

THE RISE OF THE MODERN WEST-1

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GUIDELINES FOR STUDY OF THE COURSE

In this Course we have followed a uniform pattern for presenting the learning material. This starts with an Introduction to the Course underlining the significant developments in a chronological order and covers 11 Units. For the convenience of study all the Units have been presented with a uniform structure. Objectives as the first section of the Unit have been included to help you find what are you expected to learn from the study of the Unit. Please go through these objectives carefully and keep reflecting and checking them after studying a few sections of the Unit. Introduction of the Unit introduces you to the subject areas covered and guides you to the way the subject-matter is presented. These are followed by the main subject area discussed through Sections and Sub-Sections for ease of comprehension. In between the text some Self-Check Exercises have been provided. We advise you to attempt these as and when you reach them. These will help you assess your study and test your comprehension of the subject studied. Compare your answers with the Answer Guidelines provided after the Summary. The Key Words and unfamiliar terms have been explained subsequently. At the end of each Unit under Suggested Readings we have also provided a list of books or articles as references. These include the sources which are useful or have been consulted for developing the material for the concerned Unit. You should try to study them; they will help you in understanding and learning the subject matter in an all-inclusive manner.



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COURSE INTRODUCTION

The course on the rise of early modern west takes a look at the social, economic, political and intellectual developments in the western European societies between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries sometimes going forward and going backwards during this period. While we look at the social, economic, political and intellectual developments during this period we are careful to not to reduce one to another. Causal linkages are looked at but not in a deterministic manner. For example when we look at the rise of print led public sphere in the Unit 10 we seek to describe the independence and autonomy of this phenomenon as well. The course starts with an introduction to the early modern west in Unit 1 and then goes on to examine the broad sweep of transition from feudalism to capitalism as examined by eminent historians such as Maurice Dobb, Takahashi and Guy Bois in units 2 and 3. Here the debates between various schools of thought is presented carefully pointing out the ways in which they differed from each other. The role played by various factors such as trade, class or class struggle as highlighted by various authors is carefully delineated.

Unit 4 looks at the voyages and discoveries in this period. It tells us how the developments in scientific and technical knowledge facilitated the undertaking of voyages. This in turn led to the processes of early colonization especially undertaken by Spain and Portugal. This early colonization ushered in empires, slavery and slave trade and a flow of bullion in to Europe which led to the development of capitalism. Unit 5 precisely looks at the institutional foundations of this transition from feudalism to capitalism. It shows how the rise of new urban centres created the space for trade and exchange in Europe. By 1450s the earlier trend of famines, diseases and war had been reversed and now there was a demographic revival leading to increase in population. Renaissance and Reformation led to a new discoveries, inventions and work ethic which further enabled the transition to early capitalism. Unit 6 on plantation economies and slave trade closely examines how the plantations were based on an expanded agro management techniques and slavery. The introduction of sugar in Europe fuelled the cultivation of sugarcane on a large scale on the plantations. While the early plantations were funded by individual entrepreneurs and private bankers plantations especially established in the Americas were funded as national enterprises of the national economy accompanied by intense mercantilist rivalries between different European nations. Unit 7 takes a look at the commercial revolution which laid the foundations for the capitalist growth of this period. The emergence of merchant associations, the growth of banking and insurance sectors and the coming in to its own of metallic currency all facilitated this commercial revolution.

Units 8 to 10 look at the intellectual developments in this period which facilitated the rise of the early modern world. Unit 8 looks at Renaissance which laid the foundations of the new world in humanism, scientific discoveries, inventions and arts and aesthetics. Renaissance also brought out the individual as a focal point at the centre of human development. The contributions of men like Leonardo da Vinci brought forward the development of a new scientific and aesthetic outlook which challenged the medieval and feudal attitudes. Reformation which is examined in Unit 9 showed the way a challenge to the outlook of traditional Catholic church could be built up. Unit 10 examines the rise of the print led

public sphere which expanded the reach of Renaissance to a wider public and built new attitudes towards scientific thinking and practise. Indeed the widening of the public sphere created new attitudes challenging the limited domain in the confines of which the culture of manuscripts had initiated the Renaissance. The printers workshop became a place where the gap between intellectual and manual labour were bridged and new and scientific attitudes towards knowledge were developed.

Unit 11 takes you in to the political domain and examines the development of the European state systems. It also attempts a comparison between the Eastern and Western Europe to point out how the development of the bourgeoisie in western Europe led to a different balance of power within western and eastern European state systems. The unit also looks in to the rise of absolutist monarchies and examines their features.



UNIT 1 INTRODUCING EARLY MODERN WEST

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Problems of Defining Early Modern West
- 1.3 The Defining Features of Early Modern West
 - 1.3.1 Lack of Single Power Centre
 - 1.3.2 Strong Tradition of Civil Society
 - 1.3.3 Contest between Individual and Collective
- 1.4 Cultivation of a Global Orientation and the Age of Geographical Exploration
- 1.5 Trade, Colonies, and Mercantilism
- 1.6 The Growth of Slave Trade
- 1.7 Printing and Networks of Information
- 1.8 The Social Structure in Early Modern West
- 1.9 Commercial Revolution and its Consequences
- 1.10 Social Institutions and Universities
- 1.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.12 Key Words
- 1.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the term ‘early modern west’;
- understand different features of the early modern west;
- understand the different features of the politics and the civil society of the early modern west;
- understand how the relationship between the individual and collective was shaped in this period;
- understand how the printing and commercial revolution shaped up in this period; and
- understand the nature of social structure of this period.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term ‘early modern’ gained currency in historiography in 1970s. The famous works of historians Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1972), and *Economy and Society in Early Modern Europe* (1978) and Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1975) clearly indicate the wide use of the term. It describes a period between medieval and modern period of history in the context of European history and is a response to problem of

periodisation. It may appeal more to those interested in the study of society, economy and popular culture which cannot be satisfactorily examined and explained within the narrow boundaries of monarchical reigns or national events. Although, we still study 'Renaissance' but many scholars objected to the use of term which they argued often had more elitist or literary/artistic connotations and which was seldom used in main European countries (England, Germany, France). Reformation, as a religious reform movement, was more truly a European phenomenon, which engulfed and spread over large geographies in Europe. How does 'modernity' unfold in Europe? It is generally seen by the historians as a long period of change between Middle Ages and the Rise of Modern West. It involved a transition from feudalism to capitalism, from hand crafts to mechanised industrial production, use of animate form of energy to inanimate fossil fuels as source of energy, from religious uniformity to secularism and freedom of worship, from dark ages to scientific rational age, from decentralised polities to centralised nation states and empires and from restricted, elite dominated politics to notions of natural rights, freedom, equality, popular politics and creation of a 'public space'. These themes give some coherence to term 'early modern' but problems persist as we will see.

1.2 PROBLEMS OF DEFINING EARLY MODERN WEST

The term 'early modern' relates to the problem of periodisation. How do the historians divide the long span of past time into specific ages or periods? Periods are divided in different ways. The reign of a monarch or family is one way, for example, 'Tudor England' refers to the time when England was ruled by monarchs from the Tudor family. Historians also talk about particular chronological periods in their descriptions as a narrative tool to generalize about that specific period, such as 'the Sixteenth Sixties', which refers to the decade of the 1660s – and this sense duration of time may stretch to say to include the late 1650s and the first years of the 1670s. A key feature of periodisation is, thus, that each historical period has some elementary features of society, culture, politics and ideas that give the time an underlying unity and set it apart from earlier and later times. These traits of time may not fit neatly into the historians demarcation of time period. This attempt to fix convenient dates of a beginning and an end dates is not easy. For example, who can say with certainty that when does the Middle Ages end and when the Early Modern age begin. The beginning of the early modern and thus the end of the medieval period (also called the Middle Ages) has been associated by historians with a set of terms. The first book in English to have 'modern' in its title was Leonard Digges's. Elementary changes occurred in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Speaking linguistically, we may also say that The 'early modern' was the period when 'modern' was introduced and assimilated into English usage. The first publication was *Arithmetical Military Treatise* (1579) which included a long section on 'modern military' matters.

Before we look into the main attributes of the early modern period in the West, there is another conceptual difficulty related to space or geographical dimension. What do we mean by the 'West'? It is difficult to know exactly where to draw the boundaries of 'the West'. Oceans, seas, mountains and rivers define natural geographical boundaries but there is no natural, geographical feature that clearly marks the East and the West. Can we define it in the same way just as we can define the dates of the early modern period by certain historical social attributes?

Each European national history has different trajectories, at least, in terms of political history and episodes and their colonial histories or history of empires are different again. So where are the point of convergence? History of the West is a history or rather histories of many different countries. Instead of one coherent history, there are a series of discontinuities and divisions. If we speak of transnational or global history, separating the West from the rest of the world is not possible. European overseas colonialism from the sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century has been formative of the history of the West. The two cannot be separated.

1.3 THE DEFINING FEATURES OF EARLY MODERN WEST

In the field of ideas, this time saw a rekindling of interest in the writings of scholars from ancient Greece and Rome and a new weight given to the use of observation as the basis of knowledge. This series of developments, called the Renaissance, in turn led to new idea of liberal humanism that defined men (not women! but White men of the West or Europe and not the Asian and the Blacks !!) as the engineers, maker of their own history, creators of empires, and masters of language and knowledge. The new way of observing nature and experimenting as tool of knowledge, though still in rudimentary form in the early modern period, also emerged as is evident in the model of the solar system with the sun at the centre while the planets revolved around it, proposed by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543). The spread of these new ideas was aided by the development of printing using movable type, devised by Johannes Gutenberg (c.1398–1468) in the 1450s. There was also a significant change in the economy, with a decline in the number of people holding land under the feudal system. Instead of getting access to land in return for military service or unpaid labour, farmers paid rent in goods or money. In religion, the power of the Catholic Church was challenged through criticism of its theology and practices, which ultimately led to the emergence of new Protestant churches. Finally, around the same time, Europeans discovered cultures beyond Europe; the best-known voyage was that led by Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) which began the colonisation of the Americas.

1.3.1 Lack of Single Power Centre

When we speak about the history of the West either in early modern phase or later when full-fledged modernity emerged, it can be argued that no single power ever gained supremacy for long. This left permanent, long-lasting imprint on the making of the West. There were a number of power centres and no political entity with a common purpose. The historical experience of the Western World has been one in which a plurality of city states, small regional states, territorial empires, and later nation-states dominated with none ever gaining total supremacy and none enduring for long. These polities had differences in terms of economy, social structure and culture but they also exhibited significant similarities. There were frequent wars between the various powers of the West but some sort of balance of power system also evolved since 1648. There were conflicts between church and state in various countries But they were also able to achieve an accommodation between their respective claims. It was an accommodation in which the state got an upper hand at least in a few powerful absolutist states in

the early modern period. But as there was no single centre in inter-state relationship, There was also a lack of single institution/centre within society which could control the entire society.

1.3.2 Strong Tradition of Civil Society

The absence of a powerful institution within societal order was due to a strong tradition of civil society which became quite pronounced in the early modern West. This was a legacy of the Middle Ages itself. Feudalism could not prevent the local powers from winning rights against the nobility and setting limits to the centralization of power. Feudalism was based on decentralized power structure and a polity of mutual obligation. So, even after the emergence of absolute monarchs in a few states, the ruling elites had to negotiate and share power with organized civil society groups, such as merchants, craft workers, the intelligentsia, and later organized workers. This segment was most developed particularly in the autonomous cities. There the demands of organized guilds and civil society held back the growth of absolutism. The structure of power institutionalized by feudalism gave a foundation to legal and symbolic relations of mutual recognition whereby the ruler had to grant rights to those lower down in return for their obligations. This was a legacy which could not be wiped out in the early modern West. The history of early modern West demonstrate this continuity in the form of civil society movements which played a major role in shaping the direction of societal development. The legality of any political order was always open to questioning from those who did not accept its legitimacy. This undoubtedly had a democratizing effect in the long term.

Moreover, the relation between the present time and the past was from very early on in the history of Modern West can be seen in terms of continuities and discontinuities. There are many legacies that can be traced back to the Middle Ages. But there are also periodic ruptures which produce change. Within Christianity disputes over the scriptures and ecclesiastical authority were not new. Primary domain of the Church was supposed to be spiritual but it was enjoying wide powers in medieval period in terms of landownership and worldly privileges. So as a powerful social institution entangled in profane world, tensions were bound to emerge, which Max Weber claimed to provide the West with the basic momentum towards rationalism. The movements that shaped the later history of The West, from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and Enlightenment, shared this propensity towards the disconnection of the present from the past. To be sure, the Reformation and the Renaissance saw the present as deriving its legitimacy from the revival of an older past that if retrieved would allow the present to break free from the recent past. This spirit of rebirth or revival of a more ancient mentality was nonetheless a denunciation of the preceding age. The later and more utopian movements of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, in bringing a more future oriented dimension in the form of idea of progress to the forefront. This is how continuity was achieved to a large degree through rupture, which made possible the reconstruction of the past in new forms.

1.3.3 Contest between Individual and Collective

Then there was a contestation between quest of individual and collective liberty. It has been widely regarded that the idea of the individual was invented in the West. It was central to Christianity, in the pursuit for individual salvation; it was

the basis of the Western philosophy and ethics. While the notion of the individual as such cannot be exclusively attributed to the West, since similar ideas can be found in other ancient civilizations, what is perhaps more characteristically Western were the political implications that followed from the discovery of the individual. The emphasis on the individual later lent itself to the philosophy of liberalism and to the capitalist ethic. But the kernel of idea was discernible in the Calvin's idea of the Calling during Reformation. The concept of the *Calling* was a religious conception, that of a task set by God. However, Weber argues that the concept of the Calling was a new idea, a product of the Reformation, and a Protestant notion. The concept of Calling that was new involved the valuation of the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume. This gave every-day worldly a religious significance and the individual was to fulfill the obligations of his or her position in the world in order to be acceptable by God. According to Weber, while the concept of Calling was first developed by Luther, he was not all that friendly to capitalism or the capitalistic spirit, and a more traditional view of economic activity came to dominate Luther's teachings – opposition to capital and profit-making and acceptance of one's occupation and work as a divine ordinance. Such a view was not conducive to a radical shift in approach to economic activity, in contrast, the teachings of Calvin, Wesley and others were also concerned with the salvation of the soul, but these teachings had consequences that were unforeseen. Weber argues that for reformers such as Calvin, the Puritan sects, and for men like Menno, George Fox, and Wesley saw the clearest expression of the Calling in a manner that had connections to the development of the capitalistic spirit. That is, the teachings of these writers were not directed toward ethical culture, humanitarianism, social reform, or cultural ideals. But the unintended consequences of their teachings included spurring on the development of the capitalistic spirit. The most widely known groups in this tradition are the Huguenots of France, the Calvinists of Geneva, the Reformed churches of Holland, the Puritans of England and New England, and the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and North America.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) How do you define the early modern west?

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- 2) What were the implications of different power centres for the early modern west?

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3) How do you see the individual and collective in the early modern west?

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1.4 CULTIVATION OF A GLOBAL ORIENTATION AND THE AGE OF GEOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

The Early Modern West saw a trend towards the cultivation of a world orientation, a kind of cosmopolitan outlook. Gradually, people were moving towards a conception of globe as a political and cultural entity, larger than their own homeland. It was still marked by a need to negotiate with “others” and has reflected tensions between home country and colonies. At least, some sections of elites were becoming familiar with what was different, and outside home country. Although the ‘other’ was often seen as something to fear, to attack, to colonise, to dominate or to keep at bay. The Western powers were not the only ones who developed an interest in other peoples, but it is arguably the case that curiosity about other cultures was taken further in the West. There was extensive borrowing of the culture of others, as has been much documented in recent years by the global historians. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the most salient aspects of the Western science and technology were derived from other civilizations. The Western civilization was itself constituted through centuries of cross-fertilization from other cultures, especially those of the East and the Mediterranean. Central to all of this was of course colonial expeditions and expansion of the Western Powers. While not all of European ventures to the furthest corners of the world were colonial ones, many were and this was one of the main ways in which the West related not only to the non-Europeans world but also to itself. The map was not a West European invention, but it was in Early Modern West that sophisticated cartographic techniques were developed that made it possible to think of the world as a globe. The European discovery of what became known as America was the single greatest event that shaped the formation of the Western worldview. Unlike the encounter with Asia, the encounter with America took the form of a ‘discovery’ that challenged the assumptions of a world ordered by Eurasian civilizations. It opened the way for the emergence of the wider category of the West, which ultimately reduced the place and significance of Europe. The explorations began by the Portuguese and Spanish sailors aided by the kings of their country. Beside wealth in the form of silver and gold and control of spice trade, military glory and spread of Christian beliefs were their main motives. A number of technological factors contributed to their success. With the help of instruments like magnetic Compass, Astrolabe and with better cartography (a science of map-making) and shipping, they were able to reach new lands where they fulfilled their ambitions. The *caravel*, was a kind of improved ship designed by the Portuguese. Its triangular sails allowed the ships to sail against the winds. This technique was learnt from the Arabs. The magnetic Compass was invented by the Chinese and Astrolabe by the Greeks.

The Age of Exploration as it was called also suggest that religious and worldly affairs were closely connected in the Early Western mind. This found expression in the phrase ‘God, Glory and Gold’.

1.5 TRADE, COLONIES, AND MERCANTILISM

Led by Portugal and Spain, European nations in the 1500s and 1600s established many trading posts and colonies in the Americas and the East. A colony is a settlement of people living in a new territory, linked with the parent country by trade and direct government control. With the development of colonies and trading posts, Europeans entered an age of increased international trade. Colonies played a role in the theory of mercantilism, a set of principles that dominated economic thought in the seventeenth century. According to mercantilists, the prosperity of a nation depended on a large supply of bullion, or gold and silver. To bring in gold and silver payments, nations tried to have a favorable balance of trade. The balance of trade is the difference in value between what a nation imports and what it exports over time. When the balance is favorable, the goods exported are of greater value than those imported. To encourage exports, governments stimulated export industries and trade. They granted subsidies, or payments, to new industries and improved transportation systems by building roads, bridges, and canals. By placing high tariffs, or taxes, on foreign goods, they tried to keep these goods out of their own countries.

1.6 THE GROWTH OF SLAVE TRADE

Another offshoot of the Age of Exploration was emergence of large scale slave trade. During the last half of the fifteenth century, for example, about a thousand slaves were taken to Portugal each year. Before the age of exploration, there were slaves who served as domestic servants. The demand for slaves changed considerably, however, with the discovery of the Americas in the 1490s and the establishment of sugarcane plantations. Cane sugar was introduced to Europe from Southwest Asia during the Middle Ages. During the sixteenth century, plantations, large agricultural farms, were set up along the coast of Brazil and on islands in the Caribbean to grow sugarcane. It led to an increase in demand for labour. The small indigenous or AmeriIndian population had been wiped out died of epidemic diseases imported from Europe. Thus, African slaves were shipped to Brazil and the Caribbean to work on the plantations. In 1518, a Spanish ship carried the first boatload of African slaves directly from Africa to the Americas. During the next two centuries, the trade in slaves multiplied and became part of the triangular trade that marked the emergence of a new world economy. The pattern of triangular trade connected Europe, Africa and Asia, and the American continents. European merchant ships carried European manufactured goods, such as guns and cloth, to Africa, where they were traded for a cargo of slaves. The slaves were then shipped to the Americas and sold. European merchants then bought tobacco, molasses, sugar, and raw cotton and shipped them back to Europe to be sold in European markets. An estimated 275,000 African slaves were exported during the sixteenth century. Two thousand went every year to the Americas alone. In the seventeenth century, the total climbed to over a million and jumped to six million in the eighteenth century. By then the trade had spread from West Africa and central Africa to East Africa. Altogether, as many as ten million African slaves were brought to the Americas between the

early sixteenth and the late nineteenth centuries. This institution was considered to be natural until Quakers, a group of Christian reformers, began to oppose it.

1.7 PRINTING AND NETWORKS OF INFORMATION

Then there was a new system of spreading information already in existence. Two of the key events which defined the beginning of the early modern period were linked to ideas. The first was technological: the development of printing using type. Ideas had been circulating in manuscript for centuries, but the printing press provided an additional means of reproducing texts in very large numbers. Books were produced in both cheap and expensive editions. The production of cheap editions, coupled with the increasing numbers of people who were able to read and write meant that people from across society were reading – the rich, the middling and even some working people had access to books and ideas. Printing affected all areas of life. For example, the availability of cheap books would have had a big impact on religion and culture. For the spread of the Protestant ideas, books and pamphlets were crucial. Reading and writing had existed in the European Middle Ages and Asian Empires but they remained restricted activities, largely limited to the clergy and the medieval scribes' who tirelessly copied and re-copied. The peasantry and most of the populace still lived by orality, although they did have what Illich calls "lay literacy," which was an awareness of the existence and importance of books and deference to the authority of written documents, even if they themselves could not read them. Literacy remained an elite privilege, and until 1500 CE, most likely not more than 10% of the world population could read or write.. What changed then, in the Early Modern West, of course, was the arrival of Gutenberg's printing press and movable type. Until Gutenberg's invention, the only way to reproduce text was copying by hand, a laborious task. The printing press made books a mass commodity, and for precisely that reason, literacy became a mass phenomenon. The social history of 'Book' has been traced by Roger Chartier. Standardized typefaces made reading an easier activity, because readers no longer had to deal with the idiosyncrasies of another person's handwriting. The errors so frequently made by scribal copyists were eliminated, and thus thousands of people could have access to the same, presumably error-free "standard edition" of a text. This introduced new modes of production, transmission and reception of written word. It also brought into life new categories of 'author', 'book' or 'work' and helped to create 'communities of readers' and 'libraries'. Although measuring literacy in pre-industrial societies and early modern Europe is a daunting task, but spread of literacy cannot be doubted although the same 'text' could have been appropriated and understood differently by different social groups. The geography of literacy indicate higher literacy in North and North-West Europe, however, there were inequalities across gender, occupations and estates. literacy was predominantly linked to a person's work and status. Then, the Early Modern West had interlinked system of communications. West Europe was considerably more networked than other parts of the world due in part to its navigational rivers, trade routes, centres of learning from monasteries to universities, translations, map making, the early development of printing and the techniques for the manufacture of paper etc. The bourgeois culture of modernity, as Seigel shows, was based on networks that facilitated its diffusion.

1.8 THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN EARLY MODERN WEST

The Society constituted of three major social orders in the Middle Ages — the clergy, the nobility and lower rank of the peasant or serf-cultivators and artisans.. The estates or orders of medieval Europe were unequally ranked and this hierarchy of ranks was legally recognized and approved by religious-normative order of the society. It is an over simplified view of social structure as there were significant variations within each social strata in terms of access to wealth, power and resources. Nobility was differentiated from within which included kings with big, estates, many castles and palaces to minor nobles with a small estate and may be a single house. It also leaves out merchants, traders and manufacturers: groups which grew in numbers and importance over the early modern period. But contemporaries thought in terms of ranking of society in these terms. Here are two definitions of the structure of society. Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), a novelist and social commentator, in an eighteenth-century newspaper. described it poetically as follows showing finer variations in terms of wealth or social produce one has entitlement to in society:

The great, who live profusely.

The rich, who live very plentifully.

The middle sort, who live well.

The working trades, who labour hard but feel no want.

The country people, farmers, &c., who fare indifferently.

The poor, that fare hard.

The miserable, that really pinch and suffer want.

Although nobles continued to dominate the social elite in the Early Modern Western society, owning much of the land and wealth, they were also joined in the social elite by wealthy merchants and bankers. Some merchants were much richer than the nobles. The society started undergoing a slow, long transformation. This transition process has evoked a lively debate within the scholars but one thing is certain that the institution of serfdom weakened in Western Europe and peasant cultivators were no longer a homogenous social group. Society was also divided along gender lines. Early modern Europe was a patriarchal society, where men held greater power than women but it depended on class location also. Men dominated the worlds of trade and of politics, but women were confined to domestic domain and kitchen. As mothers, they may have exercised some emotional power over their children. Wealthy women of nobles and rich merchants ran large households, and some of the wives of nobles looked after their husbands' estates while they were away on business or at war.

1.9 COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The Commercial Revolution of late Middle Ages had profound impact on the society as is evident from the rise of fairs, to the physical expansion of cities, the increased output of books, and the growth of population and urbanization. It is estimated in 900 C.E. Western Europe had only about 1% of its population living

in cities with more than 10,000 people; by 1500, the urbanization rate for Western Europe stood at over 8%, with peaks of over 10% and 20% in the Netherlands and in Belgium, respectively. The medieval “commercial revolution”—was simple expansion of trade but it should not be confused with the Early Modern commercial or financial “revolutions” in the Low Countries and England (involving the long term development of the bourse, exchange banks, joint stock companies, and so on). The invention, diffusion, or earliest perfection of holding companies, of cashless transactions using bills of exchange, of contracts for marine insurance, and of advanced bookkeeping techniques including so called “double entry” accounting, practices facilitated the expansion of long distance trade, international banking, and commercial and industrial partnerships. The desire for merchant credit and decreased transaction costs in long distance trade led to the use of moneys of account and the creation of the earliest instruments of international finance; the most fundamental of the latter was the “bill of exchange”. It was a multi party payment order executable in a foreign currency in a distant location. This was invented in Northern Italy, widespread already in the fourteenth century, and in use — largely unchanged — until the eighteenth. Cashless exchanges had occurred at the fairs, on the basis of obligatory letters. The bill of exchange was revolutionary because the issuer could thereby order a distant third party to pay the debt in another currency, which allowed the bills to circulate widely and function as instruments of both credit and transfer in international trade. Now, merchants pooled capital and shared risk to enrich themselves and their polities, utilizing the infrastructure and markets that they helped to make, and creating new legal and financial instruments to facilitate their ventures.

1.10 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND UNIVERSITIES

Then the role of institutions and institutional change is always important as an underpinning factor in any social change. The Early Modern period saw not only economic transformation in Western Europe, but also the establishment of the first universities — first one was established in Bologna in the 11th century. Then fifty more in the emerged following four centuries. There was also the development of formal legal institutions and state administrative systems. probably, these educational and legal institutions played some role in promoting economic activity. Huff (2003) argues that the European university was an institution that was uniquely suited to promoting technical change, and that the rise of universities can be seen as an important institutional turning point in the history of European science. But it is a doubtful conjecture and perhaps an exaggerated statement. The initial universities such as Bologna had close affinity with Medieval Islamic centres of learning, although they had acquired some corporate features and privileges and legal status. Outside Universities, academic degrees accorded by them were not an entitlement to practice any particular profession. For example, the study of theology was not a pre-condition or eligibility for priesthood in Church. Only gradually, university degree became a marker of professional elites engaged in the cure of souls, legal practice, government administration and medical care and education. Universities in Early Modern period provided education mainly in arts, theology, law and medicine and not in disciplines like architecture, ship-building, agriculture, veterinary-medicine and military technology.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Did the invention of printing bring about changes in the way knowledge was shared and circulated?

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- 2) What was the impact of the commercial revolution on the early modern west?

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1.11 LET US SUM UP

We have seen that how with the end of Middle Ages in the Western Europe, a period of transition set in. This period of transition to modernity was long and slow and the pace of change varied from country to country. It entailed changes in almost all aspect of social life-religious beliefs, trade and human settlement, economy, social institutions, mode of communications and relationship with non-Western world. In the Early Modern times in the Western Europe, trade had expanded, towns had grown in number and size, and a new, more sophisticated society had emerged. In large parts of western Europe feudalism, with its fragmented power-structures, began to erode. The Unit has highlighted some singular features of this change. In later units we will learn more about this social metamorphism in greater detail.

1.12 KEYWORDS

Renaissance: Literally means ‘rebirth’.Refers to the period in early modern Europe when there was a revival, development and flourishing of classical arts and learning. This led to notions of humanism and individualism which challenged the medieval and feudal world views.

Reformation: The process of reform in organised Christianity where the hegemony of orthodox church and the pope were challenged.

Periodisation: The notion of dividing a particular phase in history in terms of its well defined characteristics. This can lead to debates and controversies as different scholars highlight different features of a period and adopt different classificatory terms. For example the controversy over the term feudalism in India.

1.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 1.2
- 2) See Sub-section 1.3.1
- 3) See Sub-section 1.3.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 1.7
- 2) See Section 1.9

1.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM – DEBATE 1

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 General Features of a Feudal and a Capitalist System
- 2.3 The Beginning of a Debate
- 2.4 Paul Sweezy's Intervention
- 2.5 Takahashi and Rodney Hilton in Fray
- 2.6 Role of 'Uneven Development': E J Hobsbawm
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Keywords
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the rise of the modern west in the context of the debate on transition from feudalism to capitalism;
- Analyze how different historians focused on contradictions between forces of production and relations of production in feudalism to highlight the emergence of capitalism;
- Examine how historians later tried to bring in the role of trade and the rise of towns to bring forward new factors which contributed to decline of feudalism;
- Know how in the debate the role of class struggle and class conflict was brought in to highlight how a dynamic process encompassing classes, modes of production and trade and commerce played in the transition from feudalism to capitalism; and
- Discuss how a broader approach taking in to account capital accumulation from colonies and their exploitation brought forward a picture of uneven transition from feudalism to capitalism.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Marx believed that history of human civilization passed through different modes of production: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. He thought that dissolution of obsolete capitalism will usher in communism. The *mode of production* of a society is simply the way a society goes about producing goods and services. Since no human society can produce things or necessities of life without human labour power and other productive tools (raw-material, machinery, land, plants and infrastructure etc.). These were the *productive forces* of a society. But these productive forces are used and controlled in the context of

property and rules regarding how productive assets are to be used, there is also need for social rules, laws, customs and power relations between individual and at the broader level between group of people or classes. These were designated as *relation of production* by Marx. As long as productive forces in a society are attuned to or are in sync with the relation of production, the society moves smoothly and economy grows but when there is tension (*contradiction*) between them, society is ready for transition from one mode to another mode of production through revolution. It is generally accepted that changes started to take place in the Feudal mode or system of medieval Europe in 14th century which gradually led to development of a capitalist economy. This period of transition is one of the most controversial and scholars, historians have argued on the nature of this process of transition depending on their perspective. This and next Unit will narrate and explain views and arguments of scholarly community about this significant change which sets in motion the process of the rise of modern capitalist economy. It is, therefore, necessary to know some general features of a feudal and a capitalist society before we go into the depth of arguments about transition from feudalism to capitalism.

2.2 GENERAL FEATURES OF A FEUDAL AND A CAPITALIST SYSTEM

The feudal system was primarily based on agrarian subsistence economy. The manor or the large tract of land was the centre of the feudal system and the manor was owned by the feudal lord. This land was allotted to the feudal lord by the overlord or the king. The feudal lords, being the superior class, did not cultivate lands themselves. The land was cultivated by serfs, who were tied to the landlords' manor having limited control over their labour power and partial control over small patch of land on which he and his family survived. The serf was the actual tiller of the land who worked on the lord's land (*demesne*) and also on the plot of land allotted to him. The serfdom was based on use of *extra-economic coercion* for controlling the labour and fate of serf-cultivators by feudal lords. The feudal lords enjoyed legal and judicial power and privileges over serfs. The entire system worked on mutual obligation. The king allotted land to the nobles and the nobles were supposed to provide money and soldiers to the king. Similarly, the feudal lords got the land grant and were supposed to provide protection and services to the overlords. Serfs were expected to till the feudal lord's land and his land (a small patch of land from the lord for the subsistence of his family) and in return the lord provided them protection. So in a feudal society, the king was at the top and the serf was at the bottom of the feudal hierarchy. But apart from secular lords, the clergy or the priestly class also owned large tracts of lands and acted like feudal lords. The Catholic Church was the largest land lord of the medieval Europe which was equally oppressive despite its claim to work for the salvation of the people. In such society, access to social opportunities and status was determined by the accident of birth. The ascribed role or status of individual was assigned by virtue of factors outside his or her own control. This assigned role was rationalized as divinely ordained and natural and was legally recognized and approved by religious-normative order of the society. However, many towns also coexisted with manors in medieval Europe representing non-agrarian segment of the economy. These towns were involved in manufacturing activities. The manufacturing in these centres was done by an association of artisans, craftsman and professionals called guild. The guild was responsible for the production and

sale of commodities. The quantity and quality to be produced and the price was determined by the guild. The guild was also responsible for the socio-religious aspects of its members, and their lives. The produce of the guild was sold to manors and to long-distance markets.

In contrast to feudal system, capitalism is an open market-oriented economy characterized by mass-scale commodity production and with high level of division of labour and specialization and use of machinery. So the products are not for subsistence use, rather they are meant to be sold in market to earn profits. There is a separation of producer and consumers in time and space. The Products and services are, therefore, exchanged through markets using money as a medium. The means of production or productive assets are privately owned in this system and the owners of these private assets buy labour power to use in their production operations to produce for the market where they sell their products to earn profits for themselves. Production for profit or accumulation is the sole implicit purpose of all production under this system and it is characterized by individualism, acquisitiveness, maximizing behaviour of most of the economic agents. (maximizing of profits for the producers and maximizing of satisfaction for the consumers). The individual's professional or occupational role came to depend on individual effort and ability at least formally and legally in the capitalist system, thus, allowing for limited mobility.

2.3 THE BEGINNING OF THE DEBATE

Disagreements amongst historians can be more overtly ideological in character. But more often it is on the basis of evidence and interpretation of facts. The debate was initiated after the publication of Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, published immediately after the Second World War and revised edition appearing in 1963. Dobb based his approach to the transition from feudalism to capitalism on Marx's notion of the mode of production. While he recognized that one mode of production dominated a given epoch, he also accepted that elements of other modes of production could coexist with the dominant mode. According to him, in transition from feudal to the capitalist mode, He laid emphasis on three key things – the crisis of feudalism in the fourteenth century, the beginning of capitalism in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution. The decline of feudalism and start of capitalism are separated by at least two centuries. It was from the latter half of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century that capital began to penetrate production to a considerable degree. Dobb defines feudalism as a 'system under which economic status and authority were associated with land-tenure, and the direct producer was under obligation based on law or customary right to devote a certain quota of his labour or his produce to the benefits of his feudal superior'. Feudalism here consisted of social relations between feudal lords and peasants. Feudal lords ruled over peasants and their lands. The 'serfs' or kind of bonded cultivators utilized their small lands with their labour work and were required to allocate a part of their labour to the feudal lords.

He argued that the decline of feudalism was the result of inner contradiction within the feudal mode of production. This explanation is generally described as the 'inner-contradiction model'.

He argued that trade and merchant capital did not directly change the feudal economic system. The development of trade was closely related to the growth of division of labour, and that division of labour depended on rise of productivity of labour. According to him, capitalist development was brought about by the emergence of an urban setting. In his view, 'lord-peasant' class relations and the outcome of 'lord-peasant class conflict' was important to understand the growth of towns in the feudal society that led to the rise of commercial-industrial capital. During the period of the transition, development of towns in feudal societies were due to increased demand for weapons and luxury products coming from feudal class. This was also the reason for growth of trade. As a result of this, there was rise of interest in exchanging peasant-produced food for luxury goods. Dobb's analysis on transition of feudalism to capitalism does at some point contradict itself.

Modern discussions of feudalism have been plagued by long drawn-out controversies over its conceptualization. These disputes have centred on whether feudalism should be thought of in essentially political and legal or socio-economic terms. Dobb laid emphasis on economic aspects. According to him, the feudal mode is defined as the extra-economic extraction by overlords of rents or services from a class of subsistence producers. The peasant producers largely control the process of production but are not legally free. Feudalism and serfdom were synonymous. The rise of the political and economic autonomy of the corporate towns, followed immediately by the economic decline of the fourteenth century, marked the crisis of the feudal mode. According to Dobb, towns had some part in the decline of feudalism. The towns provided shelter to runaway serfs and served as the oasis of freedom in late medieval peasant revolts. But the antagonism and confrontation between peasants and landlords in the countryside was the main arena of class-struggle.

At the end of the Middle Ages, serfdom had vanished while medieval forms of government and the class power of landlords continued to exist. Though the peasantry as a class had grown stronger, they remained subject to manorial authority. The emerging class of hired labourers was subject to a good deal of coercion. So the wage labour was still a supplement to a livelihoods based on from subsistence farming. The merchant bourgeoisie became more powerful but cooperated for the most part with the landlords. However, the urban craftspeople and well-to-do and middle class peasants become independent of feudalism. They were petty producers who were not yet capitalists, but certainly contained a potential to become so. In Dobb's conception, it was this petty mode of production which predominated economically in the two hundred or so years between the beginning of the feudal crisis and the advent of the capitalist mode in the mid-sixteenth century.

Until Dobb it was generally assumed that the intensification of market exchange and the growing role of money brought about the decline of feudalism. On the contrary, Dobb demonstrated that money and exchange actually strengthened serfdom and feudalism. The emergence of merchant capital was fully compatible with feudalism. Rather it was the economic weakness of the feudal mode of production, coupled with the growing need of the ruling class for revenue, which was responsible for the system's crisis. The lack of economic incentive to work hard and the low level of technique placed a limit on peasant productivity. Feudal-class demands on peasants increased inordinately due to the expansion of its

numbers and due to growth of landlords' establishments and retinues. The burden on cultivators increased due to feudal landlords' demand for more and more luxury consumption and the exigencies of war and brigandage. The competition between leading nobles increased spending on feasts, luxury commodities, pageants and wars. All this increased economic pressure on producers. The result was economic exhaustion, flight from the land and peasant rebellion.

Over-exploitation and stagnant productivity resulted in a decline in population after 1300. Subsequent labour shortages, peasant resistance or threat of flight led to widespread commutation of labour to money rent. The manorial system was further weakened by the thinning of the ranks of the nobility through war, the growing practice of leasing demesne, the emergence of a stratum of rich and middling peasants differentiated from the mass of peasant poor, and the growing use of wage labour. By the end of the fifteenth century, the economic basis of the feudal system had disintegrated. The late medieval social differentiation of the peasantry, a key theme of Dobb's work, prepared the way for the later dispossession of the mass of peasants. The emergence of this drifting population heralded the coming of capitalism, setting the stage for the emergence of capitalist wage labour. The role of the towns was above all to act as a magnet attracting the serfs fleeing from countryside.

Dobb's perception on the role of the towns was later strongly contested. Dobb's explanation that the collapse of feudalism was the result of its own internal contradictions, stemming from the over-exploitation of the peasant producers was more acceptable. In Dobb's own words: "it was the inefficiency of Feudalism as a system of production, coupled with the growing needs of the ruling class for revenue, that was primarily responsible for its decline; since this need for additional revenue prompted an increase in the pressure on the producer to a point where this pressure became literally unendurable." Dobb's interpretation of the decline of feudalism set off the celebrated transition debate.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Discuss Maurice Dobb's views on the transition debate.

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2) Do you agree with Maurice Dobb that the collapse of feudalism was due to its own internal contradictions?

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2.4 PAUL SWEEZY'S INTERVENTION

Paul Sweezy, another celebrated Marxist economist and co-founder with Paul Baran of the *Monthly Review*, was first to contest Dobb viewpoint. Sweezy agreed with Dobb that serfdom was the dominant relation of production in Western feudalism. But organized around the economically self-sufficient manor, feudalism, according to him, was a mode of production for use, and as such tended to stagnation. It needed an external force, the growth of trade and increase in production for exchange, to undermine the system. He rejected Dobb's view of internal contradiction for the decline of feudalism. This, in his views, can only be explained as arising from causes external to the system. Sweezy's view of an external prime mover was necessary to explain decline of a closed, self-sufficient system producing only for use. He disagreed that the prime mover of change was internal to the feudal system. Dobb for one rejected Sweezy's view that feudalism tended toward stagnation, and insisted that it had its own momentum based on its internal – especially class – contradictions. Class conflict between peasants and lords did not directly lead to capitalism. What it did was to lessen the dependence of the petty mode of production upon feudal over-lordship, eventually freeing the petty producer from feudal exploitation. Sweezy's notion of trade-driven external prime mover appear to be simple single cause explanation of decline of a complex social system. Dobb's view was more historically and theoretically better informed and a more refined view of feudalism as an internally dynamic system driven by economic growth and class conflict. While placing greater emphasis on internal factors, Dobb also considered the growth of trade a factor. Sweezy further criticized Dobb for not signalling the existence of a system of pre-capitalist commodity production which was neither feudal nor capitalist in the wake of feudalism's demise.

