollard Movement.

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* , Cambridge University Press, 2009.
9. Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* ,Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
10. Jenkins, Simon. *A Short History of England,* Profile Books, 2018.
11. Churchill, Winston, *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

UNIT THREE

Middle English Language and Literature

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- get introduced to the background of Middle English Literature.
- identify the features of the literary works of renowned medieval writers.
- discern the factors that influence literary and cultural achievements of a given age.
- compare and contrast the features of Middle English literary achievements with that of the English literature of succeeding centuries.

Prerequisites

When you step back in time to medieval Britain, the 12th to 15th centuries, you see that the world is a place of knights, castles, and dramatic social change. This is the age when the English language itself was transforming, evolving from Old English into what we now call Middle English. It's a time of linguistic revolution, as French and Latin influence the English tongue, giving us the rich vocabulary and structure that shapes the English we use today.

But it's not just about the words; it's about the stories. Middle English literature opens doors to fascinating tales of chivalric adventures, religious devotion, and human frailty. We encounter classics like *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, a story that's as much about a society in transition as it is about the vivid characters Chaucer brings to life.

In this unit , we'll explore how this dynamic period in British history gave birth to the language and literature that laid the foundation for much of what we read today. From linguistic shifts to epic poems, we'll discover how Middle English literature reflects the heart and soul of medieval Britain, and how it continues to influence us centuries later.

Keywords

Old English, Middle English, Medieval Romances, Langland and Chaucer

Discussion

The period in English history that roughly falls between 450 AD when the earliest settlements were made in the island of Britain by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes and 1066 AD when William of Normandy conquered England is usually identified as the Anglo-Saxon period. This period is also referred to by the term Old English, especially when one talks about the history of the English language and literature. The English language has undergone considerable changes in its transition from Old English to the English that we use today. Old English may look like a completely different language. The Anglo-Saxons had a body of literature which was superior to any that existed in Europe at the time of the Norman Conquest. Special mention must be made of *Beowulf*, the epic poem of 3183 lines about the exploits of the Scandinavian hero Beowulf. One must also note the intensity of passion that is there in the elegiac religious lyrics of the time. Only two names of poets- Caedmon and Cynewulf - have survived and much of the work has remained anonymous. The prose works that must be mentioned are Bede's *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the translations that were undertaken by King Alfred the Great.

The second stage in the history of both the English language and literature began with the Norman Conquest. The Middle English period is usually identified from 1066 AD to 1500 AD and is noted for the extensive influence of the French language on English. After the Norman Conquest, most of the Anglo-Saxon nobles were dispossessed and a new French-speaking aristocracy supplanted them in power. This event acted as a significant setback to the English language and literature. French language and culture replaced English in polite court society and had lasting effects on English culture. The blow was greater for the literature than the language. English which had edged out Latin as the official language by the tenth century was demoted in favour of the French language. But the native tradition survived, although little 13th-century, and even less 12th-century, literature in English is in existence, since most of it was transmitted orally.

English continued to remain as the language spoken by the majority, most of whom including the former Saxon nobles who lost their lands, were treated as serfs. The English people who were required to be in touch with their Norman masters for their livelihood were forced to adapt and learn some French words for communication. The Norman aristocracy who had to communicate with their English servants were also forced to learn some English words. As the Norman men, especially from the lower ranks, settled in large numbers in England after the Conquest, they entered into inter-racial relationships with Saxon women. When King Henry I (Reign from 1100 to 1135), fourth son of William the Conqueror, became the king, he entered into a marriage with Princess Matilda, a princess who descended from the royal family of Wessex, in order to fortify his relationship with the people. Thus a bilingual situation emerged gradually in England. Latin, which was the language used by the Church and higher learning also continued to be used and enjoyed a higher status than either the French or English language.

Old English fragmented into several dialects and gradually evolved into Middle English, which, despite an admixture of French, is unquestionably English. The loss of Normandy by the English in 1204, and the royal decrees in both England and France in 1224 making it illegal for anyone to hold land in both countries, must have been a factor

in the reemergence of the English language among the upper classes. By the 14th century, when English again became the chosen language of the ruling classes, it had lost much of the Old English inflectional system and had undergone certain sound changes. It had also enriched its vocabulary by adding thousands of French words. By the mid-14th century, Middle English had become the literary as well as the spoken language of England.

As a result of the Norman Conquest, Wessex lost its political and cultural importance, and its dialect, West Saxon, which had established its supremacy as the literary language lost its prestige. The dialects of the other parts of the island were restored to their former positions of equal authority and this resulted in the development of three groups of dialects, the Southern, Midland (divided into East and West) and Northern, all differing among themselves in forms and even in vocabulary. It was only towards the end of the 14th century that East Midland, the dialect of London which under the Norman kings replaced Winchester as the capital city and seat of the Court and Parliament, emerged supreme. This happened partly also through the influence of the two Universities, Oxford and Cambridge, which gradually grew up during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and attracted students from all parts of the country. This victory of the East Midland form was marked by, though it was not in any large degree due to, the appearance in the fourteenth century of the first great modern English poet, Chaucer.

The Middle English literature of the 14th and 15th centuries is much more diversified than the previous Anglo-Saxon literature. A variety of French and even Italian elements influenced Middle English literature, especially in southern England. In addition, different regional styles were maintained, for literature and learning had not yet been centralised. For these reasons, as well as because of the vigorous and uneven growth of national life, the Middle English period contains a wealth of literary works which cannot be easily classified.

Medieval Romance is a literary form, usually characterised by its treatment of chivalry that came into being in France in the mid-12th century. The concept of chivalry in the sense of "honourable and courteous conduct expected of a knight" was perhaps at its height in the 12th and 13th centuries and was strengthened by the Crusades. A knight's love for a lady was known as courtly love (*amour courtois*), a philosophy of love and code of lovemaking that flourished in France and England during the Middle Ages. The term romance usually carries implications of the wonderful, the miraculous, the exaggerated, and the wholly ideal and many medieval romances are set in distant times and remote places with its motifs of the quest, the forest, the test, the meeting with the evil giant and the encounter with the beautiful beloved. Medieval Romance may be defined as a story of adventure – fictitious and frequently marvellous or supernatural – in verse or prose. At its best, as in the work of the French writers Marie de France and Chretien de Troyes, romance could analyse the connection between a refined inner life and the demands of society.

The subject matter of medieval romance is usually divided into three categories: matter of France, matter of Rome and matter of Britain. The matter of France deals with the activities of Charlemagne (Charles the Great [742-814], king of the Franks from 768 until his death and considered the first Holy Roman Emperor) and his knights and finds its greatest expression in *Chanson de Roland*, which tells of a desperate story of a courageous fight against hopeless odds, ending with the hero's death. The matter of Rome deals with the

ancient classical civilizations of Greece and Rome and includes the stories of the Trojan war, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. The matter of Britain is concerned with the Arthurian stories introduced by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kingdom of Britain, 1137). Geoffrey's work was based on Celtic sources in Welsh language but the main source of the Arthurian portions may have been Geoffrey's own imagination. King Arthur was a legendary hero who was believed to be the leader of Celtic Britons in the battle against Saxonian invaders in the 5th and 6th centuries. It is not certain whether the legend is based on an actual historical person but it has been a profitable legend for medieval romances. It is possible to identify a fourth group of romances - matter of England, which deals with legends celebrating popular English (Anglo-Saxon) heroes.

The French romances dealing with the matter of Rome and matter of Britain combined adventure and sentiment, the latter deriving from the elaborate conventions of courtly love. In the matter of Britain there is a certain amount of material ultimately based on the belief—probably Celtic in origin—in an otherworld into which men can penetrate, where they can challenge those who inhabit it or enjoy the love of fairy women. Such themes appear in a highly rationalised form in the lays of the late 12th-century Marie de France, although she mentions Arthur and his queen only in one, the lay of *Lanval*. Marie de France is considered the first female French poet though she is believed to have written most of her works in England. But nothing is known with certainty about her.

With Chrétien de Troyes, a 12th-century French poet who wrote five romances dealing with the knights of Arthur's court, the Arthurian theme reached its highest perfection in the Middle Ages. His *Perceval* contains the earliest surviving literary version of the quest of the Holy Grail. It is not known whether he lived in England at any point of time but his works were very popular in England during the medieval period. One of the best medieval romances written in verse in English is 'Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight' by an anonymous poet which appeared around 1370. This romance deals with a weird adventure that befell Sir Gawain, nephew of King Arthur, who is portrayed as the model of an ideal knight. Against a background of chivalric gallantry, the tale of the knight's resistance to the temptation of another man's beautiful wife is narrated. The vigour of the Anglo-Saxon, the polish of the French, and the magical folk strain of the Celtic combine successfully in the poem. Other English romances in verse that have survived include 'King Horn' and 'The Lay of Havelok the Dane' which deal with Anglo-Saxon tales.

One of the earliest of the surviving poems in early Middle English is *Orrmulam*, written probably about the year 1200 by a monk Orm. Layamon's *Brut*, written about 1200 is one of the important early Middle English verse chronicles and its source is a French poem *Roman de Brut* by Anglo-Norman poet Wace written about 1155. Wace's poem itself is a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kingdom of Britain. Wace also includes Arthurian stories from other sources, and is the first one to actually refer to the Round Table, and he refers to it thrice in a manner which suggests that it was already familiar to his audience. The interest which Layamon's *Brut* possesses for modern readers centres round the Arthurian section. It is the work of the first writer of any magnitude in Middle English, and, standing at the entrance to that period, he may be said to look before and after. He retains much of Old English tradition; in addition, he is the first to make

extensive use of French material. And, lastly, in the place of a fast vanishing native mythology, he endows his countrymen with a new legendary store in which lay concealed the seeds of later chivalry.

The Owl and the Nightingale by an anonymous author, probably written around the beginning of the 13th century, is the first example in English of the *debat,* a popular continental form; in the poem, the owl, strictly monastic and didactic, and the nightingale, a free and amorous secular spirit, charmingly debate the virtues of their respective ways of life. To the medieval mind the poetic associations to the nightingale were invariably those of love. The owl, on the other hand, unmistakably represents a poet of the religious type. The allegory may represent the argument between asceticism and pleasure, philosophy and art, or the older didactic poetry and the newer secular love poetry.

Lyrics written before the 12th century have not survived in English. The great bulk of the lyrics that are in existence are religious. Some of the best religious lyrics preserved in the *Harley Lyrics* show a new emphasis on the humanity of Christ and the suffering of his mother. Most of these lyrics are either in praise of Mary or describe her sorrows. There is an element of mirth in some of these lovely hymns addressed to Mary and they reveal the influence of courtly love with its exaltation of woman in its courtly sense. The focus on the cult (devotion) of the Virgin was a great humanising force. An element of erotic mysticism is noticeable in the image of the wistful (sad) soul striving for union with the Divine.

The popular ballad had flourished by the end of the Middle English period. It is one type of narrative song with certain clearly marked characteristics which distinguish it from other kinds of poetry. It is composed in simple stanzas, generally of two or four lines, suitable to a recurrent tune. It is usually sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. In many ballads there is a refrain, and a frequent characteristic is the habit of repeating a stanza with slight modifications that advance the story. Ballad art is always objective, with no marks of personal authorship and no attempt to analyse or interpret the action or the characters of the story. In general the ballad reflects the simple direct approach to a story characteristic of unlettered people. Though ballads flourished in the late Middle Ages, most of them are unlikely to have been written down and hence may not have survived in its early form. It is possible to say that most of the surviving ballads were written down after 1600. The most popular among the ballads are about Robin Hood, the heroic outlaw.

In the beginning of the Middle English period, the Anglo-Saxon alliterative tradition in poetry was replaced by the rhymed verse of French. But the unexplained reemergence of the alliterative verse form in the 14th century produced some of the best poetry in Middle English. The most popular alliterative poem of the period is The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, better known as *Piers Plowman* (around 1362), and it is certainly one of the most significant poems of the Middle English period. It is a long, impassioned work in the form of dream visions (a favourite literary device of the day), lamenting the plight of the poor, the avarice of the powerful, and the sinfulness of all people. It is an allegorical poem which provides a detailed record of late 14th century life, covering all aspects of the political and theological debate and echoing common sentiments in its satire of the corrupt church and the plea for its reformation. The emphasis, however, is placed on a Christian vision of the

life of activity, of the life of unity with God, and of the synthesis of these two under the rule of a purified church. The narrator, after undertaking a quest, finds the path to spiritual salvation through Piers, an ordinary man. Piers is the perfect exemplar of Christian life who knows truth through love. The poem is assumed to be written by William Langland about whom very little is known. The poem's dialect suggests that the poet lived in the West Midlands. It is written in a simple language but its imagery is powerful. The poem has survived in three versions (around 1362, 1377 & 1387), the latter two revisions probably carried out by Langland himself. Despite various faults, this allegorical poem bears comparison in its vivid delineation of scene and the realistic painting of character with the best of medieval allegories, with the French *Roman de la Rose* or the Italian *The Divine Comedy* by Dante.

John Gower was the best-known contemporary and friend of Chaucer, who addressed him as "Moral Gower," at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde.* Each of his three major works, characterised by metrical smoothness and serious moral criticism, was written in a different language. *Speculum Meditantis* (French), written before 1381 is an allegorical manual of the vices and virtues; *Vox Clamantis* (Latin), written around 1381 expresses horror at the Peasants' Revolt led by Wat Tyler and goes on to condemn the baseness of all classes of society. He is mainly remembered for his poem in English, *Confessio Amantis* (*Lover's Confession* 34,000 lines, written around 1390). It is a compilation of 133 stories in octosyllabic couplets skilfully retold from familiar sources. The tales are arranged around the seven deadly sins whose various aspects they illustrate while Genius, the priest of Venus, hears the elderly lover's confession. The relation between piety and love is explored while discussing love in its widest personal and social contexts. The chief interest of *Confessio Amantis* for the modern reader is as a collection of stories and many of the stories are originally from the Latin poet Ovid. Despite its great length and considerable achievement in workmanship, *Confessio Amantis* is a pale shadow compared not only with *Canterbury Tales* but also with the other poems of Chaucer. Gower is not a great poet but is only an earnest man with a message for his times.

The works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 -1400), considered the father of English poetry, mark the brilliant culmination of Middle English literature. The known facts of Chaucer's life are fragmentary and are based almost entirely on official records. He was born in London and by 1366 he married Philippa Roet, who was a lady-in-waiting to Edward III's queen. During the years 1370 to 1378, Chaucer was frequently employed on diplomatic missions to the Continent, visiting Italy in 1372–73 and in 1378. From 1374 on he held a number of official positions. The official date of Chaucer's death is Oct. 25, 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Chaucer was influenced very early by French literature, in particular the *Roman de la Rose*, one of the most influential works of European culture. Chaucer's literary activity is often divided into three periods. His chief works during the first period (up to 1370) were based largely on French models and included the *Book of the Duchess,* an allegorical lament written in 1369 on the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, and a partial translation of the *Roman de la Rose.* Chaucer's second period (up to 1387), is usually called his Italian period because during this time his works were modelled primarily on Dante and Boccaccio. Major works of this period were *The House of Fame* (about 1379), describing the adventures of Aeneas after the fall of Troy

and *The Parliament of Fowls,* a poem of 699 lines, which tells of the mating of fowls on St. Valentine's Day and was believed to celebrate the betrothal of Richard II to Anne of Bohemia. Some of the other works of this period included a prose translation of Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* and an unfinished *Legend of Good Women* which introduced the heroic couplet (two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter) into English verse.

Chaucer's greatest achievement of this period was *Troilus and Criseyde* (around 1385)*,* certainly one of the great love poems in the English language. In this poem of 8239 lines, Chaucer perfected the seven-line stanza later called *rhyme royal.* This psychologically penetrating non-alliterative verse romance is a tale of the fatal course of a noble love, laid in Homeric Troy and based on *Il filostrato*, a romance by the 14th-century Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio. Troilus, a Trojan prince (son of Priam and Hecuba), fell in love with Cressida (Chryseis), daughter of Calchas. When she was exchanged for a Trojan prisoner of war, Cressida swore to be faithful to Troilus, but then deceived him. Troilus was killed by Achilles. In this poem Chaucer has not only given us a full and finished romance, but has endowed it with what medieval romance conspicuously lacked—interest of character as well as of incident, and interest of drama as well as of narrative.

To Chaucer's final period, in which he achieved his fullest artistic power, belongs his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales* (written mostly after 1387). This unfinished poem, about 17,000 lines, is one of the most brilliant works in all literature. The poem introduces a group of pilgrims journeying from London to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury. The pilgrims gather at the Tabard Inn and Harry Bailey, the innkeeper who offers to accompany them suggests that each of the 30 pilgrims should tell two stories each on the way to Canterbury and on the way back. The stories are recounted by Chaucer through the mouths of the pilgrims and his plan was to relate 120 stories. In its present form there are only 24 tales, and of these, two are interrupted before the end, and two break off shortly after they get under way. But the unity of the poem is not affected by the fact that the whole poem as planned remains incomplete. It appears that Chaucer had altered his original plan in the course of writing the poem.

Together, the pilgrims represent a wide cross section of 14th-century English life. The tales are cast into many different verse forms and genres and collectively explore virtually every significant medieval theme. In its total impression, the Canterbury Pilgrimage of the poem is the procession of human comedy. Characters are both individuals and morally and socially representative types. In the interludes between the tales, these characters are set in action, talking, disputing, and the tales themselves are a livelier extension of their talk. These tales are the entertainment the pilgrims provide for each other and at the same time they are a fuller revelation of themselves, their interests, attitudes, and antagonisms. The stories vividly indicate medieval attitudes and customs in such areas as love, marriage, and religion. *The Canterbury Tales* probably gives us more information about 14th century English society than any other social document of the time. Through Chaucer's superb powers of characterization the pilgrims such as the earthy wife of Bath, the gentle knight, the worldly prioress, the evil summoner come intensely alive. His humour is all-pervasive. No other Middle English writer has his skill, his range, his complexity, and his humane outlook. John Dryden comments on *The Canterbury Tales*: "Here is God's plenty." Because of major changes in pronunciation

and accentuation that took place in the century and half after Chaucer, his metrical technique was not fully appreciated until the 18th century.

The period also witnessed the popularisation of drama. The plays were mainly of two types: Morality Plays and Mystery Plays. Morality Plays emphasised the need to be moral and just in life while Mystery Plays dealt with stories from the Bible. Morality Plays were allegorical dramas in which characters personified moral qualities (such as virtue or avarice) or abstractions (such as death or youth) and in which moral lessons were taught. *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Everyman* are among the most important of the morality plays that have survived.

The term Mystery Play is sometimes used synonymously with the term miracle play. Some literary authorities make a distinction between the two, designating as mystery plays all types of early medieval drama that draw their subject matter from Gospel events and as miracle plays all those dealing with legends of the saints. Miracle plays dealing with the legends of the saints were less realistic and more religious in tone than those concerned with biblical episodes, and were eventually superseded by the latter. Mystery or Miracle plays were long cyclic dramas of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption of mankind, based mostly on biblical narratives. They usually included a selection of Old Testament episodes but concentrated mainly on the life and passion of Jesus Christ. They always ended with the Last Judgement. The cycles were generally financed and performed by the craft guilds and staged on wagons in the streets and squares of the towns. Texts of the cycles staged at York, Chester, Wakefield, and at an unstated location in East Anglia have survived, together with fragments from Coventry, Newcastle, and Norwich. Their literary quality is uneven, but the achievement of the York cycle is greater and consisted of forty eight single plays.

As a development of the morality play, interludes (from Latin interludium) were performed in Europe by small companies of professional actors during the 15th and 16th centuries. The term covers a wide range of entertainment, from simple farces performed on small stages in public places to dramatic sketches performed at banquets in the halls of the nobility. In both cases the plays were purely secular and more concerned with ideas than with morals. Most interludes came from France and England. These pieces usually dealt with the antics of foolish or cunning peasants, exploring the relationship between master and servant or husband and wife. The allegorical characters of the moralities are absent in the interludes which stand midway between the moralities and the regular drama. *The Four P's* (1540) by John Heywood is the best known of all Interludes in English.

Recap

- There were two developmental stages for the Medieval English language: the Old English and Middle English periods.
- The works of William Langland satirised the corruption in the church and can be seen as a protest against social inequalities of the period.
- Most of the literary works expressed their reflections on society and religion.
- Geoffrey Chaucer is the towering literary figure of Middle English literature.
- Medieval Romances which were very popular during the 12th and 13th centuries made effective use of chivalry and courtly love.
- The subject matter of medieval romance is usually divided into three categories: matter of France, matter of Rome and matter of Britain.
- Morality plays and Mystery plays were two types of plays.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who was the author of the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People?*
2. Which was the most important work of Langland?
3. What was the common name of the Plague?
4. Name the most famous work of Chaucer?
5. Who wrote the work *Confessio Amntis?*
6. Which English writer created characters like *the miller, the wife of Bath* and *the Pardoner?*
7. Who imported the printing technology to England?
8. Name the two famous morality plays of Medieval England
9. Name the most popular interlude.
10. Who is known as the father of English poetry?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Bede
2. Piers Plowman
3. Black Death
4. The Canterbury Tales
5. John Gower
6. Geoffrey Chaucer

7. William Caxton
8. Everyman and Castle of Perseverance
9. The Four P's by John Heywood
10. Geoffrey Chaucer

Assignments

1. Prepare a note on the growth of language and literature in Medieval England.
2. William Langland mocked the corruption in the church and his works can be seen as a protest against social inequalities of the period. Validate the statement.

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* , Cambridge University Press, 2009.
9. Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* ,Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
10. Jenkins, Simon. *A Short History of England,* Profile Books, 2018.
11. Churchill, Winston, *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

UNIT FOUR

Secular Prose

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the given unit, the learner will be able to:

- discern the features of the English prose during the later middle periods.
- understand the secular features of the later medieval literature.
- develop an integral concept about the socio-economic and cultural situation of England.
- identify those literary works which were secular in character in Medieval and later medieval England.

Prerequisites

Think of secular prose as the unsung hero of historical writing. Unlike religious texts that focus on divine intervention or spiritual matters, secular prose is all about the gritty, human side of history, the politics, the power struggles, the culture, and the everyday lives of people. This is the writing that shaped the *real* world of Britain, moving away from the heavens and focussing squarely on life on earth.

It was a time when politics was evolving, kings were challenging the church, and society was shifting in big ways. Secular prose gives us a front-row seat to all of that! It's the early political essays, legal documents, and historical narratives that chart the course of British identity. Think about how early writers like Geoffrey Chaucer or Thomas Malory used prose to not just tell stories, but to shape society's values and the very way people understood their place in the world. As we explore secular prose today, we're not just talking about texts, we're unlocking the mindset of a nation in the midst of transformation.

Keywords

Middle English religious and secular prose, Women Writers, Caxton and printing, Morte de Arthur, Thomas More, Utopia.

Discussion

Middle English Prose of the 13th and 14th century continued in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon prose: homiletic, didactic, and directed toward ordinary people rather than polite society. The fact that there was no French prose tradition was very important to the preservation of the English prose tradition. A number of sermons, lives of saints and other devotional works appeared during this time. The earliest writings of this kind are known as the *Katherine Group*, and include the lives of three virgin saints, Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana, and two religious treatises. Written in West Midland dialect, their primary aim is the glorification of virginity and narrate stories of resistance to marriage and ultimate martyrdom. The *Ancrene Riwle* (Rule for Anchoress) is a manual of instruction intended for three young girls who had decided to become religious women. Written about the year 1200 in West Midland dialect, it became a very popular work and is an interesting historical document

Though there were no abrupt and brilliant imaginative contributions like that of Chaucer or Langland, there was a steady growth in religious prose. The first secular prose appeared around this time which was of a contemplative and often analytical nature. Such prose was represented by Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* and *Cloud of Unknowing, a mystical* work written by an anonymous author of the 14th century. Richard Rolle produced some good mystical tracts like *The Commandment*, *Meditations on the Passion* and *The Form of Perfect Living*.

The mystical tradition continued in the 15th century in different ways by two women writers who saw visions, namely, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love* of Julian of Norwich (written around 1393) is a work of fervent piety. This is believed to be the first book written by a woman in English. *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1433) is the first substantial surviving English autobiography and recounts the religious experiences of an extreme and sometimes hysterically pious woman. The spiritual focus of her *Book* is the mystical conversations she conducts with Christ for more than forty years. It records the tension in late medieval England between institutional orthodoxy and increasingly public modes of religious dissent.

The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (1410), a translation by Nicholas Love of a Latin text turned out to be a very popular prose work of the 15th century. The Roman Catholic Church also highlighted this work in opposition to the work of Wycliffe. The Lollard movement produced a bulk of secular literature which brought them under the threat of the death penalty by the Catholic Church. For this reason, most of the writings remained anonymous. Langland's *Piers the Plowman* was printed in the 15th century for religious reasons by early Protestants. Wycliffe's English translation of the Bible was read widely in spite of the doctrinal suspicion. It influenced the later translations of the Bible by William Tyndale (1525), Miles Coverdale (1535) and the *Authorised Version of King James* (1611).

The last quarter of the fourteenth century witnessed the coming of translations and prose compositions of a secular nature. The Gutenberg press imported to England by William Caxton brought a change in literary creations. It transformed the English language into a powerful medium of expression and it became much easier to make books. One of the earliest printed works in English was that of *Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory

Morte d'Arthur (The Death of Arthur, 1469-1470), which turned out to be the greatest prose work of the Middle English period carried on the tradition of Arthurian romance, from French sources, in English prose of remarkable vividness and vitality. He loosely tied together stories of various knights of the Round Table, but most memorably of Arthur himself, of Galahad, and of the guilty love of Lancelot and Arthur's queen, Guinevere and retells them in chronological sequence from the birth of Arthur. The most enduring prose writer of the era, Malory casts the Arthurian tales into coherent form and views them with an awareness that they represent a vanishing way of life. Malory's account differs from his models in its emphasis on the brotherhood of the knights rather than on courtly love and on the conflicts of loyalty (brought about by the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere) that finally destroy the fellowship. Caxton, the first English printer, printed *Morte d'Arthur* in 1485.

The works of Chaucer like *Tales of Melibeus,* and two of his astronomical translations from Latin- *Treasure on the Astrolabe* and the *Equatorie of the Planets*- were secular in nature. It was followed by the work of John Trevisa who translated Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicom,* a universal history, and Barthalomeow's *On the Property of Things* (an encyclopaedia) from Latin to English. However, the most read among the surviving secular prose was *The Voyages and Travels of Sir John Mandeville.* It described the journeys of Sir John Mandeville, the Knight of St Alban through Asia. It is now considered a fictional work. The later phase of the Medieval period saw the consolidation of English prose with more serious themes. The *Brut* chronicle written by an unknown author became an instrument in fostering national unity and identity. The same was the case with John Capgrave's *Chronicle of England* and *On the Governance of England* written by John Fortescue. Religious controversialists like Reginald Pecock and John Skelton were more eccentric authors who followed the secular style in literature. The transition from medieval to Renaissance embarked on an era of free thinking in all walks of human life. It does in the field of literature too.

3.4.1 Transition from Medieval to Renaissance

Caxton introduced his printing press into England in 1476 and printed Malory's cycle of Arthur's legends in 1485. In the same year Henry Tudor became the first Tudor king under the name Henry VII (Reign from 1485 to 1509) and the year is considered to mark a transition from the Medieval period to the Renaissance in English literature. Alexander Barclay furnished his essays during this period after the fashion of Italian humanist sources. He translated the work of Sebastian Brant, a German satirist into English as *The Ship of Fools* (1509) and it was a good example of satire on contemporary folly and corruption. *The Pastime of Pleasure* (1509) by Stephen Hawes was another example of the transitional phase of English literature. The new trend gave importance to the humanist view projecting education and good governance. The works of Sir Thomas Elyot namely *The Book Named the Governor* (1531) and Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545) and *The Schoolmaster* (1570) are the best examples cited in this regard. But the most notable work of English humanism was undoubtedly Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), first written in Latin and then translated to English. The title which was derived from Greek meant "no place", and it referred to an imaginary and perfect state, a place where everyone was equal. The english translation appeared posthumously in 1551 after he was executed by King Henry VIII in 1535 for refusing to accept Henry as the head

of the church.

David Crystal explains that in Old English "we encounter a language which is chiefly Old Germanic in its character – in its sounds, spellings, grammar and vocabulary. After this period we have a language which displays a very different kind of structure, with major changes having taken place in each of these areas, many deriving from the influence of French following the Norman Conquest of 1066." Several changes appeared in grammar, especially in word endings; most of the inflectional endings have been replaced in Middle English by relying on alternative expressions to explain the meanings of relationships. The pronunciation system underwent a lot of changes. Several consonants and vowels altered their quality, and new contrastive units of sound ('phonemes') emerged.The way sounds were spelled altered, as French spelling conventions came to be used such as *ou* for *u* (*house*), *gh* for *h* (*night*) and *ch* for *c* (*church*). A lot of prefixes and suffixes were added resulting in countless new words. But by the beginning of the 15th century, as English became the language used by almost all the upper classes, the flow of loan words from French reduced. But the advent of the Renaissance resulted in the growing importance of Latin which emerged as the language of religion, scholarship and science and more Latin words have made their influx into English. The English language as we use today is a rich storehouse of words, at least half of them borrowed from languages such as French, Latin and Danish.

Recap

- Later medieval English prose was contemplative and analytical in style.
- Advent of some women authors who gave accounts of the life of bourgeoisie women.
- Wycliffe's English translation of the bible served as a basic text for future translations of the Bible.
- The Caxton's press gave a new impetus to printing and learning in later medieval England.
- The legend of king Arthur was presented with a mix of chivalric spirit and tragic feelings.
- Social criticism by prose writers.
- Thomas More's *Utopia* visualised an ideal community.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who was the first woman writer in English?
2. Whose medieval translation of the Bible was used as a basic guide for the later translations?
3. Name the first surviving English autobiography.
4. Name the first English printer.
5. Who wrote the book *Utopia*, which visualises an ideal community?

6. Who is the legendary hero of Celtic Britons who fought against Anglo-Saxon invaders?
7. Which is the most notable work of Humanism in England?
8. Which is the first substantial surviving English autobiography that recounts the religious experiences of a pious woman?
9. Name two religious controversialists who followed the secular style in literature.

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love* of Julian of Norwich
2. Wycliffe's Bible
3. *The Book of Margery Kempe*
4. William Caxton
5. Thomas More
6. King Arthur
7. *Utopia* by Thomas More
8. The Book of Margery Kempe
9. Reginald Pecock and John Skelton

Assignments

1. Trace the transition from the Medieval period to the Renaissance in English literature.
2. Evaluate the statement "French prose tradition was very important to the preservation of the English prose tradition".

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from*

Start to End, Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language ,* Cambridge University Press, 2009.
9. Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* ,Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
10. Jenkins, Simon. *A Short History of England,* Profile Books, 2018.
11. Churchill, Winston, *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

BLOCK - 04

Transition of Modern Era

UNIT ONE

Tudor Monarchy

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- know the legitimacy and legacy of the Tudor dynasty in British history.
- understand the social and political history of the Tudor era.
- evaluate the significance of the Tudor dynasty in British history.
- prepare the timeline of the rulers of the Tudor era.
- enumerate the accomplishments made by the rulers of the Tudor dynasty.

Prerequisites

The history of Britain during the Tudor period is not merely a tale of kings and queens; it is a profound narrative of transformation-politically, religiously, and culturally-that shaped the course of English society for centuries to come. Through the reigns of five pivotal monarchs, from Henry VII to Elizabeth I, England underwent an extraordinary revolution that would leave its mark on the nation's fabric. The changes that unfolded within this period-particularly in religion-are nothing short of remarkable, for they not only altered the relationship between the monarchy and the church but also redefined the very identity of the English people.

The Tudor monarchs themselves, often painted as larger-than-life figures in the annals of history, set the stage for the dramatic shifts that would follow. Henry VIII, perhaps the most famous Tudor king, reshaped England's religious landscape with his break from Rome, establishing the Church of England. This was not merely a matter of theology; it was a political act, a declaration of power. His son, Edward VI, carried forward these reforms with fervour, even at the cost of his health, as his short reign was marked by a decisive move towards Protestantism.