2.5 KOHACHIRO TAKAHASHI AND RODNEY HILTON IN FRAY

Marxist economic historian Kohachiro Takahashi insisted in the first place that the debate be widened beyond the English case to include the experience of feudalism in the Continental Europe. Takahashi rejected Sweezy's conception of feudalism as a self-sufficient, closed economic system which produced only for use rather than exchange. Commodities were produced and circulated in different modes of production including the feudal. It is important to know how products were produced. As such Takahashi strongly supported Dobb's view that the decline of feudalism was due to internal factors like class struggle rather than an external factor like trade. But according to Takahashi, Dobb's definition of feudalism was inadequate in that he immediately started from the abstractions of feudal landed property and serfdom. But just as Marx began his analysis of capital from the commodity, so likewise the analysis of feudalism had to begin from the fundamental social units of Western feudalism: the *virgate* (cottage, small plot, collective rights), the village community and the manor (*seigneurie*). It was the manor which dominated the other two and became the basis for the extraction of surplus from producers in the form of feudal rent and the mobilization of labour.

Rodney Hilton also questioned Sweezy's view and argued that long-distance trade was not responsible for decline of feudalism. Sweezy's view was based on

the so-called Pirenne thesis. Henri Pirenne was a famous Belgian historian of medieval period. He claimed that the economic decline of the West coincided not with the fall of the Western Roman Empire but with the closure of the Mediterranean as a result of the Muslim occupation of the Eastern Mediterranean coast in the eighth century. Contrariwise the economic revival of Western Europe began with the reopening of the Mediterranean during the crusades of the eleventh century. Arguing against Pirenne, Hilton maintained that the decline of the Roman Empire in the West was the result not of the disruption of trade but of internal factors. The decline of production for trade and exchange in the Empire began as a result of internal economic and demographic weakening as early as the third century, hundreds of years before the collapse of Roman political authority. It was not due to the Arab intrusion into the Mediterranean. Likewise internal factors within Western Europe led to the recovery of production for distant markets before the start of the crusades. If development of feudalism was due to internal factors and mechanisms, its decline was also due to internal factors.

Hilton, like Dobb, supported the idea that decline of feudalism was a result of internal class struggle. It was the main cause for decline of feudalism and this was dependent on the growth of the forces of production. As its dynamic element, class struggle between overlords and peasants led to the flourishing of the feudal mode of production in one phase and then to its decline in another phase. The nobility and princes also engaged in political competition with one another while striving to maximize their rental income. The resultant quest for increased rent at first stimulated technological innovation, the development of towns and commerce, and increases in productivity, only later contributing to feudalism's decline. Hilton underscored the growth of the forces of production when feudalism reached its highest point of development. The interaction of these factors, including growing production for the market, led to increased social and class differentiation among the peasants. The richer peasants were able to increase the size of their land-holdings and employed more and more wage labour, which was increasingly that of the completely landless rather than that of smallholders. The prosperous peasants resented the demands of lords for more rent, and their resentment was supported by small and poorer cultivators because demand for more rent was also imposing a restriction on economic expansion and was equally undermining the subsistence and livelihood of smaller peasants.

The struggle over rent intensified and reached a peak in the fourteenth century. Income from rent declined and was only partly compensated for by increases in state taxation, warfare and plunder, and commutation of rents into cash payments. Feudal rent no longer remained an incentive to production, and landlords' dependent on it for income ultimately had to look to the emerging power of the state for continued existence. The number of tenants obliged to labour on their lord's demesne and the value of rent, now paid predominantly in cash, declined. Overall the legal claims of the lords over the persons of their tenants weakened. Money rent favoured the social stratification of the population of the manor into rich and poor. The sale and purchase of land begun leading to creation of a land market. The holdings of the rich peasants in the manor expanded at the expense of the rest. More peasants were forced to resort to wage labour. Rich peasants and lesser nobles were the most efficient producers in an increasingly market-oriented economy, which began to take capitalist forms. With Hilton's vivid demonstration of the role of class struggle both in developing the forces of production under feudalism and in its decline, this became, along with peasant

social differentiation, the fundamental pivot around which debate on the transition would now revolve.

In Hilton's views, the role of towns and trade, seen by others such as Sweezy as a principal reason for decline of feudalism or as a prime mover, was itself the outcome of class struggle. For Hilton argued that the commutation of rents into cash payment furthered the development of merchant capital and the growth of larger towns within the context of the feudal mode of production. Hilton's view of the towns as part of the feudal system rather than as an external catalyst to capitalism was greatly influenced by an article by John Merrington which appeared originally in *New Left Review* and was republished as the final contribution to the debate over *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, edited by Hilton in 1976. Merrington argued that town-based commerce facilitated the expansion of the feudal mode of production. The urban corporate form or the guilds, although at times in opposition to local feudal landlords, actually functioned as a 'collective seigneur' under feudalism, and strengthened its economic foundation. Feudalism accorded an autonomous place to urban production and exchange in its structure.

Merrington argued that towns and trade were natural, built-in components of feudalism. They were not external capitalist forces working to undermine functioning of feudalism. So, they did not play any significant role in the emergence of capitalism. For merchant capital did not create surplus value, it only redistributed it. While it played a key role in primitive accumulation of capital, it could not be a source of a permanent self-reproducing accumulation.¹ For that to occur the extension of the market in the territorial state and the emergence of agrarian capitalism were necessary, and when they did emerge, urban merchant capital was reduced to a declining sphere of operations. Merrington's arguments were a powerful reinforcement of the role of class struggle and the internal logic of feudalism's decline. He, however, overlooked three aspects of their role in its decline. First, the towns served as a potential or actual refuge for the subject rural population, as Dobb pointed out. Second, urban markets strengthened social and political links between rural producers. Finally, as Merrington himself noted, merchant capital played a role in primitive accumulation which was a necessary if not sufficient condition for the development of the capitalist mode of production. These aspects of the role of towns and trade could not be so easily dismissed, and as we shall see below, later accounts came to see class struggle and trade as joint factors in the rise of capitalism.

2.6 ROLE OF "UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT": E. J. HOBSBAWM

As already discussed, Takahashi had pointed to the need to broaden the discussion on feudalism to include Continental Europe and Japan. This was part of a general trend in Marxism to extend the concept of feudalism in analyzing non-European pre-capitalist societies, rather than employing the problematical and Eurocentric concepts of communal and Asiatic modes of production. Feudalism, at least after Hilton's intervention, was seen as a progressive mode capable of evolving toward capitalism, whereas the other two categories of communal ownership of property and Asiatic mode of self-sufficient village economy discussed by Marx were seen as stagnant, unchanging and hence not in conformity with Marxist method

of dialectical change in society. In a deceptively simple contribution, Eric Hobsbawm helped to free Marxist understandings from the problems associated with notions of Asiatic and communal modes of production, and reconnected them with ideas about uneven and combined development.

Hobsbawm unreservedly admitted that the forces making for economic development in Europe were also present elsewhere in the world. Japanese feudalism, in particular, resembled the European model of feudalism closely, and it was conceivable that capitalism could have emerged there independently of European influence. In his view, the intrusion of European imperialism ruptured a genuinely internal process of development in non-European societies. Having raised the possibility of non-European forms of capitalism, Hobsbawm nonetheless insisted that the accomplishment of capitalism in Europe was unique and very special. He argued that there is no getting round the fact that the transition from feudalism is, on a world scale, a case of highly uneven development. We should note that the notion of uneven development was not new and Marx mentioned it in his work *Grundrisse* (1857-58), where unevenness represents the condition for a transition from one declining mode of production to another expanding and more progressive mode. Moreover, uneven development is a fundamental feature of the capitalist form of development. With respect to uneven development in Western Europe, according to Hobsbawm, the crisis of feudalism involved the most advanced sectors of capitalist development within Western Europe as well.

The remarkable thing about the 14th century crisis was, in his view, not only the collapse of large-scale feudal demesne agriculture, but also demise of the Italian and Flemish textile industries. England advanced industrially but the much greater Italy and Flanders industries could not recover. Unevenness characterized not only the crisis of feudalism but also the emergence of capitalism itself. Overall European development from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries was marked by repeated crises in which regression in one place allowed progress elsewhere. West European advance came directly at the expense of Eastern Europe and Asia, Africa and Latin America. The process of West European transition to capitalist economy was accompanied by simultaneously turning other areas into dependent economies and colonies. Seizing resources from advanced areas or later on from colonized regions became an inherent feature of West European capitalist development. In other words, the emergence of capitalism in Europe has to be understood in terms of an ongoing world-wide process of appropriation based on uneven development both within and outside Europe. Hobsbawm concluded that 'the net effect of European capitalism was to divide the world ever more sharply into two sectors: the "developed" and the "under-developed" countries, in other words the exploiting and the exploited.' Hobsbawm's conception of the transition is one in which unevenness plays a vital part. Gain in one place is invariably at the cost of other places, even those that were initially more developed. Hobsbawm's sense of the dialectical quality and the unevenness of the process of transition was an impressive insight, representing a significant contribution to the transition debate.

Hilton's editing and republication of the 1950s transition debate (in 1976) was the consequence of the revival of the dispute in the 1960s. The *New Left Review*, started in 1960 as a bimonthly political academic journal, played an important part. Brenner, Anderson and Wallerstein and other left-leaning historians published

their important contributions to the transition debate. Scholars such as Poston, Ladurie, Abel and Verhust put forward the ‘demographic model theory’. This theory was constructed in opposition to Marxist’s model, further enriching the debate. We will continue to discuss all these ideas and contest of ideas in next unit.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Outline the differences between Paul Sweezy and Rodney Hilton.

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- 2) What did Hobsbawm mean by uneven development? Explain.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we discussed the long and uneven process of transition from feudalism to capitalism. The debate over question emerged among Marxist scholars with the publication of Maurice Dobb’s *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*. Given the long duration of transition, the uneven nature of social-economic change and differences in the perspectives of scholars, a lively and historically enriching debate has been discussed in this Unit. Some like Paul Sweezy arguing for an external catalyst like long distance trade and market forces to explain the demise of feudalism while others like Dobb and Rodney Hilton trying to relate the transition to the endogenous factors like class struggle between feudal landlords and peasant cultivators. There are variations in arguments regarding the nature of class struggle and specific role of towns and trade and the process unevenness was highlighted by scholars like Hobswam and Takahashi. The debate demonstrates that as history is not something fixed and unchanging, so its interpretations are also full of lively debates and discussions about the exact nature and mechanisms of social change.

2.8 KEYWORDS

Mode of Production : A heuristic term used to capture the concepts of relations of production and forces of production taken together as a whole to designate the dominant production process of a social formation. For example, feudalism, capitalism, socialism.

2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 2.3
- 2) See Section 2.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 2.5
- 2) See Section 2.6

2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM-DEBATE 2

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Example of Japanese Feudalism: The Debate between Takahashi and Anderson
- 3.3 Perry Anderson's Contribution to the Transition Debate
- 3.4 Brenner and the Late Medieval Crisis
- 3.5 Critique of Brenner's View: Guy Bois, Harman and Terence J. Byres
- 3.6 The Demographic Model of Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 Keywords
- 3.9 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises
- 3.10 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to understand:

- how scholars looked beyond Europe (e.g. Japan) to understand the transition from feudalism to capitalism;
- how the transition from feudalism to capitalism is understood by some scholars in terms of struggle between classes and in terms of forces of production; and
- how other scholars refute this thesis by pointing out the dynamics of trade, urbanisation and demographic cycles in weakening the feudal relations and facilitating the transition to capitalism.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As we mentioned the previous unit, one strand of thinking thought that transition from feudalism and capitalism occurred in Europe. It became a main point of contention whether rest of the world figured in this development or not. Both Brenner and Anderson concentrated attention on the development in Europe to understand the process of change or transformation. While Brenner was more rigid, Anderson at least made an attempt to widen the discussion of feudalism beyond Europe by including Japan, as we shall see. But Anderson also believed that the legacy of Rome was essential to the existence of feudalism in the first place and to the eventual development of the capitalist notion of private property. Meanwhile Emmanuel Wallerstein's world systems approach attempted to view the development of European capitalism from a perspective which included the non-European countries. Initially Takahashi's had stressed a perspective beyond Europe. Later Hobsbawm related the issue to uneven and combined development. But the earlier phase of discussion of the transition question had hardly touched on the world outside Europe.

3.2 EXAMPLE OF JAPANESE FEUDALISM: DEBATE BETWEEN TAKAHASHI AND ANDERSON

Takahashi believed that Japanese feudalism was similar to that of the West, and its transition to capitalism was an internal affair in which threat of Western imperialism also played a role. The Meiji Restoration, or so-called capitalist revolution from above, was the outcome. Takahashi particularly credited the top-down nature of Japanese capitalism to the flexibility of its feudalism. When capitalism was growing in the West, the feudal regime consolidated itself in Japan. The Tokugawa Shogunate in the seventeenth century was based on very heavy rents-in-kind and personal serfdom. The economic aspirations of the petty producers in Japan were crushed by the weight of feudal rent and the development of usury. These burdens on the peasants stimulated increased commercialization of the surplus. As a result, proto capitalist manufacturing and commercial agriculture based on wage labour emerged in the countryside. According to Takahashi, the dominant economic power of the urban merchants and financiers depended on the feudal state and great landlord magnates. Centralized collection of revenue made possible a high degree of commercialization and urbanization as well as an extreme level of peasant exploitation. On the eve of the Meiji Restoration, voice of middle peasants and small manufacturers against the merchant and financial monopolists tied to feudal magnates could be heard. Over-exploitation of peasants by landlords led to increasing misery in rural areas and population decline. This demographic and economic crisis was a main reason for the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Yet Japanese feudalism proved much more robust than that of the states of the West, and its resilience fundamentally determined the nature of the capitalism that did emerge. Over-exploitation created food shortages, peasant revolts and population decline. These Popular and proto-capitalist revolt acted as a catalyst. The popular anger was used by a modernizing political elite to dismantle the institutions of the feudal regime while preserving the essence of landlord power over the peasantry. But revolt from below fundamentally failed to transform the feudal Japanese social and political order. The military power of the landlords was broken but they continued to control their tenants socially and economically. The political and economic freedom of the bulk of producers remained fundamentally constrained. As a consequence it was the state rather than the petty producers that was to take the lead in capitalist development. For Takahashi, the intrusion of the West was merely a catalyst which set off what was already the internal evolution of Japan toward capitalism.

Anderson dealt with Japanese feudalism in a long note or appendix added to his book *Lineages of the Absolutist State*. He agreed with Takahashi that feudalism set the stage for a capitalist development and that the Japanese feudalism resembled the Western counterpart in many ways. Anderson emphasized the gains in the productivity of Japanese feudal agriculture in the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries. This period was marked by increased commercialization, including the spread of cash crops like sugar, cotton, tea, indigo and tobacco. The urban merchant class expanded and became more influential while the cities grew prodigiously. The potential for capitalist development present. However, Anderson rejected Takahashi's idea that Japan could have abolished feudalism through the power of its own internal contradictions. The separation of Japan

from the world market blocked its independent evolution from feudalism toward capitalism. The expansion of Western trade acted as an external catalyst for the fall of the feudal regime and led to the Meiji Restoration. Anderson argued that for capitalism to develop, connections to the world market and an appropriate set of social relations of production are both necessary.

3.3 PERRY ANDERSON'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRANSITION DEBATE

But, for Anderson, only Western European feudalism could have created capitalism. Anderson's view of feudalism and its downfall combines an emphasis on class struggle with acknowledgment of the significance of exchange relations. The emergence of the territorial state and expanding global market both provided very important foundations for emergence of capitalism. In feudalism the peasant producer was tied to the land by being legally bound to the soil as a serf. Agrarian property was privately controlled by a class of feudal lords who extracted a surplus in the form of rent from peasants by political-legal or extra-economic coercion. Despite this feudal bondage, it provided the setting for an impressive boost in productivity during the High Middle Ages. In contrast to Dobb and Hilton, however, Anderson stresses the exhaustion of the possibility of further advances in the forces of production as the source of the feudal crisis. In his view, this was not due to over-exploitation of the producers. The pressure of increasing population forced clearing of increasingly marginal land, while necessary investments in improving the productivity of existing cultivated soil was not undertaken. The subsequent economic crisis provoked widespread peasant revolts. The revolts failed in short-term. However, the long-term impact of revolts was that the income and wages of the peasantry improved and serfdom declined.

Anderson also insisted that urban commercial networks tended to weaken and erode feudal social relations. Towns served as potential refuges for fugitive serfs as well as artisans in peasant revolts. Indeed, the centres of the most significant rural revolts were located near towns. In the long term the noble lords' need for commodities produced in the towns led them to commute labour services of serfs into rents-in-cash. They also began to lease out demesne to peasant tenants. In England in the fifteenth century serfdom almost vanished and peasant incomes rose. Social differentiation increased in the villages, as a stratum of rich peasants emerged at the top and wage labour at bottom. Anderson acknowledged that trade was built-in the feudal mode of production. Dobb had already suggested that the early modern state was above all designed to defend the nobility, and Anderson agreed and gave a convincing evidence of this thesis. The end of serfdom did not bring feudalism to an end.

The consolidation of the territorial monarchies at the end of the Middle Ages modified the apparatus of feudal domination. The class power of the nobility had diminished as a result of the disappearance of serfdom to some extent. But it was reconsolidated with the emergence of the new territorial monarchies, which became the principal instruments for the maintenance of noble domination over the peasantry. Moreover, in so far as nobles blocked the emergence of a free market in land and peasants retained access to their means of subsistence, feudal relations persisted. In the medieval period political and economic control had been combined in the hands of feudal landlords. With the appearance of the territorial state in the early modern period, political power began to be separated

from immediate control over the economy, allowing capitalist forces to emerge. The political order remained feudal while society under its protection became more capitalistically oriented. According to Anderson, the emerging territorial state was based on two things: firstly, under the threat of peasant unrest there was more centralization of powers in the new absolutist State. Secondly, the pressure of mercantile or manufacturing capital within the Western economies also increased. The development of the territorial state bolstered feudalism and it also provided an enlarged political space within which capitalism could develop. In such a space lay the market. Just as Merrington saw the medieval market as built-in, natural element in the power of *seigneur*, Anderson also insisted that the capitalist market was a creation of the territorial state and almost as much a political as an economic institution. Anderson's insight into the role of the state is critical to understanding the transition.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss Takahashi's contribution to the debate on transition from feudalism to capitalism.

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- 2) How did Perry Anderson look at the transition to capitalism?

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3.4 BRENNER AND THE LATE MEDIEVAL CRISIS

Beginning with Dobb, scholars demarcated the period of the decline of feudalism from the period of the rise of capitalism. Dobb and Sweezy, two chief protagonists in the initial debate, both recognized the existence of an intermediate period prior to the emergence of capitalism. In this phase of a weakened feudalism, there was a relatively more freedom for petty producers to produce for market and distant trade prior to the emergence of full-fledged capitalism. Moreover, most of the participants in the debate, while stressing one or another factor leading to the transition, nonetheless tended to concede a multiplicity of causes. Dobb, Hilton and Anderson stressed the vital importance of class struggle in the decline of feudalism. But Brenner took the importance of agrarian class struggle a step further, arguing that as it unfolded in England in the late Middle Ages, it not only destroyed feudalism but created a path leading directly to the emergence of

capitalism. So, in Brenner's view, there was no conceptual and chronological divide between the decline of feudalism and the origins of capitalism. His authoritative thesis, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653*, which while not bearing on the end of feudalism debate, proved important to the controversy on the English Revolution.

Dobb and Hilton had already emphasized the decline in late medieval population and ensuing class conflicts central to their conception of the crisis in England and elsewhere in Europe. In Brenner's view such conflicts arose from a crisis of peasant accumulation, productivity and ultimately subsistence provoked by over-exploitation. Excessive landlord exploitation and the inherent conservatism of the peasant mode of production placed definite limits on the productivity of peasant agriculture. Brenner stressed that landlords used extra-economic coercion to extract more and more surplus from the producers. More specifically he demonstrated the inherent economic limits of the peasant subsistence mode within the constraints of the medieval manor. The economic objectives of peasants within the bounds of the manor were not to improve their holdings, maximize output or deepen their relation to the market, but rather to ensure the reproduction of the family unit of subsistence production. As a result a definite limit was imposed on economic growth. In the resultant crisis the survival of the mass of producers was put into question. Following the demographic collapse of the fourteenth century, intense class struggles revolved around the issue of serfdom and the control of land. The outcome of these struggles in the different parts of Europe depended on varying historical and social circumstances. Brenner denied that trade or towns were important in the transition. Indeed, he rejected the idea that the towns in any way contributed to the dissolution of feudalism. On the contrary, it was the development of rural networks of solidarity and cooperation that was important to the varying outcomes of the late medieval class struggles, notably between West and East Europe.

In Eastern Europe the weakness of the peasantries faced with landlord power led to the strengthening of serfdom. In the class struggles in France, in contrast, the peasantry not only consolidated its free status but was able to hold onto land and rights into the early modern period. Surplus extraction sufficient to maintain the nobility transferred itself from the local to a higher level through the crystallization of the territorial state. Whereas local rents withered, royal taxes were employed to benefit the warrior and court nobility, amounting to a new system of centralized rent. The feudal system was perpetuated as a result.

England represented a third way that led to agrarian capitalism. Peasants were able to win personal freedom but were less successful in the class struggle than their French counterparts. As a result English nobles were able to retain most of the cultivable land, and from the late fifteenth century onward, they began to rent this land to rich farmers on favourable terms of enhanced rents based on growing profits. According to Brenner, with the peasants failure to establish essentially freehold control over the land, the landlords were able to occupy, consolidate and enclose cultivable lands. They created large farms and to begun to lease them to capitalist tenants who could afford to make capital investments. Unlike medieval peasants, capitalist tenants needed to improve productivity in order to meet landlords' demands for higher rents. In order to obtain higher rents landlords found themselves advancing capital to tenants in order to improve

output. An economic logic of accumulation was initiated. On this basis there emerged the classic threefold division of rural society into landlord/capitalist tenants/ wage labourers which transformed English agriculture in a capitalist direction. In feudalism both the exploiting landlords and peasant producers had direct access to the means of reproducing their existence: that is, land for the peasants, rent for the landlords. In pursuit of their subsistence, the goal of the peasants was to produce as much of their subsistence based crops from the land as they could without resort to the market. In the prime of feudalism labour rents or rents-in-kind provided for the maintenance of the landlords. Consequently there was no need for both classes to produce for the market, and therefore the need to produce for exchange or to sell competitively was almost absent. They were not required to cut costs and therefore to improve production through innovation, specialization and accumulation. Whatever innovations there might have been were absorbed into the way of life of the peasant class, which was based largely on economic subsistence. The new relationships between landlords and proto-capitalist tenants at the end of the Middle Ages broke this traditional logic of subsistence production and imposed another based on cumulative economic growth so as to increase their share in agriculture produce and income.

Brenner's insistence on the role of class struggles in the countryside as decisive to the fall of feudalism and transition to capitalism was with more rigour. It lent empirical and conceptual rigor to a perspective previously taken by Dobb and Hilton. Brenner's emphasized relations of production or social property relations approach for understanding the transition. He criticized Sweezy for his insistence on the importance of trade or exchange relation. He also criticized the neo-Malthusian historical school exemplified in the work of Michael Postan and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. They argued that the decline of population accounted for the disintegration of feudalism. We will discuss their views later in this unit. He nonetheless conceded that in the absence of technological change, the ratio of land to labour determined the upswings and downswings of the population. But for him this argument reinforced the centrality of class relations. The class-relations set the parameters of demographic cycles and ultimately helped to burst through their limits.

3.5 CRITIQUE OF BRENNER'S VIEW: GUY BOIS, CHRIS HARMAN AND TERENCE J. BYRES

Critics of Brenner attacked on his over-emphasis on class, and his misunderstanding of late medieval class relations. As against his one-sided insistence on the determining influence of class struggle, they insisted on the importance of a forces of production. Class struggle remains at the crucial point of their view of the decline of feudalism. The French medieval historian Guy Bois was the first to voice such objections to Brenner's view of feudalism's downfall. He argued that class should not be understood in narrow economic sense. He insisted on the importance of the forces of production perspective, understood as the material and non-material resources at the disposition of a class. Bois agreed that Brenner's rightly pointed out political and social agency of class. Bois acknowledged that Brenner's introduction of strong doses of class struggle into his account was admirable, and that it had been ignored in the past. However, he objected to the sketchy and overly ideological manner in which

Brenner introduced such conceptions. He objected that Brenner's ideas were unconnected from all other concrete objective contingencies and from laws of development specific to a particular mode of production. In other words, Bois complained that Brenner's view is based on too superficial a view of the economic history of the medieval period and of the dynamics of its mode of production.

Bois insisted, for example, that the medieval hierarchical network of markets based on small and large towns could not be separated from the development of the *seigneur* or manor. The market, according to Bois, developed by accident with and was dependent on the system of manors. The market was in no way an entity which was alien to feudal society. But the medieval market was not simply an autonomous economic mechanism which peasants entered or withdrew from at will, as pictured by Brenner. It was in part a coercive institution through which peasant surplus was extracted and commercialized by landlords using merchants as intermediaries. This insight of Bois's that markets were not strictly economic entities but also had a coercive or political element is of critical importance to an understanding of both the feudal and capitalist modes of production. With regard to the decline of feudalism, furthermore, Bois asserts that feudalism declined because of the tendency of diminishing rents, which resulted from the structural opposition of large-scale property and small-scale production. The dominant landlord class was unable to maintain the economic base of its supremacy because there was an erosion of the productivity of family labour on the increasingly small patches of arable land as a result of population growth. Bois felt that feudal crisis went beyond the realm of economy and found manifestation in political, religious, cultural – reflected as a crisis of values but also of class conflict.

Chris Harman also has engaged with Brenner and his followers by insisting, like Bois, on the importance of the forces of production, in opposition to Brenner's emphasis on class. Harman insisted that the social capacity of a class depends on the productive forces that undergird it. Such forces include the material, intellectual and political resources at its disposition. The capacity of a class to change the social relations of production depends on its ability to mobilize such resources. Historic change occurs when the existing social relations block the further development of the forces of production. In Harman's view Brenner turns these relationships upside down, subordinating the forces of production to the determination of class relations. Harman insists on the increases in the productivity of agriculture in the High Middle Ages both in England and on the European Continent. Agricultural surpluses were marketed in the towns, manufactures were consumed not merely by nobles but also by peasants and townspeople, and commercial ties between producers in town and country were strengthened. Wage labour began to be employed on a limited basis by embryonic capitalists. Social differentiation among the peasantry strengthened these tendencies. The late medieval crisis confirmed rather than negated these economic and social advances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. During that period of difficulty the lead in opposition to the nobles was taken by those peasants and craftspeople who were most in command of the forces of production that had developed in the previous period of prosperity. In other words, Harman considers the social upheavals of the fourteenth century throughout Western Europe to be a proto-capitalist revolution brought on by the development of the forces of production in the High Middle Ages and their fettering by the perseverance of feudal relations. According to Harman, the religious heresies, new cultural movements and

revolutionary social movements of the late Middle Ages were important factors in the decline of feudalism, but find no place in Brenner's standpoint.

Whereas Brenner minimized social differentiation within the medieval peasantry, stressing its homogeneity as a class, Terence J. Byres makes the differentiation of the peasant class the key player in his notion of capitalist development. So, rather than suggesting that it was the land leases that affected brought the class formation Byres argued that it was the rich peasantry that forced the pace, rather than the landlords. The peasantry was not a uniform, homogenous class. In the thirteenth century, the peasantry were internally divided and stratified between rich, middle and poor peasants. Rich peasants had more livestock and land, and often worked for the lords as bailiffs, stewards and rent collectors, helping the lords maintain control of the bulk of the peasants. Contrary to Brenner's notion of an essential equality among medieval peasants, the prosperous peasants' enforcement of legal-political control over the rest of the peasantry on behalf of the nobility amounted to economic control over them. The power of the rich peasants increased during the thirteenth century as they were able to market part of their agricultural surplus and purchase the labour of poor peasants and embryonic wage earners. Their ability to produce surpluses had been enhanced by previous gains in productivity or improvements in the forces of production. In the late medieval crisis their power grew alongside that of the rest of the peasantry in relation to the nobles, as rents and personal servitude declined and more land became available for purchase. The crisis reduced the numbers of poor peasants and wage earners, limiting the ability of rich prosperous peasants at this stage to hire labour. It was the middle peasants whose numbers and incomes rose most notably during this period. But from the late fifteenth century onward it was rich peasants who came to the forefront, benefiting in particular from the cheap labour increasingly available as a result of the rise in population. This was a process which occurred across the face of Western Europe but assumed decisive significance in England. As we have noted, Brenner stressed the offering of economic leases by landlords to prosperous farmers as integral to capitalist beginnings. But he said nothing about where the farmers able to take up such leases came from. According to Byres, such farmers were the creation of preceding process of social differentiation and especially during the period of feudal breakdown. They then became the prime movers of sixteenth-century capitalism, which was based on the dispossession of a growing mass of peasants and their subjection to the emerging power of rural capital.

3.6 THE DEMOGRAPHIC MODEL OF TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM

This was put forward by scholars like M. M. Postan, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, W. Abel and A. E. Verhust. This viewpoint was in opposition to Marxist analysis which generally dominated the debate. According to demographic model, freedom of peasants in medieval Europe was dependent on demographic fluctuations or rise and fall of populations. In cycle of population growth, when population outstripped agricultural production, it led to decline in population automatically due to certain natural checks. Once the balance between production and population was restored, the cycle began again. This increase and decrease in population determined relative freedom of peasant cultivator. In other words, the fate of

institution of serfdom in medieval economy was dependent on demographic factors. Postan and Habbakuk were among the first to stress on the role of population in the long term changes in the economic structures. Ladurie and Postan used the data from the church records to explain the long term growth, and the decline of the population in the Middle Ages and after. They have drawn attention to non-human factors like climate change and plague which along with social factors like the age of marriage and economic incentives to have large or small families influence the demographic cycle.

From tenth to middle of fourteenth century, it is generally accepted that it was a period of an expanding demographic base. Families, cities, markets, guilds, and fairs multiplied everywhere in Europe. Centers of commerce and industry grew at a great rate. Prices remained comparatively stable throughout this period. The only major economic problem was the so-called “money-famine” of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During the thirteenth century, large parts of rural Europe became more densely settled than they would ever be again until the twentieth century. The cause of medieval population-growth was mainly an increase in fertility, not a decline in mortality. The most rapid rises appeared in the price of energy, food, shelter and raw materials- items most heavily in demand during a period of population growth, and least elastic in their supply. Population related rising prices also affected the movement of wages, rents and interest. In the early stages of the great wave, wages had kept pace with prices, and during some decades even increased more rapidly. But as inflation continued in the mid-thirteenth century, money wages began to lag behind. As a consequence real wages fell, slowly at first, then with growing momentum. By the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries real wages were dropping at a rapid rate. At the same time that real wages fell, rents and interest rose sharply. Returns to landowners generally kept pace with inflation and even exceeded it. Many historians estimate that Europe lost between 25 and 40 per cent of its inhabitants during the Black Death. This great depopulation had many economic consequences. The price of food rose sharply during the epidemic years, then began to fall very rapidly as there were fewer mouths to feed. At the same time prices of manufactured goods tended to rise, partly because artisans and craftsmen could demand higher wages, and also because of dislocations in supply.

M. M. Postan asserted that operation of market forces in medieval period did not automatically lead to disappearance of serfdom. Basing himself on empirical data derived from Doms day Book, statistics of Black Death and historian J. C. Russel’s estimates, Postan concluded that population was steadily rising in Europe till fourteenth century. A stage reached when agricultural produce was not able to meet the food requirement of the existing population leading to a collapse of population due to famine, scarcity and phenomenon like the Black Death. The constant pressure of population on land and other ecological resources caused diminishing return from the soil due to decline in productivity, fragmentation of landholdings due to pressure of population leading to shortage of food supply. The high level of population also led to fall in wages for labourers and increasing rents by landlords due to increased demand for land for cultivation. Population pressure forced people to cultivate more waste and less productive lands which was uneconomical. As there was huge reserve of labour available, there was less need for the landlords to tie cultivators to lands in the form of serfs. So in such phase, serfdom as an institution declined. So, in demographic model, agrarian crisis is seen as a product of demographic factors especially changes in population

level. W. Abel assign the main role to external factor such as epidemics and war causing either stagnation or a fall in population in fourteenth and again in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His book *The Peasants of Languedoc* is a rural history and author narrates the life of the peasants.

Le Roy Ladurie proceeded with a “Malthusian model” governed by a demographic structure in which biological factors were still determining and productive capacities remained limited but in which a market economy already existed so that the movement of the prices and population increase led to pauperization and intensified class conflict. His notion of agrarian cycle including successive phases of growth and decline is linked to demographic changes. In the first phase, called the low water mark, covering from 11th to 15th century, the preconditions of growth were prepared (low rent rate, more plentiful food).The second phase is the advance- from late 15th to 1600 is the period of expansion. The third phase is maturity from 1600 to 1650 or 1680 and he called this the period of rent offensive by the landlords. The fourth phase was the long period of recession or contraction. These phases were interwoven with his neo-Malthusian idea of a rural population fluctuation.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Critically evaluate Brenner’s ideas on the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism.

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- 2) Describe the so called ‘Demographic Model’ of transition from feudalism to capitalism.

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3.7 LET US SUM UP

One of the most lively academic debates in recent times relate to the question of what led to the decline of feudalism and the emergence of capitalist mode of production that led to the creation of the modern world. Divergent explanations have offered on the nature of feudal relationship and the moving forces responsible for its decline and the linkage of this decline had with the birth of capitalism. probably we could not single out a solitary factor as the cause of this transition. Since a social formation is complex, interaction of various causes highlighted

separately by various scholars may have played a role in the social change. Moreover, the process of transition was not uniform in time and space. The trajectories of transition may have varied from region to region as evident in the case of Japanese feudalism.

3.8 KEYWORDS

Demography: The science of studying populations and their trends such as birth and death etc.

Class struggle: In the Marxian conception the struggle between classes is seen as a driving force of social change and is termed class struggle.

3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 3.2
- 2) See Section 3.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 3.4
- 2) See Section 3.6

3.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 4 EUROPEAN VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY (FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES)

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Motives of Voyages and Expansion by the Iberian States (Portugal and Spain)
- 4.3 Role of Navigational /Technical Knowledge
- 4.4 Importance of Renaissance and Sea Voyages
- 4.5 Discoveries and Voyages
- 4.6 Nature of Portuguese and Spanish Possessions (Early Colonial Empires)
- 4.7 Types of the Colonies
- 4.8 Slavery: Plantation and Mining
- 4.9 Impact of Colonization
- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Keywords
- 4.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 4.13 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the process of early colonization;
- examine the dynamics of economy and polity within Europe, and linkages with the New World;
- familiarize the processes by which Europe's economy benefited from colonial expansion as well as exploitation of indigenous and slave labour;
- analyze the impact of trade and colonization on Western Europe, the New World, West Africa and parts of Asia; and
- Understand the concept of Eurocentrism.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the fifteenth century Europe entered into an age of international trade and subsequently commercial activity. The era was marked by full swing maritime activities as well as geographical discoveries by the Iberian peninsula, that led to the findings of the western Hemisphere and significant expansion in America, Asia and Africa. It was the Portuguese and the Spain who pioneered the discovery of new sea routes, encouraged voyages and formed early colonial empires in fifteenth and early sixteenth century. They led expeditions and patronized search

to the unknown and distant lands, and were followed by the north-western European states. From fifteenth to eighteenth centuries the process of colonization intensified, resulting into conflicts, wars, and rivalry. European states began to embark on a series of explorations that inaugurated a new chapter in world history mentioned as the Age of Discovery.

Discovery, or the Age of Exploration. This era is defined by figures such as Ferdinand Magellan, whose 1519–1522 expedition was the first to traverse the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and the first to sail the globe.

4.2 MOTIVES OF VOYAGES AND EXPANSION BY THE IBERIAN STATES (PORTUGAL AND SPAIN)

In this sub unit we will discuss the factors that motivated the states towards explorations and conquests. Amid the many motives which led Europeans to take part in the overseas movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the desire was to strike the infidel a blow, to strengthen their native state, to ascertain the shape and the nature of the earth, to gain great wealth or perhaps all of these. Adam Smith had stated in 1770, the discovery of America and the route to the Cape of Good Hope are the two most important events in history of mankind. D.K. Fieldhouse felt this as a Eurocentric view and said that the Turkish power stretched from western Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, India had colonized South East Asia earlier and controlled much of the trade, Muslims over Middle East and Southern Asia and towards the East was the Chinese. The discoveries and colonial empires affected the entire world and they became part of the European world-economy as a whole. The overseas expansion liberated Europe from geographical and psychological barriers. It is relevant to understand the motives for overseas voyages, explorations and expansion and pertinent to raise question what led to the rise of colonial empires that was initiated by Portugal and Spain?

It is not easy to generalize the motives of the voyages and expansion. Prior to the fifteenth century trade was a monopoly of the merchants from Venice and Genoa through the Mediterranean sea that brought in variety of goods like spices, cotton cloth and silk through Levant. It provided an impulse in the fifteenth century and motivated the others to turn to the lucrative trade. As per G V Scammel, gamut of motives have been identified, be it economic or ideological factors or their adventurous temperament, for European colonization. The understanding of motives of early exploration by European sea voyages are factors like God, Gold and Glory highlighting religious, economic and personal factors. The Mediterranean (Iberian Peninsula) between Spain and North Africa was conquered by Islam until the capture of Ceuta by Portugal in 1415. Portuguese made early transition into maritime reconnaissance and accomplished her part in the Reconquista from the Moors where as Castile was still confronted by the Moorish enclave of Granada until its fall in 1492. The fight against Muslim rulers referred to as the “Reconquest”— inspired a sense of commonality among Catholics. Historians put Dorn Pedro alongside his brother Prince Henry the Navigator as architects of early maritime exploration, trade, and conquest in the name of Portugal. Scholars acknowledge his voyages but also question the motives behind voyages. The monarchy’s need for external sources of wealth and power cannot

be overlooked. Under the guidance of Prince Henry the Portuguese explored the West African coastline with the aim of capturing the supplies of gold from South of the Sahara, one of the sources of the Moors' wealth, and also attacking Islam thus making two motives work simultaneously. Fifteenth century Castile then was contented with the acquisition of the Canary Islands. God implied factors especially the history of crusades between the Christians and the Muslims which led to the discovery of new sea routes. Gold dust can be identified with economic motives of exploring this region. It was sailors dream to find Antilla, a mythical land with its riches. Glory was for those who undertook the task of discoveries and voyages. According to J. H. Parry with the capture of Ceuta the crusading zeal passed to its modern stage and took form of struggle to carry the Christian faith along with European commerce to other parts of the world. Even the papal privileges granted were mainly concerned with the trading monopolies and advancement of Christendom. Henry desired the discovery of those regions whose inhabitants were to worship the Christ with the hope of Indies and Prester John. Internal politics, economic pressures and personal factors were more responsible for exploring the Atlantic coast of Africa. It was also to defuse the internal situation in Portugal, since military expansion would give the nobility something to direct their attention while commercial expansion would strengthen the position of the Royal Treasury. Portuguese achievements were confined to deliberate intentions, be it religious or economic motives in Africa and Asia or to break Venetian monopoly and establish trading base and to organize the explorers, and cannot overlook the sheer urge for discovery. Despite Portugal's small size and meagre population its achievements cannot be overlooked.

Scholars also consider the rise of Ottoman Empire or the fall of Constantinople in the hands of the Turks to have obstructed the land route to Asia and goods from Red Sea stopped coming and this encouraged them to look for diverse routes. This argument problematizes the fact that despite rising spice trade the prices were falling. The Turks did not conquer Levant till the sixteenth century, by then the Portuguese were already sailing across and the Turkish were reducing taxes, in other words they facilitated trade. The dual motive for imperialism was ideology and wealth, aptly expressed by Bernal Diaz, who accompanied the conquistadores into Mexico in 1519: 'We came here to serve God and also to get rich'. This period was marked by the rise of nation states in Western Europe where they conflicted as rivals for power and encouraged expeditions. European powers established militarized entrepots at key points in commercial networks and began to extend political authority and settlement.