Yet, the story of the Tudors is also one of deep personal struggles. The young Edward VI, an intellectually gifted monarch, ruled only briefly, and his tragic death at 16 symbolised the fragile nature of power and life in the Tudor court. His half-sister, Mary I, whose reign became infamous for her violent attempts to restore Catholicism, remains a figure steeped in controversy-her efforts to undo the Protestant reforms led to the brutal execution of hundreds, earning her the moniker *Bloody Mary*. But in her

death, England found a new ruler, Elizabeth I, who would forge a national identity that blended both the Protestant and Catholic legacies, restoring stability after decades of religious warfare.

This period of religious turmoil and political manoeuvring-the English Reformation-was driven not only by the personal ambitions of the monarchs but also by the broader intellectual currents of the time. The advent of the printing press, the spread of Renaissance humanism, and the rise of new philosophical and theological ideas led to a society in flux. The Church of England, a product of Elizabeth I's religious settlement, established a compromise that sought a middle path, offering stability after years of religious conflict. Meanwhile, the arts flourished, with the golden age of English literature emerging under Elizabeth's rule, setting the stage for England's intellectual and cultural dominance in the centuries that followed.

The story of the Tudors, then, is more than the history of rulers and battles; it is the story of a nation grappling with its soul, its identity, and its future. The impact of their reigns still echoes today, reminding us of the power of faith, the cost of ambition, and the enduring strength of England's cultural legacy.

Keywords

Tudor Dynasty, Henry VII, English Reformation, The Church of England, Edward VI and Mary I, Elizabeth I

Discussion

4.1.1 The Tudors (1485-1603)

The House of Tudor, the English royal dynasty of Welsh origin comprised five sovereigns: Henry VII (1485–1509); his son, Henry VIII (1509–47); followed by Henry VIII's three children, Edward VI (1547–53), Mary I (1553–58), and Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Among the prime Tudor monarchs, Henry VII, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I contributed a great part in turning England from an average state in the Middle Ages into a powerful Renaissance state that in the next centuries, would dominate much of the world. The series of changes marked by Henry VIII's break with the papacy in Rome (1534) and the beginning of the English Reformation culminated in the establishment of the Anglican church under Elizabeth I.

The origins of the Tudors can be traced to the 13th century, but the family's dynastic fortunes were established by Owen Tudor (1400–61), a Welsh adventurer who was employed by Kings Henry V and Henry VI. Owen, who fought on the Lancastrian side in the Wars of the Roses (1455-85), (a series of civil wars for the English throne fought between the houses of Lancaster and York) was beheaded after the Yorkist victory at Mortimer's Cross (1461). Owen had married Henry V's widow, Catherine of Valois, who belonged to the Lancastrian side. Their eldest son Edmund (1430–56), was created Earl of Richmond by Henry VI and married Margaret Beaufort, who, as the great-granddaughter of Edward III's son John of Gaunt, held a distant claim to the throne as a Lancastrian.

Their only child, Henry Tudor, was born after Edmund's death.

4.1.1.1 Henry VII (Born 1457; Reign 1485 – 1509)

Fig 4.1.1 Henry VII

In 1485 Henry led an invasion against the Yorkist king Richard III and defeated and killed him at Bosworth Field on August 22 and claimed the Crown through the right of conquest. (Richard had usurped the throne of his 12-year-old nephew Edward V who was allowed to be on the throne for only two months). Henry VII cemented his claim by marrying Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV and heiress of the House of York. Apart from the right of conquest, Henry's claim to the throne was through two women, his mother and wife. By defeating Richard III at Bosworth, Henry Tudor established a new monarchy that comprised well-known figures in royal history. The term 'new monarchy' was coined by J. R. Green in 1893 to describe the despotic kingship of the early Tudor regime. By undermining the nobility and marrying Elizabeth of York, Henry united the quarrelling families and proceeded to secure his position on the throne. Cautious and calculating, he kept the peace and built up a firm financial base, and showed a skill to extract money from the people who suffered. He extended the power by using traditional methods of administration and increased revenue, including the day-by-day examination of accounts. He displayed prudent fiscal management and restored the fortunes of a bankrupt exchequer. His financial methods were efficient and ruthless, and he was successful in leaving a fortune for his successor.

Throughout his reign, Henry did his best to strengthen tense relations, both at home and abroad. Henry faced a series of rebellions against him and could feel secure only by 1506. He quelled all the revolts that came his way to ensure his position could be secured and concentrated his attention on the proper administration of the country. To end the power of the barons, the King established a special court of the Stuart Chamber, a large council presided over by himself, in which lawyers, clergymen, and lesser gentry were active. He reduced the power of the feudal lords. He imposed heavy fines on nobles who were found disobeying the regulations of the King. He also increased the foreign trade of the country so that the wealth and prosperity of the country could be increased.

It was after Henry VII took over as the King of England that it went on to become an influential nation. With his foolproof policy towards his neighbours, England created an important place for itself in the family of European nations. With France, its ancient enemy, England adopted an intelligent policy. When the King of France attacked Spain, Henry VII also declared war on France. But soon, the French decided to make peace with Henry by offering large sums of money and recognising his dynasty. He also joined the League of Venice to maintain the balance of

power in Europe with Spain. He effectively exercised control over Ireland to ensure that it didn't become the breeding ground of rebellion against him. He secured a treaty with Scotland in 1499 and in 1502, arranged for his daughter Margaret to marry James IV, King of Scots. He ensured peace with Spain, the most powerful country in Europe at the time, when his eldest son Arthur married Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of King Ferdinand II of Spain, in 1501. When Arthur died the following year, she was betrothed to Prince Henry, the second son of Henry VII. Henry VII was a farsighted ruler. His domestic and foreign policies brought prestige to England and credit to the Tudors. He spent money shrewdly so as to maintain the royal treasury till his death in 1509. He was succeeded by his second and only surviving son Henry without any opposition.

4.1.1.2 Henry VIII (Reign 1509–1547)

Fig 4.1.2 Henry VIII

Historians regarded Henry VIII as one of the most important monarchs to have ruled England and Wales. He did not follow the same approach to government and administration as his father, Henry VII, had done. During his tenure, he presided over the beginnings of the Renaissance and Reformation in England, the incorporation of Wales into English administration and the establishment of the Kingdom of Ireland. When he was 11, his elder brother Arthur died, and from that day onwards, Henry, unlike all the other Tudor monarchs, was assured of the Crown if he remained alive at the time of his father's death. This meant that Henry got a chance to mentally prepare for the task. He contributed much to the very embodiment of true monarchy. He believed that the government could be left to trusted men who, once they knew the king's wishes, would implement them. Therefore, though Henry VIII was not overly involved in government, his men were actually carrying out his policies. He appointed a number of very able ministers who were able to leave their mark on Tudor's history. Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell are the best-known among them.

4.1.1.3 Catherine of Aragon

Fig 4.1.3 Catherine of Aragon

Henry has attracted a lot of attention due to the fact that he had married six times. His queens were, successively, Catherine of Aragon (the mother of the future queen Mary I), Anne Boleyn (the mother of the future

queen Elizabeth I), Jane Seymour (mother of Edward VI who succeeded Henry), Anne of Cleaves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr. Of these, the divorced Catherine of Aragon and Jane Seymour (after childbirth) met with natural death while Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard were executed on the charges of adultery and treason. The marriage of Henry with Anne of Cleaves was annulled within a few months. Catherine Parr outlived Henry.

Henry strongly argued that God had placed him as king, and therefore everyone had to conform to what Henry wanted because if they did not, they were not only defying God's lieutenant on Earth, but also God himself. It became the customary duty of all subjects to honour and obey the king even if they did not agree with what he did. Thus, Henry appeared to have subscribed to the divine right of kings. Basically, he was a despotic king, but the public supported him greatly as decisions were mostly according to the desire of the people. The strong state army protected the people from frequent civil wars in England. The Navy was the real strength of England. Foreigners were always cautious of this English strength. The credit for it goes to Henry VIII who made special efforts towards the building of ships.

4.1.1.4 Anne Boleyn

The aims of Henry VIII's foreign policy were to maintain the balance of power in Europe by resisting the power of the enemies of England and to dominate, if possible, European politics. As soon as he ascended the throne, he married Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the Spanish King Ferdinand II and the widow of his elder brother, with whom he was already betrothed. He made peace with France through the marriage alliance of his sister Mary with Louis XII of France.

Fig 4.1.4 Anne Boleyn

When the terms of his alliance with Spain expired, Henry declared war with France. By doing this, he also checked the increase in the power of Charles V of Spain who succeeded Ferdinand II. England began to be looked upon as one of the most important nations of Europe. When Henry VIII broke his relations with the Pope it paved the way for the Reformation movement. As a result, the English church was separated from the Roman Church.

4.1.2 Reformation in England under Henry VIII

The Reformation in Germany and Switzerland started as a national and popular movement. But the English reformation was the result of the personal motives of Henry VIII. During his early days, Henry VIII was a strong supporter of the Pope. When Martin Luther defied Poe, Henry VIII wrote a book refuting Luther's argument and sent it to the Pope. Then he was awarded the title of 'Defender of the Faith' by the Pope. But he became a tool for the division between the Roman Church and the Church of England.

The prime cause of the breach with Rome was that the Pope did not give consent for his divorce from Queen Catherine of Aragon. Henry was obsessed with the issue of a male heir. Catherine, who was more than 5 years older than Henry failed to deliver a son; after several early deaths and stillbirths, she had managed to give birth only to Princess Mary. Moreover, he was by this time already infatuated with Anne Boleyn who refused to become his mistress. Henry sought sanction from the Pope for his divorce on the ground that his first marriage to Catherine was illegal as she was the widow of his brother. As he was eager to marry Anne, Henry ultimately decided to defy the Pope. He summoned a Parliament in 1529 (Reformation Parliament), and a subservient Parliament passed a series of laws abolishing the Pope's authority in England. Henry married Anne Boleyn in January 1533, and Princess Elizabeth was born in September 1533.

In 1533 an Act of Appeals was passed forbidding Roman control over the English church. In 1534 Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy which declared the English King to be "the only supreme head of the Church of England" (Anglican Church) and had the power to appoint all ecclesiastical officials and dispose of the Papal revenues. Even though Henry's first intention was merely to put pressure on the Pope to grant the divorce, it ended in the complete severance of English people from the Roman church to which they had belonged for a thousand years. This also led to the establishment of a liturgy in English, the Book of Common Prayer.

There was much opposition in England to the act. Those who refused to follow the act of supremacy were punished. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester and Sir Thomas More, the author of *Utopia* who served as Chancellor was executed in 1535 for refusing to accept Henry as the Head of the Church. Earlier Cardinal Wolsey who served as Chancellor for several years also had to pay with his life when he failed to get the Pope's sanction for Henry's divorce from Catherine. Henry was not a Protestant in doctrine, but his aim was to keep England Catholic without the Pope. In 1539, a statute known as the Statute of Six Articles was passed and this defined the chief doctrines of the Church of England. The law imposed the death penalty on anyone who questioned Catholic doctrines.

It was followed by the dissolution of more than six hundred religious houses or monasteries. Most of the monastic lands acquired through the above acts were sold to the wealthy middle classes. These people, the ultimate beneficiaries of the dissolution of monasteries, were bound to the crown by a sense of gratitude. This indirectly guaranteed Protestantism in England. Many centres of pilgrimage lost their importance as a result of the dissolution. The dissolution also resulted in the destruction of many monastic libraries and it was a cruel injury to learning and literature.

It is fitting to end the section on Henry VIII with this assessment by the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

Henry VIII has always seemed the very embodiment of true monarchy. Even his evil deeds, never forgotten, have been somehow amalgamated into a memory of greatness. He gave his nation what it wanted: a visible symbol of its nationhood. He also had done something toward giving it a better government, a useful navy, and a start on religious reform and social improvement. But he was not a great man in any sense. Although a leader in every fibre of his being, he little understood where he was leading his nation.

4.1.3 Edward VI (Reign 1547–1553)

Edward ascended the throne when he was at the age of nine. He was the only legitimate son of Henry VIII and remained king of England and Ireland from 1547 to 1553. His tutors who included Roger Ascham have remarked that Edward was an intellectually gifted, precocious student of Greek, Latin, French and theology. By the age of 13, he had read Aristotle's *Ethics* in the Greek original and was translating Cicero's *De Philosophia* into Greek. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 16.

Fig 4.1.5 Edward VI

The government was carried out in his name during his reign of six years mainly first by his uncle Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and later by the unscrupulous John Dudley who became Duke of Northumberland. The measures taken by both helped to consolidate the cause of the English Reformation and they agreed with Edward's own intense devotion to Protestantism. His short reign witnessed the introduction of the English Prayer Book and the Forty-two Articles, and thus this period was important in the development of English Protestantism. The decisive move from Catholicism to a form of Protestantism was later known as Anglicanism. Due to his ardent beliefs, Edward disapproved of his elder half-sister Mary's Catholicism and even when his health was visibly failing, he did not want her to succeed to the throne. Working in league with Northumberland, he tried to exclude both his half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, from the Crown by giving his preference for his cousin Lady Jane Grey, granddaughter of the youngest sister of Henry VIII. Lady Jane Grey, who had become the wife of Northumberland's son a few months earlier, was proclaimed the Queen a few days after the death of Edward. Princess Mary and Princess Elizabeth were next in the line of succession according to an act of Parliament (1544) and Henry VIII's will (1547). Nine days later, Lady Jane Grey was forced to relinquish the Crown and was put in the Tower and later executed. She was only 16 at the time of her execution.

4.1.4 Mary I (Reign 1553 – 1558)

Fig 4.1.6 Mary I

Mary was the eldest surviving child of Henry VIII through his first marriage with Queen Catherine of Aragon. In order to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn,

Henry had argued that as Catherine was his brother's widow, marriage with Catherine was incestuous and illegal. Hence after the establishment of the Anglican Church, Mary was considered an illegitimate child. Mary lived constantly under the fear of being executed so long as Anne remained powerful. While she was alive, Catherine refused to admit that her marriage with Henry was incestuous and illegal. After the execution of Anne Boleyn, Henry promised to pardon Mary if Mary acknowledged Henry as the Head of the Church and admitted the incestuous illegality of his marriage with her mother. Mary took a long time to accept this demand from her father. As per the third act of Succession passed by Parliament in 1544, Mary and Elizabeth were granted succession to the throne after Edward and his sons, and after any other legitimate sons Henry might still have in future.

Mary was a pawn in the game of power politics played in her childhood and youth. Several proposals of marriage for her came before and after her mother was divorced by Henry. But no marriage materialised for her before she became the queen. She was brought up as a devout Catholic. When Edward VI died, she fled to Norfolk on hearing that Lady Jane Grey became Queen. She made a triumphant return to London with popular support a few days later at the age of 37 and became the first queen to rule England.

Queen Mary I is best remembered for trying to undo the works of her half-brother Edward and attempt to return England from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. With the aim of reuniting the Anglican Church with the Church in Rome, she decided to marry Prince Philip II of Spain, who was younger than her by 11 years. When her plan was opposed by both the Parliament and the powerful nobles, she was said to have replied: "My marriage is my own affair". A Protestant rebellion broke out in 1554, but Mary managed to arouse common people to fight for her, and the rebellion was crushed. Mary married Philip in 1554 and restored the Catholic creed and revived the laws against heresy. In order to attain her objective, during the next four years, she executed almost three hundred religious dissenters, often by burning them at the stake. As a result, she became known as Bloody Mary. A disastrous war with France in which England was assisted by Spain resulted in the loss of Calais, its last continental possession. Philip had become the king of Spain in 1556. Unloved by her subjects, Mary died in 1558 without any children, and she reluctantly named her sister Elizabeth as her successor before her death.

4.1.5 Elizabeth I (Reign 1558 – 1603)

Elizabeth was the second daughter of Henry VII through his marriage with Anne Boleyn. Before Elizabeth reached the age of three, her mother was beheaded. The Second Act of succession passed by Parliament as per the wish of Henry in 1536 declared his marriage with Anne Boleyn invalid from the beginning thereby making Elizabeth an illegitimate child. The act removed both Mary and Elizabeth from the line of succession. (The first act of succession in 1534 had removed Mary from the line of succession as an illegitimate daughter and legitimised any children from Anne Boleyn; the third act of 1544 made both the sisters eligible for succession after Edward). All available accounts suggest that Henry treated all his children with affection even though he was not at all pleased by the sight of his daughters at their birth. She was allowed to spend some of her time with her half-brother Edward. She and Mary benefited from the loving attention of their stepmother Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth wife. Elizabeth

received a rigorous education in classical languages, history, rhetoric and theology under the able guidance of tutors such as the humanist Roger Ascham. Even as a young girl, she was considered very serious. After her father's death, she had to undergo a dangerous existence, especially during the troublesome reign of Mary. She was sent to the Tower for two months and later spent more than a year in house arrest.

Fig 4.1.7 Elizabeth I

When Elizabeth came to the throne following the death of Mary, there was public jubilation just as it happened when Mary marched to London following the nine-day rule of Jane Gray. Since she was never married, Elizabeth was referred to as the 'Virgin Queen'. She did not feel secure at all in the early years of her reign. There were constant threats of rebellion by men who did not approve of her religious policies and by others who did not like the idea of a woman on the throne. There were many potential suitors for her hand in marriage, and she might have felt that in marrying one, she would be antagonising many others. It appears that she was making a virtue out of a necessity and thus remained unmarried for strategic reasons.

Immediately after she came to the throne, she started issuing proclamations and assembled a group of experienced and trusted advisors. Chief among them was William Cecil who served her efficiently for 40 years. She made it clear at the very outset that she intended to rule in more than name only and that she would not subordinate her judgement to that of any other person or group. When she was crowned, England was in a miserable politico-economic condition. The exchequer was bankrupt, inflation was soaring, and people were suffering at this time. But Elizabeth managed to overturn the fortunes of her kingdom. She introduced frugal policies to restore fiscal responsibilities. Under her reign, England grew stronger gradually domestically and hence was able to project a picture of its strength to the neighbouring nations. Her religious policies were the most tolerant witnessed in English history. She was able to manage the sharp religious battles between Protestants and Catholics and political battles between parliament and the monarchy respectively. The socio-cultural fields like literature and the dramatic arts flourished. She was able to withstand a Spanish invasion. By the end of her reign of 45 years, England is believed to have become more prosperous than any of the nations in Europe other than Spain. This period in history became known as the Elizabethan era and has been considered a golden era in British History.

In 1588, King Philip of Spain (who was earlier the husband of Queen Mary I) launched a naval invasion of England under its famed Spanish Armada with the purpose of overthrowing Elizabeth. But aided by

superior tactics and the heavy winds, the English navy was able to vanquish the Spanish. On 29th July, the English fleet badly damaged the 'Invincible Armada' in the Battle of Gravelines. The successful defence of the Kingdom against invasion on such an unprecedented scale, especially when no one expected it, boosted the prestige of Queen Elizabeth I and instilled a sense of pride and nationalism among the English people.

Elizabeth had seen England torn between Protestantism and Catholicism during the time of her father, her half-brother and especially during the time of her half-sister. As she was determined to learn from that experience, Queen Elizabeth I wanted to build a stable, peaceful nation with a strong government, free from the influence of foreign powers in matters of the church and the state. Immediately after becoming Queen, she restored England to Protestantism. The Act of Supremacy, passed by Parliament and approved in 1559, re-established the Church of England's independence from Rome and gave her the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. In the same year, the Act of Uniformity was passed, which found a middle ground between Catholicism and Protestantism. The Church of England's modern doctrinal character is largely the result of this settlement, which sought to negotiate a middle ground between the two branches of Christianity. She did not tolerate extreme followers of either Catholicism or Protestantism.

Advancements in the practical skills of navigation enabled explorers to thrive during the Elizabethan era, which also opened up profitable global trade routes. Sir Francis Drake, for example, was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. He was also authorised by Elizabeth to raid Spanish treasure ships in the New World. In 1583 Humphrey Gilbert, a Member of Parliament and explorer claimed Newfoundland for Queen Elizabeth I. In August 1585, Sir Walter Raleigh arranged for the first (albeit short-lived) English colony in America at Roanoke. Without these astonishing feats of exploration, the British Empire would not have expanded as it did in the 17th century.

Drama, poetry and art blossomed under Elizabeth's reign. Playwrights like Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare, poets like Edmund Spenser and men of science like Francis Bacon all found an expression for their genius, often thanks to the patronage of members of Elizabeth's court. Elizabeth was also a major patron of the arts from the outset of her reign. Theatre companies were invited to perform at her palaces, which helped their reputations; previously, playhouses had often been castigated or closed down for being 'immoral', but the Privy Council prevented the Mayor of London from closing the theatres in 1580 by citing Elizabeth's fondness for theatre.

4.1.6 Tudor Rule and the Foundation of English Reformation

The Tudor era saw unprecedented changes and developments in England. There were five Tudor monarchs who introduced huge changes that are still visible in English society. The Tudor era witnessed the most sweeping religious changes in England since the arrival of Christianity, which affected every aspect of national life. The Reformation eventually transformed an entirely Catholic nation into a predominantly Protestant one. Before Henry VIII's break with the papacy in the 1530s, the Roman Catholic Church was all powerful in England. Only a small, persecuted minority questioned its doctrines. The early years of Henry's reign also saw traditional religious

practices – such as pilgrimages, saints' holidays and religious plays – enthusiastically observed, together with the continued building and embellishment of churches that had been a major feature of the reign of his father, Henry VII.

But when Henry declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in England in 1533, following the Pope's refusal to sanction his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, his decision initiated the Reformation of English religion. With it came the sweeping away of institutions that symbolised medieval Catholicism – and monasteries became the main focus of the king's attack. Some smaller abbeys had already been closed because of a lack of recruits when Henry VIII forcibly suppressed all monasteries between 1536 and 1540. Though Henry had rejected papal authority, he remained wedded to Catholic doctrine and burned Protestant heretics. Real religious change happened under the radically Protestant Edward VI (1547–53). During the reign of Mary, I (1553–8), she restored the old order and burned nearly 300 Protestants in the process. Elizabeth, I restored Protestantism. The Reformation resulted in striking changes to religious practice and belief. The Bible was now accessible to all literate people in English translations. Instead of being spectators at Latin Masses, congregations became participants in English-speaking services that focused on sermon preaching, Bible readings and set forms of prayer. From 1549 these were formalised in the hugely influential *Book of Common Prayer*.

The present Church of England is the product of the Religious Settlement brought about by Elizabeth I. She made the declaration that she had 'no desire to make windows into men's souls. She wanted a non-interference in people's private beliefs so long as they remained loyal in public. The Act of Supremacy established Elizabeth as head of the Church of England. The Act of Uniformity established a revised version of the prayer book brought out during Edward VI as the official order of worship. Her government started measures to implement structural and liturgical reforms in the local parishes. Priests were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the Crown in order to retain their positions. Elizabeth's cautious reforms resulted in a church that was protestant in doctrine but catholic in appearance.

English Literature

The establishment of the Tudor dynasty coincided with the first dissemination of printed matter. William Caxton's press was established in 1476 just before the reign of Henry VII. Caxton's achievement encouraged writing of all kinds and also influenced the standardisation of the English language. A sense of stronger political relationships with the continent was developed. This had positive influences on England's exposure to Renaissance culture. Humanism became the most important force in English literary and intellectual life. These factors were produced during the reign of Elizabeth I one of the most fruitful eras in literary history.

The energy of England's writers influenced their mariners and merchants. Accounts by men such as Richard Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas, and Sir Walter Raleigh were eagerly read. The literary activities of the Elizabethans reflected a new nationalism, which expressed itself also in the works of chroniclers (John Stow, Raphael Holinshed, and others), historians, translators and even in political and religious tracts. Important late Tudor sonneteers include Spenser and Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, Samuel Daniel, and Fulke

Greville. Early Tudor drama owed much to both medieval morality plays and classical models. *Ralph Roister Doister* (1545) by Nicholas Udall and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1552) are considered the first English comedies, combining elements of classical Roman comedy with native burlesque. William Shakespeare, of course, fulfilled the promise of the Elizabethan age. His history plays, comedies, and tragedies set a standard never again equalled, and he is universally regarded as the greatest dramatist and one of the greatest poets of all time.

Recap

- The House of Tudor, the English royal dynasty of Welsh origin, comprised five monarchs.
- The Tudor era witnessed the most sweeping religious changes in England since the arrival of Christianity, which affected every aspect of national life.
- Henry Tudor established a new monarchy in 1485, by defeating Richard III at Bosworth.
- Henry Tudor consolidated the power by using traditional administration methods and increased revenue.
- Henry VIII, son of Henry VII, seemed to be the very embodiment of true monarchy.
- Henry VII's desire to divorce Queen Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn (the divorce controversy of Henry VIII) led to the Reformation in England. The English church got separated from the Pope.
- The short reign of Edward VI witnessed the introduction of the English Prayer Book and the Forty-two Articles, and thus this period was important in the development of English Protestantism.
- Mary Tudor tried to undo the work of her half-brother and attempted to restore England to the Roman Catholic Church.
- Elizabeth restored England to Protestantism. She adopted a moderate religious policy.
- The Elizabethan era was crucial and influential in British History (1558-1603).
- Through the Act of Supremacy and the act of Uniformity of 1559, Elizabeth tried to adopt a middle ground between Catholicism and Protestantism.
- Elizabeth was able to transform England into the most important nation in Europe. It was a great period of achievement in literature, drama and culture and the Elizabethan age has been called a golden age in English history.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who was the first monarch in the Tudor Dynasty?
2. Which queen was known as Virgin Queen?
3. Who was the boy monarch in the Tudor Dynasty?
4. Which period is considered the golden period of the Tudor Era?
5. Who attempted to restore England from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism?
6. Name the Act by which Elizabeth was established as head of the Church of England.
7. Which Tudor monarch reigned between the periods of 1558-1603?
8. Which battle established Henry Tudor the 'future Henry VII' on the English throne?
9. Who was the successor of Henry VIII?
10. Who was succeeded by Lady Jane Grey?
11. Which period did the playwrights like Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare and poets like Edmund Spenser belong to?
12. Which year William Caxton's printing press was established in?
13. Which English monarch remained devoutly Catholic and reinstated English Catholicism?
14. What were radical Protestants called?
15. Which Tudor monarch became the first Head of the Church of England?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Henry VII
2. Queen Mary
3. Edward VI
4. Elizabethan reign
5. Mary I
6. 'The Act of Supremacy'
7. Elizabeth I
8. Battle of Bosworth
9. Edward VI
10. Edward VI
11. Elizabeth I
12. 1476
13. Mary I
14. Puritans
15. King Henry VIII

Assignments

1. Prepare a timeline stating the dynastic history as well as the major achievements during the Tudor Era.
2. Evaluate the process of English reformation and the establishment of the English Church.

Suggested Reading

1. Goodman, A. *The New Monarchy: England 1471-1534,* OUP, 1988.
2. Starkey, D. *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War,* Longman, 1987.
3. Elton, G. R. *The Tudor Revolution in Government,* CUP, 1953.
4. Bardugo, Leigh. *The Life of Saints*, Orion,2020.
5. Gregory, Phillipa. *The Last Tudor*, Simon & Schuster, 2018
6. Tawney, R. H. and E. Power. *Tudor Economic Documents,* Longmans, 1924
7. Burke, S. Hubert. *Historical Portraits of the Tudor Dynasty and Reformation Period,* Vol 3, Alpha Edition, 2019.
8. More, Thomas. "On the Coronation Day of Henry VIII", *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, Vol. 3, edited by C. H. Miller, New Haven, 1984.

UNIT TWO

Growth of the New Middle Classes

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- know the social life of England during the 16th and 17th centuries.
- understand the English class system from the 16th to 18th centuries.
- realise the factors responsible for the growth of the new middle class.
- analyse the features of the new middle class in British society.

Prerequisites

In 16th-century England, society was firmly entrenched in a rural, agrarian system. Yet, beneath the surface, a seismic transformation was unfolding-one that would reshape not only the structure of the economy but the very foundation of English society. The rise of trade, industry, and the emergence of new social classes set the stage for the profound shifts that would come to define Britain's future. This was an age when the power of the monarchy, particularly under the Tudors, spurred the growth of towns and the expansion of industry. A society once divided along feudal lines saw the ascent of a "middling class"-a dynamic, evolving force that bridged the gap between the landed nobility and the labouring masses.

The expansion of the middle class during the Tudor and early Stuart periods became a catalyst for an unprecedented rise in social mobility, laying the groundwork for the industrial and commercial revolution that would follow. With the Industrial Revolution, this transformation accelerated dramatically. Technological advances-such as the steam engine, mechanised looms, and new production methods-redefined the ways people worked, lived, and interacted with the world. It was not just an economic shift; it was a revolution that reshaped the social fabric, creating new hierarchies and opportunities for those willing to seize them.

From the fields to the factories, the changes were stark. The working class found themselves enduring gruelling labour in conditions of poverty and squalor, while the burgeoning middle class-comprising entrepreneurs, professionals, and industrialists-began to claim their place among the social elite. The very definition of class began to evolve, as the industrialists and merchants wielded increasing power and influence

over the economy, culture, and politics of the nation. Education and upward mobility became the new currency, empowering a generation to rise from the lower ranks into the middle class, and eventually, into the upper echelons of society.

This journey from a feudal, agrarian society to a modern, industrial nation encapsulates not only the growth of the industry but the gradual democratisation of power-shifting from the hereditary elites to the more diversified, commercially-driven power structures of the new middle and working classes. As we explore these transformative changes, we must ask ourselves: How did the shift in class dynamics, fuelled by industrialisation, pave the way for a modern, democratic society? How did the creation of new social classes alter the political, economic, and cultural landscape of Britain? These questions are the keys to understanding the complexities of this fascinating period in history.

Keywords

Industrial Revolution, Middle Class, Upper Middle Class, Victorian Society, Trade, Tudor Society

Discussion

4.2.1 Tudor Society

In 16th century England, most of the population lived in small villages and made their living from farming. Soon, towns grew larger and became more important. After the establishment of the Tudor monarchy, trade and industry grew rapidly and England became more of a commercial country. Mining of coal, tin, Iron and lead flourished.

Tudor society was divided into four broad social classes. The nobility who owned large amounts of land formed the upper class. Below them were the gentry and rich merchants. They also owned large amounts of land and they were usually educated and had a family coat of arms. Next to the gentry class were yeomen and craftsmen. Yeomen also owned their own land. They could be as wealthy as gentlemen but they worked alongside their men. Yeomen and craftsmen were often able to read and write. The tenant farmers who had their land on lease from the rich formed the next class. There were also wage labourers who were often illiterate and very poor.

During the Tudor and early Stuart periods, there was a great increase in social mobility, with wealth and political influence shifting from the nobility and clergy towards a "middling class" of the gentry, yeomen and burghers. These were the people represented in the House of Commons, and who eventually challenged royal sovereignty. The newly forged hegemony was a product of its industry and trade, and the developments through a restructuring of its society. This metamorphosis from the traditional structure to modern industrial English society was facilitated by the emergence of this new middle class.

4.2.2 Concept of Class

The concept of class is important in the Western societal structure. There has been a

long tradition of looking at Western society through the conceptual framework of the class. There is general agreement among social scientists on the characteristics of the principal social classes in modern societies. Sociologists generally posit three classes: upper class, working (or lower) class, and middle class.

The upper class of any society is distinguished by their elite possession which was largely inherited. This hereditary ownership and the enormous income derived from it confer many advantages on the upper class. They are able to develop a distinctive style of life based on extensive cultural pursuits and leisure activities. They also exert a considerable influence on economic policy and political decisions. Because of these comforts, they were able to procure their children a superior education and economic opportunities that help to perpetuate further family wealth.

The middle classes emerged in Europe as a result of the formation of industrial and urban economies. The term middle class was initially used to describe the newly emerging class of bourgeoisie or industrial class. But later, the term was used for social groups placed in between the industrialist bourgeoisie and the working class. The middle class are the "sandwich" class. They are commonly the white-collar workers who have more money than those below them on the "social ladder," but less than those above them. It refers to a class of people in the middle of a social hierarchy, often defined by occupation, income, education or social status.

The lower class or working class is typified by poverty, homelessness, and living under miserable social conditions. People of this class do suffer from a lack of medical care, adequate housing and food, decent clothing, safety, and a steady income. They are minimally educated and engage in "manual labour" with little or no prestige.

The class status of a person, in Max Weber's terminology, is his "market situation" or, in other words, his purchasing power. The class status of a person also determines his "life chances". Their economic position or "class situation" determines how many of the things considered desirable in their society they can buy.