Another motive that survives the argument has been the demographic factor. Scholars mention that throughout the Mediterranean there was increase in the population during the sixteenth century. At Seville immigrants were the ones attracted by voyages to the Indies, who came from everywhere and at Lisbon there was constant flow of immigrants. The expanding towns attracted attention of Italian merchants and the bankers. The overseas expedition provided more of land and resources. Others argue that when the initial voyages were made, Europe's population was static or declining. Except for bullion rich Spanish Indies, emigrants were not keen to settle in the new discovered land, rather emigrants remained in short supply. Notwithstanding that in the sixteenth century the Iberian monarchies were obliged to seek supplies from European neighbors. Scammel says nor was there immense pressure to look for food. North Africa where Portugal first colonized was a grain producer. But in Morocco Portuguese were more

concerned with loot than food. In Atlantic Islands wheat was soon replaced by production of sugar and wine. The group of crops in which they were deficient was the spices, imported from Asia at huge expense.

The quest for gold of the early explorers is a more understandable motive. Ralph Davis talks about economic stresses and internal politics as main factors for voyages. The motive that holds ground is about Europe's urge to economic aspects with the desire to locate gold and silver to meet the bullion shortage. Portuguese were happy to have found gold but it is not clear if it was their initial motive. Scholars feel that such economic determinants are doubtful in Portugal expansion as it was a poor country, overpopulated and economically weaker but still she looked for luxuries like sugar, spices. Braudel denies that Portugal was a poor country and it did provide a lot of commodities to Northern Europe. To explore oceanic routes to Asia was also curiosity of king Manuel of Portugal (1495-1521). Philip II of Spain was keen to study the History of living things of Indies. There was also search for marvels as was being fantasized in the literature. The conquistadores, missionaries and officials may not have initiated in the advancement of learning but by 1500 missionary zeal was very important. The early explorations and new discoveries provided more resources and motives did vary during the expeditions. All this reflects that the motives were diverse, be it getting rid of poverty, misery or acquiring colonial wealth by occupying territories.

4.3 ROLE OF NAVIGATIONAL/TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

Besides the motives discussed above there were technical skills, theoretical knowledge that helped in enhancing European influence in overseas expansion. We cannot overlook the innovations in astronomical observations, ship building, cartography and the use of firearms that transformed reconnaissance expeditions to a colonial enterprise. A lot of geographical and astronomical knowledge from works of Ptolemy's Geography and Strabo's were translated into Latin. Aristotle talked about a westward route to Asia and Strabo projected India in the Atlantic. Christopher. Pierre d'Alley work *Imago Mundi* in the fifteenth century identified eastward route for Asia. The early explorations banked on maps and navigational techniques. Florentine merchants in Lisbon were familiar with writings of Marco Polo and Niccolo Conti who visited Asia and revealed its wealth. Portuguese became aware from the Arab sources about the sea routes towards the East. Books were translated mainly by Acute in Hebrew to Latin during John II and it became a first practical manual to observe latitudes.

By thirteenth century Italian and Catalan hydrografers had drawn charts based on sea experience of Mediterranean, Black sea and Northern Europe. Portuguese contributed in the field of navigation and cartography as they prepared nautical charts that depicted different regions of the Atlantic, Iberia and Africa. To determine longitude, they used the altitude-distance method instead of the Pole star. The use of stars to estimate latitude was evident in 1462 and in 1480s the Portuguese astronomers determined the latitude of Southern Hemisphere where Pole star was not visible by devising a method using the sun. By fifteenth century the Portuguese cartographers marked a single meridian. The magnetic compass was a Chinese contribution; the astrolabe had been perfected by Arab navigators. Astrolabes were used for celestial navigation and quadrants were produced in

the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century magnetic compass was used by Joao de Lisbon for determining magnetic declination. A cartographer Mercator projected an accurate picture of curved earth on a piece of paper. The use of gunpowder added to their military skill. The ships used were *caravels* (around 1430) that were lighter, slimmer, durable sea-going vessel was both fast and maneuverable and it carried naval guns.

4.4 IMPORTANCE OF RENAISSANCE AND SEA VOYAGES

Scholars have given importance to the spirit of Renaissance and Humanism in influencing discoveries. The invention of printing press led to translation of works in Latin and vernacular mainly dealing with geography. Two schools of interpretations are evident with their perspectives. The proponents were the “Renaissance School” who correlated the discoveries with the spread of Renaissance and its principles of curiosity and self-reliance in practical aspects, made desire of fame and glory and were inquisitive of the new world. This school felt that overseas discoveries were based on curiosity and experiments. Italy has been considered as an entry point to the Renaissance and thus was suggested that voyagers were mainly from there. Columbus was from Genoa but the city hardly participated in the Renaissance. Another perspective is that; the overseas expansion came from medieval preparations. It relates to most important motive for overseas expansion was economic mainly the quest for Asiatic spices (preservative qualities) and other luxury goods. The sea voyages were initiated way back in the middle Ages and they did inspire Portuguese mariners.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the motives that led the Europeans to undertake voyages in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries?

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- 2) How did technical knowledge help in overseas expansion?

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3) Give answers in one word.

a) Under whose guidance the Portuguese mariners explored the West African coastline?

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b) Name Pierre d'Alley work in the fifteenth century that identified eastward route for Asia.

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c) In which year was Granada recovered by Spain?

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4.5 DISCOVERIES AND VOYAGES

The 'Great Discoveries' of the late fifteenth century were part of European exploration and colonization, the colonial conquests of Spain and Portugal constituted a great break in human history. European expeditions, expansion, colonization and the possessions bordered on the three major oceans. According to Braudel the conquest of the high seas gave Europe world supremacy to last for long. For Portugal colonies included the Atlantic islands of Cape Verde, Madeira and the Azores; the coast of Brazil; fortress settlements in East Africa (like Mombasa) and West Africa (like Sao Jorge); stretches of African coastline like Angola and Mozambique; bases in the Indian Ocean like Ormuz, Goa, Calicut and Colombo; and posts in the East in Macao, Malacca, Java, the Celebes and the Moluccas. Spain's possessions, rather more compact, included the Canaries, West Indian Islands, the whole of Central America, some parts of South America and the Philippines.

Portugal possessed long ocean sea boards, fishing and sea fairing people and commercial class, emancipated from feudal interference. In 1415 the conquest of Ceuta was kept under Portuguese garrison meaning a European state took over the administration of an overseas possession in a Muslim territory. Ceuta provided a base for an attack on Gibraltar, other Moorish settlements and provided information for African exploration. By the end of the fifteenth century Portugal undertook the conquest of Cape Bojador, Cape Verde and Sierra Leone. The commodities like sugar, gold, ivory and subsequently slave labour led to the exploitation of these regions and the first European factory overseas at Arguim in 1448. A substitute of black pepper Malaguetta was also procured in this region. Through the conquest the Atlantic Islands of Canaries, Madeira, Azores Cape Verde were explored and colonized by the Iberian states. Henry took up Guinea

venture with a religious objective of converting African negroes to Christianity. But it was a diplomatic move and he used this and financed Portuguese traders and explorers. Systematic organization of African resources started and John II built a fort in Elmina in the Gold Coast to control gold trade. As part of a Treaty of Alcacovas in 1479 between Spain and Portugal, Spain recognized the Portuguese claims to monopolize fishing trade and navigation along the West African coast line and right to govern Atlantic Islands. Afonso V (1448–81) has been characterized by a preoccupation with military adventurism in North Africa as a result the Portuguese were able to attain Sao Jorge da Mina, a major center of gold trade. With this base and along with the chain of *feitorias* the Crown was able to double its revenues.

The phenomenon of Portuguese royal mercantilism reached its peak in the period from the 1480s to the 1520s. In 1481, John II dispatched explorers on achieving maritime contacts with India, of breaking into the Indian Ocean spice trade, and of establishing an alliance with supposed foreign Christian potentates like Prester John to complete the encirclement of Islam. It was Bartolomeu Diaz who actually crossed the Cape through the western coast of Africa that John II called as Cape of Good Hope as it helped find route to India. Meanwhile Pedro de Covilhao was sent in the opposite direction to enter the Indian Ocean. These voyages gave information of the entire African coastline. Vasco de Gama's fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope and then Calicut in 1498. The fleet's first major encounter with the East African trading network took place on Mozambique Island, Mombasa, and Malindi. His trip brought the cargo of pepper and cinnamon, actually met all the expectations that were desired to search the route to Asia. During Cabral voyage to India, on the way back, he touched the coast of Brazil.

Columbus with his readings and observations was convinced of westward expansion leading to Asia. Columbus had acquired a lot of practical knowledge in navigation. His voyages (1492-1504) were considered relevant especially discovery into an unknown continent of America that was opened to European exploitation. In his second voyage of discovery he explored numerous islands of West Indies but failed to explore anything that resembled India. Yet within fifty years the Spanish possessions had grown rapidly, with settlements being established far into the interior, while the Portuguese colonies remained essentially coastal. The Spanish ruler and the Genoese bankers finally supported his expedition. He reached Bahamas and went to San Salvador, islands of Cuba and Hispania and took shelter at Azores. He felt that he had reached outskirts of Asia. Not spices but he brought back gold and natives who could be enslaved and even converted to Christianity. Columbus voyages also explored West Indies and discovered Trinidad. In his voyage in 1502 he discovered and explored coast of Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. He established a colony at La Isabela (Dominican Republic) where he even ruled. Some scholars criticize him as this age of discovery was the beginning of imperialism.

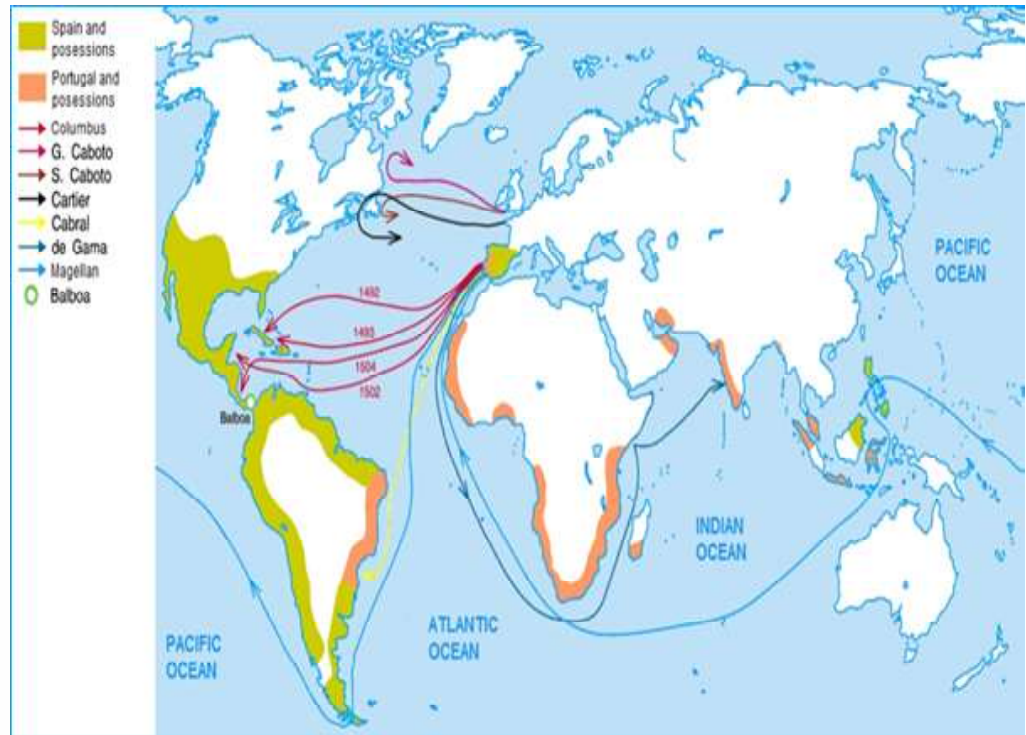
John II tried to lay claims to these discoveries made by Columbus through the treaty of Alcacovas. As a result Spanish rulers turned to Pope Alexander VI, who issued papal bulls which granted all lands discovered or to be discovered in the regions explored by Columbus and drew an imaginary line from North to south west of Azores and Cape Verde, the land and sea beyond this line be of Spaniards to explore and gave them legal claim to the lands. Through the treaty of Tordesailles in 1494, gave Portugal the route to India and the south Atlantic with the imaginary land of Antilla and the land of Brazil.

The motive was to find the route to the eastern trade and to break the Portuguese monopoly. Soon professional explorers like Vespucci, Solis and Magellan went around giving information of discoveries willing to work for any monarch. America Vespucci voyaged between 1497-98 and 1499 exploring Cuba, Guiana coast and in 1501 in Brazil. Ferdinand Magellan a great explorer under Spanish ruler Charles V wanted to bring all southern territories within Spanish demarcation that would benefit Spain. He travelled through and made way to Moluccas the Spice Islands. He was to travel westwards and sailed across the Atlantic into the Pacific in 1519. He travelled through straits of Magellan in south of South America and reached Philippines. Navigator of his caliber, through his voyages, confirmed that the world was round. Despite his death his expedition returned via Cape of Good Hope, making him circumnavigate the earth.

In 1505, Almeida was named the first viceroy of Portuguese Asia. His explorations led to the establishments of forts in Eastern Africa, Cochin and Div. In 1504 Ormuz was captured, a richest place to trade between India and Persia. Albuquerque conquered Goa in 1510, was made Portuguese head quarter. By the close of his governorship, there were major fortresses in Kilwa, Ormuz, Goa, and Cannanore in Portuguese hands. The one major venture by Albuquerque outside the western Indian Ocean was the capture of Malacca, which he took in 1511. Portuguese were able to establish fortified chain of coastal settlements starting from Suffolk in Eastern Africa to Tarande in Malacca and gradually Canton port opened trade till Nagasaki. In 1514 Pope Leo issued a bull Paracelso Devotionis in favour of the Portuguese, gave papal blessing to the discoveries and conquests while sailing towards East. The Portuguese were the first to establish commercial colonial empire. Different goods were transferred from different places like sugar, spices, gold and slaves increasing their profits.

The trade to Spanish America, was confined to the port of Seville and was restricted to the merchants of that city, organized from 1543 in their consulado or merchant guild. The great silver discoveries of the 1540's produced a revolutionary change in the transatlantic trade. The outward cargoes included manufactured goods which were not products of Andalusia, nor even of Spain. Return cargoes, included sugar, increasing quantities of silver bullion, tobacco.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century Portugal had a monopoly over the spice trade from the east. The two main oceanic trades, from Lisbon to India and from Seville to the West Indies, were important. The transatlantic trade between Spain and Spanish America in the sixteenth century moved more goods, to meet the needs of Spanish settlers, mestizos and Hispanicized Indians. The settlers developed, to pay for these imports, a ranching, planting and mining economy, producing goods for sale in Europe. For their plantations they required slaves, and so created a new trade with West Africa. The silver mines enabled them to pay for imports to sustain trade with the East.



Map 4.1: The routes pursued by Columbus, Magellan, Balboa, Cabral and Vasco da Gama who travelled to explore diverse regions

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/taDLCgkHvpaxx5su8>

4.6 NATURE OF PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH POSSESSIONS (COLONIAL EMPIRES)

The sub unit will examine the dynamics of the early colonial empires; developed mercantilist policies in relation to the colonies as their spheres of influence.

Portuguese Colonial Empire

The beginning of modern colonial empires started with conquest of Ceuta and soon Portuguese founded chain of fortified posts and commercial colonies. The world between the Cape of Good Hope and Japan, where the Portuguese had an elaborate network of trade and power between 1500 and 1700, was not a static but was characterized by change. The historians debate on “Eurocentric” explanations to look at the nature of European empire-building in the early modern period. The Portuguese had to face Muslims of East Africa, threats from the Mughal Empire and powers in China and Japan. Was Portuguese monarchy a commercial enterprise, a center of royal mercantilism or was it a military machine or an absolutist monarchy like that of Spain?

The Portuguese colonial government reflected the political character of Portugal as no distinction was made between the colonies and the metropolis. The colonies were dealt with by the Council of state; the Council of the Indies (overseas) was responsible for their government. The metropolis tried to retain full control in Brazil and other Atlantic colonies. Portugal created a model for a seaborne empire, managed a commercial and maritime enterprise in the Indian Ocean mentioned as Estado da India or India House of Lisbon. According to S. Subrahmanyam the nature of Portuguese intervention in the Indian Ocean was represented initially through commercial and then military presence through construction of forts and factories to impose monopoly on the spice trade. The Portuguese Empire

had a less uniform system; the titles conferred often varying between Viceroy and Governor or Captain General. They did create an organizational structure in India with Viceroy as the representative of the king who managed the Indian trade. As king's representative he entered into commercial treaties with local rulers and supervised their trade in Asia and was assisted by Captains-General. Each fort was under a captain who even looked into the administration of justice. Due to low salaries the empire had rampant corruption and inefficiency in Asia. Portuguese Empire, outside America, consisted of scattered bases and coastal enclaves, very different from the larger colonies of Spain.

The discovery of Brazil initiated the process of colonization in the West. Sugar was introduced in Brazil from Madeira and Sao Thome, having been planted from Sicily. The sugar trade and slave trade were two pillars on which Brazilian colony society was structured. King John III in the sixteenth century divided Brazilian coast between the Amazon and Sao Vicente into twelve captaincies which was granted to proprietary landlords known as *donatarios*. Grants were taken up by the *hidalgos* or the gentry. None of these were rich enough to bear the costs as a result four original grants were never settled, another four faced attacks from the natives. The ruler realized the need to establish central authority to save it. Brazil was made a Captaincy General and subsequently changed to a Viceroyalty, while the most important post of responsibility was the Viceroyalty of Goa which supervised Portuguese settlements throughout the Indian Ocean and the East Indies. The colonial Brazilian life was rural in nature and it had single viceroyalty, subdivided into provinces under captain-general and captain. Lesser colonies in Africa and Atlantic had captains. It was the captain general who had direct links with the Portuguese government. The Brazilian settlements were more like villages as compared to Mexico City. The home government controlled the colony through councils and tribunals which had their headquarters at Lisbon. From 1604 to 1614 the Conselho da India or India Council even handled African and Brazilian matters. C.R. Boxer says by seventeenth century history of Brazil was one of consolidation and progress, Royal government had replaced that of *donatarios*.

First a Casa de Ceuta, then a Casa da Guinea, and then a Casa da Mina was created at Lisbon under the authority of the officials who regulated the whole economic life of Portugal. Later the king created a Casa da India, followed by a state system, administering the factories and official warehouses. Soon a single administrator, the feitor, controlled two distinct Casas within the single establishment and he had under him three treasurers. There were five secretaries — *escrivas*, the *provedor* had to organize the equipment of the fleets which the casa sent out. Portugal colonial society was based on blood, social rank and married status. Those born in Portugal (*reinoes*) were highest ranked, those in Asia (*castios*) and in the next strata were in Africa (*mulattoes*) and the lowest in order were the native Christians. The Portuguese population in the colonies was divided into the officials of the church, nobility and the ordinary married and unmarried men (*soldato*). The unmarried man had to work in the military and live on the charity of *hidalgos* (minor nobility). *Soldato* were part of feudal militia though were appointed for colonial administration.

Spanish Colonial Empire

Some scholars see the enclave empire as particularly Portuguese in contrast to the settlement orientation of the Spanish. The Spanish Crown did not finance

overseas commerce but ensured that its benefits passed through Cadiz or Seville and the monarchy got its share. The Spanish colonial empire was urban empire and the regions were rich in mines and metals. The region was settled by officials, lawyers, notaries, landowners (encomenderos, ranchers) mine owners, clergy, merchants and shopkeepers. The process of empire building was initiated by private efforts and later was taken over by the crown unlike Portugal where it was initiated by the Crown.

Spanish conquest of America: The Age of the Conquistadors

The discovery of the precious metals in the New World attracted attention of many adventurous men from Spain. From 1520-1550 was the age of adventurous conquerors, or the age of the Conquistadores, who have been linked with the Moorish wars, acquired main centers of American Indian civilization and established European Land Empire. They struck to the cities and captured them all. The Spanish conquests were made at the expense of civilizations which were culturally sophisticated but unprepared militarily for the warfare conducted by the conquistadores. The Conquistadores in the New World:

- In 1521, Hernando Cortes had conquered Aztecs and secured their loyalty. He received a new commission as the representation of the Spanish crown in Mexico.
- With the help of native Indians, Cortes invaded the Aztec and defeated their ruler and his empire. The old city was destroyed and new one made named as Mexico City with Cortes as its ruler.
- He was also made a governor of New Spain in 1522.
- Another famous Conquistador Francisco Pizarro was part of founding Panama city. He took advantage of internal problems and conflicts of Inca civilization and finally took over Peru and was made the governor there.
- Conquistadores: Cortes in Mexico, Pizarro in Peru, Alvarado in Guatemala, Quesada in New Granada and Montejo in the Yucatan.
- All of these Conquistadores fought for themselves and not for Spain.

As soon as the Spanish government realized the importance of these territories rich in silver mines it established its rule over them. A second rush into the interior began, to the rich silver deposits of Zacatecas and Guanajuato in New Spain (1543–8), and of Potosi in Bolivia (1545). This necessitated further administrative changes to cope with expanding frontiers. The settlers wanted to establish landed estates like those of Castilian nobility and land was suitable for stock raising and agriculture and the indigenous people could work as peasantry. The more developed colonies became mixed societies dominated by *creoles* (local born whites) and *mestizos* (half castes) relying on natives.

Main aspects of *Encomendia*:

- The Spanish institution that became a subject of controversy was *encomendia*.
- Initially it was decided that on any new conquest the governor may divide the natives among the conquerors. This gave the Spaniard an authority to employ them whatever way he liked.

- A powerful lord of the Spanish colonies was called an *encomendero* and he was given a grant called *encomienda* comprising of some tribes. Hernando Cortes, owned 25,000 square miles and 100,000 Indians.
- According to J.H. Parry the Conquistadores converted the tributary villages into *encomiendas*. The villagers rendered to the new masters the service and the tribute which they had paid to their Indian overlords.
- The *encomiendas* provided social and economic basis for colonization.
- The *encomienda* and the stock raising produced the accumulation of capital which made possible the mining of precious metals.

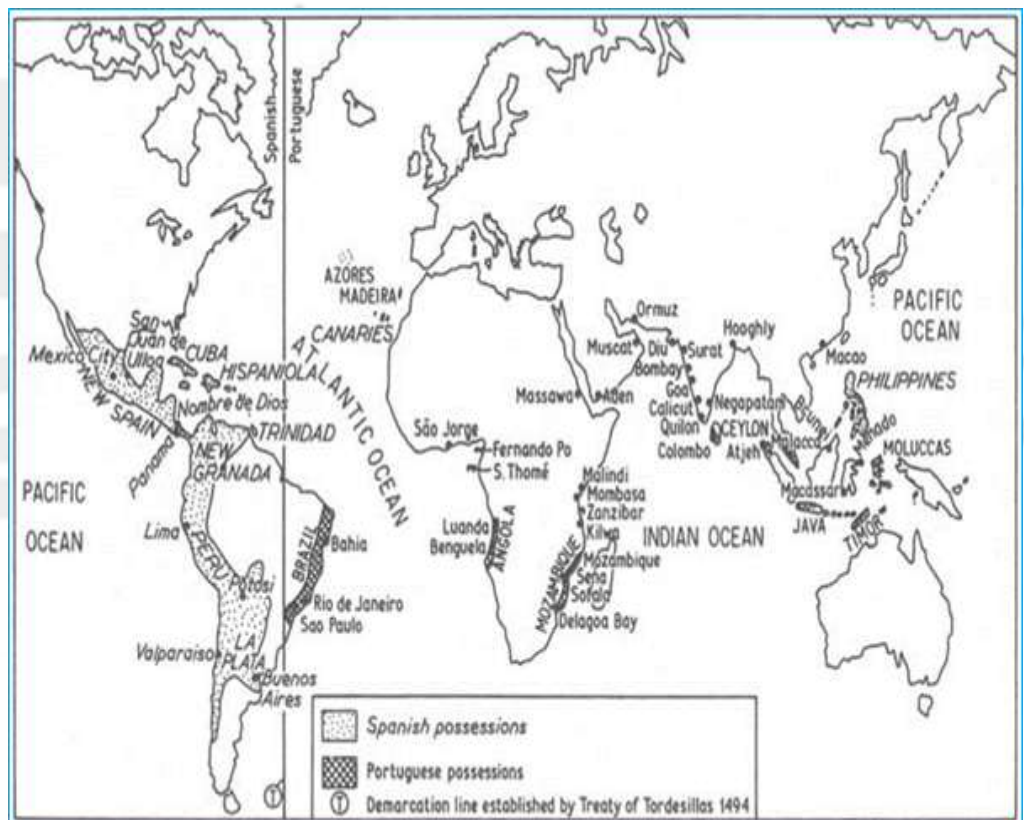
As a result, Indians came under servitude of the individuals and had to bear brunt of their ill treatment. The officials and missionaries from Spain led propaganda against this exploitation. The Indian population dwindled to almost half in Mexico. In the Caribbean island the Amerindian population fell and to fulfil the requirement of the plantations, slaves were brought in from Africa. The Spanish crown tried to exert laws to identify the Indians as free individuals and not to be ill-treated.

The Spanish government reserved one-fifth of the precious metals with monopoly of trade to Seville. Royal Quinto was levy on all bullion brought for smelting and also the tax in form of customs on inter-colonial trade. The colonial trade was a monopoly and the monopolist was the Consulado -the merchant guild of Seville. The consulado, as intermediary between the merchants and the administration, was a permanent help to the casa in sorting out the details of all the practical affairs. To organize trade, the Spanish government created Casa de Contratacion in 1503, under a treasurer, a controller and secretary, and a 'factor' whose special duty was to control the shipments of merchandise and it licensed all trade from the colonies. The chief advisory and administrative body in colonial affairs was the Council of Indies created in 1524.

The administration of the empires had officials included Governors, Captains and *Corregidores*. The Spanish colonies were gradually divided into Viceroyalties. Spanish Viceroy were much more under the control of the home government in the sixteenth century because of the constant checks exerted by the Council of the Indies. Spanish colonial government had to monitor the bureaucracy, natives and the newly settled Spanish in the colonies. To weaken the *encomienda* in 1530s an institution called Corregimientos de Indios was created. All natives were under *corregidores* i.e. the royal officials. Their services and tributes were now utilized for the king. In 1542 the Spanish government promulgated a colonial code New Laws, which banned *encomienda* (settlers privileges). There was two level of authority firstly created in Spain to control the colonies and the other that emerged in the New World. In Central America and West Indies developed a municipal administration with private and royal interests. To enforce the new system commissioners were sent to main centers of colonial government called *visitador*. He carried the inspection of the whole province of any official. Another official was the *Residencia* was appointed by the council, maintained the records of all administrative and judicial officials at the end of their tenure. Each Indian then was governed by native officials like a governor, *alcaldes* (justices of peace) around two, *regidores* or town councilors together formed the town council. They were elected annually in a meeting in which local nobility and peasantry

participated, the election being confirmed by the viceroy. The legal and the enrolled householders were called *vecinos* who elected twelve *Regidores* and from them *alcaldes* or municipal magistrates were elected. This pattern made the Spanish colonies distinct from the other colonies. The structure of government in the Indies consisted of viceroyalties, four captaincies and each was like a separate kingdom divided into provinces. At each level power of senior official was balanced through his *audencia*, a court of law and advisory council. Like viceroys and the captain generals, members of *audencia* were directly appointed by the Council of Indies to assure their independence.

This was the system to manage huge territorial empire, its wealth and make them accept the authority of the king. Over the Indian government was the Spanish governor of town who had his system of extraction in alliance with the Indian nobility. Each colony control was on the basis of its regional features and economic potential. The native policy was for non-Europeans where Indians were considered the subjects of crown but not of the Spain. They were not slaves, their property was also protected by Spanish laws and their own laws also prevailed and were brought in the fold of European beliefs. Spain regulated colonial economy, applied protective tariffs as the colonies were considered spheres of interest. The Iberian states reserved to themselves a share of the trade; precious metals and commercial monopolies.



Map 4.2: A detailed picture of Spanish and Portuguese possessions
Source: Map from Stepher J Lee, Aspects of European History 1494-1789P.98

4.7 TYPES OF COLONIES

The Spanish colonies in Mexico and Peru were ‘mixed’ colonies in which minority of white settlers created society like Spain. In some parts of America and Philippines where settlements were not very attractive Spaniards had colonies of

“occupation” with few settlers and the indigenous were loosely supervised, similarly in Portuguese colonies in Angola and Mozambique. In the Portuguese colonies Brazil was a “plantation” colony, in which a small European minority settled and tried to produce their metropolitan civilization as done by Spain in their mixed colonies. But in Brazil they had perforce to turn to agriculture to establish a widespread plantation economy. The negro slaves were begotten from Africa that produced sugar for European markets and worked in mines.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss briefly voyages and discoveries of the Portuguese empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

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- 2) Explain the nature of the Spanish colonial Empire

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- 3) What do you understand by the term Encomendia?

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4.8 THE SLAVE TRADE: PLANTATIONS AND MINING

In America the history of sugar and slavery is even more intimately linked. Sugar was responsible for agricultural slavery and it was the African slaves who replaced the Amerindians. In 1518 the first Asiento or license was granted to import 4,000 African slaves into the Spanish colonies. The Spaniards, being debarred from Africa by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), could not conduct their own slaving expeditions and had to entrust the importations to foreign nationals. For all the inhabitants of north-west Africa were assumed to be Moors, whom it was legitimate to reduce to slavery after capture. The process of colonization actually

transformed the nature of slavery where slaves were transported to far off regions to work in plantation and mines for the European states to profit. Portuguese not only supplied to the Brazilian plantations; they were also, unofficially purveyors of slaves to the sugar planters of the Spanish Caribbean, to the mines of New Spain, and Potosi. The negro, already was well known as a part of the social and economic system in Portugal and in the Atlantic islands. The negro slave thereby became an article of commerce, and the essential feature of an organized trade. The influx of slaves had its effects and it drove out free labour and yeomen farmers mainly in sugar plantations. The products from American colonies required unskilled labour mainly to grow sugar, tobacco and cotton and the *Repartimento* gangs were uncertain for continuous labour of the sugar plantations; the *mestizos* (of Spanish and Indian blood) made poor labour and the Negro slaves appeared to be the best option.

Barbara Solow argues that the link between slavery and colonial development is not accidental but arises from the difficulties of settlement where land is either originally abundant or has been made so by the expropriation of the indigenous population. In sugar the Europeans found their profitable crop, in slaves they found the coerced labor force, and in Africa they found a trading network for acquiring the slaves. Some Scholars feel that without African slaves the potential economic value of the Americas could never have been realized. In the establishment of the new international capitalist system, slavery was an indispensable catalyst, a consequence of imperial policy in the expanding capitalist world. I. Wallerstein, conceiving capitalism as a single system, considered slavery as form of exploitation alongside wage labour as part of a capitalist world-system which emerged in the sixteenth century. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman applied quantitative techniques to economic history and claimed that the American slave plantation operated like an efficient capitalist enterprise and denied that slave labour was any less productive than wage labour or incompatible with capitalism. Colonialism and slavery, their relationship with the development of capitalism has also been much discussed. B. Solow has sided with the position that both were vital to its development and important to industrialization.

The atrocities by the Europeans in the New World was questioned. It was the Spanish Jurists who discussed the legal status of the native Americans. Las Casas was the person who raised the issue of rights of the Indians and the atrocities. Their literature began to portray Spain in a negative framework. It was because of him that Spanish monarchy abolished slavery of the Amerindians, though its implementation was not fully done. Spanish atrocities were being published in Casas's work *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies 1552*. Thomas Hobbes in his work *Leviathan* presented a picture of a natural society prior to the society based on the social contract. The West's hegemony over the rest of the world fostered an ongoing sense of European superiority over non-Europeans.

4.9 IMPACT OF COLONIZATION

We need to understand the impact of explorations and conquests that transformed the commercial activities, initiated struggle for empire building by the European powers, led to the rise of the modern world and a single market for the whole world. The states created modern colonies; their methods became accepted as Mercantilism and eventually developed into modern capitalism. It had a lot of impact on European economy, as Wallerstein and others give importance to the

colonial trade as responsible for the world capitalist economy that started in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. Another impact was the decline of the Mediterranean economy and rise of the Atlantic states towards north-Western Europe. There are some scholars who have given lot of relevance to the voyages and discoveries, explorers and the Conquistadores and have portrayed natives as barbarians. Others are who tried to evaluate the didn't consider the natives as uncivilized rather have blamed the European issues, since the time of crusades in the Mediterranean.

Ecological Imperialism

The Europeans made the oceans into highways, arrived in America with guns for conquest and with infectious diseases, exploited indigenous populations and opened regions for immigrant settlement, making the New World into an appendage to European economies. The Europeans arrived there with crops and livestock, pre-adapted to American environments. The Europeans returned home with American crops- maize, potatoes, etc. that did well in European soils and with American silver to stimulate economies and world trade. Western Europe did just that by means of its brutality and guns and by geographical and ecological imperialism. The sugarcane plantations of Brazil and the West Indies became moneymaking machines for the imperial institutions and important sources of calories for Europe's populations.

Alfred Crosby has highlighted the importance of the voyages and how the Europeans affected America biologically as plants and animals were exchanged which led to the globalization of biology but also had effects in form of spread of diseases. The exchange of goods from the New World in return for industrial goods was actually very beneficial to Europe and had an impact on the trade between Europe and the other parts of the world. It was the discovery of America which changed the agricultural map of the world. The crops common to both the Old and New Worlds were cotton, coconuts and some gourds. The dog was the only domestic animal common to both hemispheres. The dispersal of crops and livestock which followed was the most important in human history and had the most far-reaching effects of the discoveries. Some feel that without the American crops, Europe might not have been able to carry such heavy populations. Without the European livestock, and especially horses and mules for transport and cultivation, the American continent could not have been developed. A lot of crops helped feed the Europeans back home that changed their eating habits. Portugal's revenues banked on the African gold, slaves and the Malaguetta and Asian spices.

The first transferences of European crops and livestock overseas were to the Atlantic islands.

The sheep, cattle and goats, found the vegetation of the slopes and valleys of the Azores environment good to live. Over-reliance on maize in the diet was accompanied by pellagra, a disease due to a vitamin deficiency. The introduction of the crops and the livestock had their effects as well as their successes and taught ecological lessons. Rabbits introduced to the island of Porto Santo in the Madeira group had become so destructive of vegetation and the cattle multiplied rapidly in Hispaniola.

Demographic Effects

The scholars have tried to look into the consequences of the demographic factors. Braudel, Wallerstein and others have looked into the impact of population migration that led to spread of various diseases. Some of the diseases prevailed in America like Yellow fever, small pox, measles, plague, chicken pox and malaria. The discoveries, conquest and colonization made people emigrate to the New World and the attraction was of land, farms where the plantation colonies were emerging. The settlement was more attractive towards the New world as compared to Asia and Africa. In America the native population depleted mainly the Amerindian and also there was displacement of African slaves.

Art and Architecture

Another impact was evident through the forms of Art. Many were responsible for the rise of new empires be it the missionaries, traders, adventurers, explorers and also responsible in spreading the information about the New World. The books on navigation, knowledge of Geography and biological sciences also spread. The Writers like Shakespeare in his *The Tempest* and E. Spencer work *The Fiarie Queene* highlighted about the New World and Thomas Mun in his *Utopia* talked about an ideal state. The poets and writers were very excited about the ideas of ships, pirates, adventurers and various characters attached to it that became part of literature. They even felt that the natives should not have been displaced. In the art and architecture, the ideas became visible. The black slaves became part also of the painting in context of empire building.

Economic Consequences and Impact on Spain

A lot of wealth by the Spanish and the Portuguese was acquired from the mines and commercial activities that led to economic consequences. These mercantilist states adopted policies, where trade was of predominance along with granting privileges, protection, monopolies, accumulation of bullion and silver imports from the New World. Scholars interpret that the price revolution in Europe was an outcome of inflow of silver bullion from the New World. But the rising prices was not merely due to influx of gold and silver or the colonial empire. Seville as mentioned by Wallerstein was the center of the world in the sixteenth century in context of the trans-Atlantic oceanic trade. Chaunu said that the central item of this trade was bullion and the monopoly of Seville, a trade which became so important that all of European life and the life of the entire world, depended on Seville. A question needs to be raised as to why Spain did not move on the path of capitalism or for that matter was not the pioneer in Industrial growth?

Scholars feel that Spanish decline was an outcome of its colonial possessions and the inflow of bullion proved that it was not all about prosperity. Spain was unable to meet the rising demands of the colonies and it was the merchants from the other states who fulfilled the requirements of the Spanish colonies. Spanish colonialism banked mainly on bullion, that entered Europe as Spanish cargo. According to I. Wallerstein the cause seems to be that Spain did not erect the kind of state machinery to profit from the creation of a European world-economy. This indicates that the “core” areas need not be those that are most “central,” either in geographical terms or in trade movements. Spanish sheep farming industry was an important barrier to the rise of a yeomanry. It is for such reasons the state machinery was not adequately and properly constructed, in P.Chauanu’s phrase. In any case, Spain did not become the premier power of Europe rather became semi peripheral and then peripheral.

Spanish empire had a huge bureaucracy that became a burden to the crown and her participation in long wars depleted its revenues and wealth. According to J.H. Elliot, Charles V imperialism was sustained on the basis of deficit financing and American silver which became the basis to provide money to the Spanish ruler by the financial houses and it helped sustain in the sixteenth century. The American wealth was being consumed fast due to royal policies and also for buying the goods be taken to the New World. The Spanish silver soon began to deplete and the alternative was to raise taxes that affected both the peasantry and the commercial people. In sixteenth century Asia Africa and America were brought into the fold of economic relations and they need to be looked into the context of the world economy. Europe was affected by its new defined relations and by the end of the seventeenth century Portugal had lost half of her imperial possessions and Spain also experienced threats to her coastal possessions and maritime commerce.

Divergence Perspective

Pomeranz's perspective offers important support to the idea that colonialism and slavery played a critical role in the triumph of Industrial capitalism. The unending accumulation of capital and power defines the European developmental path as capitalist. In contrast, the absence of such an unlimited quest characterized the developmental path of East Asia prior to the Great Divergence debate that East Asia was a market economy, but not a capitalist one. Eurocentrism, including attempts to link capitalism to some European essence, must be rejected. Pomeranz joins Blaut and Frank in challenging Eurocentrism. Accordingly, a non-Eurocentric view of the origins of capitalism recognizes the relative backwardness of Europe and the existence of proto-capitalist elements in non-European societies. As much as possible a non-Eurocentric history of capitalism pursues a comparative perspective, examining the development of capitalism in both European and non-European contexts. Finally, a non-Eurocentric history ought to be based on the assumption that whatever its economic benefits may have been, capitalism has operated against the interests of the mass of a common humanity.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Briefly describe the role of slavery in Plantations and mines of the New World

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- 2) Analyse briefly the impact of the Europe overseas discoveries on Spain.

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3) Explain the concept Ecological Imperialism.

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4.10 LET US SUM UP

The age of European voyages and discovery represented a new period of global interaction. It was the Iberian states who gave impetus to the overseas explorations. European exploration was driven by multiple factors, including economic, political, religious incentives and personal assertiveness and they were able to forge into undiscovered territories identified as New World. The period of European global exploration laid the seed bed of European empire and colonialism, which would continue to develop and intensify over the course of the next several centuries. As European exploration evolved it saw the oppression of native populations and the enslavement of Africans. The slave trade formed a commercial link between the Spanish and Portuguese empires long before the union of the Crowns in 1580. The European voyages and discoveries had opened up the routes to the new lands and paved way for capitalism. What was known was that they lived in a world of empires, and each-from China to Portugal-was striving to build and maintain power with the means at its disposal. The extension of empires around the world from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries was not a single-minded conquest by a securely or-ganized Europe but rather a multifaceted transformation. Societies and polities were disrupted and created as rulers extended power, sought intermediaries, and manipulated hierarchies. Along the way, a few people, like Bartolome de las Casas, paused to ask, what have we wrought?

4.11 KEYWORDS

Reconnaissance: The process of getting information about enemy forces of positions by sending small groups of soldiers.