4.2.3 Emergence of 'New Middle Class'

A "new middle class" emerged in England in the vast chasm between the idle landed rich and the toiling class. But the question of the true nature and origin of this middle class in terms of social mobility is often murky. Much of the work of social historians operate on the implicit assumption, furthered by contemporary outside observers that the middle class served as a stepping-stone from the lower classes into respectability (Jordan Boyd-Graber, 2006). It can be described that the English middle class could accurately be a conduit for upward mobility from the lower classes.

One of the assumptions about the formation of a new middle class says that it is the result of the industrial revolution. Followed by industrial advancements, the growth in technology and organisation reshaped the existing social structure. A recognizable peasantry continued to exist in Western Europe, but it increasingly had to adapt to new methods. Many peasants began to achieve new levels of education and to adopt innovations such as new crops, better seeds, and fertilisers. They also began to innovate politically, learning to press governments to protect their agricultural interests.

Britain's Industrial Revolution brought her social class into a different stage and caused the emergence of new classes, such as the middle class. Before the Industrial Revolution, people's standard of living and working conditions were very simple. Once the revolution started, people changed their workplaces from farms to factories and moved to urban cities in search of new jobs. Machine-made goods replaced ones that had been done by hand. The social classes in Britain also altered, which developed three distinct classes, including the upper class, middle class and working class. The emergence of these three classes followed the growth of industry, which brought more people to an upper stage, as people's desires rose. The flourishing of industries brought more wealth to the already rich people who started them and enabled many of them to move from the middle class to the upper middle class. In course of time, as their wealth multiplied, they assumed control of the economy and became more powerful than the former upper class. The improvement of education helped people from the lower class also to get new jobs, improve their financial and social standing and move to the middle class.

4.2.4 Industrial Revolution

In history, the industrial revolution refers to the process of change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to an industry and machine manufacturing economy. This was a period started in the late 18th Century which saw rapid growth in mechanisation, industrial production and changes in social structure. This process began in Britain in the 18th century and spread to other European countries. The term industrial revolution was popularised by the British historian Arnold Toynbee to describe Britain's economic development from 1760 to 1840. The main features of the Industrial Revolution were technological, socioeconomic, and cultural. The technological changes included:

- The use of new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel
- The use of new energy sources, including both fuels and motive power, such as coal, the steam engine, electricity, petroleum, and the internal-combustion engine
- The invention of new machines, such as the spinning jenny and the power loom that permitted increased production with a smaller expenditure of human energy
- A new organisation of work known as the factory system, which entailed the increased division of labour and specialisation of function
- Important developments in transportation and communication, including the steam locomotive, steamship, the automobile, aeroplane, the telegraph, and the radio
- The increasing application of science to industry. These technological changes made possible a tremendously increased use of natural resources and the mass production of manufactured goods.
- These changes were produced or influenced developments in non-industrial spheres, including
- Agricultural improvements that made possible the provision of food for a larger non-agricultural population
- Economic changes that resulted in a wider distribution of wealth, the decline of land as a source of wealth in the face of rising industrial production, and increased international trade

- Political changes reflecting the shift in economic power, as well as new state policies corresponding to the needs of an industrialised society
- Sweeping social changes, including the growth of cities, the development of working-class movements, and the emergence of new patterns of authority
- Cultural transformations of a broad order

The social scientists classified the process of the industrial revolution into two stages. The first stage of the Industrial Revolution lasted between 1770 and 1870 and centred on the changes related to steam, water, iron and the shift from agriculture. The second stage of the Industrial Revolution spanned between 1870 and 1914. New technologies based on electricity, the development of transportation based on petrol engines and greater uses of cheap steel were the characteristics at this stage.

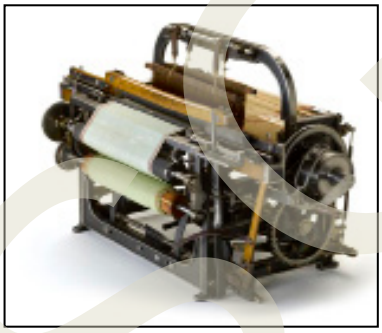


Fig 4.2.1 Edmund Cartwright's power loom

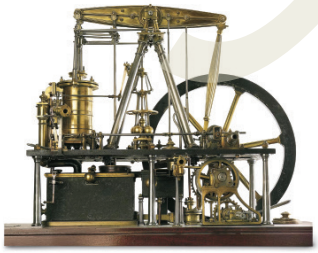


Fig 4.2.2 James Watt's steam engine

4.2.5 Important Discoveries/Inventions During Industrial Revolution

- Edmund Cartwright's power loom (1787) enabled mass production of cloth.
- Steam engine (developed by James Watt in the 1760s) further transformed the cotton industry and later steam trains.
- Smelting iron- A new method of producing iron, developed by Abraham Darby (1678-1717). This new method used coke rather than charcoal and enabled higher production. Iron was used for buildings and railways.
- Steam train - Richard Trevithick invented the first working steam train in 1806. George Stephenson's Rocket 1829, was important for convincing people of the potential of steam trains.
- Machine tools - Prior to the industrial revolution, metal was fashioned by hand, which was very labour-intensive. Machine tools, such as cylinder boring tools and the milling machine, enabled the mass production of things like cylinders for steam trains.
- Chemicals, such as sulphuric acid and sodium carbonate were important in many industrial processes, such as bleaching cloth, and other products, such as soap, and paper.
- Cement - Portland cement was important in new engineering products, such as the Thames tunnel.
- Tarmacked roads - Thomas Telford and John Macadam developed better roads, with firm foundations, drainage and a smooth

surface.

- Telegraph Wire – 1837 invented by Samuel Morse
- Bicycle – 1839 – McMillan

4.2.6 Social Impacts of the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution set a social change in motion. The rapid urbanisation caused by the industrial revolution resulted in the migration of people to cities. Changes in farming, soaring population growth, and an ever-increasing demand for workers led masses of people to migrate from farms to cities. Almost overnight, small towns around coal or iron mines mushroomed into cities. Other cities grew up around the factories that entrepreneurs built in once-quiet market towns. When farm families moved to the new industrial cities, they became workers in mines or factories. For the millions of workers who crowded into the new factories, however, the industrial age brought poverty and harsh living conditions. It was thought that when the standards of living increased, people at all levels of society would benefit from industrialization. It was the middle class who received all the fruits of industrialization. But the working class suffered and had to endure very difficult working conditions; they remained in unsafe, unsanitary, and over-crowded housing; and faced unrelenting poverty. There was no sewage or sanitation system, so waste and garbage rotting in the streets. Sewage was also dumped into rivers, which created an overwhelming stench and contaminated drinking water. This led to the spread of diseases such as cholera. Although labour unions, or workers' organisations, were illegal at this time, secret unions did exist among frustrated British workers. They wished to initiate worker reforms, such as increases in pay but had no political power to effect change.

Industrialization brought up a new middle class along with the working class. The new middle class owned and operated the new factories, mines, and railroads, among other industries. They enjoyed a much more comfortable lifestyle than that of the working class. Those who benefited most from the Industrial Revolution were the entrepreneurs who set it in motion. The Industrial Revolution created this new middle class, or bourgeoisie, whose members came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were merchants who invested their growing profits in factories. Others were inventors or skilled artisans who developed new technologies. Some rose from "rags to riches," a pattern that the age greatly admired. The new middle class were able to lead a lavish life.

Throughout the course of the developments from the 16th to 19th century, the middle classes expanded rapidly. The middle class who moved fast in the social scale had to learn new modes of behaviour and ways of life. This was reflected in the literature of the period, and the social mobility explored. During the Tudor and early Stuart periods, there was a great increase in social mobility, with wealth and political influence shifting from the nobility and clergy towards a "middling class" of the gentry, yeomen and burghers. The centralization of administration and power, royal motivation for overseas trade, the emergence of the merchant and industrial class and the development of capitalism were the factors responsible for the growth of the middle class.

In the middle class, the people with the highest social standing were the professionals that excelled in their occupations, and they included Naval and military officers, clergymen and those who had a higher status in governmental institutions, professors in the universities and the principles of the prominent

schools. Most of the middle class resided in the cities. There was also an emerging class in the middle class that has been called the upper middle class. These included large-scale industrialists, manufacturers and bankers who became successful due to the industrial revolution. These people were wealthy enough to send their children to prestigious schools and colleges which enabled their children to marry into the upper class and gradually merge with the upper class.

In the twentieth century, the middle class and the working class were given the right to cast the vote. There was a vital shift from aristocracy to democracy as the economic and political power shifted from the elite to the common man. Again, education also paved a way for the middle class to excel in science and technology as well as commerce to set the foundation of the industrial and financial institutions. But the socio-economic and cultural scenario of Britain underwent drastic changes in the second half of the twentieth century.

Recap

- In 16th century England, most of the population lived in small villages and their chief occupation was agriculture.
- During the Tudor and early Stuart periods there was a great increase in social mobility, with wealth and political influence shifting from the nobility and clergy towards a "middling class" of the gentry, yeomen and burghers.
- The middle classes emerged in Europe as a result of the industrial revolution and the urban economy.
- The industrial revolution refers to the process of change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to an industry and machine manufacturing economy.
- The rapid urbanization caused by the industrial revolution resulted in the migration of people to cities. Changes in farming, soaring population growth, and an ever-increasing demand for workers led masses of people to migrate from farms to cities.
- The new middle class owned and operated the new factories, mines, and railroads, among other industries. They enjoyed a much more comfortable lifestyle than that of the working class.
- There was also an emerging class among the middle class that was also called the upper middle class. These included large-scale industrialists, manufacturers and bankers who became successful due to the industrial revolution.
- Subsequently the middle class and the working class were given the right to cast the vote. There was a vital shift from aristocracy to democracy as economic and political power shifted from the elite to the common man.

- Education paved a way for the middle class to excel in science and technology as well as commerce to set the foundation of the industrial and financial institutions.

Objective Type Questions

1. Which city became the perceived centre of Western civilization by the middle of the nineteenth century?
2. Name the machine that greatly contributed to the revolution in the textile industry.
3. Who invented the Miner's Friend which was used to drain mines in 1698?
4. Who invented the steam engine?
5. What is the transformation of industry and the economy in Britain, between the 1780s and the 1850s, called?
6. Whose interests were promoted and protected by the Laissez Faire theory?
7. Who is known as the 'prophet of free trade' in England?
8. Who developed Smelting iron, a new method of producing iron?
9. What caused the migration of people to cities in the Tudor society during the 16th and 17th centuries?
10. What was the new middle class that was created as a result of the Industrial Revolution called?
11. To whom did the British parliament extend the right to vote during the industrial revolution?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. London
2. Flying shuttle
3. Thomas Savery
4. James Watt
5. First industrial revolution
6. Capitalists
7. Adam Smith
8. Abraham Darby
9. Industrial Revolution
10. Bourgeoisie
11. The new middle-class

Assignments

1. Trace the emergence and growth of the new middle class in Britain.
2. The Industrial Revolution created a new social class, the middle class of England or the emergence of a new middle class facilitated the birth of the industrial revolution. Validate the statement.
3. Discuss the role and importance of the new middle class in English socio-cultural life.

Suggested Reading

1. Andersson, P. *Streetlife in Late Victorian London: The Constable and the Crowd*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
2. Bailey, P. *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885*. Routledge, 2014.
3. Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Revolution 1789 – 1848*, Abacus, 1988.
4. Graber Boyd, Jordan. "The Emerging English Middle Class: Illusory Upward Mobility and the Static Elite." *CiteSeerX,* Jordan Boyd Graber, 17 Dec. 2006. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/doc_view/pid/b2a367add5dcaae6af511fd32d3f70e-4ca4c6408.
5. Köhler, A. *Social Class of the Mid-Victorian Period and Its Values*, GRIN Verlag, 2008.
6. Mokyr, J. *The Economics of the Industrial Revolution*. Routledge, 1985.
7. Schubert, J. *Daily Life in Victorian England: The Middle Class and its Values*. GRIN Verlag, 2003.

UNIT THREE

Elizabethan Era

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- extend basic information about the Elizabethan period.
- know the basic features of Elizabethan literature.
- understand the socio-political situation of Britain during the Elizabethan Era.

Prerequisites

The reign of Queen Elizabeth I, from 1558 to 1603, marked a period of immense cultural, political, and social transformation in England, often referred to as the Elizabethan Age. Elizabeth I, the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, ascended to the throne after a tumultuous childhood, during which her mother's execution and her imprisonment at the Tower of London shaped her resilient and pragmatic approach to governance. Her reign not only solidified England's position as a rising power in Europe-culminating in the famed victory over the Spanish Armada-but also set the stage for the flourishing of English literature, arts, and exploration, earning her the title of the Virgin Queen.

This golden era, under Elizabeth's steady leadership, saw the rise of an economically diverse society, where the nobility, gentry, and emerging merchant classes played pivotal roles in shaping the nation's social and cultural fabric. While the monarch remained the supreme authority, with a divine mandate to rule, the era also witnessed the proliferation of new ideas and literary forms. Elizabethan society was a world of contradictions-an age of profound intellectual and artistic progress, yet one still entrenched in superstition, violence, and the remnants of medieval thought.

The period produced some of the greatest literary works in the English language, with playwrights like William Shakespeare, and Christopher Marlowe, and poets such as Edmund Spenser, laying the foundation for what would become the English Renaissance. The convergence of the Renaissance's thirst for classical knowledge and the Reformation's focus on spiritual renewal ignited an intellectual revolution. Writers not

only embraced the artistic sensibilities of the Italian Renaissance but also expressed the dynamic, often tumultuous, reality of their world through innovative forms like the Shakespearean sonnet and plays that captured the human condition in ways never seen before.

Elizabethan literature was an outpouring of creative energy, with an emphasis on both poetry and drama. From the lyric beauty of sonnets to the grandeur of Elizabethan theatre, this was a time when England's cultural ambitions soared. The age was marked by a search for self-expression and exploration, mirroring the voyages of discovery taking place across the globe. As England expanded its horizons geographically, so too did its literary and artistic boundaries, ensuring that the Elizabethan Age remains one of the most significant and vibrant periods in British history.

Keywords

Reformation, The Act of Supremacy, The Act of Uniformity, Elizabethan Society, Elizabethan Literature

4.3.1 Elizabeth I – the Tudor Queen

Queen Elizabeth I was born on 7th September 1533, in Greenwich. She died on March 24, 1603, in Richmond, Surrey after 45 years as queen. Elizabeth was the daughter of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. In 1536, Henry had Anne beheaded. It was believed that the real reason for Anne's death was that she failed to give birth to a male child. During her childhood, unlike most girls during her time, Elizabeth received a formal education under the guidance of very efficient tutors. By the time she became the queen of England, she was able to handle multiple languages including Greek, French, Italian, and Latin. At the time when her sister Mary became the queen, Elizabeth was taken into prison at the Tower of London. Mary suspected that Elizabeth supported various plots to remove her from power and she identified Elizabeth as a threat to her throne. Elizabeth became queen on November 17, 1558, after her sister Queen Mary's death. She was crowned two months later on January 15, 1559, in a coronation ceremony.

Fig 4.3.1 Elizabeth I

During her reign, England won a famous victory over the Spanish Armada. Because the Spanish navy was thought to be better than the British navy, the victory over the Spanish Armada raised the status of England in Europe. Apart from her achievements as the ruler of England, the period of her reign is regarded as the Golden Age of England, the Renaissance period, the Shakespearean Age and the first great age of Drama and the second great age of Poetry.

4.3.2 Elizabethan Society

The social life of England during the reign of Elizabeth I is characterised by its well-defined social stratification based on social position, wealth and occupation. The Monarch was the top first position in the Elizabethan social hierarchy. It was believed that God had chosen the monarch to rule. The monarch could declare war, dismiss parliament or reject its laws. Queen Elizabeth I, the sixth and last ruler of the Tudor dynasty was evaluated by many as England's best monarch. She was a wise and just Queen who chose the right advisers and was not dominated by them.

The Tudor period was an age of individuality. Nobility was at the top of the social ladder below the monarch. These men were rich and powerful, and they had large households. Within the nobility, there was a distinction between old families and new ones. Most of the old families were Catholic while the new families were Protestant. A person becomes a member of nobility by birth, or by a grant from the Crown. Noble titles were hereditary, passing from generation to generation. Such titles included the duke and the earl in England. Most of the members of Queen Elizabeth's council and chief officers in the counties came from noble families. They were expected to serve in an office at their own expense.

The Gentry class that was just below the nobility included knights, squires, gentlemen, and gentlewomen who did not work with their hands for a living. Their numbers grew during Queen Elizabeth's reign and became the most important social class in England. Wealth was the key to becoming a part of the gentry class. This class was made up of people who were not born of noble birth but became wealthy landowners. The rise of the gentry was the dominant feature of Elizabethan society. Two of the queen's chief ministers, Burghley and Walsingham were products of the gentry. Francis Bacon, the great essayer and philosopher also came from this class. The gentry was the backbone of Elizabethan England. They went to Parliament and served as justices of the Peace.

The Tudor era saw the rise of modern commerce with cloth and weaving leading the way. The prosperous merchant class emerged from the ashes of the Wars of the Roses. The prosperity of the wool trade led to a surge in building and the importance cannot be overstated. Shipping products from England to various ports in Europe and to the New World also became a profitable business for the merchants. The yeomanry of the time who held a small piece of land included farmers, tradesmen and craft workers. They took their religion very seriously and could read and write. The Yeomans were content to live more simply, using their wealth to improve their land and expand it.

The last class of Elizabethan England was the labourers, poor husbandmen, and some retailers who did not own their own land. Artisans, shoemakers, carpenters, brick masons and all those who worked with their hands belonged to this class of society. Under Queen Elizabeth I, the government undertook the job of assisting the labourers class and the result was the famous Elizabethan Poor

Laws which resulted in one of the world's first government-sponsored welfare programs.

Elizabeth I brilliantly framed and followed the policy of balance and moderation both inside and outside the country. A working compromise was reached with Scotland. The rebellious northern barons were kept in check. She, therefore, could successfully establish peace in traditionally disturbed border areas. Under her able administration, English national life rapidly and steadily progressed. The rapid rise of industrial towns gave employment to thousands. Increasing trade and commerce enriched England. It was a practice that the wealthy were taxed to support the poor.

It was an era of comparative religious tolerance of peace. Upon her accession she found the whole nation divided against itself. The north was largely Catholic, and the South was strongly Protestant. Scotland followed the Reformation intensely. Ireland followed its old traditional religion. It was Elizabeth who made the Anglican Church a reality. Anglicanism was a kind of compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. Queen Elizabeth loved England ardently and she made her court one of the most brilliant courts in Europe. The splendour of her court dazzled the eyes of the people. Her moderate policies did much to increase her popularity and prestige. Worship of the Virgin Queen became the order of the day. It was an age of patriotism especially inspired by the naval victory over Spain.

This was a remarkable epoch for the expansion of both mental and geographical horizons. The great voyagers like Hawkins, Frobisher, Raleigh and Drake brought home both material and intellectual treasures from the East and the West. The spirit of adventure and exploration fired the imagination of writers. The spirit of action and adventure paved the way for the illustrious development of dramatic literature. Drama progresses in an era of action and not of speculation. It has rightly been called the age of the discovery of the new world and of man. Italy, the home of the Renaissance, fascinated the Elizabethans. All liked to visit Italy and stay there for some time. People were not only fond of Italian books and literature, but also of Italian manners and morals.

It was an age of great diversity and contradictions. It was an age of light and darkness, of reason and of unreason, of wisdom and of foolishness, of hope and of despair. The barbarity and backwardness, ignorance and superstition of the Middle Ages still persisted. Disorder, violence, bloodshed and tavern brawls still prevailed. Highway robberies, as mentioned in Henry IV, Part I, were very common. The barbarity of the age is seen in such brutal sports as bear baiting, cock and bull fighting, to which numerous references are found in the plays of Shakespeare. Despite the advancement of science and learning people still believed in superstitions, ghosts, witches, fairies, charms and omens of all sorts.

4.3.3 Elizabethan Literature

"Such were some of the conditions which combined to create the spirit of Shakespeare's age - an age in which men lived intensely, thought intensely and wrote intensely"(W.H Hudson).

Elizabethan Literature was a term denoted to the body of literary works during the reign of Elizabeth I of England (1558 –1603). This age was probably the most splendid age in the history of English literature, during which such writers as Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare were active. Let's discuss the literary tendencies of the age.

By the 1570s, English poetry and prose burst into sudden glory. Though the poetical production was not quite equal to the dramatic, poetry enjoyed its heyday during the Elizabethan age. It was nevertheless of great and original beauty. A large number of lyrics and sonnets were produced. England became the nest of singing birds. A decisive shift of taste toward fluent artistry displaying its own grace and sophistication was announced in the works of Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney. It was also regarded as an era of sonnets as it was very popular. It was introduced into English by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey early in the 16th century. They introduced the Petrarchan sonnet. Shakespeare made changes to the Italian model and introduced his own style, now known as the English sonnet or the Shakespearean sonnet.

Fig 4.3.2 Edmund Spenser

English prose already had a significant tradition from the Anglo-Saxon period which was continued during the second half of the Middle English period. Elizabethan prose continued the journey. A further stimulus for the growth of prose was the religious upheaval that took place in the middle of the century.

Fig 4.3.3 Philip Sidney

The desire of reformers to address as comprehensive an audience as possible—the bishop and the boy who follows the plough, as William Tyndale put it—produced the first true classics of English prose. Most significant of these prose works include the reformed Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1549,1552,1559); John Foxe's Acts and Monuments (1563), which celebrates the martyrs, great and small, of English Protestantism; and the various English versions of the Bible, from Tyndale's New Testament (1525), Miles Coverdale's Bible (1535), and the Geneva Bible (1560) to the Authorised Version (or as it is commonly called King James's Version, 1611).

In the Elizabethan age, the two potent forces of the Renaissance and the Reformation. blended and co-operated with each other. These two movements produced a great uplifting of the spirit. The word "renaissance" originated from the Latin word "nasci" which means "Be Born". Renaissance was a time of great improvement in art, literature, and learning in Europe.

Fig 4.3.4 William Shakespeare

It inspired the aesthetic and intellect potential whereas the Reformation aroused the spiritual nature. Though the passion for classical learning was a rich and worthy enthusiasm, it became a danger to the language. In all branches of literature, Greek and Latin usages began to force themselves upon English, which was not totally beneficial. The English language gave away its native sturdiness and allowed itself to be tempered and polished by the new influences.

In the Elizabethan age, the two potent forces of the Renaissance and the Reformation. blended and co-operated with each other. These two movements produced a great uplifting of the spirit. The word "renaissance" originated from the Latin word "nasci" which means "Be Born". Renaissance was a time of great improvement in art, literature, and learning in Europe. It inspired the aesthetic and intellect potential whereas the Reformation aroused the spiritual nature. Though the passion for classical learning was a rich and worthy enthusiasm, it became a danger to the language. In all branches of literature, Greek and Latin usages began to force themselves upon English, which was not totally beneficial. The English language gave away its native sturdiness and allowed itself to be tempered and polished by the new influences.

Drama, during the Elizabethan age, made a rapid & glorious leap into maturity. The Era is perhaps most famous for its theatre and the works of William Shakespeare. English Renaissance theatre began with the opening of "The Red Lion" theatre in 1567. Many more permanent theatres opened in London over the next several years including the Curtain Theatre in 1577 and the famous Globe Theatre in 1599. The period produced some of the world's great playwrights including Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Even though the writers borrowed literature from abroad, this age depicted an unbound spirit of independence and creativity. Shakespeare openly borrowed from other literary and historical works, but with his splendid creative imagination, he transformed everything into gold. Spenser, a very original and creative writer was the leading poet of his time. The stanzaic structure introduced by him has been called the 'Spenserian Stanza'.

Fig 4.3.5 Globe Theatre

Recap

- Elizabeth became queen on November 17, 1558, after her sister Queen Mary's death.
- The term 'Elizabethan Era' denotes a period between 1558 and 1603 in British History.
- The Elizabethan age was remarkable for its religious tolerance, strong national spirit, patriotism, social content, intellectual progress and unbounded enthusiasm.
- This period is regarded as the Golden Age of England, the Renaissance period, the Shakespearean Age and the 1st great age of Drama and the 2nd great age of Poetry.
- The social life of England during the reign of Elizabeth I is characterised by its well-defined social stratification based on social position, wealth and occupation.
- Elizabethan Poor Laws - One of the world's first government-sponsored welfare programs.
- Elizabethan Literature was the term denoted to the body of literary works during the reign of Elizabeth I of England (1558 –1603) - a large number of lyrics and sonnets were created.
- Renaissance and the Reformation blended and co-operated with each other.

Objective Type Questions

1. Which Tudor monarch preceded Elizabeth on the throne of England?
2. By what term is the Elizabethan era often described in English history?
3. Mention the period of the Elizabethan era.
4. What was the nickname of Queen Elizabeth I?
5. Who was Queen Elizabeth's mother?
6. Who introduced the sonnet into English poetry?
7. What are the two kinds of sonnets known in English poetry?
8. What is the stanzaic structure named after Edmund Spenser?
9. Why did Catholics reject Elizabeth?
10. Whom did Queen Mary keep as a prisoner for some time?
11. Which Act placed Queen Elizabeth as the head of the English church?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Queen Mary I
2. Golden age
3. 1558-1603
4. Virgin Queen
5. Anne Boleyn
6. Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, generally referred to together as Wyatt and Surrey
7. Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnet
8. Spenserian Stanza
9. Because she was a protestant
10. Elizabeth
11. The Act of Settlement

Assignments

1. Write an assignment on the topic 'Elizabethan Literature.'
2. The Elizabethan Era is regarded as the 'Golden Age' of England. Do you agree?

Suggested Reading

1. Weir, Alison. *The Life of Elizabeth I*, Ballantine, 1998.
2. Gortner, C.W. *The Tudor Secret: A Novel*, St. Martin's Griffin, 2011.
3. Berry, Ciara. "Elizabeth I (R.1558-1603)." *The Royal Family*, 11 Mar. 2016, www.royal.uk/elizabeth-i-r1558-1603.
4. Potter, D.L. "Mid-Tudor foreign policy and diplomacy." *Tudor England and its Neighbours,* edited by S. Doran and G. Richardson, Basingstoke, 2005.
5. History, Hourly. *Queen Elizabeth I: A Life from The Beginning To End*, Independently Published, 2017.
6. Jones, W.R.D. *The Mid-Tudor Crisis, 1539-63,* Macmillan, 1973.

BLOCK - 05

Renaissance in Literature and Development in Science

UNIT ONE

Reformation

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- become aware of the key events and figures in the English Reformation
- analyse the Reformation's religious and political impact in England
- compare English Reformation with other European Reformations
- examine theological disagreements between Catholics and Protestants
- evaluate the Reformation's consequences on England's religious life
- explain the importance of various acts and books that played a part in the English Reformation

Prerequisites

The Reformation stands as one of the most transformative periods in European history, not only reshaping religious beliefs but also altering the very fabric of society, politics, and culture. In sixteenth-century England, the Catholic Church was at the centre of daily life, holding immense power both spiritually and politically. However, dissatisfaction with church corruption, the exclusivity of Latin services, and its disconnect from the changing needs of society ignited the spark for the Protestant Reformation. This movement, driven by the desire for reform and greater accessibility to religious texts, led to a radical shift in Europe's religious landscape, sowing seeds of division that would forever change England and the rest of Europe.

What makes the English Reformation particularly fascinating is its unique combination of religious upheaval and political maneuvering. While the Protestant Reformation across Europe was largely a grassroots movement led by figures like Martin Luther, in England, it was driven by King Henry VIII's personal and political ambitions. When the Pope denied Henry's request for a divorce, he broke away from the Catholic Church, establishing the Church of England and setting off a century-long transformation of English society. This period brought about intense theological debates, cultural changes, and even violent confrontations between Catholics and Protestants, ultimately redefining England's identity.

This unit will take you through the key events of the English Reformation- from Henry VIII's dramatic break with the Catholic Church to the religious reforms under his suc-

cessors, including the Protestant changes under Edward VI, the Catholic restoration under Mary I, and the religious settlement of Elizabeth I. As you explore these events, you will gain insights into how the Reformation reshaped not only religion but also politics, culture, and even literature in England, leaving a lasting legacy on the modern world.

Keywords

Catholicism , Protestants , Reformation , Supremacy, Excommunication, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Henry VIII and Cranmer, Nonconformists

Discussion

5.1.1 Catholics and Protestants

At the start of the sixteenth century England was an entirely Christian country. There were no other religious groups and everyone followed the version of Christianity that is called Catholicism. The Catholic Church was led by the Pope who was based in Rome. All of the religious services were carried out in Latin. Most people in England attended church regularly and believed in Christianity. The Church was a central point in the community where people came together for births, marriages and funerals. In many areas the church provided support to the poor, access to basic medicine and guidance with problems. Many people could not read or write and they believed what they were told in Church. However, for some people the Catholic Church was considered 'old fashioned' and out of date with what people wanted. Some thought that the Church did things that were corrupt, that misled people and took advantage of their belief in God.

The people who did not want the Catholic Church anymore still believed in Christianity but they wanted a version that more people could understand. They wanted services to be in English with an English Bible. The people who wanted the changes to the Catholic Church were called Protestants. Even though Catholics and Protestants were all Christians and believed in God, the Bible and that Jesus Christ was the son of God their disagreements made them enemies. The two different types of Christian were prepared to kill each other over their disagreements.

Now let's proceed to learn English reformation. The Reformation in England was a religious-political movement that lasted over a century. It transformed the English society from the Catholic faith into its own distinct church of faith. The new Anglican Church was diverse from the Roman Catholic Church and from other Protestants. This reformation includes some unique series of events and particular changes that impacted the early modern English society. There are three different perceptions over the English Reformation and its impact on the people. The first view is that the Reformation was imposed on the people by King Henry VIII and his advisers. The second perception is that the seeds of the Reformation were present in the society itself. A section in the society desired the creation of a Protestant church. The third "middle ground" view is that the Reformation was an imposed one but accepted by the people. It was so because of a collaborative effort, resulting in widespread acceptance and little resistance.

These all views agree with the fact that England's Reformation was unique from the Reformations that had happened in other parts of Europe. Even though it was developed gradually with a slow pace, it transformed the empire as a whole. It was true that the state was clearly divided because of religion, but that is necessary because revisionism was inevitable. Let's check the fundamental differences between European reformation and English reformation.

5.1.2 The Reformation in Europe

- It was the time when some people began to question some of the teachings of the Catholic Church and to challenge the authority of the Pope.
- It was started in Germany in 1517 as a protest against the abuses in the church.
- Those who supported this movement for reform were called Protestants.

5.1.2.1 Causes of the Reformation

- The abuses within the Church such as Simony, the selling of positions/jobs in the Church and sale of indulgences, which offered full remission of sins in exchange for monetary payments; Nepotism, the giving of positions in the Church to the family of clergymen. Absenteeism, the practice of Bishops never visiting their dioceses; Pluralism, the practice of Bishops being in charge of many dioceses at the same time.
- The wealth of the Church and extravagance of clergy; the Catholic Church was badly organised as Popes and Bishops paid no attention to their duties as Churchmen and instead lived like Princes, fighting and spending vast amounts of money. Priests were uneducated and often could not even read the Bible.
- The influence of the ideas from renaissance literature.

Martin Luther of Germany, an Augustinian unleashed the waves of protest against all of these abuses.

Fig 5.1.1 Martin Luther

Fig 5.1.2 A painting of Luther's ninety Five Theses

Martin Luther's arguments were these:

- Justification by Faith alone.
- There were only two Sacraments, Baptism and The Eucharist.
- The bible is the only source of Christian Teaching, not the Bishops.
- Clergy should be allowed to marry.
- He rejected the Church's belief in Transubstantiation.
- Kings should be the Heads of the church in their own Kingdoms.

Luther posted his Ninety Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church, Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517 and this has been traditionally considered as the starting date for the commencement of Reformation. After this Luther's ideas spread rapidly. His new religion became known as Lutheranism and eventually became the main religion in Northern Germany, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. Luther himself married a nun named Catherine Von Bora and he died in 1546.

5.1.3 Characteristics of the Protestant Reformation

The following features or characteristics were ascribed to Reformation period.

- The central message of Protestantism was: *sola gratia, sola fide, sola Scriptura.* That meant "salvation was by grace alone through faith alone as communicated with perfect authority in the Scriptures" (Mark. A. Noll, 2012). This message has endured within most evangelical Christianity till this day and is central to the faith of many evangelicals. Protestants would obey the Bible before all other authorities. And what many Protestants would find in the Bible was a message of salvation by grace at least substantially similar to the one that Luther had discovered for himself in the pages of the Scriptures, Noll argues.
- *The Priesthood of all believers*. Believers do not need a mediator to go between them and God but can approach directly. Every believer has direct access to God. The ideas argued by Luther on this subject eventually became the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Along with *sola gratia, sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*, the priesthood of all believers was one of the top ideas of the Protestant Reformation.
- Bible made available for people in their language. If all believers are priests, then they should have access to the word of God. Then only they can effectively do their priestly duties. As Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German, Protestants have translated the Bible into regional languages. This makes it possible for indigenous people to read in their own mother tongue the words of God.
- Mass education of believers. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg was priceless to the propagation of the reformation. It was also a helpful tool for Protestant leaders to train lay people and also start schools to train future leaders. This feature of Protestantism which follows logically from the priesthood of all believers continues to this day in many evangelical circles

with great emphasis being made on using print and other modern technologies to teach believers to be able to fellowship with God directly.

- The restoration of the sacraments. The sacraments were restored to the people and Luther reduced them to only two (Baptism and Eucharist)
- Clerics could marry. Luther married the former nun Katherine von Bora. With that action, he set the example for the Protestant clerical family. Today, most protestant pastors and clerics marry. About 500 years later, Catholic clerics still don't marry.
- State churches. Early on, the protestant split from the Roman Catholic Church in different regions didn't mean the many denominations could exist. That was a much later occurrence. Each region had a national church which often paid loyalty to a local monarch as was the case in England.
- Executions and Burning at the stake. Unfortunately, it was common during the early days of the reformation for church authorities to label opponents as heretics and kill them. The burning of Jan Hus at the stake and the execution of many Anabaptists are examples. We are fortunate that we no longer live in such an atmosphere.
- Predestination. Luther believed much more firmly in predestination than many later Protestants.
- Sacraments. Luther believed that God genuinely regenerated infants in baptism and that Christ was truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Those are beliefs that very few Protestants outside the Lutheran churches share today.

5.1.4 Counter Reformation or Catholic Reformation

Due to reformation, Protestantism spread across Europe. The Catholic Church was also forced to reform. The efforts the Catholic Church made to reform itself and to check the spread of Protestantism are known as the Counter Reformation.

These efforts included (a) The Council of Trent 1545 – 1563, (b) The founding of new Religious Orders, such as the Jesuits and (c) The Court of the Inquisition.

- The Council of Trent: Paul III responded by convening the important Council of Trent (1545–63) which reacted to Protestant teachings on faith, grace, and the sacraments. It was also an attempt to reform training for the priesthood. The council was highly important for its sweeping decrees on self-reform and for its dogmatic definitions that clarified virtually every doctrine contested by the Protestants. Despite internal strife and two lengthy interruptions, the council was a key part of the Counter-Reformation and played a vital role in revitalising the Roman Catholic Church in many parts of Europe. The Church and Papacy of Roman Catholicism of modern time is the self-purified version through the council.
- The founding of new Religious Orders: There were numerous religious orders that were start-

ed during the Counter Reformation. These were concentrated on helping the sick and needy in their locality. The Rome Oratory formed the Theatines. This group wanted to advertise to the local population in Rome how good priests should live and work by setting examples in pastoral care and spiritual learning. The Ursulines were founded in Brescia in 1535. It was an order for women. They worked among the poor and founded a school for poor children. They were to become a major teaching order. The Somas chi were founded in 1530 in Venetia and they concentrated on helping orphans. The Barnabites were founded in c1530 in Milan and they concentrated on pastoral care. The Work of the Jesuits. They saw their job as "spreading the Christian Faith through public preaching, spiritual exercises, deeds of charity and the training of the young and the ignorant in Christianity". They formed schools and colleges to teach the sons of the wealthy, believing that these men were the future people of influence in their countries.

- The Court of the Inquisition: These were special Church Courts set up to deal with those people who had been accused of Heresy. People were tortured to confess and encouraged to spy on their neighbours. Anybody who came before the Court was presumed to be guilty and had to prove their innocence. Various punishments were used including flogging and burning at the stake known as Auto Da Fé. The Court was especially strong in Spain and Italy and as a result Protestantism was wiped out in both of those countries.

5.1.5 Results of Reformation

- Germany was divided – the North became Protestant while the South remained Catholic.
- In 1546, after Luther's death war broke out between the Catholics and Protestants. It lasted nine years and neither side won. The Peace of Augsburg, provided the decision that the King could decide the Religion of his own Kingdom.
- The bible was translated into most European languages for the first time and its use became widespread.
- As Protestantism spread across Europe, the Catholic Church was faced with a crisis. It had to reform. The efforts the Catholic Church made to reform it and to stop the spread of Protestantism are known as the Counter – Reformation. These efforts included; the Council of Trent 1545 – 1563, the founding of new Religious Orders, such as the Jesuits and the Court of the Inquisition.

5.1.6 The English Reformation

When speaking of English Reformation based on the above viewpoints, we can find a marked difference. In English reformation, the creation of an independent national church was directly powered by the events of the life of King Henry VIII. When Henry VIII attempted to obtain a divorce from Catherine of Aragon in 1527 so as to marry Anne Boleyn,

the Pope did not comply. It took Henry nearly ten years after he fell in love with Anne to get the break from the Roman church and marry Anne. Henry adopted a solution suggested by his advisor Thomas Cromwell that he take the title of 'Supreme Head of the English Church'.

Fig 5.1.3 Henry VIII with Anne Boleyn

The Church of England was then founded by King Henry VIII. It eventually became the official religion of England. This branch of Protestantism of England started to be known as Anglicanism. The English church was called the Anglican Church to refer to Anglicanism. In 1549, the Book of Common Prayer, the official prayer book of the Church of England was published and authorised for use in the churches.

In 1533 the English Parliament passed the Act in Restraint of Appeals, which denied papal jurisdiction in England and ended appeals of court cases to Rome. It was followed by the Act of Supremacy (1534) which recognised the king as the Supreme Head of the Church in England with 'full power and authority' to 'reform' the institution and 'amend' all errors and heresies. Henry and his newly-appointed Vice Gerent in Spiritual Affairs, Thomas Cromwell, immediately embarked upon a programme of reform.

- Cromwell's Injunctions of 1536, and 1538 attacked idolatry, pilgrimages and other 'superstitions'.
- The lesser monasteries were closed in 1536 and the remaining monasteries were dissolved over the next few years.
- People who resisted the closures were imprisoned or hanged.
- Henry rejected Martin Luther's theology of justification by faith alone; he did accept the German reformer's insistence upon the supremacy of Scripture.
- Consequently, encouraged by Cromwell and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, Henry authorised an English Bible that could be read by the laity as well as the clergy.
- The original heresy laws were brought back and Mary I used these to persecute Protestants. In total 229 men and 51 women were burnt at the stake, most in the South East and East Anglia by the orders of Mary I. As a result of this Mary has been remembered as 'Bloody Mary'.
- Parliament opposed some of Mary's changes – MPs did not want Church taxes to go to Rome. Instead of making this part of the new church Mary had to collect the money and then send it on to the Pope herself.
- Mary did not have any children and when she died, she named her sister Elizabeth as her heir.
- Elizabeth I became Queen in 1558. She had been raised as a Protestant but she wanted the country's religious problems to calm down.
- Elizabeth called a Parliament

soon after becoming Queen. It only lasted a short time but it passed a religious settlement, one that is still the basis for the Church of England today.

- Elizabeth and Parliament re-formed the church to create a compromise. The Act of Supremacy made Elizabeth the 'Supreme Governor' rather than the 'Supreme Head' of the English church. The Pope, once again, had no say over the Church of England.
- The Act of Uniformity re-introduced the *Book of Common Prayer*, based largely on Edward VI's version.
- The Church of England was very unusual - it was not Catholic but was also unlike other Protestant churches across Europe. Services were in English, not Latin, and priests were allowed to marry. However, some more traditional aspects remained, such as church music.
- The compromise was challenged many times. Catholics still felt that Elizabeth's changes went too far, but some Protestants felt she did not go far enough. Elizabeth stood up to the Protestants and the Catholics in her Parliament and refused to allow England to be led in either direction.
- The second Parliament passed the Act for Assurance of the Queen's Power, which meant that anyone working for the government had to swear to the Oath of Supremacy. But many Catholics would not want to do this. From 1563 Catholics could not sit in Parliament and from 1570 they risked losing their jobs in local government as well.
- Many Protestants continued to push for further changes but Queen Elizabeth refused.
- In 1570 Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth. That meant that England remained cut off from the Catholic Church. It also meant that Catholics were supposed to oppose Elizabeth in any way they could.
- The Elizabethan court and Parliament became convinced that there were Catholic plots everywhere. 1585 Elizabeth's officials uncovered the Babington Plot and named Queen Mary of Scotland, a Catholic, as plotting to kill the Queen and take over. Mary was already under arrest in England.
- The Sixth Parliament (1586 – 1587) was created to examine the plot and certain MPs pushed Elizabeth to have Mary executed for treason. After she was executed the Spanish sent an Armada to invade England, it was famously defeated.

5.1.7 Rebellions and Resistances

Pilgrimage of Grace – It was against Henry VIII in 1536 and the largest and most significant rebellion against Tudor rule. In response to Henry VIII's religious changes a rising in Lincolnshire spread throughout the North. It primarily aimed to stop the dissolution of the monasteries, although there were other religious, political and economic causes. After initially accepting the rebels' demands, Henry later executed over 200 of them.

Prayer Book Rebellion or 'Western Rebellion' – It was in 1549 at the time of

Edward VI. It was popular in Devon and Cornwall against changes to the church and the new Prayer book. Over 4000 rebels were killed and the uprising was suppressed.

Wyatt's Rebellion –It was during the time of Mary I in 1554. Thomas Wyatt was the leading figure in this rebellion against Mary I in Kent. It was against Mary I's proposed marriage to Philip of Spain, but historians believe there were also economic, political and religious motives. Over 20,000 men joined him in Kent, but after marching to London most rebels dispersed and Wyatt admitted defeat. He was executed for high treason.

5.1.8 Time- line of English Reformation

The Reformation in England was started with Henry VIII and continued till the close of the 16th century. The process began with a break up from the Catholic Church headed by the Pope in Rome. The Anglican Church was established and the English monarch became its supreme head. Other consequences included the dissolution of the monasteries, the abolition of the Mass, the use of the English language in services and in the Bible used, the replacement of altars with communion tables, and a general doing away of the more decorative and showy elements of Catholicism both within services and the churches themselves. The majority of people went along with the change. But there were objections from both Catholics and more radical Protestants such as the several Puritan groups who would go their own way and establish their own churches which adhered more closely to the thoughts expounded by such reformers as John Calvin.

- **Henry VIII & the Break Up**

The origins of the English Reformation were personal and it involved the need for Henry to get papal approval for his divorce. Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury formally annulled Henry's first marriage in 1533 and Parliament passed the Act of Succession in 1534. The Act of Supremacy was followed in November 1534 through which Henry, and all subsequent English monarchs were declared as head of the English Church. The Treason Act got sanction of the Parliament through then first-minister, Thomas Cromwell in 1534. These regulations restrict people to speak out and criticise their king or his policies.

- **Thomas Cromwell Begins the Reformation**

Cromwell assumed the role of vicar-general, that is, the king's vicegerent in Church affairs. By1535, in order to carry out his reform of the church, he made full use of his powers and took the opportunity to interfere on a daily basis in Church affairs. Cromwell next issued The Injunctions of 1536, especially over the clergy. The English Reformation progressed apace following Cromwell's Ten Articles of 1536. Taking inspiration from the writings of Martin Luther, rejected the Seven Sacraments of Catholicism and left but three (baptism, penance, and the Eucharist). It was enforced through new doctrine in The Bishop's Book, published in July 1537.

The bill, Dissolution of the Monasteries of 1536, allowed the closure and abolishment of Catholic monasteries. The official excuse was that monasteries were no longer relevant, they were full of corrupt and immoral monks and nuns, and they did not help the poor as much as their wealth indicated they should. Beginning with the smaller monasteries, Cromwell ensured the whole operation went smoothly by paying off senior monks, priors, and abbots with generous pensions. It was followed by the Pilgrimage of Grace uprising in 1536 which involved around 40,000 protestors.

The rebellion was peacefully disbanded but 200 ringleaders were executed. The 1539 act of parliament resulted in the closure of all remaining monasteries regardless of size or income.

Cromwell produced even stronger-reform measures in the following years. The 1538 injunctions recommended that relics of saints were removed from churches; pilgrimages should be avoided and insisted to keep records in every parish of all births, marriages, and deaths. There was clear division amongst the church hierarchy over reforms. Thomas Cranmer led the more radical faction while the Catholic conservatives were led by Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester.

- **Edward VI and His Reforms**

Edward VI ascended the throne following Henry VIII and introduced even more radical changes than seen previously. Cranmer issued the Book of Homilies (1547) and the Book of Common Prayer (1549) to ensure compulsory regulations under the Act of Uniformity. The prayer book which was updated with radical departure from Catholicism (1552) rejected the Catholic idea of transubstantiation (that the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus Christ).

By this time Protestantism became prominent. Iconography, murals, and pictorial stained glass windows were all removed from churches, and instead of Latin, services were now conducted in English. Catholic altars were replaced by communion tables. The worship of saints was discouraged. Priests were now permitted to marry. Religious guilds were suppressed; endowments were abolished. There were protests and rebellions over these issues in Cornwall and then Norfolk in 1549.

- **Reformation's Reversal during Mary I**

In 1553, following the death of Edward, his half-sister Mary I became the Queen of England. Being a strict Catholic, she set about reversing the Reformation. She reversed all the religious-aimed legislation of Edward VI though 'The First Act of Repeal' in October 1553. The Second Act of Repeal of 1555 abolished all post-1529 legislation concerning religious matters. Through these legislations, the Act of Supremacy was also annulled and so finally the Pope was back officially as head of the Church in England. She got the nickname 'Bloody Mary' derived from the 287 Protestant martyrs. They were burned at the stake during her reign, including Thomas Cranmer in 1556. When Mary died 1558, she was succeeded by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth.

- **Further Reforms under Elizabeth I**

Being a Protestant, Elizabeth I set about restoring the Church of England into Protestantism. Hard-line Protestants and Catholics were both dissatisfied with Elizabeth's pragmatic stance. So she went for a mid-way approach which appealed to the majority of her subjects. The Elizabethan Settlement was a collection of laws and decisions introduced between 1558 and 1603. The Act of Supremacy (April 1559) put the English monarch back again as the head of the Church. Now she assumed the title 'Supreme Governor' of the Church rather than the 'Supreme Head'.

In 1559, the Act of Uniformity put regulations over churches and the services. Church attendance was made compulsory and failure to do so resulted in a small fine. Those who refused to attend Anglican services were known as recusants. She issued the Royal Injunctions which was a set of 57 regulations on Church matters. It contains instructions like a preacher's licence, compulsory English language Bible, and a

ban on pilgrimages. Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer was reinstated. Finally, the Thirty-Nine Articles (1563) attempted to definitively define English Protestantism (otherwise known as Anglicism). There was opposition to the Settlement from both radical Catholics and radical Protestants. But there was a degree of toleration in her religious policy. The Queen herself stated that she would "open windows into no man's soul". But she removed remaining pro-Catholic bishops through the Act of Exchange of 1559 and confiscated their estates.

5.1.9 Impact of Reformation on Literature

The Reformation was a great 16th century religious revolution in the Christian Church which influenced the political, economic, social and cultural life of England. It had notable literary effects too. Sidney, Spenser and Bacon were the great supporters of the Reformation. Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare were the other major writers during the Reformation period.

Chaucer was the first great poet to satirise the clergy in his *Canterbury Tales*. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* revealed the true Reformation spirit. Milton combined the spirit of Reformation and Renaissance in his *Paradise Lost*. Bacon expressed Reformation in his prose. Because of the literary contributions during the reformation, England was known as The Nest of Singing Birds.

Recap

- The Reformation in England was a religious-political movement that lasted over a century. It transformed the English society from Catholic faith into its own distinct church of faith.
- The main cause of the English Reformation was King Henry VIII's desire to divorce his first wife Catherine of Aragon, which the Pope would not allow.
- The English Reformation split the Church in England from the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope.
- The Reformation resulted in the monarch becoming the head of the Protestant Church of England; monasteries were abolished and their wealth confiscated, and there were significant changes in church services, notably the use of the English language and not Latin.

Objective Type Questions

1. Which year did the Reformation start in Germany?
2. Who put forth the idea of 'Justification by Faith alone'?
3. During whose reign did the English Reformation start?
4. When was Elizabeth I coronated as Queen?
5. When was the Act of Supremacy passed by the British parliament?

6. When did the Prayer Book Rebellion happen?
7. When did the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' occur?
8. Which year did the Wyatt's Rebellion occur?
9. When was 'The First Act of Repeal' happened?
10. When did the Second Act of Repeal happen?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. 1517
2. Martin Luther
3. Henry VIII
4. 1558
5. 1534
6. 1549
7. 1536
8. 1554
9. 1553
10. 1555

Assignments

1. Discuss on the 'Reformation movement and its impact/effect on English religious life.'
2. Narrate the contributions of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I to English Reformation.

Suggested Reading

1. Cannon, John and Anne Hargreaves. *The Kings and Queens of Britain*. OUP, 2009.
2. Dickens, A.G. *The English Reformation*. Schocken, 1964.
3. Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*. Yale UP, 2005.
4. Elton, G.R. *England under the Tudors*. Routledge, 2018.
5. Ferriby, David. *The Tudors*. Hodder Education, 2015.
6. Haigh, Christopher. *The English Reformation Revised.* CUP, 1993.
7. Miller, John. *Early Modern Britain, 1450-1750.* CUP, 2017.
8. Scarisbrick, J.J. *The Reformation and the English People*. Basil Blackwell, 1984.
9. Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought*, Baker Academics, 2016.

UNIT TWO

Humanism

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learners will be able to:

- analyse the ideas and background of the development of Humanism
- examine the spread of humanism through Europe
- recognise the leaders and their ideas in Humanism
- become aware of humanism's focus on literature, art, and virtue
- explore humanism's impact on science and philosophy
- evaluate literary, artistic, and scientific achievementsevaluate literary, artistic, and scientific achievements.

Prerequisites

The Renaissance marked an era of intellectual and cultural rebirth, with humanism emerging as its driving force. Humanism was more than just a philosophical movement; it represented a fundamental shift in how people viewed themselves and their relationship with the world. Emphasising the study of classical antiquities, humanism sought to explore what it truly means to be human, focusing on literature, art, and moral philosophy as ways to understand humanity's potential. Rather than being bound solely by religious teachings, humanism celebrated individual autonomy, critical thinking, and the power of education to cultivate virtuous citizens. Humanists believed that through creativity, observation, and intellectual pursuit, people could reshape the world, both for themselves and society at large.

The influence of humanism was most strongly felt in Italy, where thinkers like Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio laid the foundations for the movement. Dante's *Divine Comedy* intertwined theological reflection with secular insight, offering profound commentary on the human condition. Petrarch's rediscovery of ancient texts reignited interest in classical philosophy, earning him the title "Father of Humanism." Meanwhile, Boccaccio's *Decameron* captured the complexity of human experience, balancing humour with the harsh realities of life. These early humanists also challenged the traditional supremacy of Latin, promoting the use of vernacular languages to make knowledge and culture more accessible.

Through their contributions, these thinkers sparked an intellectual revolution that laid the groundwork for the Renaissance, influencing art, science, and society in profound ways. In this unit, you will learn the humanist movement and explore how it reshaped the world's understanding of art, philosophy, and what it means to be human.

Keywords

Renaissance, Classical Revival, Humanism, Virtue, Individualism, Dante, Plutarch, Boccaccio

Protagoras, the ancient Greek philosopher, placed humans at the centre: "Man is the measure of all things of things that are they are, and of things that are not that they are not" - meaning that sensory appearances and beliefs are objective truths, not subjective opinions. Again, he says: we know which things are good or bad, just or unjust, or beautiful or ugly, because each of these qualities is determined or constituted by our own attitudes. He asserted: "As to the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or do not exist. For many are the obstacles that impede knowledge, both the obscurity of the question and the shortness of human life."

Humanism was the dominant intellectual movement of the Renaissance. Scholars are of the opinion that it was originally spread in Italy in the 14th Century, arrived in maturity in the 15th century, and spread to the rest of Europe with the opening of the 16th century. It then became the dominant intellectual philosophy of Europe in the 16th century. This movement was based on Neo-platonic philosophy which emphasised the primacy of human values over those of feudal and ecclesiastical institutions. The humanists believed that the human mind was capable of thinking for itself without relying on divine authority and traditional institutions. In brief, humanism made man the measure of all things in society.

Geographically, the origin of humanism can be traced to Italy. The original centre was in Florence. Initially it was a philosophical movement deriving its inspiration from Plato's Republic (Neo-Platonism). Some of the prominent members of the neoplatonic academy were Marsilio Ficino and Picodella Mirandola. Ficino tried to find commonalities between Plato's thought and Christianity. He agreed with Plato that the soul was not subject to death and that after leaving this world, it would be united with God. A hunger for bringing old texts back to the world was characteristic of Humanists.

5.2.1 Humanism

Humanism was a term invented in the 19th century to describe the Renaissance idea that the study of humanity should be a priority as opposed to religious matters. Important classical ideals which interested humanists included the importance of public and private

virtue, Latin grammar, techniques of rhetoric, history, conventions in literature and poetry, and moral philosophy. This education did not create an all-encompassing philosophy or worldview in its adherents. Humanism sometimes refers to 'Studia humanitatis' which means that rather than concentrating on religious matters, one should focus on what it is to be human, and more precisely, consider what is a virtuous individual in its widest sense and how that individual fully participates in public life.

The main elements of Renaissance humanism are:

- an interest in studying literature and art from antiquity
- an interest in the eloquent use of Latin and philology
- a belief in the importance and power of education to create useful citizens
- the promotion of private and civic virtue
- a rejection of scholasticism
- the encouragement of non-religious studies
- an emphasis on the individual and their moral autonomy
- a belief in the importance of observation, critical analysis, and creativity
- a belief that poets, writers, and artists can lead humanity to a better way of living
- an interest in the question 'what does it mean to be human'?

5.2.2 Classical Revival

The humanist movement owes its mould to the Italian trio who lived in the pre-Renaissance period. They are Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375). Because of their unique contributions, they were recognized as its founding fathers. Dante through *The Divine Comedy* (1319) discussed a central message on how to reach salvation. It was a subtle shift from entirely religious-focused works to those considering humanity's role in God's universe.

Petrarch was a religious man, but in his work criticised the abuses in the Catholic Church such as its corruption and excessive love of show. Petrarch rejected scholasticism which grimly held on to Church dogma and created endless rounds of fruitless debate amongst scholars. He made perhaps his greatest contribution to the study of antiquity by finding manuscripts which had become 'lost' in obscure monastic libraries. He regarded the period in which he lived as an intermediary period between antiquity and this new dawn (Slumber).

Giovanni Boccaccio also searched out 'lost' manuscripts relevant to antiquity. In addition, his *Decameron* (Ten Days), a collection of tales compiled between 1348 and 1353, appealed to later humanists because it dealt with everyday human experiences in great detail. Bocaccio also created works that were of great use to humanist scholars such as his Ancestry of the Pagan Gods. All these three writers promoted the use of vernacular language, Italian (at least in poetical works), and this eventually led to the dominance of Latin being challenged. The arrival of the printing press in Europe in 1450 was another boost to the trio mentioned above and the democratisation of knowledge.

From the discussion above stated you may have basic and preliminary information about the contributions of the Italian Trio. Let's look into the individual contributions of these founding fathers of humanism in brief.

Dante contributed to the development of humanism, the use of the vernacular in literature and challenged the hegemonic nature of the Church and these helped to generate the cultural and intellectual changes known as the Renaissance, which brought about the real transformation of world order.

Fig 5.2.1 Dante holding the Divine Comedy, painting in 1465

- Dante's decision to put his contemporaries in Hell in his masterpiece *The Divine Comedy*, reflects humanism, since he respects both his friends and enemies as individuals. All of these characters have their own distinct personalities, and Dante makes them stand out from the collective group of their fellow sinners.
- *The Divine Comedy* forms one of the most influential works of medieval literature as it explores ideas of the afterlife in medieval Christian belief. It imparts an imaginary journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise (Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso).
- It is also a 'universal journey'. The purpose of his narrative, as he states in his Epistola a Cangrande, is to transport all of mankind from the state of misery to real happiness. The plot of the poem is that a man, generally assumed to be Dante himself, is enabled to undertake a journey which leads him to visit the souls in Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. He has two guides, Virgil, the epic poet from his own country, who guides him through Hell and Purgatory and Beatrice who takes him to Paradise (most of the poetic work of Dante was inspired by his chaste love for Beatrice with whom fell in love when they were both aged 9 and continued to love till his death).
- The moral lesson of *The Divine Comedy* is that evil is to be punished and good rewarded. Dante gives an introspective tool for all to measure the deeds of all, even of his own. In his visits to the land of the dead, Dante follows his classical ancestors in epic poetry such as Homer in his *Odyssey* and Virgil in his *Aeneid*. But his poem has more in common with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the only other Christian epic poem.
- In Dante's Inferno, a pre-renaissance work which is the first part of his epic poem *Divine Comedy*, reveals the seeds of Renaissance humanism. Humanist prime focus is on 'here and now' (the present) rather than the afterlife and believes in rationality over spirituality. Humanists pay more attention to people than God.
- Dante wrote Inferno while in political exile from Florence. He

used it as a vehicle to express his political beliefs and take comfort in imagining bad ends for even his enemies. However, the poem's main purpose, quoting Milton, is to "justify the ways of God to Men."

- The Italian style: Florentine Tuscan became the 'lingua franca' of Italy through the popularity of *The Divine Comedy*. This made Florence the creative hub of the Renaissance. It also influenced the language of Dante's literary descendants Boccaccio and Petrarch.
- As people become less interested in thinking about God, the afterlife, and the saints and more interested in thinking about themselves, their natural world, and the here and now, humanism starts its growth.

Petrarch is rightly regarded as the father of Humanism for his influential philosophical attitudes and the compilation of classical texts.

- He travelled extensively over Europe and during these travels, he collected crumbling Latin manuscripts. His discoveries, especially Cicero's letters, helped spark the Renaissance.
- He shaped the nascent Humanist movement a great deal by the internal conflicts and musings expressed in the writings which were seized upon by renaissance humanist philosophers and argued continually the following years.
- His work 'Secretum Meum' points out that secular achievements did not necessarily preclude an authentic relationship with God. Because, according to him, instead God had given humans their vast intellectual and creative potential to be used to their fullest.
- Being a devout Catholic, he did not see a conflict between realising humanity's potential and having religious faith.
- He believed in the immense moral and practical value of the study of ancient history and literature, the study of human thought and action.
- His major works which reflect religious and philosophical interests include On Illustrious Men, 'The Epic Poem Africa' , 'the Autobiographical Treatise Petrarch's Secret', 'De Vita Solitaria' (The Life of Solitude), and 'Epistolae Metricae' (Metrical Letters).

Fig 5.2.2 Laura and Petrarch

- Petrarch's poems addressed to Laura, an idealised beloved with whom he fell in love at the age of 23, contributed to the flowering of

lyric poetry. His chaste and silent love for Laura who was outside his reach continued even after her death until his death. He is the originator of the sonnet, a poem of 14 lines in particular metrical pattern. He wrote more than 300 sonnets as well as other short lyrics and one long poem addressed to Laura. Those included in his *Canzoniere* are divided into *Rime in vita Laura* (263 poems) and *Rime in morte Laura* (103 poems). Petrarch's sonnets to Laura have inspired the love-sonnet cycles of Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare.

- His influence on European literature was enormous and lasting. His deep consciousness of the Classical past as a source of literary and philosophical meaning for the present was of great importance in paving the way for the Renaissance.

Boccaccio was considered to be one of the great mediators between the classical world and Renaissance Italy. Along with Petrarch, he laid the foundations of Renaissance humanism.

Fig 5.2.3 19th century painting of *The Decameron* by John Waterhouse

His encyclopaedia on classical myths did much to generate interest in Ancient history and culture and persuaded many to study Greek-Roman civilization.

- Boccaccio popularised the works of Homer in Florence, and this persuaded many to study the works of the poet who sang of the destruction of Troy and the adventures of Odysseus. He was one of the first Italians to celebrate the Greeks and their culture. He wrote a biography of Dante and delivered the first public lectures on *The Divine Comedy* in 1373-74.

- In his works, his characters are struggling with circumstances and using their reason and foresight to improve their lot in life. In his masterpiece the *Decameron* (1348-53), he shows young people enjoying and celebrating life even though the Black Death is raging all around them. The *Decameron* (which means ten day's work) is the most perfect example of Italian classical prose and was influential in promoting the humanistic worldview in the Renaissance. It begins with the flight of 10 young people (7 women and 3 men) from Florence, which was afflicted with plague. They retire to a well-watered countryside, where they spend their time, among other things by telling stories for the next fortnight. The story telling takes ten days and each of them tells ten stories, thus making a total of 100 stories.

5.2.3 Spread of Humanism

The establishment of the printing press helped spread humanist ideas from Italy to other parts of Europe. One of the most

celebrated humanists Desiderius Erasmus believed that education was the answer to the Catholic Church's problems. So he compiled editions of classical authors and provided a new Latin and Greek translation of the New Testament. His sharp and critical examination of original texts, textual analysis of current versions, and interest in philology were positively influenced by other Renaissance scholars. Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (1509) epitomised the moral essence of humanism in its insistence on heartfelt goodness as opposed to formalistics devotion. As the early humanists were Christians, their emphasis on critical inquiry inevitably led to clashes with Church authorities. As the church men demanded uncritical mass acceptance of divine doctrines, they strongly reacted to these criticisms. That some humanist scholars became champions of pagan texts was another bone of contention.

In northern Europe, humanist scholars were more interested in religious reforms. This humanism is often called Religious Humanism. English scholar and statesman, Sir Thomas Moore was one figure in this movement. His brilliant work *Utopia* in 1516 deals with an ideal society set in an imaginary island. It was a political critic of the reign of Henry VIII of England but its radical presentation of a society for the common good and its success rang a note of recognition among humanist scholars elsewhere. The obvious link with Plato's *Republic* was another point of favour with the classical-loving humanists.

The humanist goal for the spread of the movement was based on the idea of widening education. Erasmus, therefore, wrote many textbooks such as his hugely popular On Copia (1512), which taught students how to argue, revise texts, and produce new ones. Humanists emphasised the importance of an education which covered the liberal arts of rhetoric, moral philosophy, grammar, history, and poetry. Physical exercise, just like in ancient Greece, was also considered an essential part of education.

5.2.4 Humanism in Science

Followed by a rational movement through education, Humanism influenced the field of science as well. Observing, analysing, and categorising the world around us was an important part of humanist rational thought. So, the field of science had made a sharp leap during the Renaissance. It was powered at first by developments in mathematics. The scientific philosopher of the west, Rene Descartes, argued that one of the most important tools for studying the natural sciences was mathematics. His method for arriving at logical conclusions was called 'Deductive reasoning'. His contentions were the following:

1. That whatever we can think about, conceived of in our minds, exists and is true (Theory of Doubt - *cogito, ergo sum*- I think therefore I exist). Descartes' statement -cogito, ergo sum - I think therefore I exist - forms the basic principle of his 'Theory of Doubt'. It states that the beginning point of any question of existence may start with a definite and concrete reality. The world, universe or god may exist. But we can have the only proven evidence of existence is the definiteness of our own existence, that is, I think therefore I exist. Because the proof for my existence is the cognition of my mind itself.
2. Since we can think and conceive of God, we must take it that God exists.
3. On the question of whether we should rely on our senses, he said that God would not play false with us, would not lead us astray.

According to Descartes there were two types of reality. One was the 'thinking substance', the mind. The other was 'extended substance', which meant anything outside the mind and which could be measured. This idea is described as 'Cartesian Dualism'.

'On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres' by Nicolaus Copernicus, published in 1543 created a storm in astronomy. He proposed in this book that the solar system was heliocentric. He was regarded as a classic Renaissance scholar as he studied the works of antiquity, observed what he could in the world personally, collated all that had been studied thus far in his field, and then came up with a new view of the subject at hand. Galileo Galilei was responsible for the subsequent development of astronomy. He was largely influenced by the Platonic ideas and challenged the Aristotelian system of the universe. He was able to project a new picture of the universe because of his greatest discovery, the telescope. His study highlighted the satellites of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn and established the fact that the earth was like any other planet, thus giving a whole new perspective on the solar system. These ideas of Dialogue were not tolerated by the church which put him on trial for heresy.