Reconquista: Military campaigns through which the Christian armies reclaimed Iberian Peninsula from the Moors starting in the eighth century through crusades and was carried forward by Portugal when it captured Ceuta bringing the Christians together under a common cause of acquiring region from the Muslims, culminating with fall of Granada in 1492, by the Spain.

Moors: Muslim population of Maghreb, the Iberian peninsula.

Donatarios: Proprietary landlords were known as *donatarios*; Prominent settlers were granted vast estates, some of which actually exceeded Portugal in size, and the owners (*donatarios*) possessed extensive political, judicial and military powers. They were to settle land at their own cost receiving in return extensive administrative, fiscal and judicial powers over colonists whom they induced to move to their respective captaincies.

Creoles: Local born whites from mixed marriages between Europeans and non-

Europeans.

Conquistadores: Spanish conqueror of America.

Asiento: Revenue licenses or asientos were required for the importation of this 'merchandise'. Spanish government consented to a series of slave asientos. This was an agreement for farming out the slave trade to a contractor who was to organize the whole business, maintaining his own stations in Spain, Africa and Indies. He was also to take over from the government the task of selling licenses to the sub-contractors and giving the license fees to the Crown. Asiento was a means through which the Spanish government acquired an indirect control over slave trade with its colonies.

4.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-Section 2,3,4, Section 4.2 and need to mention diverse motives collectively were responsible for the early colonization
- 2) See Section 4.2
- 3) Correct answers in one word
 - a) Prince Henry
 - b) *Imago Mundi*
 - c) 1492

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 2,3 and 4 Section 4.5
- 2) See Section 4.6. In this question mention the nature of control over American colonies briefly talking about council, officials, local government etc.
- 3) See Section 3 and 4, Section 4.6

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) You can give details of how and why slaves were brought in from Africa. Also mention role it played in colonialism. Section 4.1 and 4.3 in Section 4.8
- 2) See Section on impact on Spain in Section 4.9. This helps to understand that Spain had good buying power but not production ability.
- 3) See Section 4.2, Section 4.9

4.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

Braudel, Fernand (1988) Civilization and Capitalism 15th& 18th centuries Vol.s I, II, III. London.

Burbank, Jane and Frederisk Cooper (2002) Empires in World History- Power and politics of Difference, Princeton:Princeton University Press

Dav's Ralph (1973), The Rise of Atlantic Economies, London: Weiden field and Nicolson.

P.S. Gupta (etc.), Aadhunik Paschim ka uday, Delhi, Delhi University.

UNIT 5 ECONOMIC TRENDS: SHIFTS, CONTINUITIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Region of Survey
- 5.3 Historiographical Overview
- 5.4 The Fifteenth Century: Out of the Middle Ages
 - 5.4.1 Demographic Trends: The Black Death and Aftermath
 - 5.4.2 Patterns of Trade and Exchange
 - 5.4.3 Agricultural and Industrial Produce
- 5.5 The Sixteenth Century Growth
 - 5.5.1 Demographic Trends
- 5.6 Trade and Exchange in the Sixteenth Century
- 5.7 Agriculture and Produce in the Sixteenth Century
- 5.8 Urban Industries in the Sixteenth Century
- 5.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.10 Keywords
- 5.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 5.12 Suggested Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand how the western economy made a transition from the feudal economy to the economy of the early modern Europe;
- understand some of the historiographical writings which analysed this transition; and
- understand some of the economic trends which emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which indicate this transition.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The early modern centuries in Europe are generally seen as one which lay the economic foundations of the modern Industrial-capitalist western world order. The transition from the chaos and stagnation of the 'feudal dark ages' to the 'capitalist modern age', is seen as one interspersed by slow growth and development of institutional foundations, interspersed with periods of rapid shifts in scale and scope of the economic activities and advances, to the extent, that some of them have been seen and reflected upon as 'revolutionary'.

The early modern economic transition is marked by a demographic cycle of growth, stagnation and decline, although not uniformly applicable across the entire region. The structures of market, exchange and commerce, underwent shifts and evolution, as they become more complex in response to the rapidly evolving world order. The discoveries, settlements in the new world, conquests and colonisation, all played an important role in bringing about the new economic transformation. The changes in social and political spheres also shaped the economic structures and institutions. With the rise of nation states and new focus on 'national economies', the local concerns of the previous age gave way to the local markets converging to suit the needs and concerns of a modern nation state, with national markets.

The foundations of the above mentioned transition also lay in the sphere of changes and evolution of religious and societal institutions and value structures. The world which the 'Renaissance' created brought about radical shifts in societal attitudes towards knowledge production and dissemination across various sections. The new 'scientific attitude', became the dominant influence on the way knowledge was verified, produced and reproduced. At the same time the dissemination of ideas of reformation, which were forced upon the Roman Catholic Church and related institutions played an important role. Brought about by changing attitudes towards the ideas of world and cosmos, and of the place of human beings within the scheme of things, the reformation led to emergence of protestant churches across various regions of Europe, unshackling the chains of feudal norms, which had restrained growth and progress in European society for ages. In words of Maurice Dobb, it was this 'protestant ethics' which emerged in the European society of the early modern western Europe, which lay the foundation for the emergence of 'capitalism' in the late 18th and 19th century.

5.2 REGION OF SURVEY

The region of present study largely coincides with Western Europe. The large landmass often described as a massive peninsula, was surrounded by sea on the three side. The varied terrain and topography across the mainland Europe gave shape to the different political and economic formations, which took shape and defined early modern western world. The region itself has been spoken about as one of the 'world regions' – a multi-nation agglomeration, defined not by political separation, but by deep historical and cultural bonds, which shaped the social and economic formations in the region. The long coastline, with an extension, the seas around also played an important role in dictating the contours of the political and economic life of Early Modern Europe. Fernand Braudel spoke about the primacy of Mediterranean coastline and the sea itself in shaping the economic and social life of southern Europe. To him, the Mediterranean acted as a cohesive bond which unified various aspects of life and society across a vast geographical space.

Scholars have explored the unifying strands of commerce and trade across the vast space of western Europe, highlighting the geographical complexity, at the same time also focusing on the connections which transcends the barriers of geography and climate to give Europe a singular cultural and economic identity, when compared and looked at in context of global connections and 'world systems'.

The region of western Europe can be geographically identified with the countries bordering the eastern coast of North Atlantic. The region is identified as a singular geographical 'meta-region' and a unit of historical analysis not only because of the geographical unity of the Atlantic coastline, but also because of the cultural unity of the Roman past.

The most important geographical feature of the space is the presence of a long and fractured coastline. The region has highest coastline to land area ratio, than any other in the world. The region also has some of the lowest gradient of land, at places, even below the sea level, as in the Netherlands. The Great European Plain which stretched from the Atlantic seaboard in the northwest to the Russian steppes in the East provides a singular continuity to the region. The various rivers which flows through and empty's themselves both on the North, West and in the Southern seas, along with the land routes which crossed through the high mountain ranges of the south were the proverbial arteries of the region. The movement of people, goods and merchandises, across the vast region, connecting various urban centres which rose and fell over the course of millennia from the Roman times to about the middle decades of the eighteenth century, happened following these arterial waterways and road networks. Hence one can say that the geography and elevation of the land to a large extent conditioned and shaped the way European economic exchange across the time and space has occurred and shaped itself.

5.3 HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

In the late 19th century, Karl Marx, began to articulate his own vision and ideas on history and on progress in human societies. Responding sharply to the prevalent notions about causation in history, which at the time was dominated by Hegelian scheme of things, Marx put forward his own ideas around the notion of material progression. Hegel had envisaged a scheme of 'dialectical progression', which based itself on the clash of ideas. The conflict between ideas, as reflected in scheme of religious and social orders and institutions, gave shape to higher state of organisation, and hence thus enabling and directing progression and advance civilisation. Marx along with Frederic Engels, put forward a scheme, what came to be called 'dialectical materialism'. Here the organisational centrality is not given to ideas and thoughts but to the material base of the societies. Material conditions and class conflict were the agents of civilizational progress. The dialectical dualism here is envisaged in the conflict between various social and class categories which evolves from within a social order, which erupts primarily due to the unequal distribution and control over resources and production means within the given socio-economic order.

Civilizational progress is seen through the eyes on material culture. The historical time line is divided in accordance with the stages of social and material progress and the dominant means of production in any given society. Thus historically, the stages of slave mode, feudal mode and capitalist mode are envisaged to exist, on path of material progression, en-route to the greatest stage of socialist mode, where class conflict ceases to exist and a perfect social harmony is achieved through equitable access to the means of production by every member of the society.

European society when seen through the lens of 'Marxism', is seen to have gone through the first two stages and is still grappling with the class tensions produced

due to the inequitable access to resources of the capitalist stage. However, according to Marxist writings, the progression between the stages is never smooth, and is inevitable to have been brought on by violent socio-political upheavals or revolutions. The revolutions occur when the discontent within socio-economic structures reaches levels where it's no longer able to contain the anger and discontent of the masses within the seams of the existing socio-economic and political categories.

Marxist writings therefore saw early modern European economic structures to reflect transition from one stage of feudal mode to the higher capitalist mode of the modern world. This transition wasn't smooth and is accompanied by great many revolutionary shifts that have been envisaged in the organisation of economy and polity in the course of the early modern centuries. Hence the terms as 'commercial revolution', 'scientific revolution', 'English revolution', have been used to highlight the nature of transitions within socio-political space of Europe. Similarly the term 'crisis' has been used to highlight the extent of chaos within European structures at the end stages of transition - the 'crisis of the seventeenth century' has been envisaged as one where across a long time period, various elements and systems of control and negotiations underwent violent shifts and breakdowns, a necessary precursor for progress to the higher stage.

One of the major focus of the writings on European economy which have been attempted are those which dealt with the issue of transition from one mode of production to another. For the early modern period, the dominant theme, thus, has been the study of the 'transition from feudalism to capitalism'. Maurice Dobb's analysis on the transition has provided the base for the studies focusing on the theme and much argument has happened over the course and factors in transition. Although the two fundamental poles of 'feudalism' and 'capitalism' remained rooted firmly within the Marxist frame. Similarly, Robert Brenner, in his analysis of agrarian class structure and economic developments in pre-industrial Europe, attacked, what he considered to be a form of demographic determinism used by 'Neo-Malthusian' scholars to explain the developments and shifts in pre-industrial agrarian societies. This invoked sharp reaction from scholars as M. M. Postan, John Hatcher, and Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie. The debate over decades has expanded and enlarged in form and scope, and have seen active participation by scholars as Guy Bois, Patricia Croot, David Parker, T. H. Aston and many others.

Another area which has attracted considerable attention of scholars has been the impact of colonial expansion on European economies and of the European commercial empires. The inflow of large amount of bullion in form of direct transfer, or through participation in lucrative markets and exchange in sugar and coffee plantations, or in slave trade, had a significant impact on the European markets and institutions and instruments of commerce. The transformation has been so rapid and so significant that the term 'commercial revolution' has been used, particularly for the changes in the period of 14th to 16th centuries, in areas of currency, instruments of exchanges, banking structures and loan instruments, which laid the foundation for the emergence of modern Economic system.

At the same plain a contrast with the 16th century has been drawn up with regard to the century and the developments which followed in the seventeenth century. The Marxist scholars as E. J. Hobsbawm, saw the period as one experiencing stagnation and decline on almost all the important economic and demographic parameters, and as a necessary development on path towards the emergence of

capitalist economy. The 'crisis of seventeenth century' broke down and disintegrated the last vestiges of feudal structures in Western Europe and paved way for the emergence of industrial - capitalist society. Much literature has developed around theme, especially in the context of the nature of the crisis. H. R. Trever-Roper, N. Standard, and Geoffrey Parker have explored different themes around the issue, ranging from exploring societal crisis, demographic and environmental factors as reasons behind the economic and production crisis of the period.

Influenced by or responding to the works of Karl Marx, the late 19th and early 20th century writings on economic history were largely attempts to explain the frequent recession and growth cycles which were symptomatic of the period. The scholars in European and American universities delved into writing the histories of the early modern period to understand better the conditions which have historically dictated growth and recession. Here the dynamism and causation were sought within the materialistic structure of Western society and the inherent class tensions, resulting from differential control over production mechanisms.

At the other end of the spectrum, stands the approach of the Annales school. A group of French scholars have attempted to write history as a *longue duree*. History here, was not seen as a long march and a dialectic struggle resulting in a progression towards a higher societal organisation. Human beings were not mere organisms acting out a given role in the structures pre-framed and difficult to transcend. The concerns of everyday life, the impact of ideas, spacial location and geography of the observed community, demographic shifts, the slow unveiling of time and the climatic shift, the cultural milieu, all were taken into account to explain the slow unwinding of historical trajectory of European society over several centuries.

Rising nationalistic and colonial competition amongst European nations also dictated to a large extent the focus of economic surveys undertaken. In fact, the macro economic analysis of European nation states has continued to influence the trends in economic history writings. Almost simultaneously, the early 20th century writings on the economic history also were attempts to evolve comprehensive theories and models of economic growth, within the larger ambit of Marxist writings or in counter response to these. Within these, one can place the debates surrounding the issue of evolution of early modern 'political economy' and whether these can be generically classified within the ambit of the umbrella term 'mercantilism'. Similarly, studies have attempted to focus on the development and influence of guilds, merchant companies and joint stock enterprises, aiming at over all attempt to discern the evolutionary stages towards the rise of industrial institutions and banking structures in the late 18th and early 19th century.

In counter to, what came to be recognised as dominance of 'theory' in construction of European economic models, as reflected in tendencies to theorise growth or decay to explain overall trends and influences of policies, bullion movements and colonialism, as reflected in studies on mercantilism, there were major counter attempts to read economic shifts more empirically and data based. Much of these responses also had its roots in the 'Annales writings' and attempts to delve in writings of sociologists, geographers, climatologists, and population researchers, to come up with a more overall and nuanced understanding of European economic space at much local level. Influence of such approach can be discerned in the

writings focusing on individual banking institutions, port towns, cities, and on industrial and agrarian commodities and their production trends.

C. H. Wilson in his introductory essay to fifth volume of Cambridge economic history, has recognised the two general streams of intellectual influence, one of economic theorists who attempted to provide one over-arching model of growth and decline of institutions as guilds, corporations, banks, etc., and the other one dictated by the concerns of political histories defining the space and chronologies.

The habit of proceeding by the more or less disparate analysis of celebrated institutions already familiar through their political importance - guilds, companies colonial trading organisations, public banks, etc. — went hand in hand with an adumbration of the macro-economy of this or that state, again vaguely familiar (if only in outline) from the earlier study of the political history of the different nations.

Much of the economic history written down to middle of 20th century has been a constant endeavour to find a balance between the two worlds.

In recent times, the advances in the Western Economic studies have been varied and diverse. On one hand we have seen scholars as Lars Magnusson and Steve Pincus resurrecting the concept of ‘mercantilism’, with the diverse application of the concept on the studies of not only early modern political economy, but also on the structuring of the entire social and political system of Early modern western Europe. Similarly, the studies have also attempted to move away from a unilinear progression model for economic growth and transitions, to one which was more diverse and multifaceted. The debates around the ‘great divergence’ in world economic order, have been revisited by scholars as Kenneth Pomaranz and Prasanan Parthasarthy, who have questioned the unilinear growth model from agrarian feudal world to the industrial capitalist world order, which attempts to look back at history from the success of the European states in reaching the higher industrial stage, than contemporary Asiatic civilizations.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Critically comment on the Marxist views on the transition to early modern European economy.

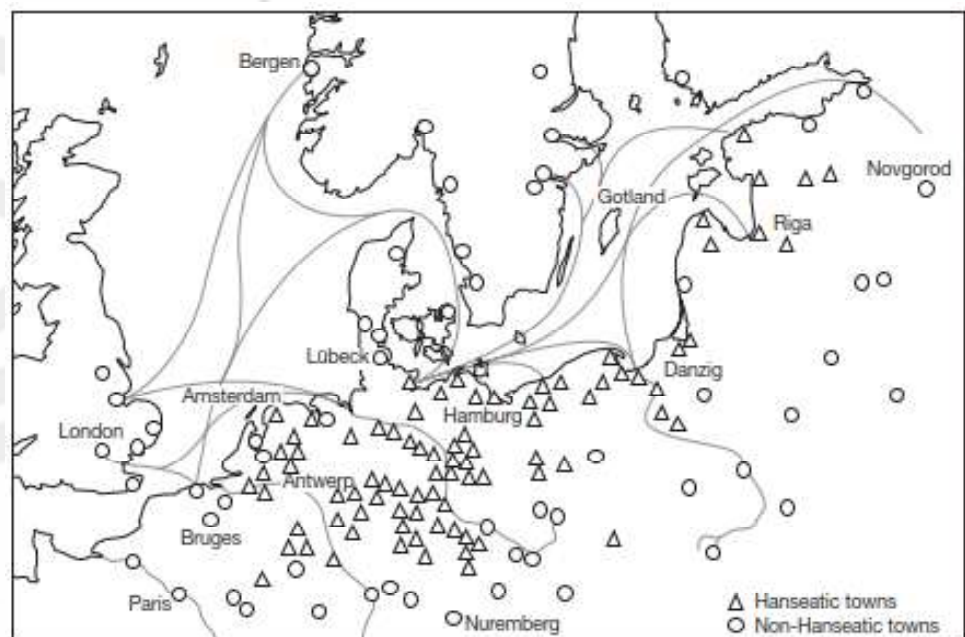
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- 2) How did the Annales school view the transition to the early modern European economy?

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5.4 THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY: OUT OF THE MIDDLE AGES

The fifteenth century saw European economy coming out of the shackles of the middle ages. The old-world feudal structure, which had dominated the social and economic order in Europe, began to crumble and break in face of new pressures and structures of political and social control which had begun to take shape in the previous period. The beginning decades of the century, saw Europe still reeling under the impact of the massive epidemic of plague, popularly known as the 'Black Death' which had devastated much of the continental Europe in the previous centuries. At the same time, the Urban centres in the Italian peninsula, began to forge new association and access new markets over the century, notwithstanding the rapid expansion of Ottoman Empire into Eastern Europe and Anatolia. The dominance of Italian city states as Florence, Naples, Venice, and of their bankers and merchants over the trade with Asia and in Eastern Products, became an important marker of the Economic life of the 15th century Europe. Similarly, in Northern Europe, the establishment and dominance of the Hanseatic League has been noticed and so has been the rise of mercantile centres as Bruges and Amsterdam. The last decade of the century saw the Portuguese discovery of the route across Cape of Good Hope in to Asiatic Markets and the discovery of Americas by numerous adventurers as Columbus.

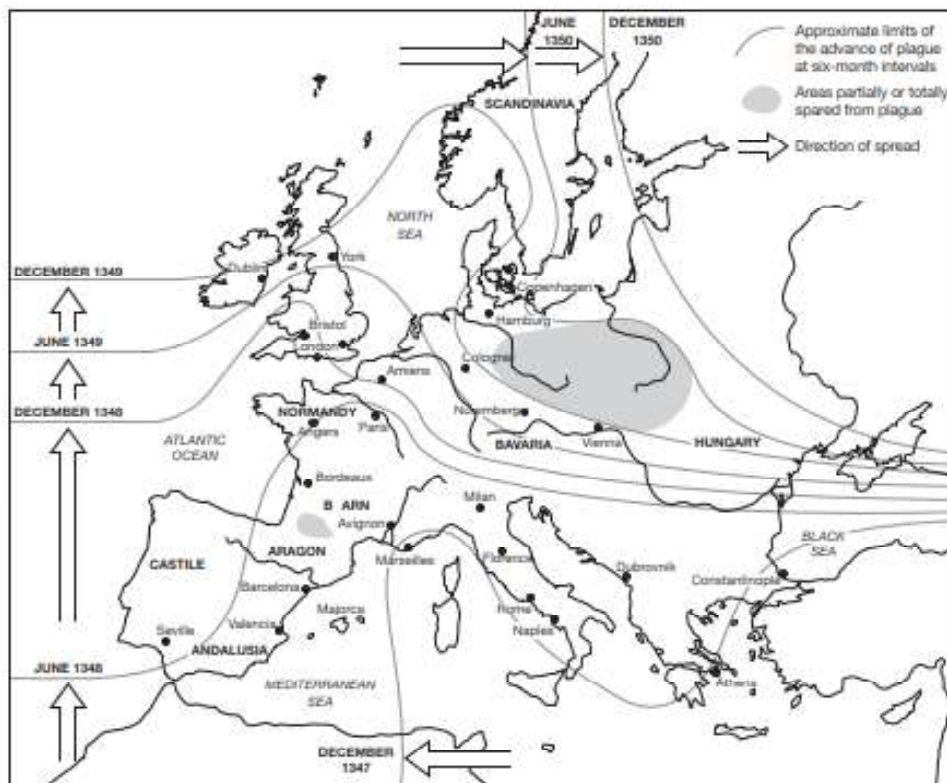


Source: Paolo Massa, "The Economy in the Fifteenth Century: Preconditions of European Expansion," in *An Economic History of Europe: From Expansion to Development*, ed. Antonio Di Vittorio (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

5.4.1 Demographic Trends: The Black Death and Aftermath

The conditions of famine and scarcity, experienced in the early 14th century, slowed down both the economic and the demographic growth by the 1340s. The period was followed by one of devastating epidemic of bubonic plague, which engulfed almost the whole of the western world by the 1350s. Such was the severity and scale of the epidemic, in terms of reach and deaths caused by it, that it's still remembered as 'Black Death' in European History. Starting from

Constantinople and eastern Mediterranean (1347), through the Italian peninsula, Spain and France (1348) to central Europe (1349), all the way to the Low countries in North Europe (1350), the plague turned out to be a demographic catastrophe for the western European region. The population loss was varied and depended upon the severity of the epidemic in different regions, although on a rough estimate, it's been estimated that by the middle decades of the century, the loss in population was about 40% of the late 13th century levels.



Source: Paolo Massa, *“The Economy in the Fifteenth Century: Preconditions of European Expansion,”* in *An Economic History of Europe: From Expansion to Development*, ed. Antonio Di Vittorio (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 8.

Along with the high number of deaths and a substantial loss of population during the course of the century, the plague had two major aftereffects on European demography and economy. For one, the plague from this point onwards, became endemic, i.e. there were numerous subsequent, although with limited effect, occurrences of the Plague epidemic. Secondly, it took over a century for the European population to reach back to the pre-1347 levels, and not until the end of the fifteenth century that the population touched the 80 million mark, although considerable regional variation in rate of growth and over all demographic concentration remained.

The growth as already suggested was staggered and varied across the continental space. Where as political instable conditions in French countryside and in Italy, due to ‘Hundred Years War’ (1337-1453), hindered the growth rate, the Iberian Peninsula, Germany and England saw much higher rate of population growth. With the economic recovery, much visible after the 1450s, the rate of growth increased.

Another aspect of the population trends in Europe, was the increasing migration towards cities from the countryside, a trend, which curiously, remained unaffected

due to disruptions and can be traced back to the late Middle Ages. Moving in search of employments and away from a countryside ravaged by famines and wars, or from the smaller towns to larger cities, by the middle fifteenth century, it has been estimated that on an average, about 10% of the European population was concentrated in Urban centres. In some regions, the percentage of urban population was as high as 15% to 20%.

The mobility and higher urban concentration also came to be reflected in the change and growth of the nature and size of urban centres. In the early 15th century, within the Italian peninsula, there were about 10 cities, with the size of around 50,000 inhabitants, compared to about 10 or so in the entire western Europe around the same time.

5.4.2 Patterns of Trade and Exchange

Emerging out of the fourteenth century, Europe had already evolved a network of communication and trade, primarily centred around the numerous towns and urban spaces which have evolved over the course of the middle ages. Fernand Braudel saw these urban spaces as the pillars or 'urban poles' around which the European economic system evolved over the course of centuries. The towns acted both as spaces of exchange of commodities, as well as generated demand for the consumption of the produce from the dominantly agrarian countryside.

As noted earlier, in the fifteenth century, two major areas emerge as dominant for the functioning of the European commercial system. The first was the Italian peninsula, with its cities as Genoa, Venice, Amalfi, Naples, Florence and others dominating the trade with the East, and their mercantile classes controlling the flow of goods as spices, across the Mediterranean world. The second region was the Baltic sea area, where by the mid thirteenth century, a group of ports – Bruges, Antwerp, Hamburg, Danzig, Stettin, and Novgorod on Russian coast, joined to form part of the German Hanseatic League. The league controlled the flow of traffic across the Baltic Sea, in North Sea and across Northern countries, including England. Initially, the activities of the league were centred around the town of Bruges, however, over the course of the century, as a result of the political instability, due to the 'Hundred Years War' (1337-1453), Antwerp replaced Bruges as the commercial centre for Northern trade and also emerged as the venue for one of the first international commodity exchange markets. International fairs, which served as spaces for exchange of high value commodities came to be organized since the fourteenth century in cities as Champagne, Geneva, and Lyons.

Transportation of commodities across the continent wasn't easy, due to numerous obstacles, both natural and those created due to political and economic exigencies. Crossing the Alps, which formed the barrier between the Mediterranean world and the markets in continental Europe, has always been a challenge. In the interior of Europe there were plenty of regular services and shipments along the rivers and canals, but there were still numerous obstacles, such as water mills or fulling works in mid-stream, that made costly transfers necessary. There were also dues and tolls to pay, or services that were under the monopoly of the corporations. Frequent wars and political conflicts between continental states also made inland transport a difficult proposition.

The route of choice was therefore the sea; the transport it provided was slow and hazardous, owing to mishaps caused by human error or acts of nature, but it was

undoubtedly less costly. Sailings did not usually take place in winter, but this was offset by the greater distances that could be covered and the high profits from the transport of both expensive goods and the relatively cheap bulk commodities.

Before the explorations and geographical discoveries at the end of the fifteenth century, ships still sailed within sight of the coast wherever possible, but there was a gradual increase in the tonnage of the vessels. These were now being equipped with a greater number of masts and with stern rudders and were making better and more rational use of sail power. Alongside the rowing galleys, ships known as carracks, or Navis, were appearing, and caravels later in the fifteenth century. For coastal navigation smaller boats were used. They were similar one to another but often had very different names. Throughout the century improvements to instruments, and developments in cartography, gradually reduced the margins of error and lowered the risks that were an integral part of navigation.

The fifteenth century saw a dramatic expansion in the geographic horizon of the Europeans. The discovery of the sea route to Asia and the discovery of Americas completely transformed the understanding and knowledge about the world. The explorations and voyages were followed by the colonization of the new world as well as a greater interaction and fusion with the Asiatic commercial world. The new routes brought about a complete shift in the patterns of trade and commercial control within continental Europe, as we began to see rise of Atlantic seaboard at the cost of the hitherto dominant Mediterranean.

5.4.3 Agricultural and Industrial Produce

At the end of the Middle Ages land was still the major resource of the European economy in terms of value, what it produced and the labour force it employed. However, it is difficult to provide a clear, overall picture of agricultural yields, organization and produce, primarily because of the many differences determined by the climate and geography of the continent, as well as lack of source material for the period.

In Mediterranean Europe, cereals were cultivated alongside a number of crops such as vines, olives, mulberries and citrus fruits. In addition, some amount of sugar cane and cotton were also cultivated. Oats, barley and rye, as well as plants such as flax and hemp used in manufacturing textiles, were grown in the northern and Atlantic areas. Cereal crops, which were also an important source of supplies for the rest of the Old Continent, were cultivated in central and eastern Europe.

The population increases from the middle of the fifteenth century, had varied consequences in the long term, on the pattern of European agriculture. One sees the beginning of a slow gradual break-up of the closed medieval manorial structures of western Europe and its opening up to the market. Another impact was the consequent deforestation, which in the second half of the fifteenth century made new areas available for agriculture. These developments along with the land reclamation projects, undertaken primarily in England and in the Low countries saw a considerable expansion of agrarian spaces in Europe.

The introduction of new agrarian contracts saw forms of agrarian management structures evolving over the course of the next few centuries, the roots of which all can be traced back to the fifteenth century. These can be traced in the

introduction of mezzadria sharecropping system in Tuscany at the end of the century and in the development of a pre-capitalist form of land management through the system of leases in rice fields in the plains of the Po valley in Italy.

These were all indications that the fifteenth century, rather than being a period of crisis, was one of readjustment after violent upheavals, and that the economic system was going through a transitional stage. In the initial decades the negative consequences of the wars, famines and epidemics of the previous century were being felt, in form of declining population and reduced trade and compromised production. However, after 1450 the process was reversed and the population once again started to increase, though already there had been signs that wages were increasing and that a new equilibrium between the quantity of cultivable land and the supply of labour was being found.

5.5 THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY GROWTH

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, European economic trends began to reflect growth. The explorations which had begun in the previous century, had led Europeans to settle and colonise new lands across the Atlantic and expand their direct reach to the markets of the Indian Ocean world.

Newer commodities, in form of new crops as potatoes, tomatoes, chillies, corn found their way to Europe, there by solving the chronic problem of hunger and starvation. Cotton and other raw materials were now directly obtained, bypassing the high tariffs imposed by the Ottoman and Italian states. Spices found their way to European markets much more easily.

At the same time improvement in navigation techniques, shipping technology and construction of new roads and highways across difficult terrains within continent, made the transport of goods and commodities over long distance much easier, there by unravelling what has been termed as ‘commercial revolution’ in the 16th century. The conquest of Americas by the Spanish conquistadors and control over the gold trading routes in West Africa by the Portuguese, ensured heavy inflow of bullion (silver and gold) into Europe. At the same time improvement in mining techniques also ensured rising outputs from the silver mines within continent. This massive inflow of bullion unleashed what has been termed as a ‘Price Revolution’, thereby ensuring that the commerce becomes a viable profession, with the increase in prices of the commodities, both essential and luxury.

5.5.1 Demographic Trends

By the sixteenth century, the demographic recovery came to be reflected, not only in the records of the churches and parishes, but also reflected in various other aspects of economic and social life of the age. Although, the territorial division, in sense of the rural or urban bases of the distributed population, followed patterns similar to the previous century, there were definite movement towards establishment of the ‘megapolis’ of the later period. Whereas in the beginning of the century, one can name only about four cities, with an estimated population size of about 100,000 inhabitants or over – Milan, Naples, Venice and Rome, of which three were to be found in the Italian peninsula. By the end of the century, the number increased to be about eight, with the addition of Palermo, Rome,

London, and Lisbon. Similarly, the number of middle size metropolis, with population size of around 50,000 increased from seven to thirteen. Overall, the percentage of population dwelling in Urban spaces, also showed a marked increase from 5.6% at the beginning of the 16th century, to about 7.6% towards the end. Improvement in diet, with the inflow of food commodities from the New world also contributed to some extent in mitigating the impact of the poor agrarian growth and food availability on population trends of the earlier period.

Population Flows across Europe and the New World

The period of the Sixteenth century, saw wide shifts in the patterns of mobility of people across Europe. In broad few patterns can be observed in explaining the shift and migration:

- 1) Movement of People from countryside and agrarian spaces to towns and cities.
- 2) Movement from one country to another.
- 3) Movement from Europe to the colonies in the New World.

Movement from countryside to towns

The period saw a rapid growth in the size of urban population, as already noted before. The emergence of large cities and of new towns, a trend which became noticeable towards the end of the fifteenth century, gained pace. In England, the urban population rose from 3.1% to about 5.8%, in Spain from 6.1% to 11.4%, in Portugal from 3% to 14.1%, and even in already urbanised Northern Low countries from 15.8% to about 24.3%.

The pattern of movement and migration was also typical of a rapidly evolving agrarian economy. There was an element of seasonality in some of the migration, which was discerned, related to a group of population, socially classified as 'paupers.' The movements occurred according to change in seasons, patterns of sowing and harvest, as well as desire to store and preserve food in harsh weather of northern Europe.

Movement from One country to another

The movement across the newly emerging nation states were because of both political and economic factors. The migrations occurred in response to wars and violence between cities and countries. For example, many migrated to different courts and cities in search of employment as soldiers and administrators in service of courts and other institutions. Religious wars and persecutions also played an important role. The stationing of armed regiments and soldiers in different regions as by Spanish empire also played an important role. Further, the pursuance of protectionist policies in market and economic management, collectively termed by scholars as 'mercantilist', also played an important role in movement of mercantile classes to regions and states which offered better protection and more suitable conditions of commerce and exchange. Specialist artisans, skilled individuals under protection of guilds and corporations, made use of the opportunities provided by the 'mercantilist' policies of the emerging nation states.

Movement from Europe to New World

Although, there was some movement from Europe to the colonial establishments in the New World in the 16th century, it wasn't at the scale, which could be

mentioned as substantial. There were still obstacles and hinderances, such as difficulties of movement across differentially vast geographical space, where issues of climatic adaptation and being a pioneer in a 'new world', which needed to be overcome.

The gendered divide in the migrating population also need to be considered while making any assessment of the demographic shifts to the new world from the old. A distinction must also be made on the nature of the movement – temporary or permanent. The majority of the movement by mariners, officials and soldiers in service of the states as Spain and Portugal were temporary migrants, who after spending some time in new world, made their way home, along with the wealth and experience accumulated. On the other hand, the permanent migrants were few in the initial years, and the inherent growth rate within the population group was low. This was primarily due to skewed gender divide amongst the early migrants, resulting in lower birth rate and also due to higher deaths in face of harsh climate and unknown diseases encountered.

5.6 TRADE AND EXCHANGE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The sixteenth century saw a major shift in the way trade was conducted across the European continent. With the rising Ottoman power in the East, the trade across the Eastern Mediterranean became increasingly difficult for the Italian traders. Moreover, the dominance of the Italian merchant-bankers in the conduct of trade in Asiatic commodities as spices and cotton, in which they acted as intermediaries between the Arab and other European merchant communities, became too stifling for the merchant communities of the other regions. The voyages under taken and heavy investment made in the ensuring the success of these is reflective of the attempt to break away from the dominance over the eastern trade by the Italian states and merchant communities. The resultant shift in trade saw the emergence of Atlantic economies, especially Iberian countries of Portugal and Spain at the cost of the Italian economies. The continuous shift of the trade northwards continued and is reflected in the emergence of England and Holland towards the end of the 16th century.

Italian City States

The economic development of the Italian states in the 16th century can be divided into two well defined periods:

- 1) Marked by political conflicts and wars, the initial decades of the sixteenth century saw a steady decline in production capacities in important sectors as textiles, along with a decline in total volume of commercial exchange, especially on the peninsula.
- 2) The second half of the century saw some recovery, although the levels of the previous century could not be achieved, primarily because the commodities which were initially monopolised and supplied only by the Italians, as silk, by now had found their way across to different regions of the continent. The Italian merchants no longer remained sole supplier of the commodities.

However, while making the generalisations, one need to keep in mind that the Italian economy was as diversified as the structures of the city states which constituted the political world of the peninsula.

Closer examination of the different sectors shows clearly how manufacturing output was negatively affected by wars; there was a general fall in production, especially in the central and northern areas, which in previous centuries had been the strong area. The population in the town centres showed a lower concentration, and there was a related reduction in the number of centres of production, with fewer specialized workshops; indeed, it became impossible to meet domestic consumer demand, which in itself was on the decline, let alone produce enough to sustain exports.

Apart from all the general difficulties, the increased expenditure to meet the requirements of war had led to increased taxation and hence an increase in production cost of essential tradable commodities as textiles. However, in spite of the difficulties due to political uncertainties and the resultant sack of many prominent cities as Brescia, Rome, Pavia and Genoa, the Italian merchants continued to register their presence in important centres of exchange across Europe.

Italians continued to play a prominent role in the great European fairs, where goods were exchanged, but that role was especially significant in places where the great financial transactions were negotiated, and where the credit instruments based on public loans of the European states were traded. Antwerp, Lyons, Besançon and Piacenza were important financial centres where Italians carried out their activities, during the sixteenth century. The Genoese bankers were particularly active at Besançon and Piacenza and had transformed those places practically into exchange fairs.

It was in this connection that during the sixteenth century there was a change in the specialization of Italian merchants. Initially they had been trading merchants, but later they started to become involved in activities that were more specifically financial. They took advantage of the changed attitude of the Church towards finance and offered to intermediate in the investment of public securities, especially those of the Spanish and French crowns. In France, Florentine bankers operating in Lyons played a particularly important role.

During the sixteenth century, the types of goods that passed through the ports and along the routes of the peninsula did not change significantly; however, what changed were the quantities. In the Mediterranean basin, there was a trade in local products as food products – cereals, wine and oil and other commodities which included sea salt from the islands, sugar, raw wool, cotton, alum, dyes and leather hides. In addition, there was iron, as well as manufactured goods such as textiles from Tuscany and Lombardy, Lombard armaments, books, Venetian glass and paper.

In the last quarter of the century, Genoese galleys found themselves controlling a totally new trade. This was the transport of huge quantities of precious metals, especially coined silver, which were being transported from Spain to Italy as part of a complex financial agreement, following the difficulties encountered by the Spanish crown; after a bankruptcy in 1557, it declared bankruptcy a second time in 1575. There was an exceptional increase in the influx of silver from the Americas, far exceeding 100 tons annually between 1570 and 1580, and 200 tons in the following decades. Apart from this, the development and success of the Piacenza exchange fairs, which were controlled by the Genoans, made the port of Genoa the ideal terminus for the fairs.

Venice also experienced fluctuations in its trade, especially in the case spice trade with the east, after the massive intervention of the Portuguese. It suffered a crisis early in the century when it was forced to trade the pepper brought into Europe by the Portuguese, but later resumed direct contacts by way of Egypt. It also traded other products from the European interior, such as minerals from the mines under Fugger control, which were exported from Venice. The considerable quantities of tin and lead that passed through led to the city specializing in the production of printing types and increasing the number of printing presses.

Sixteenth century Italy thus saw many changes that affected practically every sector of economic life. They brought about profound changes in the systems that had sustained the development of the economic and social life of previous centuries. The outcome was a changed equilibrium between the different regions. Some, such as those of the central and northern areas, appeared to regress, at least in comparison with other strong European areas; others managed to find room for great development, as in the case of Genoa, and Venice continued to play an important role, where as regions in south suffered greatly on account of the wars and conflicts in the eastern Mediterranean on account of rising Ottoman power.

Portugal

The beginning of the sixteenth century saw the Portuguese traders involving themselves primarily in the trade of Africa and Asia. Great ships were assembled with armed retinues to ensure dominance and encroach over the ancient routes across west and north Africa, which supplied important commodities as bullions, primarily gold.

The Portuguese organized the expeditions to the East on an annual basis. At the start of the century, the ships left with cargoes of minerals and metals, including copper, cinnabar, coral, lead, and above all silver and coins. On their return journey, the holds were packed with pepper and other spices, such as ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and camphor, with loads of up to 1,500 metric tons. Two-thirds were calculated to be pepper, and the price of pepper fluctuated considerably all over Europe. With the growth in trade, there was an increase in the types of goods exported and imported. At the end of the golden period of Portuguese trade with the East, and before the union with the Spanish crown, that is, until 1580, Portuguese ships left with cargoes of oils, wines and textiles, and returned to Europe with silks, porcelains, pearls and precious stones, essences for perfume, as well as the usual spices.

Portuguese trade with the East very soon attracted the interest of European merchants and bankers, and they found ways of being included in the expeditions organized by the Crown. Italians were among the first to join the expeditions between 1500 and 1505, and groups were led by Florentines and Genoans; soon afterwards they were followed by Germans. Foreigners who took part in the Portuguese voyages found themselves subjected to a number of regulations imposed by the Crown. Strict controls were in force from the moment the goods were purchased on the eastern market to when they were sold on the European markets; the Crown held an almost exclusive right, which was only occasionally relaxed.

The naval expeditions had extremely high costs, one reason for which was the loss of large numbers of vessels during the voyages, though this did give rise to

a considerable development in shipbuilding in Lisbon, Oporto, Setubal and the Azores. However, despite the costs, the trade in spices guaranteed huge profits, which were often 100 per cent more than the capital invested. Until 1514, when it held the monopoly for itself, the Crown had a 30 per cent share in the pepper cargo. The fall in prices that inevitably resulted from the arrival of such large quantities led partly to the need for state intervention in the spice trade. The Portuguese crown also tried to develop Lisbon as one of the leading commercial cities in Europe, so that it could compete against Antwerp and London, which were destinations for Portuguese ships. In the last quarter of the century, Portugal was up against risks from English, French and Dutch piracy, and the costs of expeditions to the East became unsustainable for the Portuguese state finances. In 1578 the spice trade was contracted out to Conrad Roth, a German merchant from the Fugger city of Augsburg, who took on the expenses and risks; half the imported goods went to the king, but these were re-consigned to Roth at a predetermined price.