Later on, modern science was institutionalised by the efforts of William Harvey noted for the circulation of blood, Robert Boyle known for his laws on temperature and by Robert Hooke, a famous biologist. Perhaps the greatest contribution humanism made to science was its thirst for answers and the confidence that they could be found through human endeavour. The scientific revolution was an important aspect of humanism as it led to the rise of Empiricism. According to this method knowledge was to be acquired through scientific methods and speculations of general laws.

5.2.5 Humanism in the Arts and the Renaissance

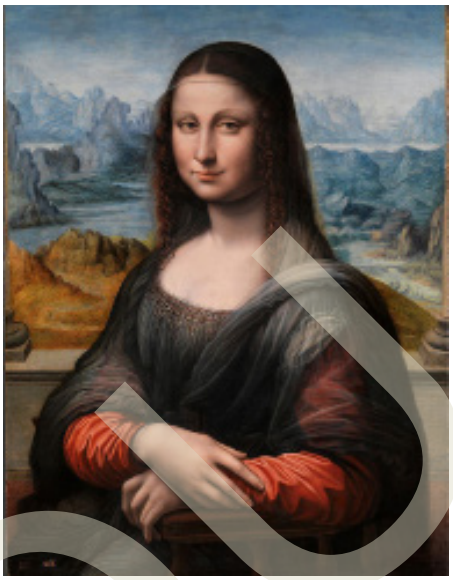


Fig 5.2.4 Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci

It was in art that the Renaissance attained its highest achievement. In the hands of men like Leonardo da Vinci in Italy, it became almost a science, capable of exploring nature. Art was practised according to mathematical principles of balance, harmony and perspective. In Italy, Renaissance was preceded by a period of "proto-renaissance" in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio belonged to this period. The word Renaissance means "rebirth (French)" and generally the year 1453 is considered as the starting point of the Renaissance. Constantinople, the capital city of the Eastern Roman Empire, was captured by the Turks in 1453. Many scholars in the east fled to Italy carrying with them important books and manuscripts and a rich tradition of Greek scholarship. This gave a tremendous boost to humanism. High Renaissance art flourished in Italy during the period of about 35 years from the early 1490s to 1527 when Rome was sacked by imperial troops. This period was dominated by three great artists: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo

and Raphael.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

Fig 5.2.5 Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci, an Italian painter, sculptor, architect and engineer exemplified the proper Renaissance humanist ideal. His *Last Supper* (1495-98), the monumental wall painting in the monastery of Santa Maria della Grazie and *Mona Lisa* (1503-19) were the most acclaimed paintings of the Renaissance. *Mona Lisa* depicts a half-body portrait of a woman with a distant landscape visible as a backdrop. The synthesis achieved by Leonardo between the woman and the landscape has made this mysterious painting one of the most discussed paintings of all time. In *Last Supper*, Leonardo portrayed a moment of high tension when surrounded by his apostles, Jesus says: "one of you will betray me." It showed the conflict between Jesus who sits lonely and in a state of serenity whereas the apostles are agitated except for Judas who partakes in this secret knowledge. Some of the other notable works of Leonardo include *Adoration of the Magi* (1482), *Virgin of the Rocks* (1483-86).

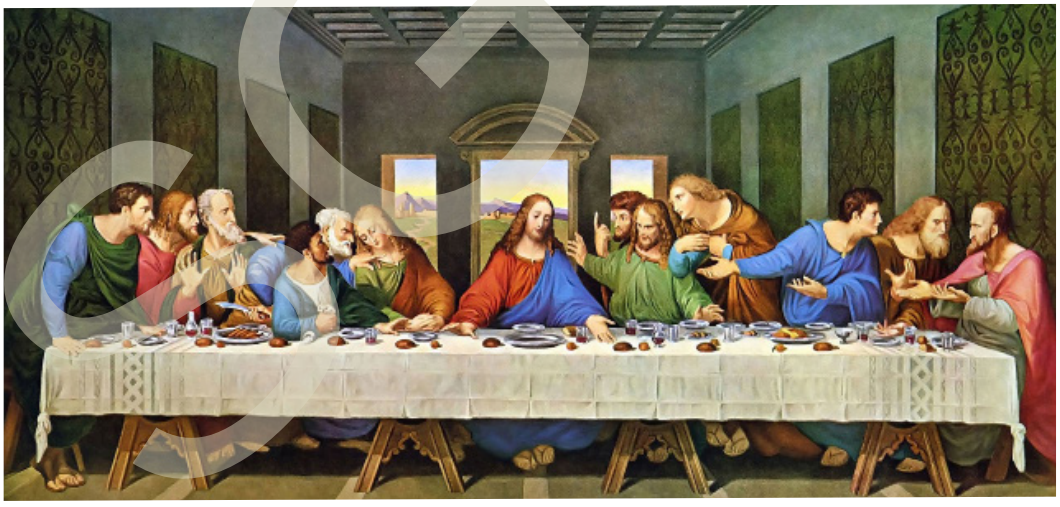


Fig 5.2.6 The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vici

Michelangelo (1475-1564)

Fig 5.2.7 Michelangelo

Michelangelo (full name, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni) was an Italian sculptor, painter, architect and poet and he was considered the greatest living artist in his time. He was the first artist in the west to have a biography published during his lifetime. He thought of himself primarily as a sculptor. His most notable sculpted works include the *Pieta* (1499), at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City and *David* (1501-04) at a cathedral at Florence, both made in marble. Such works reveal a tendency to bend rules of anatomy and proportion to achieve a higher truth. But his most famous work is the giant ceiling fresco of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. It was completed in four years, from 1508 to 1512, and presents an incredibly complex but philosophically unified painting that blends traditional Christian theology with Neoplatonism.

Fig 5.2.8 The Pieta (1499), sculpture by Michelangelo at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

Fig 5.2.9 Ceiling fresco (mural painting) of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican by Michelangelo

Raphael (1483-1520)

Raphael (full name, Raffaelo Sanzio) was an Italian painter and architect. His greatest work *The School of Athens* (1508-11) was painted in the Vatican at a time when Michelangelo was working on his fresco at Sistine Chapel. He is also well known for the paintings of the madonnas (several paintings of Virgin Mary with child Jesus).

Fig 5.2.10 Raffaelo Sanzio

Renaissance painters and sculptors became very interested in classical mythology, sometimes even combining it with Christian themes such as subtly representing Venus as the Virgin Mary.

Ancient thinkers were directly represented in art, perhaps most famously in the School of Athens fresco in the Vatican by Raphael.

Fig 5.2.11 Madonna del Prato by Raphael

The ancient artist's skill and ability to capture reality in bronze or marble were largely appreciated. Renaissance artists were keen to capture this reality. Just like Renaissance writers, artists wanted not only to emulate the classical tradition but also to improve upon it. Consequently, the correct use of perspective became an ever-more precise endeavour for Renaissance artists. Artists were also convinced that their ancient counterparts had somehow discovered mathematical secrets of proportion.

Fig 5.2.12 Sistine Madonna by Raphael

Artists of Renaissance gave emphasis to the human experience in their works. Even religious art during this period has a keen focus on the human figures and their experiences within the scene. As the writers knew full well the powerful effect of their words, the artists recognized the power they had to create a lasting aesthetic impression on the viewer. The most outstanding example of this was Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. Superior artisans of this time used their intellect to study art and create masterpieces that would carry their fame for generations to come.

Buildings were designed as elegant, symmetrical, functional, and harmonious with their surroundings and displayed the classical ratios of length and height. The reverence for classical authors and a knowledge of antiquity found expressions in the performance arts, notably in the plays of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare did not take any particular side in the humanist debates presented in his works but made full masterly use of that humanist power tool - language - to achieve the effects.

Philosophy

The humanists owe a lot to their Greek predecessors for the development of philosophy and social theories. Followed by Aristotle's speculation of 'man is a social animal', St. Thomas Aquinas developed a hierarchical structure of authority and the obligation involved in man's relationship towards god and the temporal ruler. Perhaps the new philosophy of Neo- Platonism was an attempt to break the edifice of scholasticism.

Niccolo Machiavelli was the next humanist who contributed to the political philosophy of the modern west. His most popular work is *The Prince*. This political treatise sought to examine the forms of political and military action which were likely to ensure a ruler's political survival. He justified the use of deceit and treachery as essential for the functioning of a successful government. Therefore, the idea that the 'end justifies the means', became the main inference even today. Ultimately, the Renaissance created a new language, a new spirit and ethos. The political thinkers and scholars spread such ideas and philosophy to a wider public that created a new intellectual awakening.

Recap

- The Renaissance was an age of genius and gave particular importance to individual endeavours.
- It was a great period of enquiry and critical re-examination of beliefs that had been held for centuries. This was a time when philosophers, poets, artists, and humanist scholars focused their attention on the role and destiny of man, the limitations imposed by the intractable movement of time.
- The deepest among them gave tremendous importance to human experience and the singularity of each human life.
- Humanism was the dominant intellectual movement of the Renaissance and it sprouted in Italy
- Humanism was a term invented in the 19th century to describe the Renaissance idea that the study of humanity should be a priority as opposed to religious matters.
- The humanist movement owes its hold to the Italian trio who lived in the pre-renaissance period. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Petrarch (1304-1374), and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) were recognized as its founding fathers.
- The establishment of the printing press helped spread humanist ideas from Italy to other parts of Europe.
- Ultimately, the Renaissance created a new language, a new spirit and ethos. The political thinkers and scholars spread such ideas and philosophy to a wider public that created a new intellectual awakening.

Objective Type Questions

1. What is meant by the term humanism?
2. Who were the Italian trio responsible for the birth of Humanism?
3. Whose work triggered the modern literary theory?
4. What is the meaning of the word 'mimesis' used by Plato?
5. What is meant by the concept 'Renaissance'?
6. Which of the following Italian city-states is considered the 'birthplace of the Renaissance'?
7. Which ancient classical civilization was an important influence on the Renaissance humanists?
8. What is the artistic technique that is used to show depth and distance on a flat surface?
9. Who is the author of Divine Comedy ?
10. Who is the author of the work *Secretum Meum*?
11. Who is the author of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. A humanity-centred view of the universe
2. Dante - Petrarch – Boccaccio
3. Ferdinand de Saussure
4. Representation
5. Rebirth of Greek and Roman culture
6. Florence
7. Greek and Roman civilizations
8. Realism
9. Dante
10. Petrarch
11. Bacon

Assignments

1. Prepare an appreciation report of the achievements in art and architecture during the renaissance humanistic period.
2. List out literary achievements of the humanist period.

Suggested Reading

1. Andrews, S. *Eighteenth-Century Europe: The 1680s to 1715*, Longman, 1964.
2. Bernal, J.D., *The Social Function of Science*, G. Routledge, 1993.
3. Campbell, Gordon. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Renaissance*. OUP, 2019.
4. Celenza, Christopher S. *The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance.* CUP, 2020.
5. Hale, J.R. *The Thames & Hudson Dictionary of the Italian Renaissance.* Thames & Hudson, 2020.
6. Hale, J.R. *Renaissance Europe: The Individual and Society 1480-1520*, University of California Press, 1971.
7. Gilmore, M. *The World of Humanism 1453-1517*, Harper, 1952.
8. Rundle, David. *The Hutchinson Encyclopedia of the Renaissance.* Hodder Arnold, 2000.

UNIT THREE

University Wits

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- analyse the contributions of the University Wits to drama
- compare classical traditions with popular stage elements
- explain Marlowe's influence on Shakespearean dramatic techniques
- evaluate individual styles of Lyly, Peele, and Greene
- identify the thematic and structural innovations introduced
- analyse Shakespeare's evolution through comedies, tragedies, romances.
- explore Spenser's influence.
- examine Raleigh's contributions to poetry, exploration, history.

Prerequisites

The University Wits, a group of late 16th-century playwrights educated at Oxford or Cambridge, were instrumental in the evolution of English drama. This influential group, including figures such as Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Kyd, and John Lyly, shifted the focus of drama from medieval religious and moral plays to more complex and sophisticated narratives. Their works explored themes of ambition, power, and human emotion, often incorporating poetic language and intellectual depth. The University Wits laid the foundation for the flourishing of Elizabethan theatre, influencing later playwrights like William Shakespeare, who further developed many of their innovations.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616), widely known as the "Bard of Avon," reshaped English literature with his 37 plays and 154 sonnets, which delved into themes of love, ambition, and the complexities of human nature. Edmund Spenser (1552–1599), a leading figure of the English Renaissance, is best known for *The Faerie Queene* and *The Shepheardes Calendar*, pioneering the Spenserian stanza and focusing on virtue. Sir Walter Raleigh (1554–1618), poet and explorer, made significant contributions with works like *The Silent Lover* and *The History of the World*. This unit will analyze the lives, works, and contributions of these writers, exploring their lasting impact on English literature and drama.

Keywords

Renaissance Drama, University Wits, Christopher Marlowe, Blankverse, Revenge Tragedy, Shakespeare, Renaissance Poetry, Renaissance Prose

5.3.1. The University Wits

The University Wits, a group of pioneering dramatists from the Pre-Shakespearean era, played a crucial role in shaping the landscape of English drama during the Renaissance. This term refers to a constellation of playwrights associated with the University of Cambridge or Oxford, including prominent figures like Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, and their central figure, Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Kyd attended university before pursuing a career in literature. Together, they represented the intellectual vigour and creative spirit of the Renaissance, fusing academic learning with the theatrical demands of their time. These playwrights were often not just writers but also actors, granting them a nuanced understanding of the stage and audience. Their works reflected a keen awareness of theatricality, blending compelling storytelling with an appreciation for the audience's preferences, and they frequently revised older plays, eventually emerging as independent creators.

The University Wits were bound by shared artistic goals and often collaborated on plays, exchanging material and characters that led to recurring motifs in their works. They embraced a romantic and adventurous outlook, embodying the spirit of the Renaissance both in their writing and their lifestyles. Their plays were imbued with grandeur, poetic richness, and a fascination with themes of ambition, power, and human struggle. Bohemian in their personal lives, many of them led turbulent existences. Marlowe, for instance, met a tragic end in a tavern brawl, while Greene, in his final days, penned a remorseful account of his unconventional life in his work *Mamilia*. Despite their brief and often tumultuous lives, the University Wits left an indelible mark on English drama, paving the way for the golden age of Elizabethan theatre, culminating in the genius of William Shakespeare.

John Lyly (1553-1606)

John Lyly was a pioneering dramatist who sought recognition primarily from the court rather than the public theatre. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Lyly tailored his works for child actors in royal service, creating comedies that catered to aristocratic tastes. His notable plays include *Women in the Moon*, *Endymion*, *Sappho and Phao*, *Alexander and Campaspe*, *Midas*, *Mother Bombie*, and *Love's Metamorphosis*. These works reflect his inclination toward sophisticated entertainment, infused with classical and allegorical themes, that appealed to the elite audiences of his time. His unique approach set him apart as a dramatist with a distinct voice in the early stages of English theatre.

Lyly's plays are marked by their witty and imaginative qualities, blending romantic sentiment with romantic fancy. His comedies often draw on mythological and allegorical themes, providing a satirical lens on various subjects. However, despite their charm, Lyly's works lack the force, depth, and raw passion

that characterised some of his contemporaries' dramas. What makes his plays stand out is their wit and humour, most notably displayed in sparkling and sophisticated dialogues. Lyly's emphasis on clever exchanges and intellectual humour made his works a model of refinement. These qualities helped elevate the comedic genre, even if his plays lacked the emotional gravitas of others.

One of Lyly's most significant contributions to English drama was his innovative use of prose in his plays, a departure from the predominantly verse-driven works of the time. His mastery of witty dialogue and courtly style provided an excellent template for later playwrights, most notably William Shakespeare. Shakespeare owes much to Lyly for lessons in crafting light, elegant dialogue, courtly sophistication, and the handling of classical and fantastical themes. Lyly's influence is evident in Shakespeare's use of sparkling repartee, classical references, and fairy-tale-like romantic elements, as seen in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. While Lyly's works may lack enduring popularity, his innovations significantly shaped the development of Elizabethan drama, leaving an indelible legacy in the world of theatre.

George Peele (1558-1597)

George Peele is remembered as a versatile playwright who contributed a variety of works to Elizabethan drama, including pastoral plays, romantic tragedies, chronicle histories, mystery plays, and literary satires. Among his significant plays are *The Arraignment of Paris*, a romantic comedy infused with classical elements; *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward I*, a rambling chronicle play recounting historical events; *The Old Wives' Tale*, a clever and humorous satire on the popular dramas of his era; and *The Love of King David and Fair Bathsheba*, a Biblical play that explores themes of love and morality. These works prove Peele's ability to experiment with different genres and styles, making him an important figure among Elizabethan dramatists.

Peele's poetic style is notable for its decorative and flowery descriptions, which reveal his command of language and imagery. His works are imbued with an urban and graceful treatment of themes, reflecting his artistic sensibility. However, unlike his contemporaries such as John Lyly and Christopher Marlowe, Peele did not make groundbreaking contributions to the development of English drama. His plays lack mastery in plot construction, characterisation, and versification. Nevertheless, his writing exhibits moments of genuine poetic brilliance, a fair amount of pathos, and a natural fluency that elevates his works above the earliest examples of English drama.

Esward Albert acknowledges Peele's strengths and limitations, noting that while he did not attain the stature of a leader in Elizabethan drama, he holds an honourable position among its contributors. Peele's ability to handle blank verse with relative ease and variety, his humour, and his freedom from overtly sensuous elements distinguish his work. His plays reflect significant progress in the evolution of English drama, offering a blend of poetic charm, humour, and subtle emotional depth. As one of the more attractive playwrights of his time, George Peele remains an essential figure in understanding the rich tapestry of Elizabethan theatre.

Robert Greene (1558–1592)

Robert Greene is remembered as a notable dramatist of the Elizabethan era, having left behind five plays: *The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, *A Looking Glass for London and England*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *The History of Orlando Furioso*,

and *The Scottish History of James IV*. Among these, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* stands out as his most popular work. This romantic comedy blends three distinct realms - the magical, the aristocratic, and the pastoral-into a harmonious narrative. Greene's skill in plot construction is especially evident in this play, with its imaginative romantic setting and lively storytelling capturing the audience's attention. While his other works may not prove the same level of cohesion, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* solidifies his reputation as a master of romantic comedy.

Greene's contributions to drama extend beyond plot construction to include character portrayal, particularly of women. He was one of the earliest Elizabethan dramatists to create characters like Rosalind and Celia, who would later be immortalized by Shakespeare. His female characters, such as Margaret and Dorothea, are notable for their romantic charm and nuanced realism. These characters are infused with idealistic elements that set them apart, making them both relatable and aspirational. Contrary to some criticism, Greene's ability to craft such characters demonstrates his skill in imbuing his plays with emotional depth and romantic allure. His female protagonists reflect the period's ideals while also feeling grounded in humanity, making them memorable figures in Elizabethan drama.

Critics like Esward Albert have sometimes undervalued Greene's work, accusing him of weakness in character creation and a lack of stylistic brilliance. However, even Albert acknowledges Greene's genial humour and his less austere approach compared to other tragedians of his time. Greene's ability to infuse his plays with humour, warmth, and romantic idealism sets him apart from many of his contemporaries. While his style may not reach the poetic heights of Marlowe, his contributions to character development, plot construction, and romantic settings remain significant. Greene's plays, especially *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, exemplify his talent for crafting engaging, imaginative, and emotionally resonant drama, ensuring his place among the notable playwrights of the Elizabethan age.

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594)

Very little is known about the life of Renaissance playwright Thomas Kyd. He is a playwright whose talents lay in his ability to craft thrilling, suspense-filled narratives, even though he lacked the wit of Lyly and the poetic brilliance of Marlowe. Kyd excelled in transforming an exciting story into a series of tense and striking situations, effectively linked by suspense and surprise. There is no evidence that he attended the university before turning to literature. His most famous work, *The Spanish Tragedy*, is a prime example of his mastery. This revenge tragedy employs the full Senecan apparatus of horror-ghosts, madness, hanging, stabbing, pistolling, and suicide. Kyd used these elements with remarkable skill, preparing his audience for the inevitable while still managing to surprise them. *The Spanish Tragedy* provided dramatic literature with its first significant romantic melodrama, laying a foundation for the genre that would later influence Shakespeare and others.

The play stands out for its well-constructed narrative and external action, which hold the audience's attention from start to finish. The thrilling murders, expertly staged, and the climactic rise at the end demonstrate Kyd's mastery over stage effects. *The Spanish Tragedy* also introduced a new type of hero to Elizabethan drama- the hesitating hero, a character type later perfected in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The characters in the play are forceful and engaging, and their actions drive the momentum

of the story. E. Albert comments on the play's grandeur, noting, "There is a largeness of tragical conception about the play that resembles the work of Marlowe, and there are touches of style that dimly foreshadow the great tragical lines of Shakespeare." Through its compelling narrative and tragic depth, *The Spanish Tragedy* carved its own unique place in the dramatic canon.

Despite its defects, as noted by Fredrick S. Bose, *The Spanish Tragedy* is an "organic creation" that fully deserves its widespread influence. The play holds a unique position in dramatic literature, bridging the gap between earlier works like *Gorboduc* and Shakespeare's masterpieces, including *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Kyd's work is credited with popularising the revenge tragedy genre, and his ability to create strikingly memorable moments on stage ensured the play's enduring impact. While Kyd may not have been the most stylistically accomplished of his contemporaries, his contribution to the evolution of Elizabethan drama is undeniable, and *The Spanish Tragedy* remains a testament to his storytelling prowess.

Thomas Lodge (1558-1625)

Thomas Lodge was a writer whose contributions to the theatrical world have often been seen as lacking in originality. His work *The Wounds of Civil War* is generally regarded as a work that fails to break new ground in the realm of drama. Despite its ambitious themes, the play does not offer anything particularly innovative or revolutionary in terms of structure, character development, or thematic exploration. The play's portrayal of civil conflict is competent, but it falls short of presenting new insights or elevating the genre to new heights. Lodge's approach to drama was often seen as derivative, and his works rarely ventured beyond the confines of the traditional and familiar, which placed him firmly in the realm of mediocrity rather than distinction.

While Lodge may not have succeeded in making a lasting impact on the stage, he did possess certain literary talents in other genres. He was known for his lyrical poetry, where his command over the lyric form was evident. His poetry exuded a certain charm, and he had the ability to create verses that could resonate with readers. This lyrical talent, however, did not translate effectively into his dramatic works. His skill with prose and fiction, while notable, did not extend into the theatre with the same level of success. His fiction held a certain appeal, but his plays lacked the same vitality and complexity that defined the works of his contemporaries such as Marlowe or Shakespeare.

Lodge's place in the history of Elizabethan drama is therefore somewhat ambiguous. He possessed a lyrical charm in his poetry and a power in his prose, yet these strengths were not enough to elevate his theatrical works. Unlike many of his peers, Lodge did not contribute significantly to the development of the English stage. His lack of innovation and failure to push the boundaries of dramatic form meant that his influence on the evolution of English theatre was minimal. Ultimately, Thomas Lodge remains a writer whose talents were more suited to the page than to the stage, and his theatrical legacy is one of missed potential rather than lasting achievement.

Thomas Nashe (1558-1625)

Thomas Nashe was a versatile writer whose literary career spanned across various genres, including pamphleteering, story writing, and drama. His primary contributions to literature, however, lie in his sharp and often satirical pamphlets, which critiqued the social and political atmosphere of his time. Nashe was known for his biting wit and his ability to

weave clever and critical commentary on the world around him. While he made a name for himself as a pamphleteer, he did not confine his talents to prose alone. He ventured into drama and, in this regard, became associated with the University Wits, a group of playwrights and dramatists who were educated at Oxford or Cambridge and played a significant role in shaping the early landscape of Elizabethan theatre.

Nashe's involvement in the dramatic world was not as prominent as some of his contemporaries, but he did contribute to the burgeoning Elizabethan theatre scene. One of his most notable collaborations was with playwright John Marston in the creation of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Isle of Dogs*. In *Dido*, Nashe and Marston together adapted the classical myth of Dido and Aeneas, producing a tragedy that reflected both the dramatic conventions of the time and the influence of classical sources. In *The Isle of Dogs*, a play notorious for its controversial content, Nashe and Marston explored political satire, which led to the play being censored and the authors being briefly imprisoned. These collaborations reflect Nashe's willingness to experiment with both classical forms and contemporary issues, showcasing his flexibility and creative engagement with the dramatic world.

Although Nashe's contributions to the stage were not as prolific as those of other University Wits like Christopher Marlowe or Robert Greene, his role in the development of English drama cannot be overlooked. His sharp sense of humor, satirical nature, and keen understanding of social dynamics influenced the theatrical world, particularly in terms of blending serious drama with comic elements and social critique. Nashe's involvement with the University Wits, his collaboration with other key playwrights, and his ability to stir controversy with his works all point to his position within the vibrant and experimental atmosphere of late 16th-century theatre. His plays, though limited in number, remain a testament to the dynamic literary and dramatic energy that defined the early years of English drama.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93)

Christopher Marlowe revolutionised English drama by elevating its subject matter to heroic and imaginative heights. His plays explored grand themes that resonated deeply with Renaissance audiences, challenging the conventional boundaries of theatrical storytelling. Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* dramatised the story of a world conqueror driven by ambition, while *Doctor Faustus* explored the profound philosophical and moral questions of a necromancer seeking universal knowledge at the cost of his soul.

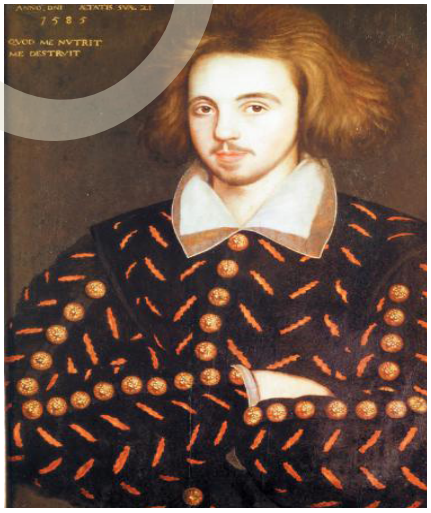


Fig. 5.3.1 Christopher Marlowe

These works, steeped in Renaissance ideals of aspiration and human potential, captured the audience's imagination and inspired a new vision of theatrical grandeur. Marlowe's ability to pair epic subject matter with compelling drama marked a transformative moment in the history of English theatre.

At the heart of Marlowe's success was his ability to create lifelike characters brimming with passion, energy, and humanity. His protagonists, such as Tamburlaine, Faustus, Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, and Edward II, were no longer mere puppets manipulated by fate or narrative. Instead, they were vivid, multidimensional individuals whose ambitions, flaws, and struggles drove the plot. Tamburlaine is an unstoppable conqueror who embodies the Renaissance's unrelenting drive for power, while Faustus is torn between heavenly salvation and earthly desire. Edward II's tragic downfall highlights his human vulnerabilities in the face of political betrayal. These characters were groundbreaking in their realism, setting a new standard for the psychological depth of dramatic figures and securing Marlowe's reputation as a master playwright.

Marlowe's contribution to tragedy redefined its scope and structure. Rejecting the medieval conception of tragedy as the fall of princes under the weight of fate, Marlowe introduced individual heroes whose struggles stemmed from their overreaching ambitions. His tragedies focused not just on the protagonists' inevitable downfall but also on their internal and external battles. In *Doctor Faustus*, the constant tension between the Good and Evil Angels represents the protagonist's inner turmoil, embodying the Renaissance spirit of conflict between human aspiration and divine limitation. Similarly, *Tamburlaine* explores the relentless pursuit of power and its consequences. Marlowe's innovative emphasis on struggle added a new layer of complexity to the genre, making his works both intellectually stimulating and emotionally compelling.

The passion and intensity of Marlowe's works are matched by their poetic brilliance. Marlowe imparted vehemence and vitality to the Elizabethan stage, capturing the unbridled energy of the Renaissance. As Legouis aptly remarked, "Grace, wit, and fancy had been scattered on [the stage], but never hitherto had it known this dash, this vehemence animating a whole play." His *Tamburlaine* brims with the fervour of world conquest, *Doctor Faustus* explores the insatiable thirst for knowledge, and *The Jew of Malta* dramatises an obsessive pursuit of wealth. Marlowe's ability to channel these elemental passions into poetic form revolutionised the theatrical experience, ensuring that his plays resonated deeply with audiences.

Perhaps Marlowe's greatest legacy lies in his transformation of the language and structure of English drama. By discarding rhymed couplets and introducing blank verse, he infused drama with a rhythm and flexibility that elevated its expressive potential. His verse, famously termed "Marlowe's mighty line" by Ben Jonson, combined power, precision, and poetic grandeur. Marlowe's lines are rich with classical allusions, bold imagery, and a sensuous energy that captivated audiences and influenced generations of playwrights, including Shakespeare. While his verse occasionally bordered on bombast, its emotional resonance and technical brilliance remain unmatched. Through his innovations in language, character, and theme, Marlowe not only laid the groundwork for Elizabethan drama but also defined the artistic possibilities of the Renaissance stage.

5.3.2. Contribution of the University Wits

The pre-Shakespearean dramatists we have just considered- John Lyly, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Kyd, and Christopher Marlowe- are known as the 'University Wits,' as most of them were university-educated, except for Kyd, who lacked formal university

education. Their careers share striking similarities, as they were all actors as well as dramatists. With first-hand knowledge of both the stage and the audience, their primary aim was to entertain the people and meet their expectations. They started as actors, revised existing plays, and eventually became independent writers, gaining a deep understanding of their craft in the process. They drew from a shared repository of material - mythology, legend, and history- which explains the recurring similarities in their themes and characters. While they rarely created original plots, each contributed significantly to the development of English drama in unique ways, influencing Shakespeare in various aspects.

Before the University Wits began writing, two dramatic traditions competed to shape English drama: the classical tradition and the tradition of the popular stage. Scholars and humanists wrote plays for select, cultured audiences, adhering to the classical tradition's strict rules. The classical drama was guided by three main principles:

(a) **Unity of tone and action:** Tragedy and comedy were kept separate, as mixing them was believed to diminish the impact of tragedy. Tragedies excluded humour entirely to preserve their seriousness.

(b) **Three unities of time, place, and action:** The action had to occur in a single location and unfold within a few hours, ideally matching the play's staging duration. This restricted the development of characters, as no significant transformation could occur within such a short time frame.

(c) **Avoidance of vigorous action:** Staged indoors, classical plays avoided fighting, bloodshed, and other violent events, which were reported by messengers instead of being shown on stage. Consequently, classical dramas contained minimal physical action.

These rigid principles marked a contrast to the more dynamic and experimental popular stage tradition, paving the way for the innovations brought by the University Wits.

The English drama of the popular tradition disregarded the classical rules of dramatic composition entirely:

(a) **Disregard for the unities of time and place:** Scenes shifted frequently, and characters could age dramatically between scenes. The audience's imagination bridged gaps in time and space.

(b) **Boundless imagination:** Dramatists portrayed entire lifetimes in a single place and within an hour, ignoring the boundaries of realism or probability.

(c) **Vigorous action:** The stage was filled with energetic, violent scenes, including fighting, bloodshed, and even murder, vividly depicted before the audience.

(d) **Blending of tragedy and comedy:** Tragic and comic elements were intertwined, reflecting the complexities of real life. Clowns and comic antics were integral to the popular tradition.

(e) **Crudeness and obscenity:** The plays often included coarse humour and vulgarity to cater to the tastes of the lower-class audience.

This vibrant and dynamic approach set the foundation for the innovative works of the University Wits and later dramatists, including Shakespeare.

The national English drama emerged from a fusion of classical, courtly, and popular traditions, a path first paved by the University Wits.

As humanists and men of the Renaissance, they were well-versed in the classical rules of dramatic composition and the elegance of courtly drama. At the same time, their experience as actors acquainted them with the tastes of the common audience, which heavily influenced their work. The University Wits disregarded rigid unities, embraced the popular love for action, and aimed to present life in its entirety. They delivered the grand stage spectacles and elaborate shows the audience craved while introducing beauty of form and structural precision to the drama. By eliminating much of the crudeness and absurdity of the popular stage, they ensured, as Hudson puts it, "the triumph of that free and flexible form of the drama," later perfected by Shakespeare.

The University Wits deserve credit for developing a suitable dramatic medium. John Lyly was the first significant dramatist to write prose comedies entirely. He refined comedic language, excelling in puns, conceits, witty dialogues, and wordplay. His style influenced Shakespeare's early comedies, such as *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Christopher Marlowe contributed most significantly by perfecting blank verse and transforming it into a powerful medium for dramatic expression. He gave it flexibility, allowing the sense to flow seamlessly from one line to the next. His blank verse, praised as "Marlowe's mighty line," is resonant and powerful, though sometimes prone to bombast and declamation. Shakespeare inherited this blank verse, refined it, and elevated it to unparalleled heights, creating a medium that served his dramatic genius perfectly.

The University Wits made significant contributions to the art of characterisation. Robert Greene's Margaret in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* stands as the first portrayal of a pure English country girl, tenderly and gracefully painted, without precedent in English literature. She serves as an early sketch of Shakespeare's heroines. Similarly, Thomas Kyd introduced the hesitative hero in *The Spanish Tragedy*, foreshadowing Shakespeare's Hamlet. Marlowe's tragic figures, like those of Shakespeare, are vivid and full of life, capturing the imagination through their intense passions and vitality rather than being mere puppets.

The University Wits also brought advancements in plot construction. As Hudson notes, "From Lyly, Shakespeare learned how to combine a courtly main plot with episodes of rustic blunders and clownish fooling." Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* skilfully integrates courtly, rural, magical, romantic, and idyllic elements, anticipating Shakespeare's mastery of plot in comedies like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although many of Marlowe's plots are loose, his *Edward II* showcases a tightly constructed, almost Shakespearean narrative compactness. These innovations laid the foundation for the complex characters and sophisticated plots that defined Shakespearean drama.

The University Wits, particularly Marlowe, revolutionised the medieval concept of tragedy. In medieval tragedy, the fall of a great figure, such as a king or prince, was attributed to fate. However, for Marlowe, tragedy was not limited to kings; it became a matter of individual heroes. His tragic figures are not born great but achieve greatness through their own heroic actions, fuelled by superhuman willpower and ambition. Though ultimately defeated by cruel Fate, they remain unconquered, fighting until the very end. Marlowe introduced themes of struggle and conflict, with heroes who battle valiantly but are crushed by overwhelming odds.

Unlike medieval dramatists, Marlowe did not aim to convey moral lessons. Like Shakespeare, he often enlists our sympathy for heroes who are, in some respects, villains. In *Edward II*, Marlowe offers a poignant glimpse into the soul of a king torn by inner turmoil and weakness. The tragic vision Marlowe presents closely aligns with Shakespeare's, emphasising the complexity and humanity of his characters, whose flaws and struggles elevate them beyond mere villainy.

The University Wits brought poetic elegance and refinement to English drama. Peele and Lyly enriched it with vivid poetic imagery, infusing their plays with a sweetness that would later characterize Shakespeare's works. In contrast, Marlowe added fire, intensity, and lyrical eloquence to the drama, imbuing it with grandeur and passion. His heroic, grandiose style matched perfectly with the lofty themes he explored.

Each of the University Wits, in his own way, advanced English drama. The greatness of Shakespearean drama would not have been possible without their contributions. However, their diverse talents had yet to be unified in a single individual and work. Shakespeare was the one to bring these elements together, refine them, and elevate them further. Through this fusion, he created the vibrant, national drama of England-Romantic Drama-that resonated with all audiences. Additionally, he infused it with his unique, robust sense of humour, which was absent even in Marlowe's tragedies. Shakespeare's originality and greatness lie in this synthesis.

5.3.4. William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

William Shakespeare is considered the greatest dramatist in English literature, often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon." His work includes 37 plays, 154 sonnets, two long poems, and several others. His plays have been translated into multiple languages and remain some of the most performed works worldwide.

Fig. 5.3.4 Shakespeare's handwriting

Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564. He married Anne Hathaway at 18, with whom he had three children. By the 1590s, he was active in London as an actor, playwright, and part owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men. He spent his later years in Stratford, where he died on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare's career spans four stages. In his early years (up to the mid-1590s), he wrote comedies and histories, influenced by Roman models and the popular chronicle tradition. His early history plays, such as *Richard III* and *Henry VI*, built on the work of other Elizabethan dramatists, particularly Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe. His first history plays supported the Tudor dynasty, a theme that continued in works like *Henry IV* and *Henry V*.

From the mid-1590s to 1600, Shakespeare's comedies grew more sophisticated. Plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night* are examples of his comedic brilliance. During this time,

Shakespeare's tragedies began to emerge, beginning with *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar*, which introduced a new level of dramatic depth. In these plays, themes of political intrigue, character complexity, and self-reflection came to the forefront.

Fig. 5.3.4 *Romeo and Juliet*

The period from 1600 to 1608 is considered Shakespeare's "tragic period," with works such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* representing the height of his tragic achievements. These plays explore fatal flaws and the tragic consequences of human actions. Shakespeare's tragic heroes often make hasty decisions that lead to their downfall, creating compelling narratives that resonate deeply with audiences.

His final works, written between 1608 and 1613, include tragicomedies or "romances," such as *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*. These plays often reflect a shift in tone, with more serene themes emerging, though some scholars argue that this shift may reflect changing theatrical tastes rather than a personal philosophical change.

Shakespeare's impact was immense, not only on drama but also on poetry. During the plague years, he published two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. His sonnets, published in 1609, are a profound exploration of love, time, and human nature, with themes of unrequited love, mortality, and beauty.

Shakespeare laid the foundation for modern drama by innovating with character development, plot structure, and the use of soliloquies, which allowed him to delve deeply into the psychological complexity of his characters. His works influenced later poets, novelists, and playwrights, including Herman Melville and Charles Dickens, and continue to inspire music, art, and psychology.

Shakespeare's legacy is immeasurable; his works are integral to the English language, shaping both the literature and the way we express ourselves today. His dramatic innovations, notably those seen in the *University Wits* provided a crucial foundation for Shakespeare's success. The Wits experimented with new forms and themes in drama, elevating the English stage, and Shakespeare built on their work, taking English drama to unprecedented heights in both artistic and thematic complexity.

5.3.5 Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

Ben Jonson (1572 -1637) was a prominent English Renaissance dramatist, poet, and actor, often considered the second most celebrated playwright after William Shakespeare during James I's reign. Known for his satirical masterpieces such as *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *The Silent Woman*, Jonson combined intellectual depth with

sharp wit. His works reflect his disdain for societal follies and vices, exposing them with biting humour and moral clarity. In 1619, the University of Oxford honoured him with an honorary Master of Arts degree.

Jonson is particularly noted for developing the "comedy of humours," a genre where characters are dominated by a single trait or 'humour,' such as greed or jealousy, driving their behaviour and the plot. This approach showed his mastery in characterisation and psychological depth. Despite his often controversial and stubborn nature, Jonson's influence on Jacobean and Caroline playwrights was unmatched, with numerous disciples emulating his style. A prolific scholar and playwright, he became the first living dramatist to publish his collected works in 1616. His plays, celebrated for their ingenious plots and vibrant language, remained popular on stage until the Restoration era, cementing his legacy as a towering figure of English drama.

Jonson's chief plays still remain as renowned and celebrated dramas of all time. His insistence on putting classical theory into practice in them has reinforced rather than weakened the effect of his gift of lively dialogue, robust characterisation, and intricate, controlled plotting. Jonson's plots are skilfully put together. The incident develops out of an incident in a consistent chain of cause and effect. Sometimes Jonson's comedy derives from the dialogue, especially when it is based on his observation of contemporary tricks of speech.

Johnson's brilliance lies in his method of concentrating character creation which shows how they dominate the personality. Along with a classical conception of art, his clever and shrewd observation of people are the secret of his character creations. In Jonson's plays both eccentricity and normal behaviour are derived from a dominating characteristic, so that the result is a live, truthfully conceived personage in whom the ruling passion traces itself plainly. The later plays, for example, have characters whose behaviour is dominated by one psychological idiosyncrasy. But Jonson did not deal exclusively in "humours." In some of his plays (notably *Every Man in His Humour*), the stock types of Latin comedy contributed as much as the humour theory did. What the theory provided for him and for his contemporaries was a convenient mode of distinguishing among human beings.

During most of the 17th century Jonson was a towering literary figure, and his influence was enormous. Before the civil war The Tribe of Ben touted his importance, and during the Restoration Jonson's satirical comedies and his theory and practice of "humour characters" was extremely influential, providing the blueprint for many Restoration comedies. In the eighteenth-century Jonson's status began to decline. In the Romantic era, Jonson suffered the fate of being unfairly compared and contrasted to Shakespeare, as the taste for Jonson's type of satirical comedy decreased. Jonson was at times greatly appreciated by the Romantics, but over- all he was denigrated for not writing in a Shakespearean vein. In the twentieth century, Jonson's status rose significantly.

5.3.6 Renaissance Poetry

The Renaissance period in England, particularly during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, was a time of flourishing arts, culture, and intellectual exploration. Elizabethan poets were part of this vibrant literary movement and were deeply influenced by classical ideals, humanism, and the English vernacular. Key figures include Sir Philip Sidney, whose *Astrophel and Stella* is a seminal work in English sonnet writing, and Edmund Spenser, known for his epic *The Faerie Queene*, which blended

medieval chivalric themes with Renaissance ideals. Other important poets like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare also made significant contributions, with Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* showcasing bold, dramatic verse, and Shakespeare's sonnets exploring complex themes of love, time, and mortality. These poets mastered the use of sonnet form, allegory, and vivid imagery, contributing to the development of English poetry that balanced artistic beauty with intellectual depth. Their works not only reflected the era's exploration of human nature and individual expression but also shaped the future of English literature.

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

Edmund Spenser, a postgraduate from the University of Cambridge, was one of the preeminent poets of the English language. His long allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene* 91590) is one of the greatest works in the English language. It was written in an elegant style which came to be called the Spenserian stanza, a stanza of nine lines, with the rhyme scheme *ababbcbcc* and the first eight lines having five syllables and the last line with nine syllables . The poem sets out to be a story with twelve Knights of Elizabeth who undertook various enterprises in her honour. The poem is merely a lovely mosaic in which deeds of chivalry and pictorial fantasies are woven. He declares his purpose "to fashion a gentleman in virtuous and gentle discipline". Along with Sidney, Spenser set out to create a body of work that could parallel the great works of European poets such as Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio and extend the line of English literary culture begun by Chaucer.

The Shepheardes Calendar (1579-80) can be called the first work of the English literary Renaissance. It is modelled on the artificial pastoral popularised by the Renaissance and inspired by Virgil and Theocritus, Bion and Marot. It is a series of twelve eclogues, one for each month. Spenser's dominant theme is the unrequited love of Colin Clout for Rosalynde, but the eclogues are also opportunities for comment on political and religious problems of the time. Technically it is a poem of considerable merit and shows great power in dealing with various old- time metres in a fresh and masterly way. His love of allegory leads him to pretty pieces of words. Comparing this poem with the verse preceding it, one realises the richness, the warm pictorial beauty and sense of amplitude hitherto foreign to English poetry. Never before there was an English poem in which the combination of lines and rhymes was so variously rich and novel. It is the first English pastoral composition, and as such exercised a great influence on subsequent literature.

Spenser's poetical achievements are very great in number and full of variety. He has composed epic, elegy, sonnet and many other forms of poetry. The most outstanding of his other works are "Amoretti","Astrophel", "Four Hymns", "The Epithalamion" and "The Prothalamion ". His fame and popularity continued to grow till Spenser came to be called the "Prince of poets of his time." He has influenced many poets who came after him. A host of poets who followed him throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, regarded him as their master. Charles Lamb rightly called Spenser the "Poets' Poet. He minutely observes his vivid influence on the works of subsequent poets. But we should not forget that Spenser is not a poet for the layman but for poets and scholars. He is the greatest non-dramatic poet of the Elizabethan age.

5.3.7. Renaissance prose

Renaissance Elizabethan prose marked a significant shift in English literature, influ-

enced by the revival of classical ideas and the growth of humanism. Prose during this period was characterised by a focus on clarity, eloquence, and the exploration of human experience. Key figures in Elizabethan prose include Sir Thomas More, whose *Utopia* offered a vision of an ideal society, and Richard Hooker, whose *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* contributed to religious and philosophical thought. The period also saw the emergence of prose fiction, notably in works like *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius, which influenced later Elizabethan authors. Sir Walter Raleigh, a poet, soldier, and explorer, furthered the prose tradition with works like *The History of the World*, reflecting both historical and philosophical perspectives. Raleigh's prose reflects the growing intellectual curiosity of the time, blending personal experience with historical narrative.

In addition, the translation of works from Greek, Latin, and Italian into English became widespread, contributing to the enrichment of the language. The essays of Francis Bacon, known for their philosophical insights and rhetorical elegance, are another major prose achievement of this time. Overall, Renaissance Elizabethan prose laid the groundwork for modern English prose, blending intellectual exploration with stylistic sophistication.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1554–1618)

Walter Raleigh was one of the last true "Renaissance men," Raleigh was an explorer, soldier, courtier, author, and sceptic: he is remembered as one of the men-of-letters to not only have written of new worlds but to have actually sailed off in search of them. He was a poet who fought in wars as often as he wrote of them. Raleigh was truly a widely cultured minded man as his varied interests in geography, theology, poetry, and governance.

Being a favourite courtier of the English Queen Elizabeth I, he played a leading part in English colonisation of North America. He served in the suppression of rebellion in Ireland, helped defend England against the Spanish Armada and held political positions under Elizabeth I. Raleigh put together several voyages to explore and colonise the New World. His voyages were funded primarily by himself and his friends instead of by a joint-stock company or state fund. As a result, his colonies never had the steady stream of revenue necessary to support them. In 1584, his plan for colonisation in "Virginia" in North America ended in failure at Roanoke Island, but paved the way for subsequent colonies. The first Roanoke Island colony was forced to abandon because the relations broke down between the settlers and the local native tribes as the colonists placed heavy demands on the natives' crops.

In 1594, Raleigh set a voyage to "City of Gold" in South America but only contributed to publish an exaggerated account of his experiences in a book that contributed to the legend of "El Dorado". He described his expedition in his book called *The Discoverie of Guiana*. Raleigh was imprisoned after the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. But in 1616, he was released to lead a second expedition in search of El Dorado. During the expedition, men led by his top commander ransacked a Spanish outpost, in violation of both the terms of his pardon and the 1604 peace treaty with Spain. Raleigh returned to England and, to appease the Spanish, he was arrested and executed in 1618.

As a man who spent most of his life abroad fighting battles and exploring continents, it is understandable that Raleigh did not have the time to author a large body of poetry. Nevertheless, as a member of the English gentry he had received a thorough education in English,

European, and classical literature. Throughout his life Raleigh held literary aspirations and continued to write poems until his demise, both at occasions of court and during his adventures abroad. Of these poems, a number have received particular acclaim, among them the short lyric "Even Such Is Time" and the diptych poems "The Silent Lover I & II":

His poems show a mastery of Elizabeth forms, which were relatively new at that time. The sonnet had been introduced to the English language by Sir Thomas Wyatt only a few decades before Raleigh's birth. Hence, Raleigh's command of rhyme and metre, his elegant stanza-forms, and his overall knowledge of classical and English literature demonstrated in his poetry is quite a substantial achievement for a man of his time, particularly when one considers all the many other duties which competed for Raleigh's attention.

His most important work as a writer was *The History of the World* (1614). However, Raleigh's legacy to literature and to poetry in particular has much more to do with his own attitudes and character than the actual poems which have come down to us through history. Like Marlowe, he often found himself accused of heresy, and although he always rebuffed these attacks, his poems, such as "The Silent Lover" reveal opinions that are strikingly unsentimental for a man of the Elizabethan era. Raleigh, as a writer and a poet, valued common sense much more than high feeling, and in this regard he registers a break from the overwrought poetry of the medieval periods of English literature.

Recap

- University Wits shaped Renaissance English drama with academic and theatrical expertise.
- Lyly's plays tailored for courtly audiences, featuring allegory and sophistication.
- George Peele contributed diverse genres, blending grace, wit, and pathos.
- Greene's romantic comedies crafted memorable characters, including early Shakespearean prototypes.
- Kyd revolutionised revenge tragedy with suspense, violence, and psychological depth.
- Lodge's lyrical poetry failed to elevate his derivative dramatic works significantly.
- Nashe blended satire, social critique, and classical drama in his plays.
- Marlowe's epic tragedies explored ambition, power, and profound human struggles.
- University Wits influenced Shakespeare with new techniques, themes, and complex characters.
- Combining classical and popular traditions, University Wits paved English drama's future.
- Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist, known as the "Bard of Avon."
- Shakespeare's early works focused on histories and comedies, influenced by Rome.

- His tragic period includes Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth.
- Shakespeare's sonnets explore themes of love, time, mortality, and beauty.
- Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is an influential allegorical masterpiece in poetry.
- Raleigh was a Renaissance man, renowned for poetry, exploration, and governance.
- Ben Jonson revolutionised English drama with satirical comedies and "humours."
- His influence shaped Jacobean, Restoration comedy, and modern dramatic traditions.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who is considered the central figure of the University Wits?
2. Which playwright among the University Wits is most known for the use of blank verse?
3. Which of the following playwrights primarily catered to aristocratic tastes with his comedies: John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, or Christopher Marlowe?
4. What is Thomas Kyd's most famous play?
5. Which playwright is known for writing plays tailored for child actors in royal service?
6. Which playwright among the University Wits was involved in political satire and briefly imprisoned for it?
7. Who wrote *The Spanish Tragedy*?
8. What is the main feature of Christopher Marlowe's contribution to English drama?
9. Which playwright's works were noted for their lack of depth but influential in refining English comedy?
10. Which University Wit created *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward I*?
11. What is Shakespeare often called?
12. In which city was Shakespeare born?
13. Which sonnet collection did Shakespeare publish in 1609?
14. What group of playwrights influenced Shakespeare's work?
15. What poem by Shakespeare explores themes of love and beauty?
16. Who wrote "comedy humours"

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Christopher Marlowe
2. Christopher Marlowe
3. John Lyly
4. *The Spanish Tragedy*
5. John Lyly

6. Thomas Nashe
7. Thomas Kyd
8. The introduction and popularization of blank verse
9. John Lyly
10. George Peele
11. Bard of Avon
12. Stratford-upon-Avon
13. Sonnets
14. University Wits
15. Venus and Adonis
16. Ben Jonson

Assignments

1. How did University Wits shape Renaissance English drama and its themes?
2. Kyd's contribution to the revenge tragedy genre?
3. How did Marlowe's tragedies explore ambition, power, and human struggles?
4. How did Shakespeare's early comedies and histories reflect Roman influence?
5. How do Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Raleigh's works compare?

Suggested Reading

1. Cobban, A. B. *The Medieval Universities: Their Development and Organisation*. Routledge, 1975.
2. Murray, Alexander. *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*. Clarendon Press, 1978.
3. Rudy, Willis. *The Universities of Europe, 1100-1914: A History*. Associated University Presses, 1984.
4. Radcliff-Umstead, Douglas. *The University World, A Synoptic View of Higher Education in the Middle Age and Renaissance*. University of Pittsburgh, 1973.
5. Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1957.
6. Hudson, W.H. *History of English Literature*. 2nd ed., Macmillan, 1920

UNIT FOUR

Development in Science

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- discuss medieval inventions like gunpowder and mills, impacting industries
- explain key figures: Detail Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton's contributions to science
- analyse scientific inventions like microscopes and telescopes, advancing technology
- examine how new knowledge challenged traditional, theocentric beliefs
- explain calculus and Newton's laws' influence on science

Prerequisites

The medieval period was a transformative time in human history, one that laid the foundation for the scientific revolution that would redefine how we understand the world. This era was marked by a deep intellectual curiosity and a drive to question established beliefs, which led to innovations that would shape the modern age. Thinkers and inventors began to embrace observation, experimentation, and reason as tools to explore the natural world, sparking a paradigm shift that would ultimately lead to the rise of modern science. These intellectual breakthroughs were not just theoretical; they gave birth to technologies like the mechanical clock and the printing press, which changed daily life, communication, and even warfare.

Philosophers and scientists such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes played crucial roles in this scientific evolution. Bacon is remembered for developing the inductive method, which emphasized the importance of empirical evidence in the quest for knowledge. Descartes, often regarded as the father of modern philosophy, merged mathematics and philosophy, famously declaring "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), a statement that continues to influence contemporary thought. These and other thinkers laid the groundwork for fields like physics, chemistry, and astronomy, setting the stage for the unprecedented intellectual and technological advancements that followed.

Perhaps no figure embodies the spirit of this intellectual revolution more than Sir Isaac Newton. Born in 1642, Newton's groundbreaking work on gravity, motion, and calculus revolutionised science. His contributions were not limited to physics; his discoveries in

optics and his philosophical inquiries helped shape the trajectory of modern science. His ability to synthesise complex observations into universal laws was a monumental leap in human understanding, paving the way for future developments in fields as diverse as thermodynamics and quantum mechanics.

In this unit, you will learn the critical developments in science during this period and examine the lives and legacies of the brilliant minds who reshaped our understanding of the world. You will also learn how the scientific principles that emerged from the medieval and early modern periods continue to influence modern science today.

Keywords

Scientific Revolution, Inventions, Mechanical clock ,Printing press, Gunpowder, Paper money, Baconian Method, Newton's Laws

Discussion

During the medieval period, people had to face significant pressure due to a series of questions raised about the existing system of knowledge and human existence. When they tried to solve these problems with the help of methods and knowledge of that time, it was realised that they couldn't reach a scientific solution unless they revise the existing methods of inquiry. Some of the inventions and discoveries made in the Middle Ages (e. g. the invention of gunpowder) led to problems which asked for immediate reaction in a variety of fields. In order to find solutions, more and more intellectuals dared to study nature objectively and to apply the results of contemporary scientific thinking. This led to an enormous increase in the quantity and quality of innovation and eventually resulted in the "Scientific Revolution" of the16th and 17th centuries. The key sciences were mathematics, chemistry and astronomy, and the key men were Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton.

The following inventions of the medieval period have had lasting importance.

Mechanical Clock: The invention of mechanical clocks enabled people to accurately keep track of time. The knowledge of not only what hour it was, but even what minute and second it was, changed the way people scheduled their days and work patterns.

Printing Press: While printing technology had been developed in 11th century China, it was the 15th century German Johannes Gutenberg and his printing press that started a new era of the mass production of books. Until the rise of computers in the 20th century, books and the printed word remained the dominant form of media for the world's knowledge.

Gunpowder: Gunpowder was invented in China sometime between the 9th and 11th centuries. The knowledge of the invention spread throughout Eurasia in the 13th century, and it revolutionised warfare and made previous military technology and many medieval castles obsolete.

Water and Wind Mills: While mills were in use from antiquity, it was in the Early Middle Ages that they became very popular. Throughout the medieval period, new and

ingenious forms of mills were invented, which allowed people to harness the energy from natural forces like rivers and wind, a process that continued to the present day.

Paper money: It has a very important advantage over coins made from precious metals because they were easier to transport anywhere, and proved to be a great benefit to merchants. However, the concept of placing value on a marked piece of paper was started in the 13th century only. In the 17th century, regular banknotes started circulating in Europe as the common currency.

Along with other inventions, a change in the way of thinking replaced the old Theocentric notions. This movement based the generation of new knowledge on observation, experimentation, and the use of reason. This period was characterised by the use of reason to achieve new knowledge and questioned the old notions about human existence. Advanced knowledge paved the way for many more innovative ideas and inventions during the early modern times.

Let's have a brief look into some of the outstanding inventions:

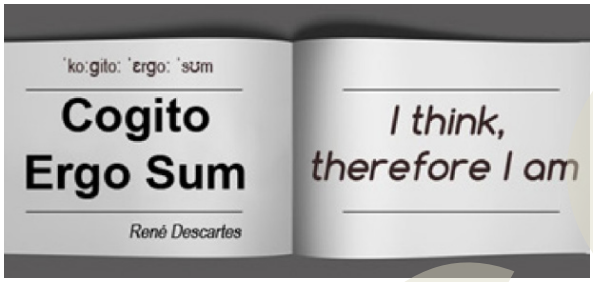
- Compound microscope (1590) - Teenager Zacharias Janssen invented the first compound microscope, likely with assistance from his father Hans Janssen, who made eyeglasses for a living.
- Thermometer (1593) - Galileo Galilei created the first thermometer, which was actually a thermal scope. It allowed water temperature changes to be measured for the first time.
- Adding machine (1645) - Blaise Pascal invented the adding machine.
- Telescope (1608) - Hans Lippershey invented the refracting telescope.
- Slide rule (1632) - William Oughtred invented the slide rule, which further sped up the process of completing complex calculations.
- Cartesian coordinate system (1637) - Rene Descartes invented this system, which is better known as the x-y axis for graphs.
- Barometer (1643) - Physicist Evangelista Torricelli invented the first barometer. His invention was a mercury barometer.
- Probability/statistics (1654) - Blaise Pascal and Pierre de Fermat together invented the mathematical foundation for statistics and probability.
- Calculus (1665) - Sir Isaac Newton invented calculus, though he didn't publish it until 1687. Calculus is the mathematics of continual change.
- Reflecting telescope (1667) - Sir Isaac Newton further advanced
- science by making the first reflecting telescope.

The following are some of the leaders of Scientific Revolution:

5.4.1 Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

Fig. 5.4.1 Rene Descartes

Rene Descartes was a French lay Catholic philosopher, scientist, and mathematician, widely considered a seminal figure in the emergence of modern philosophy and science. So, he was regarded as the father of Modern Mathematics as well as the father of Modern Western Philosophy. His philosophical methodology consisted of scepticism (rejection of authority) and rationalism (an assertion of self- confidence). Descartes' method is deductive and he rejected Aristotelian logic as sterile. Mathematics was central to his method of inquiry, and he connected the previously separate fields of geometry and algebra into analytic geometry.



He was responsible for the increased attention given to epistemology in the 17th century through his 'Theory of Doubt' and 'Deductive Method'. The Theory of Doubt or Cartesian doubt was a methodical doubt in a way of seeking certainty by systematically doubting everything. He argued that any knowledge could just as well be false as the sensory experience, the primary mode of knowledge, is often erroneous and therefore must be doubted. *Cogito Ergo* or 'I think, therefore I exist' is the principle of this doubt. The only certain rule in this world is the reality of our own existence because of the presence of our cognition. It found that even his doubting showed that he existed, since he could not doubt if he did not exist. Descartes thought we shouldn't assume anything unless it could be proven through a chain of reasoning and the scientific method.

Coordinate geometry was introduced by Fermat and Descartes, ignoring rather than solving the foundational problems which had prevented the Greeks from taking this step (viz: the lack of any well understood number system which could account for incommensurable ratios). This development is important to science because it makes geometry quantitative and permits the use of algebraic methods. Geometry must be quantitative for it to be useful in science and engineering, and algebraic methods permit more rapid development of mathematics than the less systematic (if more rigorous) methods required by the Greek axiomatic approach to geometry.

5.4.2 Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Francis Bacon was born into a prominent wealthy family in London, England, on January 2, 1561. He was one of the leading figures in natural philosophy and in the field of scientific methodology in the period of transition from the Renaissance to the early modern era. He was a critic of Aristotle. His laws of science by gathering and analysing data from experiments and observations marked the beginning of the end for centuries old natural philosophy of Aristotle. This scientific method unleashed a wave of new scientific discoveries, particularly in the hands of devotees such as Robert Boyle.

Fig. 5.4.2 Francis Bacon

Throwing Out Aristotle

"The corruption of philosophy by the mixing of it up with superstition and theology, is of a much wider extent, and is most injurious to it both as a whole and in parts." (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1620).

> Half of science is putting forth the right questions.
>
> - Francis Bacon

Most scholars in the early 1600s blindly accepted the doctrines of Aristotle. Aristotle used the deductive method of reasoning. He would move from a general rule to specific facts. He started with rules he had developed from logical arguments. Bacon's objective was to replace this methodology with a new body of scientific knowledge secured by experiments and observations. Bacon's most significant work, *Novum Organum* (The New Tool), described what came to be called the 'Baconian Method of science'. He championed the inductive method in science. This means moving from specific facts to a general rule. The method starts with observation of particular instances (data collection). After that, proceeds to an inductive leap which means arriving at a conclusion or general principle from the collected particular data. Thus, the inductive method provides general principles through observation and experimentation.

In other words, Bacon gives us an outline of his conception of the scientific method in *Novum Organum*. This method involved collection of particulars through observation and systematic experimentation, putting down this data in writing in a proper and well-arranged fashion, deriving axioms (general principle) by certain method and rules from the above particulars, and finally deriving new particulars from these axioms so that the axioms could confirm their own extent.

For example, the inductive investigation could have involved measuring the electric conductivities of a number of solid materials such as silver, gold, iron, platinum, lead, copper, zinc, tin, brass, sulphur, phosphorus, wood, table salt, granite, sand and sugar. The specific results would allow you to state the general rule that metals conduct electricity better than non-metals. Thus, through the inductive method, Aristotle's rule turned out to be wrong. Bacon argued that Aristotle's method ended up with a defective understanding of Nature because it didn't follow scientific methods.

Bacon conceived that Nature never tells you her secrets easily. To find it, one should employ hard work and vigorous interrogation. So scientific methods need to devise experiments that ask Nature the right questions. Only then one might succeed to find the truth. Nature would not reveal the truth to philosophers such as Aristotle, who thought they could sit in and coax her into revealing her secrets simply by thinking. Instead of logical speculations, one needed to gather solid data first to guide scientific thought.

He also objected to the tendency of Aristotle, Plato, and others including Pythagoras to mix scientific ideas with religious ideas. Bacon believed that the two should be kept separate. He was highly suspicious of people who said the laws of nature were there as part of a greater purpose. He thought they were there to be discovered and, if possible, exploited.

> Science is but an image of the truth
>
> - Francis Bacon

5.4.3 Natural Philosophy: Theory of the Idols

Bacon's doctrine of the idols represents a stage in the history of theories of error and functions as an important theoretical element within the rise of modern empiricism. According to him, the human mind is not a 'tabula rasa' or blank slate. Instead of an ideal plane for receiving an image of the world, it is a crooked mirror that has implicit distortion. He does not sketch a basic epistemology but underlines that the images in our mind right from the beginning do not render an objective picture of the true objects. Consequently, we have to improve our mind, i.e., free it from the idols, before we start any knowledge acquisition.

Bacon warns the student of empirical science not to tackle the complexities of his subject without purging the mind of its idols. On waxen tablets you cannot write anything new until you rub out the old. With the mind it is not so; there you cannot rub out the old till you have written in the new.

He interprets Aristotle's syllogism in relation with sophisticated fallacies. There is no finding without proof and no proof without finding. But this is not true for the syllogism, in which proof and invention (middle term in syllogism) are distinct.

To him, Judgement by syllogism presupposes—in a mode agreeable to the human mind—mediated proof, which, unlike in induction, does not start from sense in primary objects. In order to control the workings of the mind, syllogistic judgement refers to a fixed frame of reference or principle of knowledge as the basis for "all the variety of disputations". The reduction of propositions to principles leads to the middle term. Bacon deals here with the art of judgement in order to assign a systematic position to the idols. Within this art he distinguishes the 'Analytic' from the detection of fallacies. Analytic works with "true forms of consequences in argument", which become faulty by variation and deflection.

He called the wide variety of errors in mental processing the Idols of the Mind. There were four idols: Idols of the Tribe, Idols of the Cave, Idols of the Marketplace, and Idols of the Theatre.

Idols of the Tribe: The Idols of the Tribe made the false assumption that our most natural and basic sense of thing was the correct one. He called our natural impressions a "false mirror" which distorted the true nature of things.

Idols of the Cave: The Idols of the Cave were the problems of individuals, their passions and enthusiasms, their devotions and ideologies, all of which led to misunderstandings of the true nature of things.

Idols of the Marketplace: There are also Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate, and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore, the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding.

Idols of the Theatre: The final Idol of the Theatre, is how Bacon referred to long-received wisdom, the ancient systems of philosophy, the arbitrary divisions of knowledge and classification systems held onto like dogma. Without emptying one's mind of the old ways, no new progress could be made. This would be an important lasting value of the Baconian view of science. Truth must be reasoned from first principles.