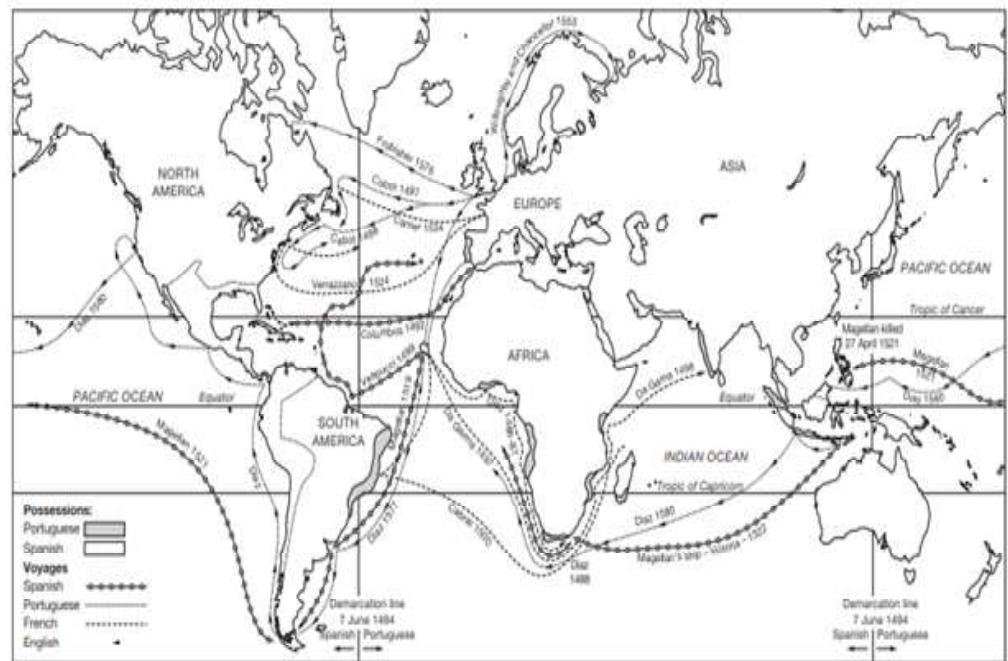
The relationship the Portuguese had with Brazil was quite different. This was the part of America that fell to the Portuguese by the Treaty of Tordesillas. It very soon became clear, from the early expeditions, that Brazil would not offer up any riches comparable to those the Spaniards could gain from the countries they had conquered. Apart from the brazilwood that was widely available for providing dyeing materials, and that gave its name to the region, it was soon obvious that its greatest wealth lay in its environmental characteristics, and in its potential for agricultural exploitation. However, there were numerous problems; one of the first was that the men who had come over the sea from Portugal had no aptitude for agriculture. Besides that, the indigenous population showed no inclination towards farming either. In addition, there was the nature of the land itself.

Results were gradually and laboriously achieved through a system of land concessions, which were granted on condition that the land was cultivated, and that imported labour became available. This labour was provided by slaves; for the Portuguese this was less of a problem, since they were already familiar with the use of slaves in the homeland, and for almost a century they had had contacts with the African coasts, where slaves were offered to them just like any other goods coming from the interior. Finally, the production of sugar cane was considered the most suitable crop for the territory; it was later followed by cotton. The trade in African slaves became in itself a source of profits for the Portuguese, who took advantage of their monopoly in the trade with the Atlantic coast of Africa and became the suppliers of the Spaniards in America.

Spain

Spanish investment in Americas was more intensive and consuming than the Portuguese. Unlike the Portuguese, who only desired to create a structure of transference of produce from East to Europe and did not really invest heavily in its possessions in Americas, the Spaniards, undertook long and acrimonious campaigns of conflict and conquest over the indigenous cultures. The result was the Spanish empire which covered most of the explored new world, south of equator. The organization of the influx of precious metals to Seville certainly left the greatest mark on the sixteenth century, but during that period, colonial policies were developed and pursued that exclusively affected relations between America and Spain; they were later to have consequences for the whole of Europe, reaching far beyond that century.

During this early period, Spain sent shipments of seeds for cereals and food plants, sugarcane, citrus fruits, olives and vines, tools for working the land, in addition to live- stock such as horses, oxen and sheep, which were unknown in America. Farming and animal breeding practices were transferred from the Antilles to the continent. The most important commodity, which the Spaniards obtained from Americas was the Silver, from the mines in Mexico and the region around. Spain exercised strict control over the inflow of bullion from new world and made Seville the clearing house for the Spanish silver. Laws were made to ensure that the silver doesn't leave Spanish control region without the permission of the crown. Controls were also carried out in the American ports of Vera Cruz, Porto Belo and Cartagena, which were the only ones authorized to have dealings with Seville.



Voyages of Discovery in the 15th and 16th centuries. Source: Paolo Massa, “The Economy in the Fifteenth Century: Preconditions of European Expansion,” in *An Economic History of Europe: From Expansion to Development*, ed. Antonio Di Vittorio (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 21.

North Atlantic Economies

In the period before the sixteenth century, the area known as the southern Low Countries, which had Bruges as its centre and Antwerp as its port, experienced considerable development; indeed, it was considered one of the hubs of the European economy, comparable to Italy. Furthermore, important commercial centres like Amsterdam, Bremen and Hamburg had made headway in the immediate vicinity. Their position on the North Sea had made it possible to exploit the great lines of communication that linked the sea with the interior regions of central Europe; these were the navigable rivers of the Rhine, the Elbe, the Scheldt and the Moselle. In the North Sea ports, products from the Baltic Sea and England, such as corn, raw wool, linen, hides, wool and salt, were exchanged with products from the interior deriving from mining, industrial and textile activities; the German fairs also provided trading opportunities. This was the case until the era of the geographical discoveries, and the development of ocean-going navigation.

When the Portuguese began their trade in the East, they were compelled to use the North Sea ports, since Lisbon was decentralized with respect to European trade. They found that Antwerp was the most favourable market for produce from the East Indies, especially pepper and spices; they later also used Amsterdam and Hamburg. During the same period of the early sixteenth century, the influx of cloth from England to these ports had by now become quite considerable.

The last quarter of the sixteenth century thus witnessed the decline of Antwerp and the growth of Amsterdam as the main centre of economic activity in the Low Countries. The administration of Antwerp was based on a centralized system that had the effect of restricting economic activity; the granting of privileges and concessions was not conducive to attracting the new energies that were now emerging. Amsterdam, on the other hand, had a more permissive approach that created more favourable conditions; the arrival of men, enterprise and capital was facilitated, if not actively encouraged.

In the final years of the sixteenth century, the Dutch were engaged in organizing major expeditions to the East Indies; this brought them up against the Portuguese, and they were led to seek a new model of economic expansion. The Portuguese expeditions to the East soon came under tight state control, while the Dutch granted greater liberty, so to speak, to private initiative. However, private initiative was organized through companies that were loosely set up for the purpose, which in the early seventeenth century would become more regulated.

However, in the sixteenth century the main traffic flows for the Dutch were through the Baltic Sea; records for the transits through the Sound, which was the mandatory route connecting the North Sea, show that by the last decades of the century well over 50 per cent of all the ships passing through were Dutch. In the ports and emporiums of Holland it was now possible to find all the goods that were being traded by sea. At the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch were in a position to trade with the whole of Europe, set up new methods of processing the raw materials that were now available, develop sophisticated commercial and accounting techniques, and generally operate in conditions that were completely innovative; furthermore, they also had access to large amounts of capital.

During the sixteenth century in England, economic developments differed from those in other European countries. Its geographical circumstances, and the organization of the state, brought about particular changes and prospects. Many historians have analysed the case of England and emphasized particular or more general aspects of its economy at different times. During the sixteenth century, a combination of many factors was at work; these included wool production, changes in agriculture, the development of manufacturing, the availability of raw materials, relations with the European continent, maritime transport, absolute monarchy and the participation of the social classes, as well as the Anglican Reformation.

English wool had always been one of the main products in the foreign trade of the country; it had been exported in considerable quantities to the European continent, and to the traditional wool textile centres, such as Italy and the Low Countries. Customs duties on wool exports had guaranteed significant revenue since the thirteenth century, but with the help of a protectionist policy, attempts had been made to develop a manufacturing industry in loco in order to exploit its inherent advantages. Though this particular policy came up against opposition

from the wool producers, who preferred to exploit the advantages of the free market to gain the best prices and conditions, the sector had managed to establish good contacts with European merchants. They supplied the quantities of wool, and at the same time sent to England the high-quality products that were in demand.

Throughout the century, there was a considerable increase in the quantities of textiles exported, particularly those in the form of short-cloths. Antwerp was the ideal centre for distributing them to the rest of Europe, and the spread of English cloth has been seen as one of the causes, and effects, of the crisis of Italian cloth.

The increase in wool production in England brought about changes in the structure of agricultural production; pasture land was extended, and there was an increase in the weaving industry, which in its turn led to a demand for labour. These two factors led to consequences that have been the subject of numerous historical interpretations. On the one hand, the demand for pasture accelerated the process of field enclosures, which led to the expulsion of the weaker classes from the countryside. On the other hand, because of the fluctuation of employment in manufacturing activities, more and more people found themselves open to risk. In the countryside, apart from the effects caused by the expansion of sheep rearing, there were also those caused by the suppression of Church property; the expropriations carried out by the Crown led to changes in farm organization, which had negative repercussions for the small farmers. Although these processes undoubtedly took place, they do not seem to have affected the whole country. The increase in population was probably more general and called for changes in the agricultural sector in order to guarantee supplies of foodstuffs such as corn for the needs of the expanding urban centres.

5.7 AGRICULTURE AND PRODUCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

At the start of the sixteenth century European farming was still producing the same crops as in previous centuries. There had been no significant innovations, and existing resources were exploited as far as possible. European farmers continued to cultivate a wide variety of plants for food, which included all kinds of cereals and edible fruits. Wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, millet, sorghum as well as chestnuts were cultivated, while olives and grapes began to attract the attention of agronomists, who took advantage of the new printing methods to publish their studies. Flax and hemp were cultivated in many areas for textile manufacturing, while cotton was restricted to areas in the south of Europe.

One of the most significant consequences of the geographical explorations was that people discovered new plants. However, these plants were not actually adopted in the sixteenth century and became part of the European farming tradition only in the following centuries, bringing about profound changes in diet and helping to alleviate the effects of famine. Potatoes, maize, tomatoes, tobacco, tea, coffee and cocoa were only the most significant products of the many that were being brought to Europe during the sixteenth century.

New opportunities for agriculture came from plants that had already long been known in Europe but were now being cultivated more widely and could be exported. Rice was a legacy from the Arab occupation of the Iberian Peninsula

and spread to northern Italy. It was particularly useful for consumption on ships. Other cereals had created problems on long transoceanic voyages, since their oil content made them more difficult to store, and they were more perishable. Mulberries contributed to the expansion of silkworm rearing, first in Italy and then in France, and laid the foundations for the future development of the silk industry. This period saw the start of the great sugar cane venture; except for a few small areas in the south, cane was hardly grown at all in Europe. Thanks to the Portuguese and Spaniards, sugar cane gradually found its way to central and southern America via Madeira and the Canary Islands, and in the following centuries it became one of the most important crops in the New World. It also involved slavery on a dramatic and huge scale.

Contact with other continents also led to significant developments in livestock breeding. Large numbers of live animals were carried on the voyages, for two main reasons. First, animals, and particularly horses, were required by men-at-arms for transport and in battle, and second, live animals could provide food. It was not feasible to carry meat on board, since it was difficult, if not impossible, to preserve it; but apart from the meat, live animals could provide other food products such as milk and eggs. Furthermore, one of the aims of colonization was to recreate the same way of life as in the homeland as far as possible. Thus horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, rabbits and poultry travelled with the crews on their voyages and became established in the new areas of European settlement. They started to multiply, and in many cases their numbers increased considerably. On the other hand, very few animals from other parts of the world were suitable for European farming, apart from the turkey; exotic animals were a source of curiosity or amusement rather than anything else. More significant results were achieved with attempts at cross-breeding between animals of the same species but from different places. Animals with specific characteristics that could be used in specific environments and conditions were also bred. A typical example was the horse, which was being increasingly used in farming for pulling ploughs, as in the Low Countries, or for providing extra power.

5.8 URBAN INDUSTRIES IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The exploitation of the mines also experienced an analogous process of expansion and was, if anything, even greater in the sixteenth century. It had already started in the first decades of the century; the increased demand for minerals, especially copper, silver, iron and mercury, as well as rock salt, involved the complex organization of plant and workers, which in their turn required financial resources on a hitherto unknown scale.

Opportunities for investment in mining had attracted capital from rich merchants since the late fifteenth century. Mining activity was now being structured into much larger enterprises than previously, and large numbers of waged workers, who formed the first great concentrations of workers in specific areas, were being employed. These trends were particularly marked in the mining areas of central and eastern Europe, from Poland to the Tyrol, financed with capital invested by the great merchant bankers of Augsburg, especially the Fuggers.

With the expansion of the markets for mineral supplies, with new mines gradually being discovered and exploited, especially in the second half of the century, and

with the possibility of acquiring other mineral ores through the new trade routes, mining, as well as the interest of those holding capital, changed in importance. However, this did not mean that the processing of mineral ores and the use of products obtained from it ceased to develop at a later time; there were signs of the development of a new form of labour that would make headway in the following centuries, carried along on the wave of the technological innovations that were to come.

The secondary sector was also very active, and numerous forms of occupation were being exploited in manufacturing during the sixteenth century. There were opportunities for work that lay half-way between the traditional and the innovative, and this was precisely one of the most significant aspects of the economic expansion of Europe.

At the same time, it marked the transition from the medieval economy to that of the modern era. The artisan workshops, which had sustained the fortunes of the merchants, still played a decisive role; however, the guilds were now experiencing all the risks inherent in their statutory regulations, which had hindered and slowed down the adoption of innovations, especially in the traditional wool textile sector. Some sectors, such as the shipyards and naval arsenals, required considerable numbers of workers. Visible reminders of how huge these workplaces were still stand to this day. All the specialist jobs were carried out under the same roof, and included the preparation of wood and timber, cord, canvas, navigational instruments, cartography and armaments; the list touches on a whole range of economic activities.

The manufacture of consumer goods and semi-finished products was largely carried out using the labour of field workers, who were available in their free time. Being seasonal, farm work left ample periods free for other activities, and this was how employment in the homes of farm workers was able to develop.

Many interpretations have been put forward as to the evolution of the first industrial society and the various phases it went through over the centuries. ‘Proto-industry’ and ‘pre-industry’ are terms that have often been used to define the different forms of productive organization that produced the goods needed to meet consumer demand at all levels. It is perhaps safe to say that, in the context of the general expansion taking place in sixteenth century Europe, forms of industrial organization already existed that had developed in previous centuries, but in the sectors of shipbuilding, mining and farming they began to appear on a much larger scale than before. In particular, production processes were being developed in which fixed capital played a greater role than previously. At the same time there was an increased demand for energy, especially from water mills and windmills; they were undergoing mechanical improvements so that the rotation of their axles could be transformed into other forms of motion that were needed for different work processes.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Outline some of the main trends of the 15th century European economy.

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- 2) Did the 16th century European economy exhibit trends which were different from the 15th century economy? Comment.

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5.9 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit you were able to:

- Understand some aspects of the transition from feudalism to the early modern European economy.
- Grasp how different writers saw this transition.
- Understand how the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries unravelled some aspects of this transition.

5.10 KEYWORDS

Demography: Study of population trends in a given period.

Fixed Capital: Capital invested by an enterprise on machinery etc. which is regarded as fixed cost of the enterprise.

5.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 5.3
- 2) See Section 5.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 5.4
- 2) See Section 5.5

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UNIT 6 PLANTATION ECONOMIES, SLAVE LABOUR AND SLAVE TRADE*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Early Plantations in the Mediterranean
 - 6.2.1 Sugar Plantation
 - 6.2.2 Mediterranean Slavery
- 6.3 Atlantic Plantations
- 6.4 The Atlantic Islands: Early Settlements
- 6.5 Shift to Americas
 - 6.5.1 Economic Factors behind the Shift
- 6.6 Slave Trade from Africa and Early Sugar Plantations
- 6.7 African Isolation and Diseases
- 6.8 Slavery in Africa
- 6.9 Beginning of Atlantic Trade
- 6.10 Sugar Plantation and Slavery in Brazil
- 6.11 The Sugar Industry
- 6.12 Early Plantation Society in Brazil
- 6.13 The Americas
- 6.14 The West Indies
- 6.15 The Seventeenth Century 'Sugar Revolution'
- 6.16 The Economics of Sugar
- 6.17 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.18 Keywords
- 6.19 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 6.20 Suggested Readings

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the historical context in which the plantation economies arose;
- understand the link between the working of the plantations and slave labour; and
- understand the significance of sugar in the growth of the plantation economies from the early period onwards.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Plantation economies evolved and emerged in the Atlantic world during the course of the late 16th and the 17th centuries. Establishment of large-scale plantations and farms, supported by a labour force, constituting of largely imported slaves

from West African coast, were characteristic of early colonial economic investment into the new world and the Caribbean islands.

Both Plantations as an agro-management structure and slavery as a labour organising institution has had a long history within structures of western civilisation. Slavery has been known and recorded in European world since the Greco-Roman period, when the very material basis of civilisation was organised on the back of slave labour. The regions of Eastern Europe and Mediterranean had been familiar with trade in military-slaves in the Islamic world. Similarly, Europeans came into contact with 'plantation organisation' especially with regard to the cultivation of labour-intensive crops as sugarcane, during the course of crusades into West Asia. Sugar, as a commodity of exchange, doesn't find much mention in the ancient and medieval Europe, however, post crusadic period of the 13th century, it emerged as one of the primary commodities in demand to satisfy the sweet cravings of the elite European classes. Until now honey has been the primary source of sweetener to be used in European cuisine, which by the end of the 17th century came to be replaced by Sugar. Along with sugarcane, tobacco came to be the other major import from the new world.

The volume of these imports and the demands which these plantations generated for labour in form of slaves, fuelled the commercial rivalries between early colonising empires of Spain and Portugal. Eventually by the middle of the 17th century, the dominance came to be severely challenged by new entrants as Britain, the Dutch and the French, all of whom invested heavily in creation of colonial plantation and protecting these investments with the creation of navies and military structures along the colonies to guard their interests.

6.2 EARLY PLANTATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

As mentioned earlier, Europe's engagement with plantation complexes as systems of agricultural management began with the interaction with similar complexes in West Asia during the period of early Crusades. The rise of Islam and movement of people and armies from South Asia to Central Asia to the North African coast and the Iberian Peninsula, also enabled large scale movement of flora and fauna. A range of crops, from tropical zones were introduced into the Mediterranean world, which included rice (originally from Southeast Asia, and reached Europe after centuries of modification due to cropping in South Asia), coconuts, Sour oranges, lemons, lime, sugarcane, bananas and probably also mangoes. Many of these over a period of time, found their way into southern Europe and one find them being cultivated in Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Portugal, by the 15th and the 16th century.

6.2.1 Sugar Plantation

Sugarcane plantations grew in the Mediterranean as a result of the increasing investment in sugar trade by Italian traders and early crusaders, who gained the insight into plantation organisation and methods of its replication in European farms.

As a crop sugar cane requires heavy manual labour to cultivate and take care, at the same time, raw cane plant is very heavy and hence could not be hauled or transported over long distances. As a result, any investment into sugar cane agriculture would necessitate the creation of supportive infrastructure to extract

sugar out of sugarcane. Once concentrated, cane sugar has high value to bulk ratio, unlike the crop. As a result, cane sugar was ideal for long distance transport, especially over water. Over the course of the early modern centuries, the demand for sugar as a sweetener increased manifold, primarily to the emergence of new markets with the emergence of middle bourgeois classes which have the means to purchase products hitherto limited to the elite classes in European societies. Price revolution of the European markets aided in the increase of demand as well as profitability of investment in sugar as a commodity.

The first attempt to increase sugar production to serve European markets was made in the vicinity of Tyre on Eastern Mediterranean by the crusading knights, who captured the city in C.E. 1123. The venetian traders who supported the crusading armies by facilitating the movement of goods and commodities across the sea, utilised the existing farms in the vicinity of the city for sugar plantation. The profitability and viability of these early farms was the result of the adoption of local sugar extraction techniques, as well as providing of a viable market by ensuring steady transport of the extracted sugar across the Aegean and Mediterranean seas into Italian and European markets. Similar sugar farms began to emerge in the vicinity around the same period. Thus, we find King Baldwin II of Jerusalem (C.E. 1118-1131), investing personally in sugar farms in the vicinity of the city of Acre. Crusading groups as Teutonic Knights and Knights Templers owned and invested in sugar farms around the city Tripoli, in northern Lebanon.

Until the 13th centuries, sugar farms around Lebanon, remained primary source of sugar plantation and source for sugar import in Europe. An attempt to replicate sugar production on European Mediterranean was made in Sicily, by the Norman settlers in the region. Although due to technological backwardness and steady competition from Anatolian and West Asian production centres, the industry initially suffered setbacks. However, by the second half of the 15th century, with the assimilation of Asian technology, Sicily emerged as one of the main centres of sugar production and supply in Europe, and an important staging centre for transmission of sugar plantations into Western Mediterranean and across Atlantic.

Cyprus also emerged in the period from the 13th to about the end of the 15th century as one of the chief sugar production centres in Eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus came under European control in the course of the second crusade and ultimately passed into Venetian control in 1498. The plantation style management of agricultural land also got support from the leading business families and bankers of other Italian cities, who were granted access to these fertile resource areas in return of their support for crusading armies. On Cyprus we find presence of families as Cornaros from Venice and Ferrer from Catalonia in Spain. Other sugar plantation belonged to the church and especially the order of the Hospitalier.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the early plantation economies of the Mediterranean.

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2) When did sugar come in to prominence in the early modern period?

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6.2.2 Mediterranean Slavery

An interesting development which hand in hand with the expansion and adoption of plantation structure for organising sugarcane cultivation, was the use of slave-labour in Asiatic and African Mediterranean. Unlike Europe, slavery continued to flourish in Islamic zones, primarily in form of military slaves or slaves used in hard labour-intensive agricultural organisations. Even though much of the workers in these plantations were not slaves, slave labour did begin to emerge as important supplement for labour shortage in the plantations in the Mediterranean world.

Slavery remained a minor aspect of the Mediterranean economic life, much till the eighteenth century. Up to 1204 CE, when the crusading armies captured Constantinople, most of the slave traffic originated in the southern Mediterranean. Post the conquest of Constantinople, until about 1266, the slave capture zones shifted eastwards into the Black Sea, where trading ports were established for the purpose by the Italian traders. The trade went on until the 14th century, by which time, sources for slave had diversified much geographically. Tartars, Mongols, Russians and Ukrainians found their way into slave traffic, however, only a minuscule number of these slaves found their way into plantations. Hence, this early slave trade in Mediterranean made no or very little distinction based on race, ethnicity and religion of the slaves, and African slaves were certainly not part of this early exchange, which came primarily from Eastern Europe and West and Central Asian zones.

African slaves began to appear in the Mediterranean slave markets by about 14th century. Many if these early slaves were brought to North African markets from across the Saharan zone and then sold further into Europe. Gradually the Mediterranean slave trade came to engage in slaves from various regions of Africa, such as from Eastern Africa – north along the Nile valley; Central Sudan, Tunisia and Libya.

The situation regarding African slaves underwent rapid change by the mid decades of the fifteenth century. The capture of Constantinople by Ottoman Turks closed the routes to the black seaports and the eastern slave procurement regions for Venetian traders. About the same time, the Portuguese navigators explored the coastal regions of Western Africa and were able to tap into the slave markets in the region. For the next century and half, Lagos and Lisbon emerged as a major centre for slave procurement and decimation in European and Mediterranean markets.

However, with the discovery of the Atlantic slave labour market it made sense to move the plantations closer to the sources of procurement. This was aided by the establishment of settlements in Caribbean and in mainland America. Apart from

the sugarcane plantations, tobacco and coffee were other crops whose cultivations began to be organised on plantation structures. Apart from agriculture, the establishment of copper and silver mines in Southern America and Mexico also attracted slave labour.

6.3 ATLANTIC PLANTATIONS

Early Atlantic plantations were established in Brazil in the seventeenth century and in the Caribbean islands of Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Domingue (Haiti) in the eighteenth century. Many of these early plantations transformed gradually into full blown agrarian settlements with well-defined political, administrative and social structure. Dependent on largely slave labour, these plantations overtime came to serve the European markets, initially as a supplement and later as main supplier of prime agricultural produces and food grains.

According to Philip D. Curtin, certain common characteristics can be discerned while analysing these early plantation colonies.

- 1) First and most importantly the productive labour force in these societies is slave labour.
- 2) Secondly, the population of these settlement societies was not self-sustaining, and this holds true for both the African slaves and the European settlers. The death rate in these colonies was consistently high and the numbers of both the African and non-African demographics must be maintained by regular immigration from Europe or in form of slave inflow from Africa. This high rate of death over birth, remained a constant factor in social life of Atlantic colonies for until about the middle of the 19th century.
- 3) Thirdly, the agricultural enterprise was organised in large scale plantations. Typically, the worker strength of these plantations was around 50 to 100 workers on a single farm, far larger than the European spaces at the same time. The owner of the plantation controlled and managed all steps of production with the assistance of his agents. While in farm itself almost all aspects of daily life, be it family or related to production was organised and regulated by the owner himself. This was very much different than what was organised in European farms.
- 4) Fourth, though capitalist in its nature, the farm itself has some feudal characteristics. For e.g. the ownership of the slaves and exercise of certain rights which were legally defined and exercisable. The agents of the owner normally acted as agents for enforcement of law and order, and most of the disputes were resolved locally and not taken to higher regulatory authorities.
- 5) Fifth, the plantations were created to supply a distant market with a highly specialised product – mainly sugar, and then coffee and cotton. Since the success of the plantation was in the success to export the produce, at times most of the produce was exported and there was very little left to feed the local population. Hence much of these plantations were dependent upon the supplies of food grains, eatables, and slaves provided by long distance traders. No section of European or African economies were so export oriented as the plantations were.

- 6) Political control over these colonies lay in distant lands and territories across vast oceans and in societies which were far different in composition and nature than what had taken shape in these distant colonies in America and Caribbean. As a result of the rivalries to dominate the trade and flow of traffic of slaves and commodities like sugar to and from the colonies, the nature of political control of the home country on the colonies was inherently fragmented and prone to tensions. Some of the major European powers to participate actively in the transatlantic commerce and control were Portugal, Spain, England, France, Netherlands, amongst others.

As the plantation activities and settlements moved west into the Atlantic zone, they evolved in form and size. From small settlements on the fringe of Mediterranean economic zone, depending on some slave labour, they evolved into humungous settlements with complex control and managerial structures, heavily dependent on slave labour. As the death rate in Atlantic zone continued to be high, the high concentration of slave workforce could only be managed and sustained through steady inflow of slaves from West African coast, which in turn gave rise to lucrative trans-Atlantic slave trade managed and controlled by western European powers, who fought and struggled over it, to ultimately shape the early modern commercial world dominated by West European imperial and colonial powers.

6.4 THE ATLANTIC ISLANDS: EARLY SETTLEMENTS

As the Europeans developed technology to venture deep into the Atlantic, they came to settle and establish initial contact colonies in some of the islands in the eastern Atlantic, off the coast of western Europe and Africa. They were developed for varying purposes. While some having climate similar to Europe were developed more of a staging and trading post for ventures further west, the others, in the tropical zone, were developed for sugar plantation and saw establishment of earliest slave settlements in the Atlantic zone. Also, it's important to note that many of the islands closer to equator along the rim of African coast, were volcanic in nature, and due to their tropical location had a far wetter climate than on the mainland Africa.

The Azores, uninhabited when discovered between 1427 and 1431, had climatic similarities with mainland Europe and hence not really suitable for plantation purpose. They were settled as staging post for ventures in the west. While Madeira or the Madeiras constitutes of two main islands, surrounded by a group of small islets, came to be amongst the earliest plantation settlements in the Atlantic. The Madeira, the largest island amongst the group along with Porto Santo, one of its neighbours from the group, had climate suitable for sugarcane cultivation. The final Portuguese settlement was attempted around 1420, at the same time as the navigators were making push southwards along the west African coast. About 250 miles south were the Canary Islands, which were also developed for sugar plantation, although the rugged topography made cultivation difficult. The islands were keenly contested by both Portugal and Spain, and it was only around 1480, that Spain gained absolute control. Still further south, opposite the mouth of the Senegal river are the Cape Verde islands. Considerably dry and hot, they were used by Portuguese primarily as an offshore base for management of their Africa trade, primarily in slaves and gold. Still further south in the Gulf of Guinea, are

the islands of Sao Tome, Fernando Po, Principe, and Annobon. All the four islands were discovered and claimed by the Portuguese between 1471 and 1472. Of these only Sao Tome and Fernando Po had any valuable economic importance. Sao Tome, an inhabited island was developed as a major sugar plantation space, while Fernando Po was inhabited by African tribes, who were treated as labour source to work on these early Atlantic plantations, most possibly as slaves.

As the European settlements moved into the Atlantic, the pattern of investment and organisation of plantations underwent rapid shifts and transformations. The European settlements in the islands of the Atlantic also had a catastrophic impact on the local island populations, as the local inhabitants rapidly died on contact with the Europeans due to violent engagements and diseases, to which they had no natural resistance. Most of these early voyages were funded and supported by royal courts in Lisbon and in Spain, although the participants in these early voyages were almost always Italians. Much of the financial investments also came from the banking families of the Italian states as from Genoa and Florence.

Sugar plantation was established in Madeira in about 1455, however, the cultivation and sugar extracting continued to be organised separately. The sugar-mill establishments continued to be funded Italian merchant banker from cities as Genoa and managed by technicians from Sicily. Direct supply of sugar from Madeira to Antwerp began around 1472 and by 1480 around 70 ships were trading with the island annually. Production rose steadily from around 73 metric tons in 1455 to about 760 metric tons in 1493 to 2400 metric tons by 1570. By 1500, Madeira sugar dominated the northern European market, and was sold even in Genoa and at Istanbul, in spaces closer to the earlier Mediterranean sugar plantations spaces. The Canaries were developed by Spain in similar manner, and was supported by Genoese enterprises and German capital.

The movement to Sao Tome was the next step in colonising of the Atlantic. Lying in tropical zone, with rich volcanic soil, and closer to the slave procurement zone of Congo basin, the island provided the perfect setting for flourishing of the kind of slave plantations which dotted the Atlantic landscape in decades and centuries to come. Sugar production in the island began to rise after 1500 and reached around 2, 250 metric tons by 1544. However, in subsequent decades the cost of production in the island increased substantially in wake of uprising by Angolan slaves who used the rough terrain to their advantage and created security problems for the establishments in the region. The distance of the island from the mainland, made investment in face of security issues, difficult and over the years the production steadily fell. Moreover, settlement of plantations in Brazil, drove the sugar planters in the island out of business.

6.5 SHIFT TO AMERICAS

The movement of plantations into Americas brought about a drastic shift in the manner of organisation of both production and supply across the Atlantic. Whereas in the European world or in eastern Atlantic, the organisation was funded by bankers and enterprising individual planters, who worked under the flags of one country or other, with a pure sense of maximising their individual profit; in the Americas, this organisation was transformed into unitary nationalist enterprises, fuelled by a competitive mercantilist commercial rivalry. The organisation of trade here on became a national monopoly to be guarded and fought over. The

networks of exchange and markets in the produce all became subservient to the national mercantilist interests. The history of 16th and 17th century Atlantic is marred by the Spanish conflict with the Portuguese and other North European powers, as well as conflict between Britain and the French and Dutch state and commercial agents and agencies.

By the end of the 15th century, both Spain and Portugal began to move ahead from the initial plantations settlements in Canaries and Madeira. Spanish industry began to move to the island of Santo Domingo or Hispaniola in the Caribbean. The earliest introduction of sugar here was done by Columbus in 1493, which was not successful. Subsequently, Spanish settlers reintroduced sugarcane in 1503, with the assistance of technicians from Canaries, which again failed. However, this time the reason of failure was not absence of technology, but the scarcity of labour force. Much of the Arawak Indians died after directing diseases brought on to these islands by the Europeans. A fresh attempt was made in 1517, by introducing both the landers, technicians and labourers from the Canaries. This time, there was some initial success, and the production rose to about 1000 metric tons before 1570. However due to the apathetic and disinterested attitude of the Spanish government, which was more interested in establishing silver mines and such industries in Peruvian highlands and in Mexico, the production declined and for a long time, the Santo Domingo production remained peripheral to other competitive production and market spaces in the Atlantic. It was not until the French occupation in the eighteenth century, that Santo Domingo emerged as one of the most prized sugar colonies in the Atlantic.

Portuguese settlements in Brazil took different form and trajectory altogether. Much closer to African coast than the Caribbean islands, the Brazilian sugar plantations emerged as true slave plantations in a short period. Portuguese domination and virtual monopoly of the slave trade in the Atlantic, ensured steady supply of labour for plantations in Brazil, and within a short period of its introduction from 1540 onwards the sugar production rose to equivalent levels as was in Sao Tome and Madeira. By 1560, it was 2500 metric tons, which rose to 5000 tons by 1580. By 1600, the figure had reached 16,000 tons and it was recorded to more than 20,000 tons by 1630. For rest of the seventeenth century, the production figures hovered between 20,000 to 30,000 tons per annum. Thus by the end of the 17th century, Brazilian sugar plantations were producing much more than the contemporary Caribbean counterparts.

6.5.1 Economic Factors behind the Shift

The establishment of sugar plantations many miles away from mainland Europe, supported by slave labour imported from Africa, seems to require heavy investments and one needs to understand the rationale behind the move made by many of the early settlers and planters. The economic rationale behind the movement and settlements needs to be understood in terms of availability of new navigating technology, new and improved understanding of wind and oceanic current patterns, as well as improved consumer demand in sugar, especially in north European markets.

Northern Europe, especially the markets in England and in Low countries in the seventeenth century began to experience improved conditions of wealth creation and hence consequently there was an improved demand in commodities as sugar, which until now were seen as luxury product. The cost of shipping of sugar from

Madeira to Portugal or Genoa, was almost equivalent to that to Antwerp. In most seasons, Madeira is downwind from Gibraltar, and on return a ship would rise the trade wind in Northwest direction and then from Azores, the westerlies made the voyage east to home in Europe simple and easy. Shipping technology also improved steadily in sixteenth century and made these cross oceanic voyages possible. The ships from the low countries especially provided support for transfer of bulk cargoes.

The migration of sugar-industry also gained from the “clean slate advantage”. When the industry was first established in a new place, the size of the mill controlled the amount of land to be cleared and utilised to supply cane for a profitable operation. Once the investment was placed it became difficult to change the size of the mill or in many regions also bring in a change in size of cultivation holdings, as too large areas under cultivation may not be profitable as the mill in the neighbourhood may not be able to process the cane effectively. When a new island was cleared, the settlers had a decided advantage of knowing how much area is available for cultivation and how large the size of the processing mill should be to take advantage of the production capacity of the land.

6.6 SLAVE TRADE FROM AFRICA AND EARLY SUGAR PLANTATIONS

The western expansion and economic advance over the course of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century was achieved on the back of slave labour from Africa. The profitable employment of the African slave labour in plantations in the Atlantic world had led to burgeoning trade and exchange in the slaves across the Atlantic Ocean, controlled by maritime empires of the Portuguese and the other European powers. Over the period this trade gained considerable complexity in form and scope and attracted other European powers to the game. Over the course of the seventeenth century the Dutch and English emerged as engaging participants in this trade.

Africans were not always desired as slaves in the European economic world. In fact, the word ‘slave’ has its root in ‘Slav’, which literally speaks of a person of Eastern European and Baltic descent. Throughout the course of the Roman empire, slaves were primarily procured from Eastern regions and from amongst the northern Germanic tribes. Its only after the closure of the eastern route after the Ottoman conquest, as discussed before, that the African slaves began to be sought for manual farm labour in European markets.

Africa on the eve of European expansion was divided into multiple small and large states, some with complex political organisation while others with just rudimentary kinship and clan-based organisation. The states in South Saharan region evolved in response to impetus of trade and Islam, leading them to be organised as trading states, some with courts and merchants, who over time converted to Islam. The domestication of camel and its introduction in the Saharan region by Arab traders enabled these African traders to now easily move across desert spaces which had until the 9th century been a barrier to exchange between South Saharan fringe regions and the Mediterranean world. The best known amongst these states were Takrur in the Senegal valley, Ghana in the Sahel (south Sahara), located north of middle Niger and middle Senegal, Songhai near the Niger bend and Kanem, near lake Chad. There were other states which evolved

still South, although in contact with the trading communities of Sahara, such as Mali, located on upper Niger basin. Another set of city-states emerged in the region of present-day Nigeria, where Hausa language was and is still spoken, while others evolved in the region between the open Savannah and tropical rain forest. State of Oyo in the present day western Nigeria and that of Benin, which lay in the tropical rain forest and had access to sea through creeks and rivulets in the region are just few examples of the variety and complexity of political space in Western and Central Africa in the early 16th century.

However, much of the sub-Saharan Africa was not organised in states in formal sense and were organised in forms of stateless societies organised along kinship and clan lines. Before the Portuguese arrival on the African coast, the exchange in Western Africa was organised by a series of interlocked trade Diasporas - people of similar ethnic identifies would settle down at distance to facilitate exchange by their own. At the fringe zones of the desert, commodities would be exchanged with other groups organised and distributed along the other ethnic lines. By the end of the 15th century, these trade networks had begun to tap into the gold deposits in the forested regions of present-day central Ghana.

When the European traders arrived on the coast, they found a network of trade routes criss-crossing tropical Africa, facilitating exchange in varieties of goods and commodities, such as kola nuts, Shea butter, several kinds of salts, textiles, iron and iron tools and importantly slaves. Most of these slaves were war prisoners, who were sold to passing traders to be sold in distant areas from where it's almost impossible to return. Some of these slaves found their way into the markets of North Africa. According to recent estimates, the number of these slaves would range from about 500 at minimum to 4000 at maximum, per year.

6.7 AFRICAN ISOLATION AND DISEASES

As the Europeans arrived on the African coast, they found the disease environment, which was not in their favour, as was the case in the Americas. The West African disease environment was too dangerous for Anya outsider to venture deep into the territory, let alone the Europeans. Even the natives faced innumerable challenges in form of rampant malaria and other infectious diseases. Infections from Guinea Worm, trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), onchocerciasis (river blindness), and schistosomiasis (liver flukes) were extremely high. In additions the usual diseases as smallpox, measles, and malaria were also rampant. Fatality rate for non-immune adults from malaria, was about 75% of total infections. Yellow fever also had a similar fatality rate.

6.8 SLAVERY IN AFRICA

The nature of slavery which came to be practised in Atlantic plantation was in nature very different from the manner it was practised in African spaces. The slaves in plantations were purchased to perform manual labour work on the fields and were organised on the lines of gangs, under continuous supervision of the owners. This kind of slave service was obviously very different from domestic and military slavery as it functioned in north African and in Islamic communities of the east. The domestic slavery as it functioned in America, saw slave a part of the household, in a subordinate position, where as agricultural slavery, also practised in America saw slaves having ownership of their labour and they shared a part of their produce with the master.

However, in Africa, one comes across the traditions of slavery as a mix of Islamic and tribal practises. In North Africa, under influence of Islam, one comes across organised military slaves as the Mumluku in Egypt, or 'black guards' or 'abid' of Morocco. They often come across to hold the agency to change rulers and sultans because of their dominant military position. Situation changes as one crosses the Sahara. North fringes of West African Savannah, were Islamised by the end of the 15th century, saw a Mix influence of North African tradition and those emerging from within West African society. The region was sparsely populated, and kinship grouped were often forced to incorporate outside slaves to bolster their numbers against the enemy groups. Moreover, in many African societies the position of slaves was only transitional as overtimes slaves were to be assimilated within the social setup. Slaves in west Africa did all kinds of work. Some were employed as military commanders or palace servants much like Islamic societies. Many were concubines and wives; others were agricultural labourers. However above enlistment of slave labours works only in case of 'settled slaves'. There was a marked difference in social status of settled slaves and 'trade slaves'. A freshly captured slave had no rights - legal or social – as every right were forfeited, and a master could treat slave as he wishes. For few months every captured slave lived as a trade slave, until sold off by merchants to Europeans or Africans settled in North African coast or a worse fate could fall on him if sold into slavery on west African coast, from where many found their way to plantation islands in Atlantic.

6.9 BEGINNING OF ATLANTIC TRADE

It's difficult to identify a point of beginning on slave exchange in Atlantic world. The historiography of slave exchange usually concentrates on the 18th and 19th century, and usually doesn't investigate the early centuries of the exchange. The fact remains that slavery as an exchange phenomenon, remains comparatively unimportant during the first two centuries of maritime contact - roughly the period from 1450 to 1650. The early Portuguese interest was more in looking for gold, and slave exchange was an accidental by-product of gold search and trade. Initial focus of Portuguese was centred on Gambia river basin in west African coast, which provided easy access to gold fields of Bure and Bambuhu. Lower Gambia basin was already an important salt procurement centre in African trade network and had flourishing market in slaves. The Portuguese began to purchase slaves, although, not in large numbers – approx. 1300 per year before 1500 CE and another 500 per year to Atlantic islands (not counting Sao Tome).

Second point of coastal contact was Gold coast, an entry point for access to Akan Gold fields. In 1498, the Portuguese began constructing a trade castle at Elmina to protect the gold trade. Here also one comes across the beginnings of slave exchange. However, the Akans were more interested in purchasing slaves rather than selling them. In order to fulfill the requirement of slave labour to work in the gold fields, the Portuguese entered the coastal slave trade. They established trading relations with the African states at Benin and Congo, and by 1520, Sao Tome, whose own sugar industry was coming in its own, also emerged as an important centre of slave exchange. Sao Tome imported around 2000 slaves per year, while some were used as labour on the sugar fields, and about 500 per year were sold to Akans for working in gold fields. Slave shipment from Africa to Americas did not begin until around 1532 CE – to Spanish West Indies and to Brazil.

The opening of the Brazilian market for slave was more important than any other incentive for the emergence of trade to the region. The unrest in the mid African states in the Congo basin after 1550 and an almost simultaneous rise of sugar industry in Brazil, created huge impetus on both the ends of supply and demand.

6.10 SUGAR PLANTATION AND SLAVERY IN BRAZIL

Brazil emerged as the region which attracted maximum import of slaves, through the course of two and half century of slave trade in Western hemisphere. The region saw the establishment of sugar plantations under the aegis of Portuguese control from mid-16th century onwards. The early plantation complex in Brazil contained some aspects of the institutions evolved in Mediterranean, while many changes were made in organisational aspects of the plantation system in response to the conditions encountered in Brazil. The techniques of planting cane and extracting sugar were bought from Madeira, however, the organisation of land and control therein was along the lines of social and feudal institutions as they functioned in Europe.

The early Portuguese engagements with Brazil did not yield much. The region was looked as a space where ships could fill in water, fresh fruits and some dye which were obtained from woods in the coastal vicinity. For the first three decades of the 16th century, i.e. until 1530 there was no discernible attempt on part of the Portuguese or any other European power to establish a long and stable presence in the region. Unlike other regions as in Peru and Mexico, where Spaniards engage in conflict and conquest, Brazil saw little or almost no cross-cultural exchange between Europeans and native Indians.

Much of the early interest in the region of Brazil was shown by the merchants and not by the Aristocrats in Europe. They made contracts with the Casa da India, which ran the overseas business affairs of the Portuguese crown, but these contracts were not feudal charters authorizing personal government over land that might be conquered. They merely granted the right to trade. Some private individuals signed up, but so did some syndicates with several members.

A second phase of settlement and expansion began from 1534 onwards with the arrival of French, who desired to trade in dye wood, without paying to Portuguese, who claimed rights over the region. In response, Portugal organised a naval expedition to Brazil, to lay claim to their rights even more forcefully. The entire Brazilian coast, claimed by Portugal was divided into strips, in straight line, running west, from the Atlantic coast. Each strip was assigned to individuals or companies, under feudal charters, which gave complete control to the grantees over the entire affairs of the land under their control. Most of these grants were for perpetuity and in return the Portuguese crown was assured of certain custom duties and monopoly over the trade of certain drugs, spices, dye-woods, and 1/5th of any gold, silver or precious stones that may be found. The grantees bore the title – ‘Captain donatary’, and thus the colonies came to be called *captainiasdonatarios*.

However, the above experiment collapsed within two decades as the colonies were carved with intent to minimise the investment of the crown in the colonies

so far. As the captaincies were under-capitalised, they were also continually short of labour, due to high death-rate amongst the local Indians. Moreover, the French interference could not be countered as these settlements were also poorly equipped to defend against European aggressors. Due to the above failures, the colonies were subsequently brought under crown control and administration was to be managed by bureaucrats. The switch to crown government began in 1549 and represented a new phase in Portuguese relations with Brazil.

6.11 THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

Sugar replaced Dye-wood and other forest produce as the principal commodity of export by the middle decades of the 16th century. The earliest of the plantations were established along the Atlantic coast, by employing Amerindian slaves and importing technology and extraction techniques from Madeira islands. The use of Amerindian slaves continued even after the Portuguese crown made the practice illegal in 1570.

However, the Indian slavery was not a long term option, primarily due to a very high mortality rate amongst the native Indian population, which contacted variety of diseases upon contact with the Europeans. The earliest recourse was to establish slave trade in the interiors of the Brazilian landmass, however, there was no letup in the death rate which remained high enough to ensure that there was no substantial stability and demographic sustainability in coastal plantations. Gradually, in response, over the next half a century, from 1550 onwards, African slaves began to replace locals as principal labour force in the plantation settlements along the Brazilian coast. By the end of the 16th century, Brazil emerged as leader in sugar production, replacing Sao Tome, Madeira, and the Canaries as the chief source of European sugar.

There were several factors behind this rapid growth in sugar industry in Brazil. For one, the availability of large swath of flat fertile land along the coastline, which could be used for plantation played an important role in deciding the location of the settlements. Bahia, in Salvador, was especially favoured as it supplied the best placed cane land in the world – reconcavo. About 4000 sq. Miles in size, the region was almost as big as island of Jamaica. Easy access to slaves was also one of the major reason for success of Brazilian sugar industry. The slave transfer from Africa was easy to manage, unlike the case with the Caribbean islands. The distance from point of origin, such as the Angolan coast on west Africa, to Brazil, was on an average about 30% to 50% shorter than the distance to Caribbean islands, as Jamaica, depending on the route taken. This resulted in lower mortality in transportation, resulting in higher number of slaves being available as labour.

Brazil, also has a ‘clean slate’ advantage over older plantation settlements as in Madeira. In Madeira, the ordinary sugar mill, produced around 15 metric tons of sugar annually, which was almost equal to the earliest coastal settlements in Brazil. However, with the colonisation and conversion of new land inland, and along the coast, the mills in Brazil, by 1570s were producing about 30 to 130 metric tons of sugar annually, depending on the location. By 1600s, the average production from an ordinary mill had reached up to 130 metric tons annually.

The Portuguese plantations also profited from the old connections between Antwerp and Madeira. As plantations began to grow and the possibilities of profitability increased, many of the early plantations began to be financed by Flemish capitalists stationed in Antwerp. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the capital inflow took care of the large investment costs required to setup large scale plantations and big mills, as well as the cost of slave import, which usually accounted for about 20% of capital cost, beyond the investment in land itself.

By 1600, the economic structure which emerged along the Brazilian coast, under the aegis and management of Portuguese state and Flemish financiers, became highly specialised – centring on a single crop and dependent on slave labour. Some of the labour was still Amerindians, while many were African slaves, who were brought to work on these plantations as labourers.

6.12 EARLY PLANTATION SOCIETY IN BRAZIL

The planters owned the land in Brazilian settlements, along with the tools of extraction - sugar mill. The production was planned in a manner so as to maximise profit. However, over the period of 17th century, the plantations themselves came to constitute a small social setup – consisting about 100 to 300 people, with even more as the centuries went by. The scattered nature of settlements along a vast Brazilian countryside, also made it difficult to structure any rudimentary political control structure. In absence of any supra-state structure, the managers on plantations took upon political and administrative roles, so as to maintain harmony and structure in nascent social groupings of ‘plantations societies.’ Similar rights were also claimed by cane farmers, who worked on their fields with slaves, and sold cane to mill owners and managers.

Most of the people living and working on any sugar estate or *fazenda* were legally under the ownership and legal control of the owner – *fazendario*. Ownership carried within the right to punish slaves. The estates were squally self-sufficient and the lack of political control by royal agents, made it possible for many to engage in Amerindian slavery, even though the practice has been declared illegal. Within a few decades a new social hierarchy emerged which in titles and names sounded similar to the titles and positions of lords back home, however, these were more in tune with the hierarchy and position within the plantations and in region. The individual owner or master may be under debt to the mercantile and banking communities of Antwerp, however in the plantations, he was the owner and head of the community. Within owners also – sugar mill owners had higher status than cane farmers.

The ownership over land or production structures also enabled an absolute ownership over the body and person of the slave as well as his produce. However, with the passage of time, the heirs of the original settler and owner, no longer came to command the same control and ownership over the settlement and settlers. Overtime certain customary relationships evolved which limited the absolute exercise of power and control by the descendants of the original owners. Social pressures acted as a strong limitations on absolute exercise of authority. Similarly, economic compulsion limited the scope of large scale shift or change in production patterns and structures of the plantations. By the beginning of the 17th century, the Brazilian plantations owners had come to be bound and conditioned to a

large extent by the social-economic limitations, much like the manor lords of the early period in Europe.

The urban growth in Brazil, also to a certain degree followed on the pattern of governance and management as brought down by the experiences in Europe. The Urban-centred local government changed in Brazil. Except for major commercial and urban centres as important ports. Most of the towns and cities were small settlements which were dominated by elites who lived in their fazendas. The key municipal institution was council or *senado da camara*. It was not an elected body but chosen in manner to represent ‘good men’ of the vicinity. In northeastern Brazil in the sixteenth century, this meant, the sugar planters, where as the merchants and other artisanal communities were excluded.

The *sanados da camara* made it possible for the rural elite to dominate the towns. Many of the representatives had their agents back home in Lisbon, to work for their interest at the court. A crown official in Brazil thus faced entrenched local privileges. The *Sanados* over time also extended their influence over functioning and maintenance of local police and militia. Thus over the course of two centuries, from mid 16th to the mid 18th century, the early capitalist farming and ventures gave way to plantations societies deeply hierarchies and with entrenched privileges and control functions.

6.13 THE AMERICAS

With the voyages of Columbus, the Spanish court began to realise the importance and possibilities in Atlantic, although this was not an immediate development. The Spanish court granted Columbus and his family complete control over the territories they conquered in name of the Spanish crown. In 1593, Spain established *casa de Contratación*, or house of trade, much like the *Casa de India* in Lisbon. The original intent was to carry out trade in name of the Spanish crown in Atlantic and American world. However, the colonies showed little immediate value, and *casa* evolved into a regulatory agency. Spain dropped out of the trading post business until a small opening occurred in Philippines a few decades later. Instead of attracting merchants, the Spanish America/Caribbean attracted adventurers and freelancers who organised themselves in war bands to capture and loot as much as they could.

6.14 THE WEST INDIES

Unlike most of the Americas, the Caribbean islands were comparatively more densely populated. The three large islands of Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico were inhabited by the Arawak – an indigenous agrarian group which were socially organised in hierarchy and had an indigenous belief system. Cuba was also inhabited partly by the Arawak. Although not as advanced as the great civilisations of Mexico and Peru, they were still the most technically advanced group in the region, prior to European arrival.

The Spanish established their base at Hispaniola, where they also found some gold, and from there, they began to move into the nearby islands. Digging ore and panning gold from the tread beds took more labour than Hispaniola could provide. Labour from nearby islands were imported as slaves, however as the Arawak population began to dwindle in face of diseases and epidemics caused

by European and African introduced pathogens, the need for slave import began to arise. Moreover the near Amerindian groups had already converted to Christianity and hence could no longer be legally converted to slaves. As a result the search for slaves began to expand more and more inland on islands and mainland. By the end of the 16th century, virtually all the Indians of the tropical lowlands were dead, except the Caribs, who had a war like disposition and were able to resist European advance for some time, which enabled them to develop resistance against the diseases and pathogens.

6.15 THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ‘SUGAR REVOLUTION’

The beginning of the seventeenth century in the Caribbean led to the introduction of whole scale plantation complex along with the technological knowhow and African slaves. The sugar plantations continued to move eastwards converting more and more land into a new system of land management and usage. These new structures of plantations although replicated much from the Brazilian plantations, however in crucial manners were an advance on earlier structures. These plantations were far more dependent upon the networks of maritime, intercontinental communications and were the beginnings of the slave labour-based plantation endeavours in North Atlantic world. These plantations in Caribbean also were the steppingstone for introduction of large-scale sugar plantations in North American mainland.

The geographical and climatic conditions in Caribbean islands provided perfect conditions for success of sugarcane plantations. Most of the best land for sugarcane cultivation was near coast, which enabled barrels of sugar to be rolled on to beaches and transported on lighter boats. The discovery of trade winds and advances in sailing technology and techniques in the seventeenth century, along with the rapid advances in ship building, enabled a much quicker transport of these sugar barrels from West Indies to the European markets as Antwerp and Liverpool. High and localised rainfall in islands as Jamaica, also enabled plantations without much investment in irrigation facilities. Keeping these advantages in mind, the earliest settlements to emerge were on the Eastern most of the Caribbean islands – St. Kitts, Nevis, Guadeloupe and Martinique. Antigua and Barbados also saw sugar plantations evolve, although Antigua experienced infrequent rainfall whereas Barbados had excelled soil conditions due to its volcanic nature. Hispaniola and Jamaica were developed in the second stage of expansion and Cuba yielded the best results once the problems of transportation were met and resolved.

The islands emerged as focal spaces of contestations between the European powers in the first half of the seventeenth century. Portuguese and Spanish control came to be challenged by the rising power of the English, French and the Dutch. The religious conflict in Europe and the Thirty years war, spilled overseas, with English and French navies clashing with Spanish armadas in Atlantic waters towards the end of the 16th century. With the defeat of the Spanish Armada off the coast of Gibraltar, the English and Dutch came to dominate the Atlantic exchange and wasn't about establishing colonies to counter the Spanish influence in Caribbean and in Mexico and South America. Colonies and oases were established to bridge the strategic gaps and for better control of Atlantic sea lanes, much on the lines

of the fortified settlements in the Indian ocean region. Many of these posts also served as insertion points for illegal trade into Spanish Territories and with the Amerindians.

Some or all of the above enumerated objectives were in mind when the settlement at Barbados was planned. It was intended to be a true colony, inhabited by a plantation force from Europe – partly to grow tobacco as a cash crop and partly to be used as an English base for smuggling into the Spanish Empire. The initial settlement grew slowly in size from about its settlement in 1627 to about 1635. By the second half of the 1630s the inflow of immigrants from the mainland grew, and by 1640s population was roughly the same size as that of Virginia or Massachusetts.

French objectives were similar to those of the English, with the initial intent to smuggle into Spanish Empire and engage in barter trade with the Caribs of the Lesser Antilles. Their first settlement was on Saint Christopher (later St. Kitts), which they shared for the time being with the English company. However, the real expansion began with the establishment of the American Island Company. Like many of the contemporary commercial enterprises, the company mixed elements of commerce with the exercise of governmental power. The French crown granted the company, jurisdiction over any island the company might occupy between Trinidad in South and central Florida in north. The stockholders received monopoly over the trade and right to take over land. To meet the end, about 4000 Catholics were intended to be settled in French colonies in America's over the period of first twenty years of the 17th century.

6.16 THE ECONOMICS OF SUGAR

The change from settlement to plantation took place because of number of reasons: principal amongst these was the economic nature of sugar as a commodity. Right up to the late 19th century, sugar had a very high price elasticity of demand, i.e. as the price decreased, people were willing to pay more and more for the commodity. The European market in the period with every shift towards greater efficiency of production, rough management and changes in technology of production and transportation, led to even greater demand of the commodity. His as the prices lowered due to greater availability of sugar in market, the demand went on increasing, much like an insatiable appetite for sugar in the European markets.

One of the principal factors was the greater efficiency in oceanic transportation in the seventeenth century, achieved by the Dutch pioneers. Cargoes with high ratio of bulk could now be carried over longer oceanic voyages efficiently. These improvements applied specifically to the coast of bringing slaves from Africa to the new world. Cheaper freight rates also made possible a greater division of labour in sugar production. By the middle of the seventeenth century, islands where favourable conditions for sugar plantation existed, they could now concentrate only on a single crop, whereas food could be imported from outside and mainland Americas and Brazil.

A second fundamental condition which emerged only gradually was the epidemiological difference between the Europeans and Africans in West Indies. Both French and English colonial planners in the seventeenth century intended

Caribbean islands to be settled by Europeans only and took for granted that the large majority of European settlers would be ‘servants’, i.e. those who enter into a contractual engagement with the planners to settle in new world and work for some years, before gaining access to resources on their own violations. The possibility of using African slaves was rarely conceived and thought about when the ventures were being conceptualised. However, rumours based on Portuguese and Spanish experiences in Brazil had already spear the words that the Africans could work better in tropics than the Europeans. The belief drew from the observation, that though newly arrived Europeans and Africans boy died in great numbers in Americas, however the death rate amongst the Europeans was considerably higher, as Africans had developed childhood immunities to some of the deadly tropical diseases, especially yellow fever and malaria. In fact, the difference in death rate was about 4 times more for the newly arrived European than the Africans transported to islands as slaves. Also, the cost of service also went a long way to entrench slavery in Caribbean.

By the 1640s the Dutch after establishing a foothold in Brazil, introduced technology of sugar to French and British islands in the Caribbean – first in Barbados. The Dutch primarily acted as suppliers of equipment and slaves to the islanders, in return for crops. In some cases, they also offered to setup and manage sugar estates. However, one needs to differentiate between Dutch planters in Brazil, who held the region of North-eastern Brazil under the aegis of the Dutch a West Indian Company, until 1645, and Pernambuco until 1654, and the Dutch interlopers who wanted to derive profit from the trade, even if it meant infringing upon the legal monopoly of the Dutch company in African trade.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What were the differences between the early slave labour and the later slave labour for the plantations?

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- 2) Why were the plantations located so far from the mainland Europe?

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3) What is the significance of the shift of the plantations to the Americas?

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6.17 LET US SUM UP

From its early inception in the early 12th century in a relatively known Mediterranean environment, plantations as a system of management and commercial cropping underwent large scale transformation over the centuries to emerge as the backbone of the colonial investments by the European countries in the Americas. Crops such as Sugar cane, tobacco, indigo, rice came to be grown on a large scale and transported to Europe to augment the limited agricultural possibilities in Europe itself. The race for colonies and struggle to control the exchange networks laid the foundations of modern exchange commercial mercantile economies, which formed the basis of the emergence of the capitalist-industrial complex in the 19th and the 20th centuries.

Much of this commercial success was not easy to achieve and was only acquired by investing heavily into an alternate supply of labour force, which came to be forcefully acquired from the African coastal region and transported on large scale in inhuman conditions across the Atlantic. The settlement of plantation societies and their gradual transformation into slave colonies is the story of colonisation of Americas and the Africa over the course of the 17th to the 19th century. It was only after the American war of independence and the French Revolution in the late 18th century, that there was a definite shift in attitude towards slavery, and the use of unhindered slave labour in the American colonies, that the slave trade was finally abandoned.

6.18 KEYWORDS

Plantations: Large scale agro management structures basically large farms run on huge investments in agricultural technology and labour for producing cash crops for commercial trading.

Slaves: Africans were not always desired as slaves in the European economic world. In fact, the word ‘slave’ has its root in ‘Slav’, which literally speaks of a person of Eastern European and Baltic descent. Throughout the course of the Roman empire, slaves were primarily procured from Eastern regions and from amongst the northern Germanic tribes. Its only after the closure of the eastern route after the Ottoman conquest, as discussed before, that the African slaves began to be sought for manual farm labour in European markets.

6.19 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 5.2
- 2) See Sub-section 5.2.1

Check Your Progress 2

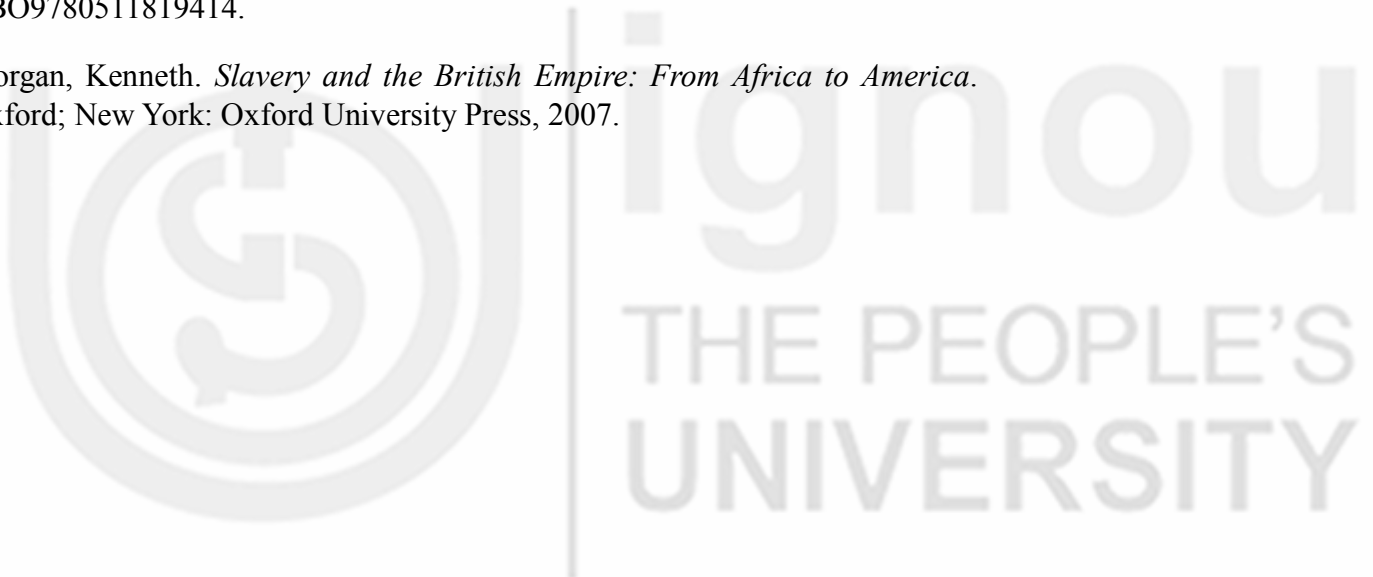
- 1) See Section 5.8 and 5.10
- 2) See Sub-section 5.5.1 and Section 5.16
- 3) See Section 5.13

6.20 SUGGESTED READINGS

Burnard, Trevor G. *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650 - 1820*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

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UNIT 7 COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION IN EUROPE

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Locating Commercial Revolution
- 7.3 Establishing Commercial Revolution
- 7.4 Price Rise and Emergence of Metallic Currency
- 7.5 Rural Base For the Commercial Revolution
- 7.6 Industrial Production
- 7.7 Evolution of Banking Institutions and Availability of Capital in European Markets
 - 7.7.1 Early Banking Institutions
 - 7.7.2 The Medici of Florence
 - 7.7.3 The Fuggers of Augsburg
- 7.8 Methods of Financial Transactions
- 7.9 Bills of Exchange
- 7.10 Promissory Notes
- 7.11 Discounting of Bills or Notes
- 7.12 Insurance
- 7.13 Organising of Trade and Exchange: Guilds and Merchant Companies
- 7.14 Regulated Companies
- 7.15 Joint Stock Companies
- 7.16 Stock Exchanges
- 7.17 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.18 Keywords
- 7.19 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises
- 7.20 Suggestes Readings

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the term ‘Commercial Revolution’ in the context of the early modern Europe;
- understand how different scholars have viewed the coming of this commercial revolution;
- understand the broad trends of this revolution;
- understand how different institutional changes came about with this revolution; and.
- understand how different instruments of commerce such as bills of exchange developed in the context of this revolution.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Early Modern centuries in Europe have been marked by great transition from an age of political chaos, dominant religiosity, localized exchange and internecine warfare, characterizing the 'Middle Ages' to one marked by political consolidation under the nation states, reforming religious traditions, new knowledge, emergence of scientific temper and Renaissance spirit, geographical discoveries and travels, long distance trade and emergence of great commercial companies. Depending upon the vantage point of analysis, the transitions have been deemed revolutionary by some scholars, such as those who adhere to Marxist thought or as transitory and long evolution from one dominant material phase to another by those from the Annales school. Although, both groups do acknowledge the occurrence of 'material and cultural' transition during the early modern centuries, i.e. a period roughly from the middle decades of the 15th century to the middle decade of the 18th century.

Scholars have over time attempted to understand the heart of this transition. For some this lay in the rekindling of 'new scientific temper' and an attitude to explore, brought on by new social and political structures shaped by the 'renaissance spirit'. For others the withdrawing of the religious institutions under the influence of reformist tendencies and movement leading to the emergence of protestant churches, which promoted undertaking of commercial and economic activities, without the taboos attached to them as was the case with the Catholicism, was at the heart of far reaching changes which shaped and structured the ensuing modern world.

Scholars of economic history have located the heart of this transition to 'modernity' in the discoveries and explorations of the 'new world' and the new routes to the 'old world'. These discoveries opened connections of exchange and interchange of commodities, for the first time in centuries, free from the control of the 'west Asian', 'Islamic' powers. The resultant opening of new markets, emergence of new urban centers and new commercial networks and institutions for facilitating the exchange — both international and local — led to the rise of the Western world. Such was the scale of economic shift that scholars have termed the period as one which saw the emergence of a 'European World Economy.' Here in this new world, the political boundaries mattered little, and the various regions were inter-connected by networks of commerce and exchange, leading to the emergence of a unified 'world economy', with its core centered on the great commercial nations of western Europe.

The term 'Commercial Revolution' has been used to make sense of the scale of economic growth and changes witnessed within the functioning and evolution of economic and commercial institutions, in the Early Modern centuries, particularly the sixteenth and the seventeenth. These changes are said to have laid the foundations for the development of capitalism and its institutions in the subsequent centuries.

It's difficult to locate one particular period in history of Early modern Europe, which marks a 'revolutionary phase' in development of commerce. As the term 'revolution' signifies a far-reaching upheaval and change in the manner of conducting commerce and in institutions and economic structures facilitating trade transactions, various scholars have located this apparent revolutionary shift

across various centuries in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Broadly there are two divergent views regarding the ‘conceptualization’ of commercial revolution:

- 1) Scholars who have focused exclusively on the sixteenth century as the core period of ‘revolutionary’ change in the commercial life of Early Modern Europe.
- 2) Those who have feels that the shifts in European commercial life have been slow and progressive and the beginnings can be traced back to the middle decades of the 13th century, when the new instruments of commerce, exchange and advent of bi-metallic currency can be traced to.

7.2 LOCATING COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

For some scholars, the end of the ‘Middle Ages’ in Europe was brought on by the opening of the commerce and trade, facilitated by the Arab invasion resulting in breakdown of the political barriers to trade between West and the ‘prosperous’ East.

Robert S. Lopez locates the beginning of the commercial revolution in Europe to the dominance achieved by the Jewish merchants and the institutions evolved by them to facilitate and control long distance control between European markets and those in Africa and Asia. In his words, at the beginning of the tenth century:

The tenth century and the early eleventh marked the high point of Jewish prominence in long distance trade, not only in Christian countries, but also in the larger part of the Muslim world. The absolute volume of their transactions was of course restricted by the limited opportunities of that age, but their share of the total was so considerable that Frankish and Byzantine regulations of foreign trade often referred to “the Jews and the other merchants,” as if Gentiles were a nondescript minority. (Lopez, 1976)

The dominance of the Italian mercantile classes and the institutional structures they evolved to ensure dominance over the eastern trade in spices and other essential commodities, from the 13th century onwards, is the starting point for many analyses of the European economic structures. Over years, scholars have focused on the changes and shifts in European commercial exchange patterns and the resultant impact on the regional economy within the continent. From the emergence of the Iberian economies, to the establishment of trans-continental trading establishments, to the emergence of North Atlantic and Baltic seaboard as the hub of European trade, to the establishment of colonies in the New World and in the Old, along the African coast and in the Indian Ocean zone, the impact of these developments on the commercial structures on Europe has been analyzed. The impact has been said to be ‘revolutionary’, particularly on the way commerce and commercial transactions were conducted.

The treatment of history in ‘Cambridge economic history of Europe’, also placed the advent of new systems of monetary transactions and evolution of banking and insurance sectors to the beginning of the fourteenth century. However, it also recognizes the massive shifts in the scale of penetrations and use of these new forms and mechanisms of trade and exchange in the 16th century. The sixteenth century over the last few decades have come to be treated as the core

century which witnessed the commercial transformation and the developers therein have been seen as laying the foundation of new capitalist Europe of later centuries. Immanuel Wallerstein, in his work on emergence of economic world system treated the sixteenth century as the foundational period. Fernand Braudel in his 'civilization and capitalism' also followed the same pattern, where the commercial growth of 16th century was seen as truly transformative, where in the new attitude towards commerce came to impact every aspect of social and cultural life of Europe. Similar assessment and treatment of the 16th century has followed in later writings on the economy of early modern Europe. It's only in the last few decades that a wholesome picture has been attempted where in the focus on economic transformation has considerably broadened to include not only matters of commercial and economic importance such as issues around coinage and evolution of banking and insurance sector, but also on the transition in political and social support structures which facilitated the broader acceptance of the elements of new commercial age.

7.3 ESTABLISHING COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

The breakdown of the feudal blocks of the Middle Ages due to plague, wars and famine in the centuries before the 16th created conditions which enabled peasant mobility and shifts in land ownership structures, thereby enabling a social and political environment which promoted growth and expansion of trade and commerce. With the breakdown of control of feudal lords and church over the social and economic life of medieval Europe, there occurred a simultaneous churning in the political atmosphere across Europe. The increasing desire on part of medieval state to attempt to control more resources, required to fight wars and maintain influence over vast and diverse territories; to provide for public in times of distress and famines; and also to satisfy the increasing desire on part of members of nobility to access the novelties and luxuries of the east, which are now being made accessible with the Ottoman conquest of Eastern Europe and Anatolia; brought the participants of the political order in direct conflict with the clergy, which was the source of the restrictive, shackling social ethics of the medieval ages. The desire for money, through promotion of long-distance trade, support for banking families and providers of credit, required states to undertake policies which ran counter to catholic church's opinion around acts of usury and notions of profit through trade and exchange. The end of crusades towards the end of the 14th century, also opened channels of commerce to Asiatic spaces, especially the 'Holy Land' on Eastern Mediterranean coast, bringing in much commerce and connection, in form of new demands of the pilgrimage traffic as well a steady in flow of Ottoman and Egyptian riches into European spaces. Along with the luxury products, spices and textiles from Asia also began to find market in Europe.

Emergence of markets and fairs which facilitated exchange of essential and luxury commodities, brought the realities of newly evolving commercial life of Southern Europe into the interiors. As the wars and political conditions as well as geography created hinderance for overland transport of commodities, coastal trade gained importance, leading to emergence of strong port centric urban spaces across western and northwestern Europe, evolving into the Hanseatic league in the 15th century. The league was a commercial and defensive confederation of towns,

ports and dominant merchant guilds in the region of Northern Europe centered around the town of Hansa. Similarly, Italian cities and their merchant class, led by Jewish communities, came to dominate the networks of exchange and markets in Southern Europe. Engagement with distant Asiatic markets and coming face to face with the difficulties and dangers in managing commerce at such long distance, they borrowed innovations and techniques from Asiatic markets, such as of 'bills of exchange', and molded them to suit the European political and economic environment. The centuries also began to see the emergence of a new form of organization of labour, especially in newly emergent industrious towns and cities, in form of guilds. A specialized body constituting a homogenous group of artisans and works engaged in a particular craft or trade in particular commodities, the guilds began to dominate the social, cultural and political landscape of European cities and urban spaces from 15th century onwards.

7.4 PRICE RISE AND EMERGENCE OF METALLIC CURRENCY

In the sixteenth century, Europe witnessed a phenomenal rise in prices of essential commodities. The price rise appears significant when analyzed and compared to the prices in vogue in the earlier centuries. Although the fluctuation in prices remained within 2% or 3% of the earlier prices, it was significant enough to cause ruptures and break in the existing social-political and economic structures of early modern Europe. The impact of the price rise or inflation in cost of commodities has been considered by some scholars to be so transformative as it laid the foundations for the capitalist society and economic system of the later period. The term 'price revolution' has been used to signify the same.

The rise in cost of living due to rising cost of commodities was first noticed in English and French sources. The commodities involved were primarily food-grains, especially cereals. The increase was minimal in case of manufactured items as textiles and metal products. In southern Netherlands, the prices of cereals escalated much faster and steeper, as compared to fish and cheese and other marine and dairy products. In Sweden, between 1460 and 1559, the prices of barley and rye went much higher compared to butter, cloves, and other manufactures. In England between 1550 and 1650, there occurred a fourfold increase in prices, when compared to those of meat, cattle and metal products, which only about doubled during the same period. In Germany, between 1620 and 1621, in some places, affected by local conditions, the prices increased in case of commodities as rye by about 14 to 16%. In France, there was a about 10-fold increase in grain prices over the course of 16th century, whereas during the same period, those of dairy products increased by about 8 times. The rise in grain prices has been recorded to be steepest in Spain, where, according to Hamilton, the price levels went up by about 3.4 times between 1601-1610, compared to the century before. According to Brown and Hopkins, the index point increase in the prices of food grains was highest in France, followed by England.

Scholars have generally disagreed on the beginning of the price increase. Some of the scholars consider this to be an essentially 16th century phenomenon, while others tend to trace it back to some developments of the 15th century. The Cambridge economic histories trace a steady increase or an upward trend in prices of commodities, especially agrarian from the mid-15th century, stating

that notwithstanding the sudden surge in prices in the 16th century, there was always an upward trend. Similarly, on the duration of this inflation in prices, there is a general disagreement. While some finds a beginning of a general recession by 1580s in Spain, others find similar trend in Italy in the last decade of the 16th century. In Germany, the recession started around 1620s, whereas there are indications of slowdown in Northern Europe, however, no record of declining prices.

Scholars generally are of the opinion that the price fluctuation in Europe had been a cyclical phenomenon. The twelfth and thirteenth century saw rise in prices, followed by a fall in prices in subsequent centuries until about latter half of the fifteenth century. From 1480s to 1620s the prices remained high, followed by another period of recession for almost a century, again followed by an increase in the eighteenth century. Pierre Chaunu suggests that the period from 1504 to 1550 experienced a steady increase in prices, followed by a relatively minor recession from 1550 to 1562-3. The next fifty years was again a period of remarkably high prices, followed by a period of recession.

7.5 RURAL BASE FOR COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

The entire infrastructural development of what came to be recognized as 'commercial revolution' in sphere of commerce, trade and related institutional growth, happened against the backdrop of rapid shifts in 'agrarian economy.' The introduction of three-cropping system, new implements and tools of cultivation, reclamation of land from the sea by building dykes in north, draining of marshes in England and in France, along with the introduction of new crops from the new world, revolutionized the way agriculture was organized and practiced in various regions of Europe.

Although the above-mentioned changes and many others in field of agriculture and its management, were slow to come about. Until about the beginning of the 14th century, the organization and techniques continued to remain stagnant. The feudal tenant-ship and control of the lords over the production, labour, as well as share of the peasantry remained dominant and controlling. Backed by the laws and the strictures from the church, the social and political organization remained essentially feudal. The economic conditions and patterns of commerce remained subservient and at the periphery of the European socio-political consciousness.

The demographic shifts of the 14th century, primarily due to large scale depopulation because of plague and other epidemics, as well as due to continuous wars and sufferings and deaths due to them, caused the feudal organization to collapse due to internal ruptures. These events and occurrences led to the shrinking of agrarian spaces as well as markets in commodities related to agriculture though large part of the 14th century. It was not until the end of the 15th century that we come across a renewed population rise across various regions of Europe. This rise on population created pressures on the land due to increasing demand. Low productivity and high demand led to rise in food prices, which formed the basis of what came to be known as the 'price revolution' of the 15th century.

Slowly the changes began to be discerned in the patterns of crops sown and the demand for agrarian products across European markets. Beginning in the south

and southeast, the changes on organization of agriculture as well as labour engaged within the sector began to spread and steadily absorbed and innovated upon in the regions of western and Northern Europe as well. Rising prices in agricultural commodities also pushed in innovation and investment. New areas began to be explored and exploited for agriculture. Rising population also pushed up demand for essential commodities as clothing and other dependent agrarian industries as in oil and wine. Fishing and dairy also emerged as important supplementary industries in order to meet the rising requirements for food and essentials. All this also required a facilitation of supply of commodities from one region of Europe to another. For e.g. food grains from Eastern Europe began to be supplied to west, or commodities as spices received in southern Mediterranean ports or Hansa ports in north began to be supplied inland towards the interiors. New markets and fairs began being organized along the navigable waterways which connected these ports to inland distribution points.

Due to significant proliferation of the agrarian shifts across Europe, there occurred a significant change in the organization of land and agrarian economy in the 16th century. At many places the *demesne lands* belonging to the feudal lord and cultivated by peasant labour, were broken up and leased in small tenancies and labour dues were commuted for a rent in money or kind. Such tenures became widespread in France and Italy. One of the major reason for this was also that the merchant classes due to increased demand of agricultural and Agri-based products, began to acquire land on lease and organize labour geared for a factory output production, providing wages instead of asking for share in production. This entrepreneurial attitude towards land and agriculture was prominent discernible in England from 16th century onwards. A class of rich peasant – yeoman – began to emerge. In some areas, land near the towns and cities began to be obtained by individual merchants, entrepreneurs, newly emerging urban bourgeoisie or at times by members of guilds, in order to enter the ranks of rural landed gentry, so as to gain on social prestige, which still was attached to land and not commerce.

Many books on agriculture began to appear. Much of these were subsequently printed and mass circulated with the advent of printing press. Martin Grosser, Johann Coler, and Conrad Heresbach in Germany; Oliver de Serres and Jean Libault in France, and Anthony Fitzherbert and Thomas Tusser in England, wrote major world on agriculture and animal husbandry.

In Netherlands, three different types of crop rotation evolved in the 16th century. One form was the rotation of multiple crops, which ended the practice of keeping the land fallow to the fourth, fifth and even the sixth year. The second form was of grain cultivation for two years, followed by one fallow year. Many of these methods also were adopted in the Eastern Europe, where social structures were still predominantly feudal. In England, the practice of land enclosures began to be followed, which gained even more momentum in the course of the 16th century. This was in response to spread of livestock farming due to increasing demand of woollen textiles in finished and raw form across European and markets.

According to Bowden, there was a sudden forward leap between 1570 and 1640, in the volume, organization and impact of agriculture trading in English economy. There occurred large scale colonization of common land and waste land during the period. Large scale migration of surplus labour took place from villages and countryside to new settlements in forests and other reclaimed areas.

It is estimated that between 1485 and 1607, about 21% of the cultivated area in Midland was enclosed. However, with the rise in prices of corn and new markets in the Agri-products emerging in continental Europe, the English shifted back to the agriculture. After the mid-16th century, rents on arable land rose more rapidly as compared to those on meadows and pasture areas. Due to the shift on trend, cattle breeding shifted northwards towards Ireland.

The period from 14th to the mid-16th century also saw rapid increase in the growth of cottage industry, especially into the countryside, away from the cities and towns. The rising demand of textile and expansion of agriculture demanded new implements and new sources of energy to be utilized. This led many to diversify into production of agrarian implements and textile weaving closer to the production spaces of raw material. This was also enabled by better availability of labour in the countryside. The cottage industries which came up included foundries, oil, stone, grain and sawmills, paper manufacturing, refineries and mining activities.