Bacon's Public Career

Bacon at the age of 15, aimed to become a lawyer and he left for London. But soon he was placed as the English Ambassador to France for two years. Thus, he performed diplomatic duties on behalf of Queen Elizabeth's government in France and hence learned politics and diplomacy. But after his father's death, he returned to England and began to engage in his work as a lawyer. His legal and political careers eventually carried him to the highest position in England's legal profession.

- At the age of 20, he became a Member of Parliament.
- At the age of 42, he was knighted for his service to King James, becoming Sir Francis Bacon.
- At the age of 52, he was appointed as England's Attorney General
- At the age of 56, he reached the top, becoming Lord High-Chancellor of England in 1617.
- In 1621, his public career ended in disgrace as he was accused of corruption, sent to prison and fined a huge fine. But the prison term lasted only a few days and the fine was remitted. He retired to study and writing.

5.4.4 Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

Sir Isaac Newton was an Englishman, physicist, astronomer, mathematician, theologian, alchemist, and government official who made an epoch in modern science through his outstanding inventions. He was the revolutionary scientist in world history for his Theory of Universal Gravitation, his Laws of Motion, and his theories in optics, as well as the invention of differential calculus. In addition, Newton invented the reflecting telescope, and made numerous other contributions to his fields of study.

5.3.3 Sir Isaac Newton

His Classical mechanics comprises the four main fields of modern physics (alongside the later fields of electricity and magnetism, thermodynamics, and quantum mechanics). He was one of the first men to assume that the natural world is governed by universal laws that can be expressed mathematically.

Newton emphasised that conclusions are drawn from experiments: "But hitherto I have not been able to discover the cause of those properties of gravity from phenomena, and I frame no hypotheses; for whatever is not deduced from the phenomena, is to be called an hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether metaphysical or physical, whether of occult qualities or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy."

Newton's view of science was that far more remained undiscovered. He said, "I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Isaac Newton was born on Christmas day December 25, 1642 in Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire. The young Newton seems to have been a quiet, not particularly bookish, lad, but very ready with his hands; he made sundials, model windmills, a water clock, a mechanical carriage, and flew kites with lanterns attached to their tails. Throughout his life he built mechanical devices and fashioned his own tools for high precision work.

5.3.4 Newton's sculpture by Eduardo Paolozzi displayed outside the British Library in London

Newton joined Cambridge in 1661. At this time the movement of the Scientific Revolution was well advanced, and many of the works basic to modern science had appeared. Astronomers from Nicolaus Copernicus to Johannes Kepler had elaborated the heliocentric system of the universe. Galileo had proposed the foundations of a new mechanics built on the principle of inertia. Led by René Descartes, philosophers had begun to formulate a new conception of nature as an intricate, impersonal, and inert machine. Newton discovered the works of Descartes and the other mechanical philosophers, who, in contrast to Aristotle, viewed physical reality as composed entirely of particles of matter in motion and who held that all the phenomena of nature result from their mechanical interaction. However, their theories still had holes, which Isaac Newton then filled. Newton's contribution to scientific thought included his four basic laws: three laws of motion and the law of universal gravitation.

Year of Great Discovery

The year 1666 is known as Newton's *annus mirabilis* (miraculous year--more precisely the two years 1665-1666), when he was about twenty-four years of age. He later recalled, "For in those days I was in the prime of my age for invention & minded Mathematics & Philosophy more than at any time since." (By "philosophy" he meant physics.) These were intense periods of intellectual endeavour at Woolsthorpe. Freed from the restrictions of the limited curriculum and rigours of university life, Newton had the time and space to develop his theories on calculus, optics and the laws of motion and gravity.

Calculus: Calculus has uses in physics, chemistry, biology, economics, pure mathematics, all branches of engineering, and more. It's not an overstatement to say Newton's insight in the development of calculus has truly revolutionised our ability to pursue new branches of science and

engineering. It is used in problems when a quantity changes as a function of time, which is how most problems behave in reality. Isaac Newton changed the world when he invented Calculus in 1665.

Newton started by trying to describe the speed of a falling object. When he did this, he found that the speed of a falling object increases every second, but that there was no existing mathematical explanation for this. The issue of movement and the rate of change had not yet been explored to any significant degree in the field of mathematics, so Newton saw a void that needed to be filled. He began work on this right way, incorporating planetary ellipses into his theory too to try to explain the orbit of the planets. He found that by using calculus, he could explain how planets moved and why the orbits of planets are in an ellipse.

At its most basic, calculus is all about studying the rate of change of a quantity over time. In particular, it can be narrowed down to the study of the rate of change and summation of quantities. The two categories of calculus are called differential calculus and integral calculus. Differential calculus deals with the rate of change of a quantity such as how the position of an object changes compared to time. Integral calculus is all about accumulation, or summing up infinitely small quantities. The fundamental theorem of calculus is what connects these two categories. This theorem guarantees the existence of anti-derivatives for continuous functions.

Calculus is used in all branches of mathematics, science, engineering, biology, and more. There is a lot that goes into the use of calculus, and there are entire industries that rely on it very heavily. Engineering is one sector that uses calculus extensively. Mathematical models often have to be created to help with various forms of engineering planning. And the same applies to the medical industry. Anything that deals with motion, such as vehicle development, acoustics, light and electricity will also use calculus a great deal because it is incredibly useful when analysing any quantity that changes over time. So, it's quite clear that there are many industries and activities that need calculus to function in the right way.

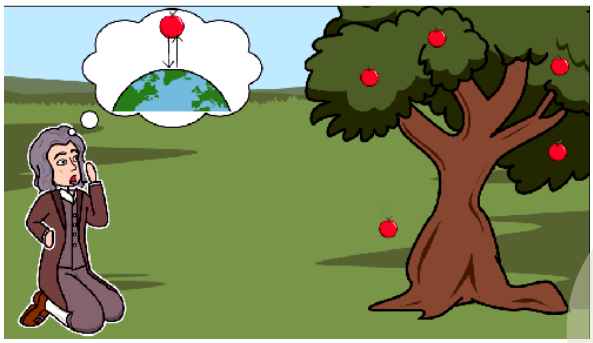
Newton's **Optics**: While waiting out The Plague he began to investigate the nature of light. White light, according to the prevailing theories, was homogeneous. His first experiments with a prism provided the true explanation of colour. Passing a beam of sunlight through a prism, he observed that the beam spread out into a coloured band of light (spectrum) like a rainbow. While others had undoubtedly performed similar experiments, it was Newton who showed that the differences in colour were caused by differing degrees of refrangibility. A ray of violet light, for example, when passed through a refracting medium, was refracted through a greater angle than a ray of red light. His conclusions, checked by ingenious experiments, were that sunlight was a combination of all the colours and that the colours themselves were monochromatic (his term was "homogeneal"), and separated merely because they were of differing refrangibility.

5.4.5 Isaac Newton's Four Basic Laws

Newton's Four Basic Laws: Isaac Newton developed a simple theory, four basic laws: three laws of motion and the law of universal gravitation, perhaps best- known work is gravity.

Newton's **theory of universal gravitation** says that every particle in the universe attracts every other particle through the force of gravity. The theory helps us predict how

objects as large as planets and as small as individual colliding molecules will interact; it shows us the way earthquakes ripple through the Earth's crust and how to build buildings that can withstand them. His simple equation for universal gravitation, written in 1666 when he was 23, helped overthrow more than a thousand years of Aristotelian thinking (reinforced by Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemy) which said that objects only moved if an external force drove that motion.



5.3.5 Representative image of Newton's Gravitational Theory

The law of universal gravitation states that "two bodies in space pull on each other with a force proportional to their masses and the distance between them." For example, the large objects orbiting one another, like the moon and earth, actually exert noticeable force on one another. It may seem like the moon is orbiting a relatively static earth, but actually the moon and the earth are rotating around a third point between them. That point is called the barycentre.

As per this law, every object in the universe attracts every other object with a measurable force (however slight). The force is:

- Directly proportional to the product of two objects' masses
- Inversely proportional to the square of the distance between the objects
- This principle can be expressed in the equation: F = G mM / r^2

Here in this equation: 'F' is the magnitude of force, 'm' is the mass of the smaller object, 'M' is the mass of the larger object, ' r' is the distance between the objects' centres of mass and 'G' is the gravitational constant.

Newton's 3 Laws of Motion

1. An object in motion tends to stay in motion and an object at rest tends to stay at rest unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.
2. Force equals mass times acceleration (F=ma)
3. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Newton's **first law of motion** concerns any object that has no force applied to it. An object not subject to an external force will continue in its state of motion at a constant speed in a straight line. Now, suppose someone is on ice skates, just standing in the middle of an ice rink. What's going to happen? The person just stays in the middle of the rink. But if they are on ice skates and moving forward at two miles an hour, they will continue to move straight ahead at two miles an hour until something pushes them or stops them. Hence, the first law describes the behaviour of an object subjected to no external force.

The **second law** then describes the behaviour of an object that is subjected to an external force. Let's take the same example, if a person is on ice skates moving forward at two miles an hour and they are pushed

from behind, they now go faster in the same direction. If they are pulled from behind, they slow down. If pushed from the side, they change direction. If the force of push is bigger and high, it results in more change. Similarly, if the object is heavier, the resulting change may be less. An object is either subject to a force or it isn't, so the first two laws are sufficient to describe the behaviour of the object.

But what may be the behaviour of the object or thing that applied the force? What happens to it? The force felt from a push is felt in the opposite direction, but in the same amount. Let's again consider the same example, if a person is on ice skates and someone pushes them, they accelerate forward because of the force and the other person goes backwards because of it. 'To every action there is always an equal, but opposite reaction'. This forms the **third law of motion**.

These three simple laws explain a lot, but they become incredibly powerful when combined with the prime law, that is, the law of universal gravitation, which says that gravitation is an attractive force, a very significantly attractive force.

Take any two objects with mass and there will be an attraction between them, along the lines connecting their centres of mass. This pull will be proportional to the product of their masses, making one twice as heavy, twice the attraction. And it will be inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them, move them twice as far away, feel only one-fourth the pull.

When these three laws of mechanics and the law of universal gravitation are used together, we suddenly have an explanation for Kepler's elliptical orbits. Not only that, we can explain the tides, the motion of cannonballs, virtually everything we see in the world around us.

Principia Mathematica: Newton's Principia attracted the attention not only of scientists but also from philosophers. In *Principia* -its full title is the Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy- Newton lays out his laws of motion, law of universal gravitation and an extension of Kepler's laws of planetary motion. It is a book that helped define the Age of Reason and it is Newton's most celebrated achievement. He proposed that the universe is mainly an empty space criss-crossed by powerful but invisible gravitational forces. Whether tiny atomic particles or giant planets, the attractive pull between two objects is proportional to the product of their masses and decreases with the square of the distance between them.

The publication history of the work is quite interesting. It was in 1684 when Newton lived in self-imposed isolation at Cambridge, that the work progressed. The young astronomer Edmond Halley approached Newton for the answers of some questions. Thus, Dr Halley's was the catalyst for the creation of Newton's principia. Halley continued to manoeuvre with great diplomacy, coaxing Newton through the process of getting the three parts of the Principia finished. Halley went to great lengths to bring Newton's work to paper, paying for the publication himself as the Royal Society had run out of funds.

Newton was a sincere religious believer, who said his discoveries were inspired by God. He devoted more time to the study of Scripture than to science. Newton wrote, "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent being... All varieties of created objects which represent order and life in the universe could happen only by the willful reasoning of its original Creator, Whom I call the Lord God. "Newton believed that God's creation of the universe

was self-evident given its grandeur. He also warned against using his laws to replace the creator. He said, "Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who set the planets in motion. God governs all things and knows all that is or can be done."

During his late life, Newton wrote lavishly on theology. He received a knighthood from the queen of England in 1705 (the second scientist to have been knighted in England). He died in 1727 from mercury poisoning, likely caused by Newton's work in alchemy. Newton never married. He is widely regarded as one of the most important people who ever lived. Many of his ideas still hold true and his equations are still used to this day and have secured his place in history.

Recap

- Scholars were referring to the renaissance as a period of 'Scientific Revolution.'
- The key sciences were mathematics, chemistry and astronomy, and the key men were Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton.
- Rene Descartes was a a seminal figure in the emergence of modern philosophy and science.
- Rene Descartes was responsible for drawing more attention to epistemology in the 17th century.
- The Theory of Doubt or Cartesian doubt was a methodical doubt in a way of seeking certainty by systematically doubting everything.
- Francis Bacon's s laws of science by gathering and analysing data from experiments and observations marked the beginning of the end for centuries old natural philosophy of Aristotle.
- Bacon called the wide variety of errors in mental processing the Idols of the Mind.
- There were four idols: Idols of the Tribe, Idols of the Cave, Idols of the Marketplace, and Idols of the Theatre.
- Sir Issac Newton developed four basic laws: three laws of motion and the law of universal gravitation, perhaps best -known work is gravity.
- Newton's *Principia* full title is the Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy; Newton lays out his laws of motion, law of universal gravitation and an extension of Kepler's laws of planetary motion.

Objective Type Questions

1. Which work of Rene Descartes was responsible for drawing more attention to "epistemology" in the 17th century?
2. Which of the ancient Greeks set forth the concepts of astronomy that dominated the Middle Ages?
3. Who is known for the statement "I think, therefore I am?"
4. Who was considered the father of modern science?
5. Which scientific approach of Francis Bacon marked the beginning of the end for Aristotle's age-old natural philosophy?
6. Who stated that the human mind is not a "tabula rasa"?
7. Which work of Newton's has the full title "Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy"?
8. Which of Newton's laws states, "There is always an equal but opposite reaction to every action"?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. 'Theory of Doubt' and 'Deductive Method'.
2. Ptolemy
3. Rene' Descartes
4. Isaac Newton
5. Observation
6. Francis Bacon
7. *Principia*
8. Third laws of motion

Assignments

1. Discuss the features of the Scientific Revolution' in the early modern period.
2. Prepare a note on the major inventions/discoveries, scientists and technologies during the scientific revolution.
3. Critically analyse the statement 'Aristotle or Newton was the most influential figure in philosophy and science.'

Suggested Reading

1. Cobban, A. B. *The Medieval Universities: Their Development and Organization.* Routledge, 1975.
2. Murray, Alexander. *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages.* Clarendon Press, 1978.
3. Andrews,S. *Eighteenth-Century Europe: The 1680s to 1715,* Longman, 1964.
4. Bernal, J.D. *The Social Function of Science,* Routledge, 1993.
5. Campbell, Gordon. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Renaissance*. OUP, 2019.
6. Celenza, Christopher S. *The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance.* CUP, 2020.
7. Hale, J.R. *The Thames & Hudson Dictionary of the Italian Renaissance.* Thames & Hudson, 2020.
8. Hale, J.R. *Renaissance Europe: The Individual and Society 1480-1520*, University of California Press, 1971.

BLOCK - 06

England under Stuarts

UNIT ONE

Charles I

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the political developments under the Stuart rule in England.
- identify the role of the Church in the power structure of British statecraft.
- analyse the political and social causes for the outbreak of civil war in England.

Prerequisites

Have you ever heard of *Stuart Little*, the 1999 movie about a small, endearing rat? Yet, beyond the charm of fiction, the name "Stuart" belongs to a royal dynasty that shaped the very foundations of British history. Rising to power in 1603, the Stuart monarchs presided over one of the most tumultuous and transformative periods in Britain's political journey. Their reign was defined by fierce struggles for power, a civil war that tore the nation apart, and a revolution so extraordinary in its peaceful nature that it earned the name "Glorious." In this unit, we delve into the era of Stuart rule in the early 17th century, unraveling the dramatic events that defined this period and exploring the enduring significance of its civil war and revolutionary legacy.

Keywords

Stuart, Divine Right, Puritans, Tyranny, Tonnage and Poundage

6.1.1 James I (1566- 1625)

Medieval English rulers used to administer the country with the help of the feudal lords. Barons were one of the classes of tenants who held their rights and titles by military or another honourable service directly from a feudal superior (such as a king). With the coming of new thoughts and ideas, their power weakened, which in turn crippled the influence of the monarchs. With the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, the Tudor dynasty came to an end. James VI of Scotland became the ruler of England, accepting the title James I, and England and Scotland became united under a single monarch. Thus, the period of the Stuart dynasty started. James was the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, and her second

husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley. His mother, Mary, was the granddaughter of the sister of Henry VIII. Thus, he was the closest male relative of the late Elizabeth I, who died without marrying.

Fig 6.1.1 James I

King James I was an ardent propagator of the doctrine of the Divine Right theory of kingship, which is a political doctrine generally concerned with European history. It defended monarchical absolutism, which asserted that kings derived their authority from God and no earthly authority, such as parliament, could hold them responsible for their actions. He had explained the concept himself through his work *Basilikon Doron* published in 1599. It often brought the king in conflict with the parliament, which believed that the law of the land binds everyone alike and that no one is above it. Such differences often brought the king into conflict with the parliament. However, the question of power was not the only issue over which disagreements developed between the two. A variety of complex issues on matters such as religion, finance and foreign policy aggravated the hostilities.

The King James I, who styled himself as the *King of Great Britain,* alienated the support of the Puritans in England, who were the religious reformers in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to "purify" the Church of England, influenced by the Calvinists. Since they formed the majority in the House of Commons, the issue assumed a religious dimension as the king was the son of a Catholic lady.

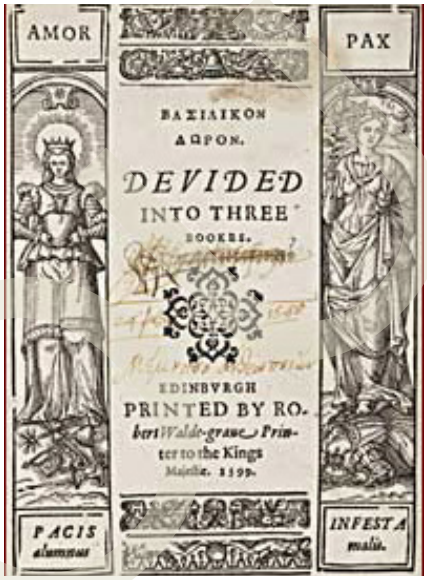


Fig 6.1.2 Title page of Basilikon Doron

The conflict between the king and the parliament resulted in the dissolution of the parliament in 1911. The parliament was again summoned in 1921 to raise the taxes, which was not to the liking of the parliament. The Parliament also had other reasons to be unhappy with the king as he proceeded with a marriage proposal between his son Charles I and a Catholic princess from Spain. The parliament was greatly annoyed because it did not want a Catholic as the successor of James I. James I passed away in 1625, leaving his throne to Charles I, who was also not pleased with the Parliament.

6.1.2 Charles I (1600-1649; reign 1625-49)

Charles I was born in Scotland in 1600 AD. As a child, he was sick, silent and reserved.

He had an excellent temper and courteous manners and had fewer vices. But he travelled less and never mixed up with common people. In 1625, when Charles I became the ruler of England, neither Charles nor the Parliament was happy. Like his father, Charles I also was a strong believer in the Divine Right theory. Further, the King favoured a section called the High Church Party against the Puritans who were in control of the Parliament. The already existing differences between Charles and the Parliament were sharpened by the issue over ***tonnage and poundage***, which was the custom duties granted to the crown by the parliament since medieval times in England.

Fig 6.1.3 Charles I of England

Moreover, the Commons did not favour the king over the question of customs duties. In the parliament session of 1626, there was an attempt to impeach Charles I for his failure in the naval battle against Spain. Charles dissolved the parliament in June 1626 at the height of differences. In 1628, when the Parliament was again summoned, the House of Commons passed the famous ***Petition of Rights*** against the high-handed actions of the king. The parliament passed three resolutions against the king before he adjourned the parliament in 1629. For the next eleven years, he ruled without the parliament, known in history as ***Eleven Years Tyranny***.

Petiton of Rights 1628

A petition send by the English Parliament to King Charles 1 against a number of breaches of law. It mainly sort to recognise for resolutions:

1. No Taxation without the consent of the Parliament
2. No imprisonment without cause
3. No quartering of soldiers on citizens
4. No martial law during peace times.

During the years without parliament, Charles I raised money by exacting *Ship Money* levied on ports. However, his attempt to bring about certain alterations in the liturgy was met with vehement opposition from the Scottish people. The king decided to impose his reforms on revolting Scotland, which created an atmosphere of war with Scotland. To raise funds for the war, he was forced to summon the Parliament again in 1640, later known as ***Short Parliament***. However, the Parliament argued that the money could be sanctioned only if the unpopular taxes were abolished. The Parliament, which was summoned in April, was suspended in May. Due to the rising pressure, he had to summon the Parliament again in November1640, which came to be known as ***Long Parliament.***

Long Parliament:

The king faced severe criticism from influential leaders of parliament such as John Pym and John Hampden. The Parliament

passed the *Triennial Act* or the *Dissolution Act* in 1641, which included the following clauses:

- If the King did not summon the Parliament, it could meet on its own.
- The Parliament could not be dissolved without its consent.

The king assured that the Parliament would meet at least once in three years. He had to yield to the provisions forwarded by the Parliament and suspended ship money and other unjust exactions introduced during the eleven years of tyranny.

6.1.3 Civil War in Britain (1642-1651 AD)

The civil war in Britain was fought in two phases. The first civil war was fought between 1642-1646, and the second and third civil wars were fought between 1848 and 1651. The peace concluded between the king, and the Parliament was short-lived. However, the attempt of the king to raise an army against the Irish revolt was looked upon with suspicion by the Parliament.

The Civil war in Britain also was called the Great Rebellion. It is considered to have started in 1642 when the King ordered his army to arrest five troublesome members of the Parliament who managed to escape the arrest. Foreseeing a civil war, some of the peacemakers tried to restore relations with the King in 1643. Since the attempt failed, the Parliamentarians joined hands with the Scottish Presbyterians. By 1645, the country was plunged into a civil war with the Royal Army, the city dwellers supporting the Parliament and the rural population backing the king. The Parliament army was the well-trained New Model Army formed in 1645, commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell.

Fig 6.1.4 Cromwell at Dunbar, 1886

The supporters of the Parliament were called the *Roundheads,* also known as Parliamentarians and the supporters of the king were called *Cavaliers* or Royalists. There was a long row of defeats for the king's army by the end of the 1640s. Though the King tried to escape, he was placed under close guard and was tried in 1649 for treason. He was sentenced to death and was executed on January 30, 1949. The death of Charles I had a galvanising effect on Irish and Scottish supporters. They extended their support to Charles II. However, the Scottish army, who supported Charles II, was defeated at the *Battle of Dunbar* in 1650. Another attempt made by the Scottish army in 1651 to capture London was defeated by Oliver Cromwell. Charles II thereupon fled to France. It ended the civil war between the three kingdoms of Ireland, Scotland and England, leaving control to Oliver Cromwell, the Protector. The civil war in England also caused heavy casualties in the economy and population.

Recap

- Stuart rule in England started with the ascension of James VI of Scotland to the English throne with the title James I.
- The Stuart kings believed in the Divine Right Theory of Kingship, which asserted the supreme power of the ruler as bestowed by Providence.
- Charles I continued the hostile attitude towards the Parliament inherited from his father, the late James I.
- The attempts of the king to spread Catholicism and sideline the Parliament ultimately led to the civil wars in England.
- The Parliament presented the famous *Petition of Rights* to the King in 1628.
- The civil wars engulfed England, Scotland and Ireland.
- The Dissolution Act passed by the Parliament proposed to restrict the powers of the king to dissolve the parliament without its consent.
- Civil Wars in England led to the establishment of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell.

Objective Type Questions

1. Name the last Tudor monarch in England.
2. What was the theory propagated by James I to assert his dominance over the parliament?
3. Who was the author of the book *Basilikon Doron*?
4. Which were the two custom duties given to the kings in Medieval England?
5. Whose rule in England was called Eleven Years Tyranny?
6. When was the *Short parliament* summoned?
7. Which act curtailed the power of the monarch to suspend the parliament at his own will?
8. Who were known as *roundheads*?
9. Who were the commanders who led the New Model Army of Parliament in civil wars?
10. In which battle of the civil war was Charles II finally defeated?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Elizabeth I
2. Divine Right Theory of Kingship

3. James I
4. Tonnage and Poundage
5. Charles I
6. 1640
7. Triennial Act/ Dissolution Act
8. The supporters of the Parliament
9. Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell
10. Battle of Dunbar in 1650

Assignments

1. Discuss the causes behind the outbreak of civil war in England.
2. Prepare a note on the impact of the civil war in England on its society.
3. Analyse the major changes that occurred in England during the reign of Charles I.

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* , Cambridge University Press, 2009.
9. Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* ,Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
10. Jenkins, Simon. *A Short History of England,* Profile Books, 2018.
11. Churchill, Winston, *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

UNIT TWO

Oliver Cromwell

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner would be able to:

- understand the nature and method of working of the Commonwealth in England in the 16th century.
- discern the background of English civil wars.
- evaluate the inherent weaknesses of the Commonwealth government.
- point out the causes for the glorious revolution.

Prerequisites

Have you ever heard of the Commonwealth countries? These are nations that were once colonies of Great Britain and later came together to foster bonds of friendship and cooperation. Yet, the term "Commonwealth" has much deeper roots in England's history, dating back to the turbulent 17th century. Born in the aftermath of Britain's Civil Wars, the Commonwealth marked a bold experiment in governance under Oliver Cromwell, replacing the monarchy with a republican system. In this unit, we delve into the distinctive features, unique nature, and influential leaders of the Commonwealth government, uncovering a pivotal chapter in England's political evolution.

Keywords

Commonwealth, Cromwell, Lord Protector, Court of Chancery, Restoration

Discussion

The attempts of the Stuart rulers to rule the country and side-linethe parliament were the main cause of the English civil wars. However, the feud between the Catholics and the Protestants, a feature of the Tudor period, continued in a different form during the Stuart period. James I had embraced Protestantism publicly and was instrumental in bringing out an authorised Version of the Bible (also known as James's Bible) in 1611. But the Puritans who controlled the Parliament suspected him to be a sympathiser of the Catholics as his mother was a Catholic. Puritans and non-Puritan Protestants were united by adherence to a broad Calvinist theology of grace during

the regime of Elizabeth I and James I. This consensus, however, broke down under Charles I, who supported some sections of Protestants who were bitterly opposed to Puritanism. His wife, Queen Henrietta Maria, from France, openly practised Catholicism and this alienated many people.

Fig 6.2.1 Charles I in three positions

The Civil War was fought between the supporters of the monarchy under Charles I and the Puritans who controlled the Parliament. After the death of Charles I, the royalist side was led by his son Charles II. The Civil War began with the formation of an army by Charles I to deal with the Irish rebellion against the wishes of the Parliament. However, the seeds were sown earlier during the *Bishop's War* (fought between Charles I and the Scots in 1639) in Scotland and with the Ulster Rebellion in Ireland in 1641. The Civil War was fought between the supporters of the King and the Parliament in England, but they also struck Scotland and Ireland. Thus, it was called the British Civil war or the *Wars of the Three Kingdoms*. It ended with the execution of Charles I and the flight of Charles II to France, and England was declared a Common wealth.

6.2.1 Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth

The execution of the king invited hostilities from all over Europe. In spite of that, England was declared a Commonwealth by the Rump Parliament (the Long Parliament after the expulsion of the 121 members) in 1648. The monarchy and House of Lords stood abolished. In this system, the power of the government was vested with a Council of the State, the Rump Parliament and the army. The military became a part of the English government. Due to his military success, Oliver Cromwell had become the undisputed leader of the Parliamentarians. He dealt with the revolted royalists in Ireland and Scotland and gained a reputation as a good administrator and diplomat. His victories over the Irish, the Scots and the Dutch brought a great reputation to the Commonwealth government.

The Rump parliament went on with the conservative laws without adopting any reforms in the legal system. The attempt to abolish the Court of Chancery, *one* of the branches of the High Court, created much opposition from the central courts. As it failed to adopt popular reforms, the Rump parliament was dissolved by Cromwell in 1652. The new Parliament nominated by the assembly could not do anything better. Therefore, it dissolved itself, and the power returned to Cromwell.

Oliver Cromwell assumed the title **Lord Protector** in December 1653 and ruled like a dictator till his death on September 3, 1658. A pragmatic section of the population, including the lawyers, office holders and magistrates, desired to establish a heaven on earth. The Republicans wanted to shape the government after the model of Ancient Rome. The social reformers wanted the land to be returned to the common people. There were also some

social radicals known as Quakers who had their vision of the new government

Fig 6.2.2 Oliver Chromwell

The first constitution of England, namely the *Instrument of Government,* was created in 1653 by John Lambert. The instrument created a protector, a council of the States, and a Parliament elected at least once in every three years. Cromwell was made the Protector, and there was a council to assist him in administration. The Protectorate was able to solve many central questions, including legal reforms and religious reforms. It brought out social legislation to cleanse society from drinking and swearing. For public entertainment, stage plays were introduced. However, there were disputes between the government and the protector, too. The government could only be shouldered by Cromwell for a long time. For a time, the people wished him to be the king, but he declined. As Lord Protector, he enjoyed more power than was enjoyed by many English kings.

In 1658, after the death of Oliver Cromwell, his son Richard Cromwell was raised to his father's position. But he proved to be a failure and had to quit. A rebellion of junior officers led to the re-establishment of the Rump Parliament. However, there was still confusion at the administrative level and in the army. George Monck, from Scotland, was one of the ablest senior officers of the period. He understood the weakness of the Rump and realised that the existing chaos could be solved only by reinstalling Charles II to the throne. Thus, he prepared the ground for the return of Charles II to England, resulting in Restoration rule.

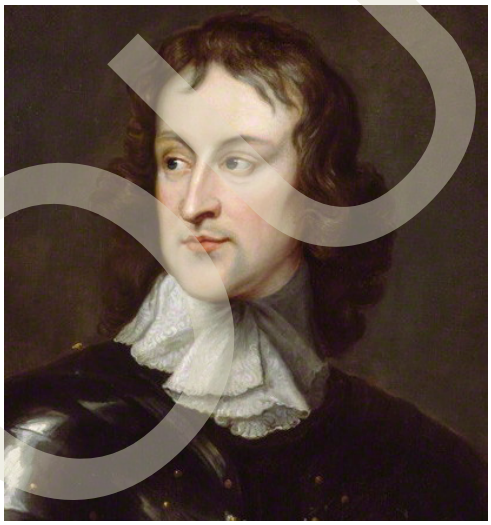


Fig 6.2.3 John Lambert

6.2.2 The Restoration

In English history, the term Restoration is used to denote the restoration of monarchy by placing Charles II on the throne of England, ending the rule of the Commonwealth under Richard Cromwell. Strict Anglican orthodoxy came back to the parliament. The period also includes the reign of James II, too. The restoration period witnessed an unprecedented expansion of trade and a revival of drama and literature.

6.2.2.1 Charles II (1630-1685)

Charles II, the son of Charles I, who had gone into exile in 1651, was proclaimed as king and returned to England in May 1660.

His coronation took place in 1661. The event of his return to power is called the Restoration of the monarchy in English history. Puritanism ceased to be a force after the Restoration. The Restoration settlement re-established the domination of the Anglican church.

Fig 6.2.4 Charles II

Although he married Princess Catherine of Portugal in 1662, Charles failed to have children. Charles ruled the country with the consent of the Parliament till his death in 1685 AD. He converted to Catholicism on his deathbed.

6.2.2.2 James II (1633-1701)

James II, brother of Charles II, succeeded him to the English throne. It was a period when the relationship between the Catholics and the Protestants was strained in England. James joined the Catholic church in 1668 but attended Anglican services until 1676. In 1677, he consented to the marriage of his elder daughter Mary to the Protestant William of Orange. The reign of James II was also marked by friction between the Crown and the Parliament. He also took some pro-Catholic measures and dissolved the parliament against the Triennial Act. The Parliament tolerated him because he did not have a male heir to succeed him. However, the entire situation changed with the birth of a son to James II in his old age. This made the parliament apprehensive about an impending Catholic rule in England. Thus, seven major Parliament members declared their allegiance to William of Orange. The advent of William's army in 1688 prompted James II to flee England. The crown was offered jointly to William and Mary. The transfer of power was thus peaceful. This event became famous as the Glorious Revolution (Bloodless Revolution) in world history.