7.6 INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

The growth of industry and agriculture in the sixteenth century was intimately linked. The developments in one sector aided and assisted corresponding and related developments in the other. Although the centuries before the 16th did not see much change in the technology of production, there was much penetration of industrial production in the rural areas. J. F. Neff, gave arguments to consider the sixteenth century as one of industrial revolution:

- 1) Coal production increased 14 times, from 17,000 tons annually in the 1550s to 25,00,000 tons by the 1680s, which facilitated the growth of towns and shipbuilding.
- 2) There was a corresponding growth in the iron industry and metallurgy workshops, which began to employ many labors from rural areas.
- 3) With the growth of new industries and increasing employment in these, led to adoption of new technologies and organization of production processes.

However, the view has been rejected, especially the use of the term ‘revolution’. No fundamental change had been discerned in technology as well as organization of production. There was a phase of vigorous growth from the mid sixteenth century in certain parts of Europe, particularly in the production of metals and minerals iron production expanded enormously with the introduction of blast furnace and it promoted a number of other industries such as armament, brass and cooper ware and glass. Textile production also increased and with it products like alum and dyestuffs.

The textile industries, apart from agriculture, employed the largest number of people throughout the 16th century. It also produced goods of greater total value than any other sector of the industry. During this period, the industry witnessed some significant trends in organization. As an urban craft, it continued to depend on skilled artisans working in their own homes or in workshops. It was kept under the regulations of traditional guilds and as such there was hardly any possibility of such workshops adopting new technology or carrying out innovations. Another trend was in the direction of the transfer of textile production

to the rural countryside. This organization provided part-time employment to the rural workers. Spinning, thus became virtually a rural occupation even for the urban weavers, who began to depend on its supply from the neighboring villages. It provided an additional income to the rural population particularly, England, Germany and the Netherlands. It helped in bringing about agricultural prosperity. The textile industries of Europe were producing different varieties of cloths such as woolens, linen, cotton, mixed material and some luxury fabrics.

There was an expansion of manufacturing and mining activities throughout the 16th century but these did not result in the factory system of production. Although the volume of trade had grown, there was a rise in population and a steady increase in prices; Europe lacked the mass demand for manufactured goods as most of the Europe was still under the grip of feudalism. There was a shortage of capital for investment and the concept of management remained imperfect.

The state structures in most of the states had grown within feudal parameters and at many places, including England and France, the governments had placed restrictions on new forms of technology and organization. Capital-intensive methods were rejected, and the state laws favored the constitution of guilds. Despite, such restrictions, the manufacturing sector tried to escape these regulations by shifting their industrial activities to rural areas, leading to the emergence of rural cottage industry in those parts where capitalist elements began to dominate production.

16th century in Europe is considered important by economic historians because it marked the rise of Atlantic economy caused by the shift in the trade belt and trade routes because of the colonial empires. The long-established trade routes from Asia to Europe through Constantinople via Genoa or Venice lost their importance with the discovery of new oceanic trade routes thereby favoring the economies of the states bordering the Atlantic coast. The first sign of this change can be observed in the rise of Antwerp in the low countries.

There were several contributing factors to the rise of Antwerp, which indirectly signified the rise of the Atlantic economy. During the 16th century, the city came to be described as the 'commercial capital of the world.' The boom for Antwerp began towards the end of the fifteenth century, when the Venetian merchants lost their monopoly over the spice trade of Asia to the Portuguese. The Portuguese began to use Antwerp as a port of clearance and established close commercial relations with the German traders and mercantile communities in the area, for e.g. the Fuggers. The German merchants supplied the much-needed capital to Portuguese to fund their trade with the Indies, in return of the spices which Portuguese supplied. Antwerp also benefitted by the close trading association which the city merchants came to forge with the wool traders of England. 'The English Company of Merchant Adventurers' established a clearance house in the city for wool, from where the commodity was stored and supplied all over the Baltic coast and northern Europe.

The advance of such commercial centers as Antwerp which came to dominate the commercial life of much of the region of northern Europe, was symptomatic of the developments of the period. Urban centers as Antwerp in Northern Europe, along with later Amsterdam and London, came to signify and represent the typical urban mart of the age. A city of multiple markets, controlled by guilds of merchants and producers, employing large number of migrant rural population in certain

crafts and techniques. The Guilds dominated the economic decision making of the city and at times of the empires. The emergence of colonial control over distant spaces, had already unleashed a rush to control and manage colonies and its resources as well as markets for European goods. The mercantilist policies of the age, came to defend the protectionist interests of the merchant guilds, bankers, stake holders and state officials and emperors, who all came to participate and shape the commercial world of the sixteenth century.

7.7 EVOLUTION OF BANKING INSTITUTIONS AND AVAILABILITY OF CAPITAL IN EUROPEAN MARKETS

With the expansion of commerce and deep penetration of money economy in the European country side, there arose a need and desire to regulate and control the flow of bullion and maintain a tab on the exchange rates of commodities in different markets across vast geographical space, from Americas to the Asiatic colonies. The inflow of large bullion across seas from American silver mines and on land created its own problems of facilitating exchange and regulating commerce. Private merchant families involved in long distance trade, especially those with deep investments in European markets since the fifteenth century, innovated and introduced banking facilities in their rudimentary form in European markets. These early merchant-bankers became the backbone of the emerging commerce driven early modern European economy, with their support for voyages of discovery as well as funding the investment of nobility in commerce.

The Italian bankers innovated and developed the technique of ‘double entry book-keeping’ to better manage the finances and by the end of the 16th century, these merchant bankers emerged in various markets across Europe, in a manner determining the demand and controlling production and distribution of commodities, as they emerge as primary investors and suppliers of bullion for industrial and agrarian operations. As the operation of trade became more complex and the risk factors increased due to wars, conflicts as well as establishment of colonies across vast oceanic spaces, so did the importance of these merchant bankers. Many cities in England, France, Holland, Flanders, Italy and Germany saw the emergence of these merchant-bankers. However, the establishment of banks in a modern sense, with a fairly large scale of operations remains a seventeenth century phenomenon. Some of the important merchant families who supported these early endeavors by Iberian states, were merchant houses from Genoa, Venice, and Florence in Italy. The Medici at Florence are one of the most prominent Italian banking houses. Germanic states as Augsburg had also seen emergence of merchant networks and local banking families in the late 15th and 16th centuries, the most prominent being the Fugger.

7.7.1 Early Banking Institutions

The history of the modern banking dates all the way back to the 12th century, with the establishment of such merchant banks in the Italian cities, with the aid and support of Jewish communities as well as town nobility of the region. The earliest recorded bank was established in Venice, with the state guarantee, in the year 1157 CE. It was the sole bank in operation in the region, until the opening of the Bank of Genoa in 1407. The most powerful of the banking family to emerge

in the subsequent period in Italy were the Medici, the banking family from Florence, who began operation in 1392 and continued to operate until 1494. One of the primary factors behind establishment of these early banks was to fund the early crusades as well as to supply bullion to travelers to the holy land and to merchants in the markets of west Asia. In 1401, based on the Venetian model, a *Taula de Canvi* – Table of Exchange, the first public bank in Europe, opened in Barcelona, Spain. The proliferation of banking operations in Europe occurred on the back of Jewish migration from one region to another.

As the exchange operations became increasingly complex over the century, due to rising demands in new commodities as well as deepening monetization of European countryside and towns, the need for larger banks began to be felt. There also began a gradual demarcation between the operations and scope of private and public banks. Early Public banks were established in Genoa and Barcelona. In 1587, the Venetian government established the *Bank of Rialto*, which basically accepted deposits and transferred money. Similar bank was established in Milan (1593), Amsterdam (1609), Hamburg (1619) and Nuremberg (1621). Northern Europe and German areas remained central to the newly developing commercial markets requiring such sophisticated instruments of exchange. However, many of these ‘public banks’ only involved themselves with the task of depositing and transferring of bullion from one point to another, thereby facilitating exchange. This was primarily due to still dominant influence of church injunctions against profiteering from credit and other activities, at the start of the 17th century.

7.7.2 The Medici of Florence

The Medici family of Florence came to exercise considerable influence and control over the commerce of the city of Florence and considerably over that of the Southern and Eastern Italy. Hailing originally from Mugello region in Tuscany, the family prospered by diversifying its interests in commerce and banking. The early wealth was generated from participation in textile trade and interaction with the ‘wool guild’ of Florence. By the end of the 15th century, they had already emerged as bankers and suppliers of bullion to kings, princes, merchants and even to the Roman catholic church and affiliated institutions.

They were considerably involved in Florentine politics, and later established relations with the leading courts of Europe. Such was the influence and reach of the family, that four of the family members, went on to hold the office of the Pope [Leo X (1513-1521), and Clement VII (1523-1534), Pius IV (1559-1565) and Leo XI (1604)]. They also established matrimonial relationships with the French sovereigns, and two of the queens of France were from the Medici family - Catherine de’ Medici (1547–1589) and Marie de’ Medici (1600–1630). In 1532, they acquired the hereditary title of the Duke of Florence, which by 1569, was elevated to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany as a result of the territorial expansion.

They were also great patrons of art and supported the evolution of musical instruments as piano and performative acts as opera. They funded the construction of Saint Peter Basilica and Santa Maria del Fiore, and patronized Leonardo, Michelangelo, Machiavelli and Galileo. They were also protagonists of the counter-reformation, from the beginning of the reformation through the Council of Trent and the French wars of religion.

7.7.3 The Fuggers of Augsburg

The Fuggers, started as a family of peasant weavers in Augsburg, slowly expanding their interests into mining of silver, copper, and mercury. As leading money lenders of the age, they emerged as principal bankers for Spanish overseas empire, as well as exercising a sense of control over Spain's overseas customs. The influence of their operations stretched from Rome to Budapest, from Lisbon to Danzig, from Moscow to Chile. As bankers they offered millions of ducats to Kings, cardinals, Holy Roman Emperors, financing wars, campaigns, colonization attempts undertaken by various European sovereigns. In 1514, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, acknowledged the role of Jakob Fugger II, as his chief financial officer, and made him the hereditary knight of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1516, by negotiating a complex loan, he made the Henry VIII of England, a Fugger ally. In fact, it was primarily due to the influence of the Fuggers on the affairs of the Holy Roman Empire and the Vatican court, that the restrictions on usury were lifted by a papal edict in 1517.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How do you locate the commercial revolution?

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2) What are the aspects of industrial production in this period?

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7.8 METHODS OF FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

The increased volume of commercial transaction over a larger area of continental Europe, now facilitated by increasing demand from the local centers, on account of rising population as well as a due to emergence of commercial farming in many regions of Europe, necessitated large scale fund transfer over the various markets and amongst the multitude of financial players. The situation was also made complex by the increasing political instability and wars fueled by religious conflicts and increasingly assertive nation states fighting over regions which exhibited agricultural prosperity or mineral deposits, especially silver and gold.

New forms of credit instruments and facilities, which had already emerged and in use in Italian states, now found getting adopted and localized in the other regions as well. The increasing familiarity of the European business classes with

these instruments of exchange, laid the foundation for the emergence of capitalist structures in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The study of medieval credit instruments is not without its own difficulties. For one the nomenclature of the credit instruments may be the same as modern times, but their nature and manner of operation differed considerably. One type, the *lettres de faire*, has no modern relative, and there are no words that describe it with even approximate accuracy. The other instruments of the time may be compared to promissory notes or letters of credit, but the resemblance is not very precise. Transfers of money were not confined to fair—towns or to fair-periods: consumptive expenditure, mercantile expenditures in towns that had no fairs, both required other instruments, and as this necessity was quite as pressing as the needs of interchange between the fairs, special instruments were developed. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in the transfers of specie the fairs of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries by no means played a commanding part. It is fairly certain that many of the transfers of money by credit in this period were affected by devices other than *lettres de faire*.

An important form of credit transfer was a promissory note stipulating payment in a distant place, at some subsequent date indicated. Ordinarily, there were only two parties, the debtor and the creditor, and both were obliged to appear at the second place or send agents to complete the transaction.

7.9 BILLS OF EXCHANGE

A bill of exchange usually is a document guaranteeing the payment of a specific amount of money, either on demand, or at a set time. More specifically, it is a document contemplated by or consisting of a contract, which promises the payment of money without condition, which may be paid either on demand or at a future date. The term can have different meanings, depending on what law is being applied and what country and context it is used in.

These were commonly employed in trade transactions in both internal and external trade. These facilitated the payments over long distance, without one having to carry the quantities of money from one place to another. Moreover, bills had the advantage of being passed on amongst multiple merchants and traders, before being finally deposited. Most of the bills were based on the practice of endorsement by the banks where the bill was presented.

The earliest use of the Bills has been attributed to the Knights Templars, who issued notes to the pilgrims, who deposited their valuables with the Templars, before embarking on a hazardous journey to the Holy Land. The pilgrims were able to retrieve their funds in an amount of equal measure after arriving at the destined place. Such documents had already been use in Asiatic markets from around the 9th century onwards. Such prototypes came to be used later by the Iberian and Italian merchants in the 12th century. The earliest form such bills came to be used by the merchants of Genoa.

In Italy in the 13–15th centuries, bills of exchange and promissory notes obtained their main features, while further phases of their development have been associated with France (16–18th centuries, where the endorsement had appeared) and Germany (19th century, formalization of Exchange Law). The first mention of

the use of bills of exchange in English statutes dates from 1381, under Richard II; the statute mandates the use of such instruments in England, and prohibits the future export of gold and silver specie, in any form, to settle foreign commercial transactions.

By the 17th century, the bills as an instrument were used by Dutch traders to transfer money to Asiatic markets as Batavia, in Ceylon, or in Bengal. In words of F. S. Gaastra:

Company-servants or others who wished to transmit their money to the Netherlands deposited their funds in the treasuries of the VOC in Batavia, Ceylon, or Bengal. They received bills of exchange for this money, and these bills were sent with the return fleets to Europe and were consequently cashed in Amsterdam or one of the other chamber cities. Many officials transferred large amounts of money when repatriating and thus could cash these bills themselves, but in other cases this money was received in the Netherlands by bankers, agents, or relatives.

7.10 PROMISSORY NOTES

Considered to be the precursor of modern currency notes, the promissory notes as instrument of credit transfer and exchange were used, particularly in Holland, Antwerp and France. A promissory note, sometimes referred to as a note payable, is a legal instrument (more particularly, a financial instrument and a debt instrument), in which one party (the maker or issuer) promises in writing to pay a determinate sum of money to the other (the payee), either at a fixed or determinable future time or on demand of the payee, under specific terms. The terms of a note usually include the principal amount, the interest rate if any, the parties, the date, the terms of repayment (which could include interest) and the maturity date. Sometimes, provisions are included concerning the payee's rights in the event of a default, which may include foreclosure of the maker's assets.

Primarily, the practice of issuing notes was introduced in Europe by Venetian merchants trading with the East. Marco Polo has been credited by some scholars to introduce a variety of Chinese promissory note, in Europe. The first recorded instance of promissory note has been traced to Milan in 1325 C.E. There is evidence of promissory notes being issued in 1384 between Genoa and Barcelona, although the letters themselves are lost. The same happens for the ones issued in Valencia in 1371 by Bernat de Codinachs for Manuel d'Entença, a merchant from Huesca (then part of the Crown of Aragon), amounting a total of 100 florins. In all these cases, the promissory notes were used as a rudimentary system of paper money, for the amounts issued could not be easily transported in metal coins between the cities involved. Ginaldo Giovanni Battista Strozzi issued an early form of promissory note in Medina del Campo (Spain), against the city of Besançon in 1553. However, there exists notice of promissory notes being in used in Mediterranean commerce well before that date.

The relative amounts of mercantile and non-mercantile transfers of money cannot be ascertained, but the life of the mediaeval community required much transference of money that could hardly be called mercantile. The most considerable items in such transfers were occasioned by pilgrimages, crusades, movements of clerical funds, and the transfers of money to meet the expenses of students studying in distant towns. The crusaders frequently negotiated loans in Northern Italy, promising repayment at the fair of *Bar sur Aube*, or at another of

the fairs of *Champagne*. Similar documents appear at Venice. This form of note was used very frequently by students to avoid the danger of carrying their funds on their persons.

7.11 DISCOUNTING ON BILLS OR NOTES

A certain percentage was deducted from the face value of the bills of exchange or promissory notes, whenever it changed hands as product or as a service charge. This deduction gave merchant his money ahead of time as well as ensured income to the banker.

An important feature of the above-mentioned instruments of exchange, especially in their initial stages of acceptance and circulation, was their 'negotiability'; i.e. the transfer of bill from one person to another and its conversion to cash. The legal issues regarding the aforesaid conversion and the responsibilities of endorsement and acceptance were slowly overcome towards the end of the seventeenth century.

Thus, in the overall assessment of the impact of the usage of bills of exchanges, promissory notes and other instruments of credit transfer, was profound and far reaching, as they acted as great substitutes for currency and enabled the credit resource of the banking and business firms to be increased and projected far beyond the actual amount in possession.

7.12 INSURANCE

As commerce grew diverse and exchange began to be organized over longer distances, there also arose a need to protect the merchants against the dangers of transferring commodities over such long distances. Maritime insurance emerged as a commercial practice against the risks of oceanic trade and was managed by brokers and merchants. By 1504, the practice of providing insurance had developed fairly well to the extent that there were around 600 people subsisting in the city of Antwerp alone. Over centuries, various forms of insurance were introduced as safeguard against the damages to commodities due to war, conflicts, and loots on the highway; or against damages due to fire in the storage facilities, amongst other facilities.

Sea loans or *foenus nauticum* were common before the traditional marine insurance in the medieval times, in which an investor lent his money to a traveling merchant, and the merchant would be liable to pay it back if the ship returned safely. In this way, credit and sea insurance were provided at the same time. The rate of interest for sea loans was high to compensate for the high risks involved. Merchants taking sea loans had to pay the high interest charges to the lenders for having borne the sea risk as opposed to sharing the profits, which is how things were done when merchants carried goods by land.

Since sea loans involved paying for risk, the Pope Gregory IX condemned the practice as usury in his decretal *Naviganti* of 1236. The *commenda* contracts were introduced when Pope Gregory IX condemned the sea loans. Under *commenda* contracts, capitalists provided funds to an entrepreneur to carry out a trade as partners in the enterprise, sharing the profit but both sea and commercial

risk belong to capitalist In the fourteenth century, Italian merchants introduced cambium contracts where borrowers had to buy the bills of exchange from the lenders (merchant bankers). Since the bills of exchange were payable no matter what, they did not cover any sea risk at all. To hedge against the sea risks they now bore, merchants invented insurance loans that were very close to today's marine insurance, i.e. "the insured or borrower remained on the land, the insured goods are sent unaccompanied, and the loan is due not upon the safe arrival of ship but upon the safe arrival of goods".

In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the European traders traveled to sell their goods across the globe and to hedge the risk of theft or fraud by the Captain or crew also known as *Risicum Gentium*. However, they realized that selling this way, involves not only the risk of loss (i.e. damaged, theft or life of trader as well) but also, they cannot cover the wider market. Therefore, the trend of hiring commissioned base agents across different markets emerged. The traders sent (export) their goods to the agents who on the behalf of traders sold them. Sending goods to the agents by road or sea involves different risks i.e. sea storms, pirate attack; goods may be damaged due to poor handling while loading and unloading, etc. Traders exploited different measures to hedge the risk involved in the exporting. Instead of sending all the goods on one ship/truck, they used to send their goods over number of vessels to avoid the total loss of shipment if the vessel was caught in a sea storm, fire, pirate, or came under enemy attacks but this was not good practice due to prolonged time and efforts involved. Insurance is the oldest method of transferring risk, which was developed to mitigate trade/business risk.

Some of the earliest written insurance contracts dates all the way back to 1340s in the Italian cities, such as Pisa and Genoa. From Italy, the knowledge and usage of insurance contracts spread to the other markets of Europe. By 16th century, the practice became fairly common in England, France and Netherlands. The rules and regulations of insurance were adopted from Italian merchants known as "Law Merchant" and initially these rules governed the marine insurance across the globe. In case of dispute, policy writer and holder choose one arbitrator each and these two arbitrators choose a third impartial arbitrator and parties were bound to accept the decision made by the majority. Because of the inability of this informal court (arbitrator) to enforce their decisions, in the sixteenth century, traders turned to formal courts to resolve their disputes. Special courts were set up to solve the disputes of marine insurance like in Genoa, insurance regulation passed to impose fine, on who did not obey the Church's prohibitions of usury (Sea loans, Commenda) in 1369. In 1435, Barcelona ordinance issued, making it mandatory for traders to turn to formal courts in case of insurance disputes. In Venice, "*Consoli dei Mercanti*", specialized court to deal with marine insurance were set up in 1436. In 1520, the mercantile court of Genoa was replaced by more specialized court "Rota" which not only followed the merchant's customs but also incorporated the legal laws in it.

These new insurance contracts allowed insurance to be separated from investment, a separation of roles that first proved useful in marine insurance. The first printed book on insurance was the 'Legal treatise On Insurance and Merchants' Bets' by Pedro de Santarém (Santerna), written in 1488 and published in 1552.

7.13 ORGANISING TRADE AND EXCHANGE: GUILDS AND MERCHANT COMPANIES

By the sixteenth century, the small fairs and markets in the European countryside has given way to the towns and markets, which evolved as a permanent center of exchange. Merchant guilds which evolved over the course of 14th and 15th century came to regulate the production and distribution of commodities and exchange rate of the same in various urban centers. The proliferation of urban centers across Europe was another mark of growing commercial penetration in European landscape. Guilds along with merchant bankers came to dominate the economic as well as political life of the cities and towns. The Hanseatic league which dominated the trade in Northern Europe as well as merchant banking families of Italian and German cities are the case in point.

Export trade underwent significant changes between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries. In this period, wool and food grains played a larger role in English exports but from mid-sixteenth century, textiles began to replace agricultural products. The result of this shift was the major trade depression which affected European markets in the fifteenth century. The demographic crisis coupled with frequent wars created trouble for individual merchants to engage in long distance trade. As a result of these developments, one come across developments of guild based as well as mercantile organization created to facilitate trade and exchange. The ‘Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers of London’ was created in 1486, which monopolized textile export to Antwerp and other North European markets, primarily by removing the middlemen merchants of Italian and Dutch origin. An important factor in the growth of trade, especially in England, was the emergence of a new form of chartered companies. Various companies were created and favored by the state with grants of monopolies. These included the Muscovy Company, the Levant Company, the Hudson Bay Company and the East India Company These were either regulated or joint stock companies and they played a crucial role not only in the expansion of trade but also in the creation of English colonial empires.

However, the most important development during the sixteenth century in the sphere of trade was the rise of new group of peddling traders and middlemen, who not only carried consumer goods from town markets to the outlying regions but also supplied artisans with raw materials. These activities, mostly unregulated, came to be detested by traditional regulators of the markets as well as the state officials. The shift to textile trade England reflects a close integration of English agriculture with the manufacturing sector that manifested itself in the growth of trade with in as well as outside England.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What are the methods of financial transactions in this period?

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2) How was trade and exchange organised in this period?

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7.14 REGULATED COMPANIES

The 16th century was a period of transition from a subsistence economy to an exchange economy moving towards early capitalist phase. Commercial expansion on an international scale required changes in the nature of business organization. In the late medieval period, trade was organized either by the individuals or in the form of family partnership. Short term organizations had come up in Italy around 12th and 13th centuries – known as *Commendas or societas*.

The expansion of trade began to change the scale of organizations as well as the form of arrangement. The earlier forms of partnerships were subjected to the disadvantage of unlimited liability for its members concerning debts or losses. These were not capable of facing heavy risks or making huge capital investments. The opening up of overseas territories and the expansion of trade of bulk items created new problems. As the Dutch expanded their trading activities in the Baltic zone, it became quite common for the Dutch firms to appoint a partner at a Baltic port and place him there permanently to handle their business. Similarly, the Spanish firms sometimes placed one of its partners in Seville and another in the American colony as a factor or an agent. Thereby the Dutch, the French, and the English merchants through secret partnership agreements with the Spanish merchants were in a position to evade the regulations of the Spanish government, which prohibited foreigners from participating in the American trade. Gradually attempts were made to form a more suitable form of business organisation. One such form was the regulated company.

The origin of a regulated company can be located in the Middle Ages, particularly in England, where the Merchant staplers were created, but not in a fully developed form. The regulated company was partly like a partnership and partly like guild. In some ways it was also like a joint stock company that emerged later. It was an association of merchants to monopolize, exploit and control a specific branch of trade like a common venture. The members agreed to abide by certain specific regulations, but they did not pool their resources together. Rather, they agreed only to cooperate for mutual benefit. These companies were chartered and given monopoly by their respective governments. They were regulated companies because they followed the rules laid down for the conduct of their business. They maintained common trade center abroad and enjoyed monopoly rights. Their respective governments protected them against the ‘interlopers (those who attempted to break into the monopoly). There were many such companies in England like the Merchant Adventurers, the Eastland Company, the Muscovy Company and the Levant Company.

7.15 JOINT STOCK COMPANIES

The increasing volume of trade and expansion of commercial economy led to changes in the form of organisations of commerce. The regulated company evolved into a new organisation – The Joint Stock Company. The precedent of such an organisation can be traced to coal mining organisations in Germany, as heavy investments in the mining operations prevented individual participation. Shares were purchased by several individuals and the running of the company operations was entrusted to the board of directors. The joint stock company worked as a permanent organisation, not subject to dissolution in case of death or withdrawal of its huddling members. The company of the size could command greater resources, as was the case with the early seventeenth century English and Dutch joint stock enterprises for trade with the Asiatic markets. A larger capital could be secured for initial investment as well as for ensuring the commodities to be traded.

The early joint stock companies were slow to evolve and many of the merchants were hesitant to participate or invest in the shares of the companies. It was only after the initial voyages to the east showed enough promise that capital and investment was easier to come by. Early English and Dutch companies followed the practice of dividing capital and profit at the end of each voyage, which created confusion amongst the early shareholders.

The Dutch East India Company, which was formed in 1602, expected to pay its investors by the end of the ten year period, as it was unable to do so, it requested its shareholders to sell stocks and shares at the Amsterdam stock exchange, initiating the practice of stock sale in an open market. The joint stock companies, enabled the individuals and not just the merchants to invest their savings into permanent corporations with the hope to increase their earnings, by both rise in profits from the eastern trade or rise in prices of the shares of the company in open stock markets.

Joint stock companies also came to organise industrial enterprises, as they began to organise production of commodities in demand in the eastern and overseas markets, according to specific demands. They also served as agencies of remittance of bullion across long distances and finally they emerged as instruments to exercise monopolies over commodities and routes by the governments, vying with each other in mercantilist pursuit, to maximise profit and trade. Most of the trading companies were also chartered companies as they received charters from the government concerning their privileges, monopoly and assignment of specific territories where they could operate. In England, two joint-stock companies were organized in 1568 for an entirely different purpose — the Mineral and Battery Works Company to carry out brass founding for manufacturing copper or brass wires, and the Mines Royal Company to carry out silver and copper mining.

7.16 STOCK EXCHANGES

An interesting aspect of the commercial revolution was the formation of a stock exchange in the commercial cities of Europe. The stock exchange centers were also called bourse, which originated in Bruges. According to Braudel, a stock exchange was the meeting place of bankers, merchants, and businessmen, dealers

and banker's agents, brokers and investors. Although there is no clear evidence of the origin of such exchanges, in Amsterdam, the new exchange was founded in 1609, while the old one probably dates to 1530s. The Bruges exchange was created in 1409, Antwerp in 1460, Lyons in 1462, London in 1554, Paris in 1563, Bordeaux in 1564 and the number continued to increase throughout the 17th century.

The stock exchange at Amsterdam made significant advances not only in terms of scale but also in terms of organization. In 1631, a new building was constructed for it where speculation was carried out in a totally modern fashion. The new elements of the Amsterdam stock market were the volume, the liquidity of the market and the publicity received and the speculative freedom of transactions. The chief contribution of the stock exchange was to promote large-scale capitalist ventures by means of sale and purchase of shares and public investments.

7.17 LET US SUM UP

In the end one gets a picture of an economy slowly transforming from a localized inward center to a more global connections, forged on the back of a slowly evolving agrarian and industrial structures and labour relations within the economic systems. The emergence of nation states and national economies led to a much closer engagement of economic structures with the political systems in the region. The aspiration of various social classes found way to harness and grow with the breakdown of societal and economic barriers of the middle ages. The penetration of liquid money/bullion into European society and its consequent commercialization had far reaching consequences on the European political and social landscape. With the initiation of mercantile monetary policies, centered on the idea of prosperity of nation and wealth of national economies, there began a conquest and race for acquiring colonies to supplement market, labour and raw material sources of home economies. At the same time, a growing realization of the importance of money in rationalizing of social status and political standing, the institutions of marriage and structures of inheritance and property control began to evolve and take shape. These evolving laws emerge as foundational structures on which the 'modern western law and legal structures' took shape and evolved. Thus, in many ways, the 'commercial revolution' of the late middle ages/early modern period laid the foundations and structures for the emergence of modern economies as well as evolution of societies and polities based on modern law and legal structures.

7.18 KEYWORDS

Localized exchange: Exchange and trade confined to local areas and not as yet integrated in the wider or global structure of trade and exchange.

Annales School: School of history writing in France which in contrast to the Marxist school's emphasis on hierarchy of causation emphasised equal weightage to all aspects of causation and investigated them as such.

7.19 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 7.2
- 2) See Section 7.6

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 7.8 to 7.12
- 2) See Section 7.13

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UNIT 8 RENAISSANCE: HUMANISM IDEAS AND SCIENCE

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Socio-Cultural Milieu
- 8.3 Renaissance: Meaning and Interpretation
- 8.4 Humanism
- 8.5 Growth of Literature and New Learning
- 8.6 Political Theory and Philosophy
- 8.7 Art and Art Forms
- 8.8 Science
- 8.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.1 Key Words
- 8.11 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 8.12 Suggested Readings

8.0 OBJECTIVES

The present unit deals with a very vibrant period of European history that extended from around 1500 to 1800 CE. During this time there was a tremendous cultural resurgence that came to be called the Renaissance, which means ‘rebirth’. It affected all spheres of European life — social, economic, and political and ultimately brought about a very significant widening of people’s intellectual horizon. In fact, it led to the beginnings of the modern west and the modern world. After reading this unit, you should be able to understand many penetrating ideas, including:

- the socio-economic and political factors that led to the emergence of the Renaissance;
- the historiographical dimensions associated with the Renaissance;
- ideas and philosophy in the context of humanism; and
- literary, artistic, and scientific achievements of the Renaissance.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The origins of the Renaissance can be located in the backdrop of socio-economic developments in Europe from the beginning of the fifteenth century till the end of the eighteenth century. This was the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism. The beginning of the Renaissance in Italy can be traced back to the period of the middle ages. It is interesting to note that during the high middle ages (eleventh to thirteenth centuries) Italy was very different from the rest of Europe. The Italian city states took the lead in the cultural renewal that led to the

Renaissance. The Renaissance did not mean only a revival of the classical tradition, which had been lost sight of during the middle ages. The Renaissance was not an isolated phenomenon. The Renaissance and its impact went much beyond revival. The developments in Italy influenced literature, philosophy, art in a way that constituted a major conceptual shift in the understanding of humanity itself.

8.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU

A number of socio-economic and political factors in conjunction with each other contributed to the Renaissance in the city-states of Italy. The territorial rivalries in Italy between the pope and the Holy Roman Empire led to the Italian city states becoming independent. Italians never enjoyed a coherent political apparatus, but were economically vibrant and dynamic as early as the thirteenth century. Though some city states had a republican form of government (communes) and some were ruled by despots (signori), the existence of an urban life was very significant throughout the country. The aim of both was the same that is to encourage commercial and mercantile activities.

The city states of Venice, Amalfi, Bari and Florence had spearheaded the commercial Revolution which resulted in the creation of a new social order based on wealth rather than birth. Feudalism could never develop strong roots in Italy. Social and marital ties between the nobility and merchant classes created an atmosphere conducive to learning, flowering of the arts, the spread of consciousness among the populace, and above all individualism. Merchants, princes, and even popes commissioned works of art. The Renaissance was urban in its art and literary forms and the society re-invented itself in accordance to the new socio-economic culture.

8.3 RENAISSANCE: MEANING AND INTERPRETATION

The term Renaissance in a simple sense means rebirth or re-awakening. A narrow perspective regards it as a movement associated with the revival of classical antiquity which means that the ancient Greek and Roman cultures were rediscovered through their works of literature, philosophy, and art. Their ideas were analyzed and interpreted. Major Greek texts were restored and translated into Latin. But the Renaissance was much more than a re-awakening. It affected all aspects of European society and culture and marked the beginning of a new age, the age of modernity.

Historians in their own way have contributed to the interpretation and re-interpretation of the term Renaissance. As suggested by Denis Hay, the notion of Renaissance was evolving throughout the long period that ranged from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The concept of the Renaissance can be traced to Giorgio Vasari's "rinascita" which was used exclusively to refer to a stage in the artistic development of Italy. (*The Lives of the most excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*).

Academicians and scholars like Johan Huizinga in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and Wallace K Ferguson in his work *The Interpretation of the Renaissance:*

Suggestions for a Synthesis locate the origins of Renaissance in the middle ages. However according to Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* the Renaissance was a movement that ushered in new forms and attitudes and gave the highest priority to individuality.

In pre-Renaissance society (the middle ages) two dominant institutions influenced the socio-cultural life of Europe. They were the Catholic church and the feudal system which were built on a pyramid of estates and values centring around complete subservience to the landlord and the church. A serf was bound to his landowner 'lord' and to the land he worked on; he could not dream of a different life. The Renaissance ushered in a distinctive thought process that helped to undermine many traditional ideas associated with the church and feudalism.

The notion of the Renaissance as a distinctive period or a watershed dividing the Middle Ages from the modern epoch dominated historical writing for centuries. However, it must be remembered that the Renaissance was not a separate occurrence; it should be located in the ambit of ongoing historical developments.

Renaissance, or cultural awakening, happened and not just at one time. The 'Carolingian' Renaissance of the ninth century brought about a renewal of the works of Latin while the 'twelfth-century' Renaissance was noted for revival of Greek learning and Roman law through contact with the Arabs. Therefore a re-awakening of Greek and Roman culture did not come as a sudden upsurge in Italy. Historians have emphasised the role of Italy in the Renaissance because Italy was the homeland of the ancient Roman civilization. Consequently the Renaissance in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must be seen as a culmination of, rather than a movement towards, cultural revival in Europe. Italian cities were groping their way towards a new culture distinct from the chivalric culture of the nobility and the scholastic culture of the clergy. In this sense the Renaissance went beyond the revival of classical learning. It paved the way for the idea of humanism and a new spirit became manifest in art, architecture, painting, sculpture, music, and literature.

8.4 HUMANISM

The most dominant theme of the Italian Renaissance was humanism. This was a term that was used by the 19th century historians to describe the concerns of the Renaissance thinkers who turned their attention and focused upon the dignity of man and his privileged position in this world.

This humanist 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. However, this new focus on man and the world should not be seen as a loss of faith in God. It was in fact a critical reassessment of the ideas of medieval theologians. Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante were the forerunners of the Renaissance ideas which gained ground over a period of time.

Humanism was the basic source of inspiration for all the cultural changes of the Renaissance, heavily influencing art, literature, history, and political ideas.

Humanist scholars devoted themselves to *studia humanitas* which included the study of rhetoric, grammar, poetry, and ethics.

Geographically, humanism originated in Italy spreading through the peninsula from its original centre in Florence. Neo-Platonism emerged in fifteenth-century Italy. Initially it was a philosophical movement deriving its inspiration from Plato's *Republic* which was in marked contrast to the medieval form of theology and philosophy known as scholasticism.

Some of the prominent members of the neo-platonic 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. He also agreed that the source of all love was God and that it connected all human beings to each other. (Roy T. Matthews and F. De Witt Platt)

Marsilio's student Picodella Mirandola in his work 'Oration on the dignity of man' propounded that man belongs in the middle of a great hierarchy of beings created by God and that he is endowed with the freedom to either degenerate to the level of a brute or ascend to higher forms. His underlying argument was that man is the moulder and maker of his own destiny.

The value system of the Renaissance as may be perceived in the concept of humanism embodies ideas like emphasis on the Neo-Platonic philosophy, regeneration of the civilized man, a more practical kind of education, a new spirit of questioning and challenging blind faith. The spirit of humanism stood for a revised approach towards religion. This does not mean that the Renaissance scholars and artists were atheists or anti-clerical. Rather they were critical of the church and churchmen who had abstract and narrow ideas divorced from the reality of the natural human love for god.

The aim of humanists was to prepare man to take his place in society. The objective was not to make man a highly trained scholar, but rather to develop correct social values and right forms of expression.

Marsilio Ficino translated many Latin works. Humanity, he wrote, had the unique faculty called intellect which he described as an "eye turned towards the intelligible light".

Humanism gave importance to the pursuit of worldly concerns and endeavours. It stood for a new way of life which accepted the existence of god, but stood for a direct connection between man and god. So the Renaissance resulted in man emancipating himself from the "omnipresence" of the medieval church and dogmas which could not be rationalised. Neo-Platonism gave a more individualistic approach to religion. It questioned the supreme authority of intermediary institutions like the church, bishops and other members of the priestly hierarchy and put forward the idea that they were unnecessary for obtaining salvation. Men could now keep their minds open and aim for the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake and to understand the world on their own terms.

So it can be suggested that the spirit of individualism was the most prominent notion of the Renaissance. Italian thinkers attacked medieval idealization of values like poverty, celibacy, and seclusion and praised instead the institution of marriage

and family life. The Renaissance is said to have liberated men from the theocentric world (theological world) to an anthropocentric world or (human world).

8.5 GROWTH OF LITERATURE AND NEW LEARNING

The growth of this new attitude encouraged a new interest in and critical approach to the study of classical literature. The publication of pamphlets, books and ancient manuscripts at this time reflects these changes. Throughout the period of the Middle Ages all scholarly and religious literature was written in Latin. This was the language of the elite and upper classes. The Renaissance created a distinct literary culture. It brought about a decisive shift making works of poetry, drama and history accessible to a wider public. Not only was Latin replaced as the medium, but there resulted a very significant growth of vernacular literature in the commonly spoken languages of the time, Tuscan, English, German, French and Spanish. The Renaissance produced a series of great men in literature like Petrarch and Boccaccio in Italy, Thomas More and William Shakespeare in England, Boscan and Gocilaso de La Vega in Spain, Rabelais in France, Erasmus in Netherlands and Ulrich Von Hutten in Germany.

Renaissance literature assumed varied literary forms in theme and style. For example, Petrarch gave a lot of importance to language, figure of speech, and poetic verses; he inspired Italian intellectual life. His work largely focussed on human activities. Dante was famous for love poems. He wrote poetry connected with worldly affairs and human emotions. Dante's work *The Divine comedy* is seen as one of the earliest writing expressing Renaissance ideas. Boccaccio was praised for his work *Decameron* (a collection of 100 stories). Most of the stories are non-religious and deal with the daily lives of common people. Such writings stimulated new thinking that gave fresh insights into the understanding of human behaviour.

However, literature as a vehicle for propagating ideas of individualism and realism reached its apogee under Colluccio Salutati, the Florentine chancellor. His ideas contributed to the notion of civic humanism. Civic humanists encouraged the idea that citizens should develop ethics and moral principles in relation to the life and activities of the community. They believed that participation in public affairs was a virtue and a duty.

Some of the other literacy figures were Ludovico Ariosto, Plantus and Terrance. They had a strong impact on literary forms like poetry, grammar, essays, and drama, which mirrored social conditions of the time. Towards the end of the high Renaissance, i.e., mid-15th century phase, the introduction of the printing press made a large amount of material available in the public domain. The universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Heidelberg emerged as centres of literary and artistic activities.

Johann Gutenberg established the first printing press in Germany in the mid-fifteenth century. Printing enabled translations of the bible, classical texts and books on subjects like law, philosophy and science. The print culture had far-reaching repercussions. Distribution and circulation of books increased in an unprecedented manner and for the first time new ideas and information reached large audiences.

8.6 POLITICAL THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY

The Renaissance humanists owe a lot to their predecessors, the Greeks for the development of philosophy. The medieval church had itself used certain classical concepts to construct an impregnable system of doctrine and political thought. Beginning with Aristotle's assumption that man is naturally a political and 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.