Fig 6.2.5 James II

Recap

- Attempts by the Stuart rulers to act independently, sidelining the parliament and the conflict of the Puritans with other protestants led to the English Civil wars. Several efforts were made by Catholicism to re-emerge.
- The Bishops War in Scotland and the Ulster Rebellion in Ireland also contributed to the causes of the English Civil Wars
- The execution of Charles I and the flight of Charles II to France marked the end of the English Civil Wars.
- England was declared a Commonwealth after the Civil War.
- In the new system, the power was vested with the Council of the State, Rump Parliament and the Army.
- Oliver Cromwell assumed the title of *Lord Protector.*
- The First Constitution of England was called the Instrument of Governments.
- The Return of Charles II to the English throne marked the beginning of the Restoration period in English history.
- Restoration means the restoration of the monarchy.

Objective Type Questions

1. Which incident in Scotland is said to have sowed the seeds of civil war?
2. When did the restoration period start in England?
3. Which section of the Parliament argued for a government after the model of ancient Rome?
4. Who succeeded Charles II to the English throne?
5. What was the literature of England after the Restoration generally known as?
6. Name the peaceful transfer of power that took place in England in 1688.
7. Which general prepared the ground for the Restoration?
8. Who became the rulers of England in 1688 after the flight of James II?
9. Which event made the parliamentarians invite William of Orange state to take up the throne of England?
10. Who succeeded Oliver Cromwell for a brief period?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. Bishop's war
2. 1660
3. Republicans
4. James II
5. Restoration Literature
6. Glorious Revolution
7. George Monck
8. William of Orange state and Mary
9. The birth of an heir for James II
10. Richard Cromwell

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of Oliver Cromwell in the establishment of the Commonwealth of England.
2. Prepare a note on the background of the restoration of the monarchy in England.
3. Describe the causes of the Glorious Revolution.

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.
7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* , Cambridge University Press, 2009.

UNIT THREE

Puritanism

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the features of Puritan/Restoration literature.
- make a comparison of literature in Puritan England with those of the Elizabethan era.
- comprehend the influence exercised by the socio-political elements of a country on literature.
- critically appreciate the features of the novel, poetry and historical narratives of the period.

Prerequisites

Have you ever encountered the novel Uncle Tom's Cabin? This iconic American work by Harriet Beecher Stowe vividly portrays the harsh realities of slavery in America. Literature often mirrors the social conditions of its time, and just as Uncle Tom's Cabin reflects the struggles of a nation, so too does the literature of 17th-century England echo its own tumultuous history. In the previous unit, we explored the events that led to the restoration of the monarchy in England, focusing on the religious tensions that ignited the civil wars. The experiences of war and restoration found expression in the literature of the time. In this unit, we will delve into the distinctive features and characteristics of Puritan literature from the latter half of the 17th century and the early 18th century, offering Insight into the era's cultural and intellectual landscape.

Keywords

Puritanism, Sonnets, Popery, Predestination, Metaphysical

Discussion

Puritanism was a religious movement that started in 16th century England to purify the Church of England which was carrying the remnants of the Roman Catholic popery (doctrines and ceremonies associated with the Pope). The Puritans were morally and religiously zealous and wanted to retain the

settlement made during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. They wanted to make their life pattern the pattern of life of the whole nation. The puritan ideology was one of the forces behind the Civil Wars in England and behind the founding of several colonies in North America. It was King Henry VIII who separated the English Church from Roman Catholicism in 1534. This was followed by the rapid expansion of Protestantism under Edward VI. However, under the reign of Queen Mary, attempts were made to return England to Catholicism. During this period many of the Protestants were forced into exile. Most of them went to Geneva where Calvinists were following a disciplined Church. The migrants from England were influenced by the practices followed by the Calvinists in Geneva. On the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558, they returned to England. However, they were not able to get the desired status in the Convocation. i.e., the primary governing body of the church. This frustrated faction was called the Puritans. The puritans believed in establishing a covenant with the Almighty. Their doctrine was opposed to scientific thinking based on reason.

6.3.1 Puritan Literature

Puritan literature is a reflection of the Puritan experiences and the depiction of their movement and way of life. They were in the form of letters, diaries or journals written by the puritan members who had travelled to the Americas, and about their own experiences. Many of the puritans had moved to North America in search of religious freedom and founded colonies such as Plymouth. They played a vital role in the social life of America. Most of the puritan literary expressions were in the form of poetry, historical narratives or sermons, with little or no contributions to fiction. They used a simple and lucid style in writing. They wrote in the first person and used as plain a style as possible to avoid any kind of complexity in comprehension. They believed in the simplicity of life and writing was a part of it. They approached literature as a serious exercise and not as a means of entertainment. The major themes of puritan literature were based on religious and political idealism with a stress on a pragmatic way of life.

The works of the period projected the biblical theme of *predestination* (the doctrine that God has ordained all that will happen) and the inevitability of sin and a strong sense of guilt and repentance. Scriptural symbolism is used widely in puritan literature. The books of the *Bible*, especially the *Old Testament* were widely used for drawing themes. The category of writers known as Jeremiads was split into three sections: those who hailed the faith of the past generations, those who were critical of the sins of the present age and those who repeatedly appealed for resentencing and penance. They were also interested in looking at natural calamities and sometimes visualised them as a sign from God. The concept of struggles in the world and spirituality was also accepted as themes for literary works. The use of Greek mythology or classical literature was avoided. The primary aim of the literature was to convey the truth of Godly existence in a simple and lucid way for all. For Puritans, literature was meant for religious discourses.

Important writers like William Bradford, Edward Taylor, Anne Bradstreet and John Winthrop widely wrote about spirituality in America. William Bradford wrote about honest and hardworking folks. He was a celebrated writer of the heroic deeds of ordinary people. Aiming at imposing the puritan spiritual concepts on society, they presented their own spiritual journeys. Many American politicians still refer to Winthrop's Model of Christian Charity.

6.3.2 John Milton (1608-1674)

Fig 6.3.1 John Milton

John Milton is considered the most significant writer in English after Shakespeare. He was a poet, a historian and a pamphleteer (one who writes political and controversial pamphlets) and his Puritanism has also attracted a lot of attention.

> The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell a hell of heaven
>
> - John Milton

Milton is mainly remembered for his masterpiece *Paradise Lost* (1667) which is considered the greatest poem in English literature. The central theme of the first epic poem in English is man's first disobedience. In narrating the story of Adam, Eve, Garden of Eden, the temptation and the forbidden apple, Milton has tried "to vindicate the ways of God to man". Unlike classical epics, Milton's focus is less on the Son (Jesus) as a warrior and more on his love for humankind. Despite the success of Satan against Adam and Eve, the hope of regeneration after sinfulness is provided by the self-sacrifice of Jesus. Throughout the epic, Milton used a grand style suitable to its elevated subject matter. He used the verse form known as blank verse consisting of unrhymed iambic pentameter.

> A good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.
>
> -John Milton

Milton's other major works are *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes,* both published in 1771. *Paradise Regained* is a shorter epic which declares that Christian heroism is a constant reaffirmation of faith in God and stresses the importance of patience and the courage to endure adversities. It unfolds as a series of debates in which Jesus refutes the arguments of Satan. *Samson Agonistes* is a tragedy modelled after the Greek ones and written partly in blank verse and partly in unrhymed choric verse of varied line length. It is believed that Milton employed the Old Testament story of Samson to inspire the defeated English Puritans with the courage to triumph through sacrifice.

While he was still a student, Milton translated *Psalms* from original Hebrew into English. During this period, he wrote the ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (1629), the sonnet "On Shakespeare" (1630), "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (both probably 1631), "On Time" (1632?), "At a Solemn Musick" (1632-1633?), the masques *Arcades* (1632-1634?) and *Comus* (1637). The major poem of this period is *Lycidas* (1638), the first pastoral elegy written in English mourning

the death of a college mate, Edward King. The poem, considered one of the greatest short poems in English, contains an attack on the corrupt church.

During his adulthood, Milton composed pamphlets against the Church of England. The Papal throne and the Catholic countries in Europe were also not spared from his criticism. His most famous prose work, *Areopagitica* (1644) is an impassioned plea for freedom of the press. Around the 1640s, he wrote five tracts on the reformation of the Church and government. They include *On Reformation, The Reason of Church Government,* and *An Apology Against A Pamphlet.* He also wrote several tracts on a variety of topics like *divorce, education and free expression.* His major historical work includes the *History of Britain* which ended with the Norman conquest.

Milton proposed the abolition of the Church of England and the execution of Charles I through his prose works. During the civil war period, he expounded a political philosophy in his works which detested tyranny and state-controlled religion. His theological views favoured liberty of conscience, tolerance towards dissents and paramountcy of scriptures. Under the Commonwealth government, he served as the Latin Secretary of Oliver Cromwell and shouldered the responsibility of official correspondence. He was completely blind by the time Restoration took place and all his great works were written in a state of blindness.

An edition (1758–60) of John Milton's *Paradise Regained*; the binding, which features mother-of-pearl and snakeskin, was created in the early 20th century by Sangorski & Sutcliffe, a London firm known for extravagant jewelled bindings.

John Milton: *Paradise Regained*

6.3.3 John Dryden (1631–1700)

John Dryden was an English poet, dramatist, translator and literary critic who lived during the seventeenth century in England. He dominated the field of English literature so much that his age has come to be known as the Age of Dryden. He was 11 years old when the Civil war broke out. He was educated at Westminster school where he received an education in classical literature. He completed his graduation from the famous Trinity College, Cambridge. He came into contact with John Milton and Andrew Marvell.

The work that marked him as a poet was his contribution to the memorial volume of Oliver Cromwell. During restoration, he composed *Astrea Redux* and *To His Sacred Majesty (*1661). His longest poem was *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) which was the celebration of two victories over the Dutch. With the revival of patents for the theatres by Charles II after the restoration, he started writing plays for the stage. Among them, important ones were *All for Love, The Wild Gallant* (1663), *The Indian Queen* (1664 in which he collaborated) and a sequel of it, The *Indian Emperour* (1665). He also wrote a tragicomedy *Secret Love or the Maiden Queen* (1667).

Fig. 6.3.2 John Dryden

In 1668 he became the first official poet laureate of England. After the Black Death, he wrote *Dramatic Poesie (*1668*),* the longest of his critical works. It is a defence of English drama against both ancient classical drama and neoclassical French drama. It is also an attempt to introduce general principles of criticism. He defended Shakespeare's habit of mixing comic elements with the tragic. His last work *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700) contained verse adaptations of the work of Ovid, Boccaccio and Chaucer. Each of the adaptations contained critical prefaces and *Preface to Fables* is considered one of his major works of literary criticism. Samuel Johnson called him "the father of English criticism".

> We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.
>
> -John Dryden

Dryden also wrote satires such as *Mac Flecknoe (*written about 1678 but published in 1682), *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) and *The Medal* (1682). The success of the first two works made him the greatest verse satirist of the time. *Absalom and Achitophel* was written in support of King Charles II by adopting the *Old Testament* story of King David, his favourite son Absalom and the false Achitophel who persuaded Absalom to revolt against his father. Mac Flecknoe, the first mock-heroic poem in English, was a devastating lampoon against fellow poet Thomas Shadwell. He wrote the beast fable *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) supporting Catholicism after joining the Catholic faith, the religion of King James II. An earlier work *Religio Laici* (1682) was a staunch defence of Anglicanism against unbelievers, Protestant dissenters and Catholics. Dryden had often been accused of being an opportunist. One of his greatest achievements was the translation of the complete works of Virgil published in 1697. He standardised the heroic couplets (rhymed iambic pentameter) in English poetry, applying them in a number of satires, religious pieces, fables, epigrams, prorogues and plays.

6.3.4 Edward Taylor (1642-1729)

Edward Taylor was a puritan poet and minister who was one of the finest literary figures of colonial America. He was born in England and was highly educated. He disliked James II and his colonial appointments and was gladdened by the Revolution of 1688. Nothing much is known about his early life. In his mid-twenties, he migrated to America.

The best of Taylor's 400 page quarto manuscript *Poetical Works* remained unpublished till 1939. His earliest verses expressed his true devotion to Protestantism. The first among the four groups of his poems was *Gods Determinations Touching His Elect* was a long dramatic allegory. His second group *Preparatory Meditations before My Approach to the Lord's Supper*, a collection of

217 poems invited criticism. His most famous treatise was *The Harmony of the Gospel*. Through a long poem *The Metrical History of Christianity* written towards the end of his life, he attacked the Church of Rome.

Taylor'spoems were traditional in their basic character, but in their quality and dynamics, it was modern. His poem was a means of spiritual revival which glorified the Christian experience. He used biblical references plenty in his poems. His main biblical references were based on the Old Testament. His collection of sermons *Christographia* is about the human and the divine nature of Christ. His works are cited as the best examples of puritan works in America.

6.3.5 Metaphysical Poetry

By the seventeenth century, Elizabethan poetry was exhausted. Nothing seemed to be original and remarkable. The melodies were sugared, and the romance was extravagant with no intellectual depth. Some of the writers who revolted against such a trend were Ben Johnson and John Donne. Ben Johnson was the founder of the classical school which reached its full blossoming in the writing of Dryden and Pope. He was primarily a dramatist and a poet, too.

The works of John Donne concentrated on passion and dramatic power. His writings were introspective and self-analytical in nature and a result of his own intellectual, spiritual and pragmatic reflections. His satires were mostly the expressions of his own experiences. He wrote with cynical and realistic thought. He is considered the founder of the metaphysical school of poetry. Literally 'metaphysical' means 'beyond physical nature'. Donne and his followers were responsible for popularising the metaphysical school in poetry. The term metaphysical poetry is now applied to the poetry of any poet who writes personal poetry with intellectual complexity and concentration in the manner of John Donne.

In the 17th century, the term 'metaphysical' was used in a disparaging manner. Dryden blamed Donne for following the "metaphysics" and Samuel Johnson also dubbed them "the metaphysical poets". In his influential essay 'The Metaphysical Poets,' (1921) T.S. Eliot argued that the works of these men embody a fusion of thought and feeling that other poets were unable to achieve due to "a dissociation of sensibility". It appears that the work of these poets contains a blend of emotion and intellectual ability, characterised by the bringing together of apparently unconnected things and they have the effect of disturbing the complacent reader. Metaphysical poetry is marked by the use of elaborative figurative language, conceits, paradox and philosophical topics.

6.3.6 John Donne (1572-1631)

John Donne was the founder of the metaphysical school in poetry and the most influential metaphysical poet of the age. He was also Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London (1621-31). He wrote poetry, satires, sonnet and elegies. Generally, his poetry is divided into three divisions like *Amorous poetry, Religious and Satirical poems.* His satires *Songs and Sonnets* were released during a period of religious oppression. Anniversaries, published between 1611-12, seem to be the only published work of Donne in his lifetime. The rest of his works were preserved only in manuscript copies and were available for private circulation.

John Donne's poetry is marked by striking changes from the poetry of the 16th century. The directness of his language is a characteristic feature of his poetry and explosive beginnings are its hallmark. "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me, love," begins 'The

Canonization' and it takes the reader into the middle of a conversation between the speaker and an unidentified listener. Holy Sonnet XI begins with a confrontation wherein the speaker and not Jesus, suffers indignities on the cross: "Spit in my face yee Jewes, and pierce my side…." He adapts the rhythms of everyday speech as in the abrupt question with which 'The Good-Morrow' begins: "I wonder by my troth, what thou and I/ Did, till we lov'd."

> Love built on beauty, soon as beauty, dies
>
> - John Donne

Donne's use of conceits also marked him very different from contemporary poetry. For instance, his use of the image of a drawing compass to suggest the parting of lovers who remain united in their souls is revolutionary in 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'. Such conceits made Samuel Johnson complain that "heterogenous ideas are … yoked by violence together" in metaphysical poetry. He is one of the greatest poets of love in English. Poems like 'The Canonization', and 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' are among his greatest love lyrics. Donne's devotional lyrics, especially the 'Holy Sonnets,' 'Good Friday 1613', 'Riding Westward,' and the hymns like 'A Hymn to God My Father', passionately explore his love for God, sometimes through sexual metaphors, and depict his doubts, fears, and sense of spiritual unworthiness. None of them shows him spiritually at peace. Donne positively influenced courtly and religious writing in the seventeenth century. He influenced the writings of George Herbert, Richard Crawshaw, Henry Vaughan, Robert Herrick and Thomas Carew.

George Herbert (1593-1633): Herbert's poems were published after his death. His most important work was *The Temple* which revealed his ardent religious zeal and his attachment to the Church of England. He was clear in his expression, and an expert in using intelligible conceits and concrete imagery. He preferred to use simple and homely language in his poetry. He wrote both personal and doctrinal poems.

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) is considered as one of the best Metaphysical poets of the period. He was a politically motivated poet who was initially against the Commonwealth. Later on, he wrote '*An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland' (1650)*, '*The First Anniversary*' (1655) and '*On the Death of O.C*' (1659) which showed his change of views. His most famous political satires were *The Last Instructions to a Painter* and *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, the former inverse and the latter in prose and both were targeted at the royalists. After his death, his poems were collected secretly and published. His notable poems include '*Upon Appleton House*', '*The Garden*' and '*To His Coy Mistress*'. In '*To His Coy Mistress*,' which is his most famous poem, the speaker urges his mistress to abandon her false modesty and submit to his embraces before time and death rob them of their chance to love. Undoubtedly, the metaphysical poets influenced the poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries profoundly.

Recap

- King Henry VIII was responsible for the English Reformation and separating the English Church from the Roman Catholic Church.
- During the period of Queen Mary, many protestants fled from England due to intolerant religious policies.
- Those who fled to Geneva from England became known as the puritan faction when they returned to England during the period of Queen Elizabeth in 1558.
- The conflict involving the Catholics, the Anglicans and the Puritans was a major factor behind the North American colonisation.
- Literature in England during the seventeenth century reflected puritan philosophy and thought.
- John Milton was a key figure in English literature in 17th century in England.
- Edward Taylor was a notable Puritan writer who emigrated to North America.
- John Dryden was so influential in English literature that the age was known as the Age of Dryden
- Metaphysical poetry gained much popularity through the compositions of John Donne, George Herbert and Andrew Marvel.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who was the author of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained?*
2. Who wrote "Lycidas"?
3. What was the most important work of George Herbert?
4. Who started religious reformation in England?
5. Name the longest poem of Dryden.
6. Who was the author of "The Harmony of Gospel"?
7. Who is considered the founder of metaphysical poetry?
8. Name the historical work written by John Milton.
9. Who wrote an "Essay on Man"?
10. Who wrote "On the death of O.C."?

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. John Milton
2. John Milton
3. The Temple
4. Henry VIII
5. Annus Mirabilis
6. Edward Taylor
7. John Donne
8. History of Britain
9. Alexander Pope
10. Andrew Marvel

Assignments

1. Trace the evolution of Puritan Literature through the works of eminent scholars and authors who made considerable contributions for the same.
2. Discuss the major role played by metaphysical poetry in the progress of Puritan Literature.

Suggested Reading

1. Hall, David.D. *Puritans: A Transatlantic History,* Princeton UP, 2019.
2. Beeke, Joel.R. *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints*, Reformation Heritage Books, 2007.
3. Miller, Perry. *Puritans: A Source Book of Their Writings*, Dover Publications, 2001.
4. Bross, Kristina. *A History of The American Puritan Literature*, CUP, 2020.
5. Armstrong, Nancy. *The Imaginary Puritan – Literature, Intellectual Labour and Personal Life*, University of California Press, 1994.

UNIT FOUR

Theatre, Satire and Political Pamphleteering

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the features of restoration drama and satire.
- distinguish the features of restoration drama and satire from that of the Elizabethan period.
- know the literary achievements of the restoration period.
- discern the innovative features of the restoration drama.

Prerequisites

Have you ever visited a drama theatre or watched a street play? If so, you may have marveled at the techniques used to bring stories to life—whether it's simulating storms, oceans, rivers, mountains, or bustling cities. The art of drama traces its roots back to ancient Greece, but it evolved significantly during the Renaissance and beyond. The innovations in drama that began in the Elizabethan period continued to shape the Restoration era. In this unit, we will explore these transformative changes in greater detail, uncovering how drama developed and adapted through the ages.

Keywords

Playwright, Pamphlets, Taverns, Satire

Discussion

The literary works of the periods of Charles II and James II and of the 1690s are generally included in *Restoration literature.* The rift between the royalists and the republicans affected the literature, too. Literary forms like novel, biography, history, travel writing and Journalism became prominent during this period. Social and economic conditions along with scientific and philosophical themes were taken up by the playwrights. The famous fiction narrative of John Bunyan *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) came out during this period. Bunyan's work is probably the greatest Christian allegory in English and was mostly written when its Puritan author remained in prison. It was a symbolic vision of a good man's pilgrimage through life and also it

became very popular work.

Much influential and satirical poetry came from renowned poets and prose writers like John Dryden, The Earl of Rochester, Samuel Butler, John Oldham, Alexander Pope, Johnathan Swift and John Gay. Butler's *Hudibras,* published between 1662 and 1680 is a severe criticism of the Puritan regime and influenced people like Samuel Johnson in the eighteenth century. The age was noted for the achievements in the field of drama by William Wycherley, John Vanbrugh and William Congreve. With the restoration, the court culture reappeared and the writers began to write with more ease. The writers were influenced by the socio-political and religious developments of the period and their creativity found expression in a number of literary forms.

6.4.1 Theatre

The period preceding the Commonwealth was not a happy one for the theatre in England. The puritans pledged to get rid of the theatre which they considered sinful in nature. There was a ban on performances or plays. The theatres were shut down in 1642 when the Civil War started. Oliver Cromwell's government declared all actors were to be considered rogues. There was of course evasion of the law; but whatever performances were offered had to be given in secrecy, before small companies in private houses, or in taverns located three or four miles out of town. No actor or spectator was safe, especially during the early days of the Puritan rule.

Literally, the Restoration of Charles II was also a restoration of the plays in English literature. Charles II, the king, had been in France during the greater part of the Protectorate, together with many of the royalist party, all of whom were familiar with Paris and its fashions. Thus, it was natural, upon the return of the court, that French influence should be felt, particularly in the theatre. In August 1660, Charles issued patents for two companies of players, and performances immediately began. Certain writers, in the field before the civil war, survived the period of theatrical eclipse, and now had their chance. Among these were Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant, who were given patents to establish theatres.

However, these two companies dominated the theatre which hindered the growth of theatrical literature. With the royal patents, the theatres were under government control. There was close contact between theatre and court politically, economically and legally. Puritans began to be satirised, and the monarch and his family were flattered. Restoration theatre was looked upon as a means to celebrate monarchy and declare the end of puritanism. Theatre symbolised the social mind which was relieved after years of division and unrest.

6.4.1.1 Features of Restoration Theatre

A few, but notable changes came about in the field of theatrical drama during the restoration period.

Stage: The presence of theatre was felt by the public. Notable structural and visual changes took place in staging the dramas. Technology began to be used for staging drama in public. The front part facing the audience in front of the curtain had an opening with the scenery. The seats were arranged in between the pit, boxes and galleries. The audience capacity was 650, and the price varied according to the performance. Often it remained high.

The Scenery: The new theatres were different from the pre-restoration period with the introduction of enclosed structures, artificial lighting and new styles. Scenes were

painted on backdrops, wigs and borders. The floor space was shaped and painted to represent rocks, mountains, grassy plots, fences and similar objects so that the scenes looked more natural and original.

The Actors: The theatre became more of a business than art in the Restoration period. The theatre owner often chose plays which best suited his financial interests. The actors did not have much financial security, and they were hired for salary. The most striking difference between the Jacobean theatre and the Restoration theatre was in the entry of actresses. No women were allowed in the Elizabethan or Jacobean theatre. The defeat of the Puritans is the main factor responsible for this change. Earlier the roles of women characters were played by young boys. The presence of the women on stage aroused curiosity in the audience, and they were eager to see live women on the stage and the sensuality they brought with them. This objectification of women induced an evolution in the writing of plays during this time that led female actors to be sexual props on the stage, as opposed to equals with their male peers.

The Playwrights: The playwrights were employed by the company on a fixed remuneration. After the initial run, the play belonged to the company, and the playwrights did not have any rights over the play. They also could not copy their play. This was a continuation of the system that existed during the Elizabethan theatre.

The Audience: The audience consisted at first most of the members of the upper and elite class. The stage items were best suited to their tastes and wits. With the rise of the merchant class, the theatre became a commercial activity and the nature of the audience also changed with the presence of more middle-class people. The plays of William Shakespeare and Marlowe were adapted with music and certain changes which often deviated from their original quality.

The Costumes: The plays of the restoration period had rich costumes as the prominent companies were funded by Charles II. The parade of the actors in an elaborate manner was the most important part of the show, and the costumes played a very important role in making it rich and elegant.

Types of Dramas: By the time the theatres were reopened in England, Corneille and Racine in France had established the neo-classic standard for tragedy, and Moliere was in the full tide of his success. These playwrights, with Quinault and others, for a time supplied the English with plots. With this influx of foreign drama, there was still a steady production of the masterpieces of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The diarist Samuel Pepys, an ardent lover of the theatre, relates that during the first three years after the opening of the playhouses he saw *Othello*, *Henry IV, A Midsummer Night's Dream,* two plays by Ben Jonson and others by Beaumont, Fletcher, Middleton, Shirley and Massinger. It must have been about this time that the practice of "improving" Shakespeare was begun, and his plays were often altered so as to be almost beyond recognition.

During the period between 1660-1700, the dramas presented separate comedies and tragedies, unlike the Elizabethan theatre which had a blend of both. Tragedies were heroic tragedies written in heroic couplets (rhymed iambic pentameter) involving themes like love, war and action. The heroic tragedy often rhymed with dialogues and poetry. The most famous writer of the heroic play of the period was Dryden, with his *Tyrannic Love* or *The Royal Martyr, The Conquest of Granada* and *All for Love.* Other dramatists were Thomas

Otway and Nathaniel Lee.

Restoration comedy is the best-known form of drama from the age. The themes included farce, satire, provincial humour and comedy of manners. The comedy was class-bound; especially with the upper class presented as happening in the metropolitan background, mostly London. The male-female rivalry, marriage functions, gossips, follies and vices and adultery were also sources of comedy for the comedy playwrights. The most important writers of comedy of the period were William Congreve (*Old Bachelor,* 1693*; Love for Love,* 1695*; Way of the World,* 1700), William Wycherley (*The Country Wife*, 1675; *The Plain Dealer,* 1676), George Etherege *(Love in a Tub,* 1664; *She Would if She Could,* 1668*)*, George Farquhar (*The Twin Rivals,* 1703*)* and John Vanbrugh *(The Provoked Wife,* 1697*)*.

In almost every important respect, Restoration drama was far inferior to the Elizabethan. Where the earlier playwrights created powerful and original characters, the Restoration writers were content to repeatedly portray a few artificial types; where the former were imaginative, the latter were clever and ingenious. The Elizabethan dramatists were steeped in poetry, the later ones in the sophistication of the fashionable world. The drama of Wycherley and Congreve was the reflection of a small section of life. It had polished style and a perfection in its own field; but both its perfection and its naughtiness now seem unreal.

The heroes of the Restoration comedies were lively gentlemen of the city, profligates and loose livers, with a strong tendency to make love to their neighbours' wives. Husbands and fathers were dull, stupid creatures. The heroines, for the most part, were lovely and pert, too frail for any purpose beyond the glittering tinsel in which they were clothed. Their companions were gossips and amorous widows or jealous wives. The intrigues which occupied them were not, on the whole, of so low a nature as those depicted in the Italian court comedies, but still, they were sufficiently coarse. Over all, the action is the gloss of superficial good breeding and social ease. Only rarely do these people show the traits of sympathy, faithfulness, kindness, honesty, or loyalty. They follow a life of pleasure and boredom, yawning behind a delicate fan or a kerchief of lace. Millamant and Mirabell, in Congreve's *Way of the World*, are among the most charming of the Watteau figures.

6.4.2 Restoration Satire

Later half of the seventeenth century was a flourishing period for satire in English literature. Roman satirists Horace and Juvenal were imitated. The verse satire was represented by Dryden, Oldham and Rochester. Oldham's *Spenser's Ghost* was an example of verse satire to be remembered along with Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel.* Prose satire was presented under the impression that the audience was well acquainted with contemporary events. Women were frequent prey for satirists during this period. Gould and Rochester were important among such satirists. Men became a subject of satire in the work of Richard Ames through *Sylvia's Revenge* (1693). In all its various forms satire played a vital role in England during this period. It also influenced the satirists of the coming century, too.

Political Pamphlets

A pamphlet is usually a short quarto book. It typically consists of one to twelve sheets or between eight and ninety-six pages in quarto. It was a means of spreading new or controversial but relevant ideas through the distribution of inexpensive and easily prepared tracts. The themes of these tracts of

pamphlets were often political or religious in nature. These were read aloud in taverns (inns), churches or in town meetings. It was a very popular means of mass communication.

Since the early sixteenth century, popular forms of print have been used for news purposes and propaganda. Vernacular printed literature in England began with the import of reformist works from Germany and the Netherlands. Henry VIII introduced legislation to control the printing and circulation of books mainly to harness the heretic literature. Throughout the sixteenth century, religious rivalry promoted the press.

A distinctive feature of pamphlets became more specific in England after the 1640s. During this period, George Thomason, Anthony Wood, the Oxford antiquarian and John Rushworth, a clerk in the House of Commons, started collecting pamphlets because of their political importance. Before George Thompson, no one had collected pamphlets systematically. During the 16th and 17th centuries, pamphlets were used widely. By 1700, pamphlets were popular and their purpose was also understood. The print of pamphlets was fanned by propaganda, news and morals. Many pamphleteers viewed it as a business. Myles Davies started writing *Critical History of Pamphlets* in 1716.

Recap

- Literary works after the Commonwealth period are generally termed as *Restoration Literature.*
- Prominent writers like John Dryden, John Oldham, Samuel Butler, Alexander Pope and others come under this category.
- The Commonwealth period was not a favourable period for the theatre.
- Restoration period gave new vigour to the theatre in England.
- Charles II provided state funds for the theatre.
- Several changes occurred in Drama, stage, audience and other realms of theatre.
- The Elizabethan style of blending comedy with tragedy underwent a change during the restoration period.
- Great impetus was given to satire and pamphleteering.

Objective Type Questions

1. Who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress?*
2. Name any two satirists of the period.
3. What type of culture was prominent during the restoration period?
4. Which are the two companies became prominent under Charles II during the restoration period?
5. Who was hailed as the most famous dramatist of the period?
6. Who was the author of the work *Provoked Wife?*

7. Give two examples of verse satire.
8. Who was the author of the *Critical History of Pamphlets* (1917)?
9. Name the famous play written by William Congreve?
10. Name the work of Richard Ames in which men became a subject.

Answers to Objective Type Questions

1. John Bunyan
2. William Wycherley and John Vanbrugh
3. Court culture
4. Killigrew and Devanant
5. Dryden
6. John Vanbrugh
7. Spencer's Ghost by Oldham and Mac Flekhnoe by Dryden
8. Myles Davies
9. Old Bachelor
10. *Sylvia's Revenge*

Assignments

1. Evaluate the role of the theatre in the restoration period of England in bringing about remarkable changes in the then society.
2. Examine the transformative changes that took place in the 'satire' field in the restoration period.

Suggested Reading

1. Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* , Ivan. R. Dee Publisher, 2000.
2. Carter, E.H. Mears, et.al, *A History of Britain*, Stacey International, 2012.
3. Amt, Emilie. (Ed.), *Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, 2000.
4. Brown, Eric. *English History, A Concise Overview of the History of England from Start to End,* Guy Saloniki, 2019.
5. Trevelyan, George Macaulay. *Illustrated English Social History*, Pelican, 1964.
6. Morgan, Kenneth O (Ed). *The Oxford History of Britain*, OUP Oxford, 2010.

7. Pritchard, R.E. *Shakespeare's England: Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times,* The History Press Limited, 2003.
8. Bailey, Richard. *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language ,* Cambridge University Press, 2009.
9. Bucholz, Robert and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* ,Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
10. Jenkins, Simon. *A Short History of England,* Profile Books, 2018.
11. Churchill, Winston, *A History of English-Speaking Peoples,* Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Regional Centres

Kozhikode
Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery
Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura
Govt. College
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi
Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

History of Britain - I

COURSE CODE: SGB24HS102MI

Sreenarayanaguru Open University
Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: info@sgou.ac.in, www.sgou.ac.in Ph: +91 474 2966841

ISBN 978-81-984516-8-2