One of the humanists who contributed to political philosophy is Niccolo Machiavelli. His most celebrated work is *The Prince*. In this work Machiavelli sought to examine through historical references, the forms of political and military action which were likely to ensure a ruler's political survival. In his book he justifies 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 from Machiavellian thinking. He proposed to do for politics what the painters of his time did for landscape art, i.e. to examine the scene from calibrated perspective and depict it appropriately. Through his other work *Discourses on Livy* he emphasised that the study of the classical past (the Roman Republic) could be used as a basis for making deductions about political actions. The book was an attempt to develop a new kind of political thought in response to the social-political needs of his time, but in the light of the past.

There were other philosophies that developed at this time. Stoicism and Epicureanism were two other schools of thought that began to gain ground during the Renaissance. The philosophy of Stoicism was about casting doubt on the idea of the absolute truth of received knowledge. For Stoicists no knowledge could be absolute and they envisaged possibilities of discovering new ideas even within the existing system of knowledge. In their view virtue was based on knowledge. In this people remain indifferent to pleasures and pain. Epicureanism was seen as a source of ultimate happiness.

Ultimately, the Renaissance created a new language, a new spirit and ethos. The political thinkers and scholar spread such ideas and philosophy to a wider public that created a new intellectual awakening.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What do you understand by the term Renaissance?

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- 2) Write a short note on humanism with emphasis on Renaissance literature.

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8.7 ART AND ART FORMS

The Renaissance was an age of genius. The Renaissance ideas continued to develop and are a source of modernity in this modern world in which individual endeavours were recognized. It was a period of tremendous searching 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.

It can be said that in the sphere of art and architecture the Renaissance was connected closely to changes in society i.e., the growth of materialism, trade, the rise of the bourgeoisie. These developments resulted in the development of an art which was more worldly. This point has been summed up beautifully by J.H. Plumb who wrote, “Art reflects society, its aspirations, confusions and inheritance”.

Most of the works of art that were commissioned by the nobility and the merchants focussed on the potential of man rather than the power and mystery of divinity. Till today the Renaissance art and architecture survives in its original form. Along with the revival of classical ideas, the growth of the Renaissance art from the Gothic to the Baroque style developed in four phases with their unique characteristics.

The first phase was the early Renaissance phase which saw the revival of the Gothic and Romanesque styles. It was an art which centred around religious activities and had a functional objective. Some of the essential features of this style included rounded arches, massive walls, small windows, plain and dark churches in order to present a spirit of austerity and the idea of the other world. In this form classical ideas were entangled with tradition as reflected in the statues of the Madonna and the paintings of saints.

But gradually after the fifteenth century, art assumes new forms in the high Renaissance period. Art not only emerges for the sake of art but men of genius lifted art to its summit: Leonarda da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian. All works of art depict maturity not only from an aesthetic perspective, but because of the importance being attached to man. The Renaissance artists looked upon art as an imitation of life, which required close observation of nature and human anatomy. Artists used optics and geometry and used their learning to develop a scientific perspective. Harmony, perfection, and love for beauty were the key features of Renaissance art. Art was no longer exclusively seen for its religious significance.

Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his ‘Treatise on painting’ that a good painter had two principal things to paint i.e. man and the intentions of man’s mind. He reminds us through his works that all objects have their natural dimension like the peasant cutting crops or sheep grazing on the mountain.

Some of the famous works of this period were Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*, *The Last Supper* and *Monalisa*; the *Pieta*, i.e., virgin Mary grieving over the body of dead Christ and the frescoes of Michaelangelo titled Buonarroti on the ceiling of the *Sistine Chapel*, particularly *The Last Judgement* integrated classical ideas and personal experience. If one looks at *The Last Supper* in its historical context, its pre-eminence as a religious and human drama is clear beyond doubt. This painting captures the emotions of fear, sorrow, and grief which appear on the faces of Christ's disciples at the announcement of the betrayal by one of them. Vinci's *Monalisa* attempts to portray the personality of an individual through the depiction of smile, yet this is a face that forever hold the eye. *Monalisa* was the wife of a Florentine merchant, *The Sistine Chapel* demonstrates the scope and power of Angelo's genius. To give a perspective to the multi-faceted themes, he divided the ceiling into 3 zones. In the lowest zone he painted biblical ancestors of Christ inwith heroic episodes. The 2nd zone comprised of old Testament prophets. In the third zone he painted episodes from the book of Genesis. In these frescoe's, Angelo gave expression to the Neo-platonic notion popular in the Renaissance – life is a journey towards liberation and union with god. It suggests philosophical enquiries into the meanings of light and the universe.

The other artists who worked in the same period were Titian who was renowned for the use of vibrating colours and Raphael is associated with the idealisation of feminine beauty.

The Venetian style is beautifully exemplified in Titian's *The Entombment* that illustrated the feeling of colour and motion. Raphael's *La Bella Jardinière* reflects important advances in the trend of realism. *The School of Athens* is a fresco by Raphael that sums up classical knowledge by depicting two great men Aristotle and Plato debating with each other to show that the Renaissance was associated the revival of classical works.

One cannot miss out on Sandro Botticelli's *Three Graces* which displays strength and vitality. To this ancient theme he added the elegance, sophistication, and grace of his own age. The fact that human figures were painted with perfection can be seen in *The Tribute Money* by Masaccio which is heavy, substantial and real. This added to the beauty of the painting by defining more closely the relationship between body and clothing.

During the high Renaissance phase sculpture emerged as a new form of art. Several portrait busts and equestrian statues of contemporary rulers were made which emphasised on the value of individualism. Michelangelo was associated with the glorification of the male human body. For instance we can make mention of the portrait bust of Piero de Medici and Lorenzo de Medici which give evidence of the feeling of self-confidence among the Renaissance men. The statue of a boy with the dolphin made by Andrea delVerocchio was remarkable in its use of motion. Michaelangelo's work *David* is the sculpture of a nude youth that stands at Piazza della Signoria under the belly of a Roman lion. This made him one of the most sought after artists in Italy.

The high Renaissance period gave way to the Mannerist phase which is identified as distorted, anti-classical, and reflective of the agony and violence of that period. This form of art emerges as a natural outcome of the socio-economic and political crisis in Italy. The deterioration in art is visible in the painting *Madonna of the Long Neck* which lacks perfection, symmetry, and harmony.

Another widely admired phase was the Baroque style of art. The Baroque artists used every device for magnifying the works of art because emphasis was on grandeur and excessive ornamentation. St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome is baroque in its exterior.

Each work of art during the Renaissance became a technical change, an adventure in perspective, proportion, and a revolution in the use of colours. The Renaissance artists were trained as apprentices under their masters. For the first time a space was created for the artist who was recognised as an individual in society and strove to perfect their craft. They put their signatures on individual works, wrote reminiscences and memoirs.

Although the innumerable paintings of the crucifixion and the Pieta speak eloquently of a deep rooted faith, but we need to remind the readers that in the high Renaissance phase scenes from the bible and Christian legends were being relocated in the lives of ordinary men and women and placed on earth. All works of art were tied with human emotion, passions and sufferings. These magnificent works of art were an admixture of classical ideas and the new values fostered by the Renaissance.

During the Renaissance period a large number of churches and cathedrals were constructed. All such grand buildings were commissioned by the popes and patronised by leading influential families. The features of the early Renaissance style are reflected in St. Andreas Cathedral. It's Roman arch columns, dome and pediment illustrate clearly the classical revival that was so basic to the Renaissance spirit. Other classical buildings were the *sacristy* of San Lorenzo, which was a Parish Church commissioned by the Medici family, and the *Pazzi Chapel*.

The most outstanding work of architecture by Fillippo Brunelleschi is the cathedral at Florence. This architecture has sometimes been called paper architecture and to some degree it does preserve in stone the procedures of laying down the architectural designs on paper and he was admired for his engineering skill. He also adopted classical styles of columns and pediments.

The Renaissance was visually one of the richest cultural movements. The Renaissance was culturally dynamic that reproduced knowledge of classical forms, symmetry, and artistic creativity. The city states were competitive and had a strong sense of making their cities vibrant and dynamic by commissioning works of art and architecture.

Most of the architects and painters like Brunelleschi, Leonordada Vinci and Massacio considered mathematical precision and geometrical knowledge integral for attaining perfection and accurate representations. A scientific consciousness was also visible in the detailed studies of the human body carried out by artists and depicted in their works. The outcome was that Renaissance artists and craftsmen created a conducive climate for the scientific revolution.

8.8 SCIENCE

Significant cross connections between science and the Renaissance cannot be denied. Studies in astronomy led to the development of extremely important ideas about the nature of the physical universe. Such ideas were taken to be attacks on the existing scholastic and theological system of thought about the cosmos.

The medieval theologians had viewed the celestial bodies only within the framework of their rigid conception of the universe.

Ptolemy had propounded the geo-centric theory of the universe according to which the earth was the centre of the universe. That was the Ptolemaic system. Such an understanding of the universe came from biblical texts and theological reasoning which was considered the source of ultimate truth. But by the fifteenth century scientific curiosity was growing and a Polish astronomer uttered the shocking truth that the earth and the planets move around the sun and not the other way around. He was none other than Nicholas Copernicus. He developed the heliocentric theory, which described the earth as a sphere that revolved around the sun in the course of a year and around its own axis every twenty four hours. Owing to the widely believed Ptolemaic view, this idea remained unacceptable for a long time. Finally Copernicus prepared his work on the *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* which was strongly condemned by church authorities.

This work was studied by Galileo Galilei who was responsible for the subsequent development of astronomy. He was largely influenced by the Platonic ideas and challenged the Aristotelian system of the universe. Galileo was able to project a new picture of the universe, particularly because he viewed the heavens through the greatest discovery of his age – 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 were not tolerated by the church. His famous work in Italian *Dialogue in the two chief world systems* made him popular, but the church put him on trial for heresy.

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 observation, experimentation, and collation of data for the purpose of the formulation of general laws.

As discussed by Stuart Andrews that the leading pioneer of this method was Francis Bacon. He laid the intellectual foundations of the Inductive method. Bacon had come to believe that knowledge that was of practical use to people, it could be described as ‘true knowledge’. He discussed and explained his ideas in two of his most influential works, *The Advancement of Learning* published in 1605 and revised in 1625 and *The New Atlantis*. He was an important source of inspiration for the founders of the Royal Society, established in 1660.

Another great philosopher of the time, 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 contention was

- 1) That whatever we can think about, conceive of in our minds, exists and is true.
- 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’.

Later on modern science was institutionalised by efforts of William Harvey noted for the circulation of blood, Robert Boyle known for his laws on temperature and Robert Hooke as a famous biologist. Many historians like Herbert Butterfield have stated the data that the {production of the scientific and medical books was relatively large. According to Kleb’s bibliography (1930) there were more than 3000 editions of 1044 titles by several authors printed before 1500 that came from the Italian Press and the spirit of science and Renaissance was closest.

Check Your Progress

- 1) Mention the features of Renaissance painting in about 250 words

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- 2) Describe briefly the achievements in science during the Renaissance period.

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8.9 LET US SUM UP

This unit covers one of the most important periods in the history of the Western world, the Renaissance, which means ‘rebirth’ or ‘re-awakening’. The Renaissance was not the name of any single event. Rather it was a series of developments and new ideas that ultimately led to the age of modernity. Between the early 15th century and the end of the 18th CE a powerful new energy and creativity were unleashed in Europe, in the arts, literature, philosophy, astronomy, the natural sciences, in other words, in learning of all sorts. In intellectual terms there was a decisive break from the blinkered world-view imposed on society by the medieval church.

Thinkers and creative persons of various types began to re-examine the classical cultures of Greece and Rome. Equally importantly, they began to study what came to be known as Humanism, in which the critical themes were the human being, ‘man’, his place and importance in the universe, as well as the significance of the individual. This focus was the harbinger of a new way of life which accepted the existence of god, but promoted the idea that there was a direct connection

between man and God. It also encouraged the spirit of inquiry, and acceptance of the legitimacy of worldly concerns and human endeavour. In geographical terms, Humanism originated in Florence, Italy.

In socio-economic terms, it was a time when feudalism was ending and an early form of capitalism was taking its place. Changes were most marked in Italy, where feudalism had not developed very deep roots and where commerce flourished in its various independent city-states. Then, gradually, wealth became more important than birth and family for deciding a person's status in society. Leisure and spare money also resulted in the commissioning of works of arts, including architecture. Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo were two of the most famous and inspired artists of the period. Discussions and debates in the universities were dynamic.

During the Renaissance there was a growing interest in the natural sciences and tools for studying the natural world. The telescope was invented in Holland and then a natural scientist, philosopher, and mathematician in Italy, named Galileo Galelei, made one for himself. He studied the heavens through it for years. Ultimately he proved Copernicus's heliocentric theory of the universe. The powerful leaders of the church did not take it lying down. They put him on trial for heresy, which meant challenging the accepted doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

This example of Galileo's work helps us to understand that the scientific revolution was an important aspect of Humanism as it led to the rise of Empiricism. According to this method, knowledge was not to be simply received from those in authority; it was to be acquired through observation, experimentation, and collation of data and then to lead to the formulation of general laws. It is no wonder that Galileo has been described as the 'father of the scientific method'. The significance of the Renaissance is still being studied and debated today. The term 'Renaissance' itself was invented by 19th - century historians.

8.10 KEYWORDS

Platonic ideas: The ideas of ancient Greek philosopher Plato (428 BC-348 BC).An innovator of the dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy.

Baroque Period: A style of architecture,music and dance,painting and sculpture that flourished in Europe from 1600 A.D. onwards.It followed Renaissance art and Mannerism.

8.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 8.3
- 2) See Section 8.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 8.7
- 2) See Section 8.8

8.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 9 REFORMATION

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Origin of the Reformation
- 9.3 The Social Background
- 9.4 Reformation in Germany
- 9.5 Martin Luther and Protestant Reformation
- 9.6 Luther and Peasant War
 - 9.6.1 Luther's Religion
- 9.7 Huldreich or Ulrich Zwingli
- 9.8 The Anabaptists
- 9.9 The Reformation in France
- 9.10 John Calvin
 - 9.10.1 The Spread of Calvinism
- 9.11 The Reformation in England
- 9.12 Impact
 - 9.12.1 Political
 - 9.12.2 Social
 - 9.12.3 Economic
- 9.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.14 Key Words
- 9.15 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 9.16 Suggested Readings

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the concept of Reformation and its historical origins;
- understand the social background of Reformation;
- understand the spread of Reformation; and
- understand the impact of Reformation in the social, political and economic spheres.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Reformation can be regarded as a milestone in the history of Europe. It was not merely an event in the history of the Church that is the fragmentation of the western Catholic Church or the emergence of Protestant theology. Rather, it brought revolutionary changes in the social and political climate of the 16th and 17th century Europe.

Definition: The reformation in the conventional sense implies the schism or break with in the Roman Catholic Church that functioned under the Pope in

Europe for centuries and the only one part of Reformation. It led to the creation of several radical and moderate folds within Christianity such as Lutherans, Calvinists, Puritans, Anabaptists, Anglicans, etc.

Prelude : The Christian Church was effectively unified till the mid- eleventh century. However, western and central Europe came under the control of the Pope while the Byzantine church emerged under the influence of the Patriarch of Constantinople. There were bitter conflicts between the two heads on the question of supremacy and church incomes. In AD 1054 a split in the Christian Church occurred. Since then the Western Church came to be called Catholic (means universal) and the church in the Byzantine Empire came to be known as the Orthodox Church.

The Catholic Church was a strong bond which provided religious uniformity to the numerous feudal units. In the absence of political unity, the church helped in stabilization of social relations. The popes interfered in the internal, political and financial matters of the rulers. In a way the Catholic Church provided unity to European Feudalism. The weakening of the feudal structure from the late medieval period was bound to have repercussion on the church as well.

9.2 ORIGIN OF THE REFORMATION

The Catholic Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries faced institutional problems because of the failure of the papal authority to provide spiritual leadership. Contemporary writings unquestionably indicate a state of increasing ecclesiastical corruption and inefficiency. The church leaders showed their inability to satisfy the people's longing for personal piety.

The economic changes and feudal crisis had led to the financial burden of the Catholic Church. It was one of the important factors leading to the mounting criticism of papal authority. The papacy had developed its own extensive bureaucratic structure and fiscal system. The Pope received various types of subscription from officials of the far flung churches. These include *Tenths* (one tenth part of the income was to be sent to Pope), *First Fruits* (offering connected with the beginning of the harvest), etc. The most controversial of all the subscriptions was the *Sale of Indulgence* (cards of pardon from a grave sin on huge payment to the church).

The economic problems of the church led to an increasing separation between the upper and the lower clergies. The higher official who came from nobility like cardinals, bishops, etc. accumulated huge wealth, while the lower clergies remained poor and came from commoners.

9.3 THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The medieval world was close society dominated by feudalism and the Catholic Church and its priesthood. The church was a focal point of life and touched every aspect of people's life from birth till death. The late middle Ages witnessed significant developments which prepared the ground for the reformers. It is argued that a decline in population was a fall in the agrarian produce as well as manufacture. This hastened the transmutation of the feudal fabric society.

Landowners too were seriously affected by the fall in their revenues owing to the declining rentals. In western Germany, especially economic factors made the nobles more dependent on the territorial princes of Germany, whose authority was steadily increasing.

Artisans and peasants were particularly affected by the low wages and high prices. These acute economic distress, disorientation and resentment found expression in the rational appeals of Martin Luther and Calvin.

Marx and Engles described the period of Reformation as having witnessed a social transformation that is *the rise of the bourgeoisie*. Reformation reflects the rise of an educated elite of laymen who were ready and eager to take over the spiritual and administrative functions of discredited clergy.

The most important theological change was the reduction of the role of the sacraments in salvation which reduced the authority and prestige of the clergy and increased the independence and self confidence of the people. The reduction in the powers of the Holy Roman Emperor weakened the papal estates.

The Reformation, though due to religious factors, was made possible by the secular requirements of the times. Among the non-religious element leading to Reformation was the **Renaissance** which resulted in a critical approach to the authority. The impact of the humanists' movement upon the Protestant Reformation has been a subject of historical debate.

The Reformation was seen as the logical and inevitable consequence of the rise of humanism. By accepting the Renaissance, the papacy brought about its own end as it led to increase in the intellectual activity with severe criticism. The ideas of Renaissance accelerated the Reformation. Italian Humanism implicitly rejected the monastic virtues of renunciation and fostered secular attitudes.

Thus, the Reformation arose, as **Alister McGrath** points out, from a complex heterogeneous matrix of social and ideological factors. The rise of nationalism, the growing political power of the south German states and the Swiss cities, the emergence of individual personalities, intellectual movements and theological awareness at the time of growing crises in the church gave way to the Reformation movement, though it varied from one region to another.

9.4 REFORMATION IN GERMANY

The politics and socio economic conditions of Germany were conducive to the emergence and spread of Protestant Reformation. Max Stienmetz suggests that Germany's economic position was characterized by an upturn in commercial production yet feudalism in the countryside remained strong. The clergy often played the role of landlord fuelling a spirit of revolt among the peasants, and the Catholic Church still owned a substantial portion of land in Germany. A strong feeling began to develop against church exploitation by the late-fifteenth century. Hence, anti-papalism and anti-clericalism became the two main characteristics of German region.

Martin Luther listed Papal and clerical abuses in his famous reforming treatise of 1520 – *An Appeal to the German Nobility*. The rise of humanism emphasized the idea of individual consciousness and human individuality, which raised new

interest in the doctrine of justification-how human beings could enter into a relationship with God. He achieved practical success because of his moderate approach and the popular resentment against the prevalent practice of “Sale of Indulgence”. Indulgence began as a gift of money or donation as an expression of thanks for forgiveness. Initially Indulgence meant relaxation of the punishment imposed by the church for a moral sin. Later it became a remission of punishment in purgatory by God and not the church alone. Thus God’s grace was commercially sold through Pope’s agents via Albrecht of Brandenburg and the banking house of Fuggers.

9.5 MARTIN LUTHER AND PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Martin Luther (1438-1546) was from peasant background. He showed strong religious inclination and in 1505 he decided to become a monk. He was a professor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg. Lutheran Reformation had to begin with simple question — ‘What must be done to seek the forgiveness of God.’

In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his **Ninety Five Thesis** on the church door in Wittenburg and directly challenged the sale of indulgence. His actions immediately attracted the attention of all Europe. Engels described Luther’s revolt against the Roman Catholic Church as ‘Luther’s lightning struck home’.

In the thesis he presented three points: 1) The concerned was the financial abuses, 2) Focus on the attention on doctrinal abuses and 3) Attacked religious issues.

In summer of the year 1520, Luther published his “**Three Treaties**”. In this, 1) The address to the Christian nobility of the German nation in which German provinces were called upon to reform the church. Here, he explained the Reformation Doctrine “*Priesthood of All Believers*”, the assertion that all Christians have an equal calling in the church. 2) Luther questioned the sacramental system of the church and declared that instead of seven, there has only three sacraments i.e *Baptism, Marriage and Ucharism..* 3) The most drastic change was that Luther denied the involvement of church and priest in granting liberation to Christian Man. He developed religious and ethical implication of doctrine of ‘*justification by Faith*’

When the Pope issued a bull (a Roman Catholic Church proclamation) of excommunication, Luther publicly burned it. In 1521, the Holy Roman Emperor asked Luther to appear before the Diet (parliament) at Worms to face trail. Luther refused to recant his position and thus was outlawed by the highest authority in Germany. He remained under a sentence of death throughout his life but was shielded and supported by the Elector of Saxony- Frederick, who personally did not like Papal interference in an academic centre. While in hiding Luther translated the **New Testament** from Greek text of Erasmus to German language. The supporters of his views came to be called the *Lutherans or Protestant*.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by the term ‘Reformation’?

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2) Discuss the unfolding of Reformation in Germany.

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9.6 LUTHER AND PEASANT WAR

Luther confrontation with the Papal Church inspired the German peasants to open rebellion in 1525. The Peasant war was not a coordinated rebellion and had several leaders; *Thomas Munzer* successfully led the movement for a brief period. He organized the struggle against the feudal lords and church exploitation. Their “Twelve Articles” a programme for action, was quite moderate and did not seek to destroy the feudal system completely.

Marxist writings suggest that the peasant war was an expression of socio-economic conflict and formed an early phase of bourgeois revolution, while the Reformation was its ideological expression. Steinmetz argues that it was a national movement precipitated by Martin Luther, bringing all the classes (except the ecclesiastical) under the leadership of the middling bourgeoisie against the Papal church. Peter Blickle on the other hand, suggests that the Peasant War was an attempt to overcome the crisis of feudalism through a revolutionary reshaping of social and seigniorial relation.

Though, the peasants war was inspired by Luther’s brave confrontation with Papal power, Luther did not want to lose the support of the nobility who were threatened by the peasants and so he vehemently attacked the rebellious peasants. Luther’s theory of political authority developed against the background of peasants’ war. Luther condemned all forms of rebellion as means of settling grievances. He argued that a true Christian should suffer the wrong and endure evil rather than flight the authority of the king. Hence Luther’s views were supported by a large section of the ruling class.

9.6.1 Luther’s Religion

Luther’s reformation began on the question of what an individual must do in order to be saved. From this developed his doctrine of justification by faith. Luther believed that the church had misunderstood the gospel and the true essence of Christianity by adopting practices such as the sale of indulgence.

Luther’s religion was given an organizational structure and a definite shape by his fellow Professor Melanchthon. He helped Luther prepare three Tracts and establish a new sect of Christians. This new group of Christians called Lutherans

believed in the supremacy of faith which destroyed the exclusive position of priests along with their mystical functions. Luther declared that each Christian was to be his own priest. For Luther the external order of the church was of secondary importance. Liberty was an inward faith and not an outward social and political freedom. He abolished the hierarchy of church officials from popes down to priests.

The Lutheran movement brought about a sharp division within the Christian church and destroyed papal supremacy. The general popularity of Lutheranism was displayed by the way in which the people accepted it as a kind of doctrine with ethical issues and which also suggested economic reforms which affected the papacy and changed economic system of the country.

Thus, we can say that Reformation in Germany was not a really a single great development but rather consisted of a number of separate localized Reformation. Each of which was organized by the city council or Prince who looked after different religious doctrine and tried to promote it.

9.7 HULDREYCH OR ULRICH ZWINGLI

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was a contemporary of Luther who carried out religious reforms in the Swiss confederation of the Zurich. Zwingli's reformation was based on humanist's views. He presented new views in course of his preaching. His actual reformation started in 1520 and was completed within five years.

The Swiss Reformation under Zwingli stressed upon the corporate nature of the church. It believed that clergy and laymen formed a 'holy community'. The Reformation in Zurich had a great social impact. The monasteries were abolished and monastic charity became a communal concern. The church and moral discipline was to be jointly supervised by the church and the state. Together they were to form the '*holy Community*'.

There were some similarities between the Lutheran and Zwingli's Reformation. Both rejected the medieval sacraments and emphasized the God. Both of them retained traditional practices of infant Baptism but for different reasons.

9.8 THE ANABAPTISTS

The Anabaptists rejected the doctrine of infant baptism and believed that the true Christian is one who was re-baptized as an adult. They believed in the doctrine of justification by faith and contended that only those who firmly believed in God could become members of the true church and excluded all others.

As infant baptism was considered a sacrament both by the Protestants and the Catholics, the arguments of the Anabaptists posed a threat to their doctrine. Moreover, the Anabaptists refused to recognize or participate in civil government, take oaths of allegiance or serve in the army and refused to pay taxes in the government. They argued that true Christians should never use sword or go to law courts or perform magisterial functions. These groups reflected the aspirations of the poor people and wanted social reforms of all the institutions in preparation for Christ second coming.

Wherever the Anabaptists settled, the local rulers persecuted them; Protestants drowned them in water and ordered them to be stoned to death while the Catholics burned them alive. Their principal leaders like Balthasar Hubmaier and Jacob Hutterhad converted some nobles to their faith, but in the end they face torture and death. But their tradition of democratic thought and economic equality remained.

9.9 THE REFORMATION IN FRANCE

The situation in France with respect to Reformation was similar to Germany. Although decentralization of government was not so great and strong. The ground was better prepared for the reform of the church in France than in Germany because of the efforts of liberal Catholics. Luther's ideas were soon imported and widely read. The strongest opposition came from the Parliament of Paris. Francis I subordinated his religious policy at home to the needs of his foreign policy. In 1560s, Francis I of France concluded the *Concordat of Bolognes* with Pope Leo X by which the crown was given virtual control of the French clerical appointments.

In France, Reformation movement was a very much inspired by Calvin and his philosophy.

9.10 JOHN CALVIN

John Calvin (1509-64) of France was from the second generation of reformers. He is regarded as the most influential reformer because of his powerful impact on different parts of Europe. Calvin was highly learned and possessed a logical brain. Many of his views derived from the Bible but he was also influenced by St. Augustine. Calvin was forced to leave France because of the religious prosecution carried out by the rulers.

Calvin was influenced by Erasmus and other humanists of his time. He shared with Luther the belief in salvation by faith alone and supported the doctrine of direct communication of man with God. His emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God gave a unique character to his teachings.

Like Luther, he also retained only two sacraments— Baptism and the Eucharist. Calvin's first edition of *Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536)* became the most influential work of Protestant theology and reflected his sharp intellect and legal mind. The doctrine of predestination constituted the most important element of Calvin's social thought. His social thought also believed to have indirectly promoted commercial activity.

9.10.1 The Spread of Calvinism

The type of Protestantism which was the basis for the modern congregational and reformed churches was Calvinism. Calvinism was established after the death of Zwingli. The leadership of the new Swiss Protestantism was provided by a Frenchman John Calvin (1509-34). The ethics of Calvinists were dynamic and social. Luther's ideology was more successful in Northern Germany and Scandinavia because it suited the rulers of these areas. But the Calvinism took roots in the states where it opposed vigorously the existing political and religious

establishments. Calvinism was the official religion of Northern Netherlands and the German states. It directly influenced the society and the development of finance, industry and commerce. The economic significance of Calvinism has been the cause of prolonged controversy. Calvinist political thought reinforced the middle class attempt to throw off the control of the French monarchy and break the power of the Catholic and aristocratic ministries in Scotland.

Hence Calvinism won adherents from the nobility and it was the support it received from noble families. The Huguenots as French Calvinist were called were particularly strong in courts and parliaments.

9.11 REFORMATION IN ENGLAND

When Reformation movement had already taken its root in Germany and France, England also witnessed its reformation. The beginning was political rather than religious. It is an irony that the English Reformation was initiated by the same ruler – Henry VIII (1509-47), who was a strong critic of Martin Luther’s reforms. Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catherine who was a Spanish princess but the Pope could not grant it because divorce was not allowed in Catholic Church and also due to the fact that the troops of the Spanish Emperor were in control of the city of Rome and the Pope could not go against him. Henry became desperate after waiting for three years, and decided to take matters into his own hand. Through a subservient Parliament (also called the Reformation Parliament 1529-34), he severed all relation with the Pope. He repudiated Papal authority and in 1534 set up the Anglican Church with the King as Supreme Head. Changes under Henry were the suppression of monasteries and the introduction of the Bible in vernacular.

The Reformation helped in strengthening the English monarchy and in creating a national church. Thus we can say that the English Reformation was quite different from other countries as here the rulers for personal reasons took the initiative to introduce it. It was implemented through political means. The Anglican Church Settlement (1559) was an attempt to avoid the extremes and adopt a midway path between Protestantism and Catholicism.

9.12 IMPACT

The European Reformation of the 16th century was a complex and heterogeneous movement with direct or indirect ramification on the political and socio economic life of Europe. Since Christianity was associated with the lives of the rulers it was bound to have some impact on them.

9.12.1 Political Impact

The Protestant reformation produced different perceptions of the relationship between state and church. One of the first consequences of Reformation was the breakdown of the Catholic Church into many divisions that was highly organized and laid down strict norms of political, moral and social behaviour.

Protestantism indirectly contributed to the idea of political unity. It is also argued by some of the historians that Protestantism marked a natural development of European Nation States.

Protestantism had been interpreted as both a product of the rising nation states concept as well as catalyst to emerge national identity

9.12.2 Social Impact

The Protestants placed family at the centre of human life and stressed on mutual love between husband and wife. From the medieval times religion played an enormous role in the everyday lives of most Europeans. Both the Protestant and Catholics Reformation played an important role in transforming popular culture including popular rituals and festivals.

The Reformation also stimulated new composition in art and music. Luther praises an art and placed music next to the word of God. However, Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland were against it. They considered music to be a source of distraction and stressed on a purified form of worship.

The Catholic Reformation became an important source of patronage to the new style of art called ‘Baroque’ that developed in post Renaissance period.

9.12.3 Economic Impact

The Reformation is sometimes seen as a revolutionary event because it represented the challenge of a new class to feudalism. According to some historians, this religious individualism was a counter part to the intellectual individualism of Humanism and it encourage the growth of Capitalism.

M.J. Kitch said that “historically there appears to be a strong link between Protestantism and Capitalism”. This link has been the subject of much debate. **Max Weber**, the German Sociologist and economist was one of the first to suggest the relationship in detail. He makes a clear connection between **Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism**. In his words, he has clearly said that it was difficult to derive the economic progress of countries before Reformation.

Weber explains the casual relation between Protestantism and Capitalism by demonstrating how the protestant model ideas created a mental and intellectual environment in which capitalism came on its own.

His work *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* did away with the abstract phrase ‘Spirit of Capitalism’. Secondly he emphasized the economic aspects of capitalism, pulling it out of the social spiritual framework.

Christopher Hill also supported Tawney’s theory of two way affinity between Protestantism and Capitalism. According to Hill, Protestantism provided a set of flexible doctrines that helped in breaking the strong hold of the “Iron ideological framework of the early times.”

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the spread of Luther’s and Calvin’s ideas.

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2) Discuss the social, political and economic impact of Reformation.

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9.13 LET US SUM UP

Thus, it can be said that Reformation embraced a number of areas – reform of both the morals and the structures of church and society; reinterpretation of Christian spirituality and the reform of its doctrine. The popularity of Reform movements cannot be properly understood purely in religious light. Rather these have to be placed in their historical, political, social, and economic context. The Reformation was far more than a movement directed against the abuses in the Roman Catholic Church. It was the culmination of a complex situation with roots deeply buried in the medieval past.

9.14 KEYWORDS

Peasant Wars: The German peasant wars were a widespread popular revolt in Central Europe between 1524-25. The revolts failed due to an intense opposition and oppression from the aristocracy.

Infant baptism: The practise of baptising/naming young children practised by both protestants and catholics. Infant baptism is also known as christening in some faith traditions.

9.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sections 9.1 and 9.2
- 2) See Section 9.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sections 9.5, 9.6, 9.10 and Sub-section 9.10.1
- 2) See Sub-section 9.12.1, 9.12.2, 9.12.3

9.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

Arvind Sinha (2010), Europe in Transition: From Feudalism to Industrialization, Manohar, Delhi

Meenakshi Phulkar (2000), Rise of Modern West, Macmillan Delhi,

UNIT 10 THE EMERGENCE OF THE PRINT LED PUBLIC SPHERE

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Rise of Print Culture and Renaissance
- 10.3 Rise of Print Culture and Reformation
- 10.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.5 Keywords
- 10.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 10.7 Suggested Readings

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand specifically the way in which the print culture developed in the early modern Europe;
- explain the changes which came about in the development of knowledge which came about in the wake of the development of the print culture in our period; and
- understand how the development of print culture revolutionized the literate European culture.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit brings you to an important aspect of developments in the early modern Europe, namely the development of the print culture in this period. As you know that in the medieval times European knowledge systems revolved around the scribal culture which basically consisted of hand written manuscripts which were basically copied and preserved for transmission. By nature this was a limited enterprise and the limited circulation of the copied manuscripts was the only way access to knowledge could be brought about. Moreover these manuscripts would be scattered in libraries or monasteries all over Europe and could be accessed only by a handful of people. The scattered nature of these manuscripts made the task of collating, comparing and analyzing the knowledge contained in these manuscripts a difficult job. This again in turn meant that only a limited number of people could engage in this exercise. With the coming of print the opportunities of accessing these works expanded and new dimensions arose which we will discuss.

10.2 RISE OF THE PRINT CULTURE AND RENAISSANCE

You have read about the renaissance in an earlier unit. It has been argued that the rise of renaissance fostered a distinctive ethos of humanism and individualism.

This indeed brought a forward way of thinking and flourishing of a revival of interest in classical learning. With the coming of the print revolution there was in fact initially an effort towards recovering past wisdom. Attempts were made to reconstitute the past systems of knowledge. However what was different now was that a new technology (printing) had been placed at the disposal of a dispersed community of scholars. As a consequence the reconstitution and communication about past works, lost languages and lost texts began 'to accumulate in an unprecedented fashion.' As Dr. Eisenstein points out the trend towards individualism gains a fillip with the rise of print culture. Now biographies of saints and kings of the scribal culture began to be increasingly accompanied by biographies of ordinary individuals pursuing more 'heterogeneous' careers. The scribal culture had not been able to preserve copyrights of individual works or patenting which the print culture now made possible. Moreover the print culture made possible the airing of private thoughts and individual idiosyncracies in the public domain. The scribal culture due to its limitations had not been able to publicise the works of say the Florentine artists of Renaissance. With the oncoming of the print culture the publicity of these artists increased manifold. Moreover their individual contributions were highlighted and made known on a large scale. Printing technology now meant that woodcut portraits of artists and their works now were made available which made it easier to match the names with the faces of the artists and this made their popularizing easier. Earlier during the period of scribal culture mostly conjectural portraits of the artists were available. Now even scientific achievements or engineering feats were made available to the larger public with the help of the printing technology of woodblocks etc. and their popularization meant that the new engineering and scientific sites became the new tourism sites in different parts of Europe.

In distinguishing the scribal phase of the Renaissance and the proliferation of communication made possible by the rise of print culture then it becomes possible to see the Renaissance in two phases. The first phase is that of the high achievements of the Italian artists and writers where Renaissance achieved its glory and the second phase in which the communication revolution brought about by the print culture disseminated the achievements and the attitudes of Renaissance far and wide. In fact the print revolution made it possible for this subsequent communication revolution. The fact that the new printing technology was now placed at the disposal of the Renaissance achievements meant that the Renaissance which was initially limited to a limited circle became accessible to a larger and widespread mass of people. This in turn also meant that its effects became more lasting and permanent. Notes Eisenstein, "in this light it seems misleading to stop short with the humanist movement in Italy when trying to account for the so called rise of classical scholarship and the development of auxiliary disciplines. Humanism may have encouraged the pursuit of classical studies for their own sake, sharpened sensitivity to anachronism, and quickened curiosity about all aspects of antiquity; but it could not supply the new element of continuity that is implied by the term 'rise'. Findings relating to lost texts and dead languages began to accumulate in an unprecedented fashion not because of some distinctive ethos shaped in quattrocento Italy but because a new technology had been placed at the disposal of a far flung community of scholars."

The transition from the scribal culture to the print culture also enabled a situation where a new man could develop. This new man straddled both the worlds of the scribal culture and print and hence had a greater versatility. Leonardo da Vinci

displayed this versatile facets of this transition phase in his paintings and scientific drawings for example. With the growth of printing this versatility could also be copyrighted and patented. In Venice in the period between 1469 and 1474 we see the development of laws which gave legitimacy to the printed work and invention in terms of according them the right to patent. These laws 'transformed the anonymous artisan in to the eponymous inventor, released individual initiative from the secretive cocoon of the guild, and rewarded ingenuity with the luster of fame as well as the chance to make a fortune.'

It may be argued that along with these developments there also arose a new spirit of independence and a new claim to shape one's own life distinct from one's parents and ancestors. In contrast to the claims made by some scholars attributing this to the ethos of Italy recent studies have shown how this was helped by the culture of print. There is a proliferation of do it yourself manuals and self help books. These ranged from areas such as how to maintain one's own accounts, holding family prayers to easy steps to help in making your own drawings and pictures, mixing clay, surveying fields, design buildings and machines. This extended the opportunities for an individual to learn the new sciences and crafts. These self instructional literatures took the individual out of the classroom and provided avenues for self development and mastering of new skills in an environment away from the prejudices of a tutelaged learning. An example of this literature is Thomas Morley's 'Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music.'

Accompanying these developments is the transformation of the concept of library. During the scribal period the library was a narrow closed space. The manuscripts were housed within the narrow confines of a monastery or abbey. Now with the rise of the print culture library was viewed as more of an open space where the multiple copies of printed works were available to more and more people. The multiplication of readership meant a greater access and a greater need for avenues to discuss these works. This meant commenting, analyzing and dissecting these works both orally and in print. The library then turned in to an open space extended from the actual collections to tea shops and gatherings where such discussions could take place.

Eisenstein also suggests that we look at the move from the scriptorium (scribal workshops) to the printers's workshops more closely before considering such factors as emergent capitalism or industrialization. The social relations of the printers' workshop were crucial in developing the notion that both heads and hands, book learning as well as practical activities could provide equally valuable sources of knowledge about the world. Unlike the earlier scriptorium and the later editorial office the printshop was a place where artisans and scholars worked side by side. The former learnt to appreciate intellectual issues while the latter acquired a taste for manual labour along with an editor's habits of mind. It was thus the Renaissance notion of learning by doing emerged 'more from the printers' workshop than from the diffuse spirit of the age' As Gilmore, the Renaissance scholar put it: the "invention and development of printing with movable type brought about the most radical transformation in the condition of intellectual life in the history of western civilization. It opened new horizons in education and in the communication of ideas. Its effects were sooner or later felt in every department of human activity."

It may be pointed out here that this interaction in the printers' workshop created a new cross cultural exchange as well that was experienced initially by the new

occupational groups that proliferated with the onset of printing. Even before a particular work came off the press there were constructive interchanges between the typefounders, correctors, copy-editors, translators, illustrators and others who took the editorial work forward. The early printers read the works which were coming off their presses and also read the works brought out by other printers. This resulted in an invigoration of intellectual activities and led to further creative ideas. The emerging mode of book production also brought together bookworms and mechanics. It produced the scholar printer—a new man who could handle machines and marketing of products along with the activities of editing texts, forming learned societies, fostering new methods of data collection and taking forward the learned disciplines. Consequently new forms of theory and practice in the printing world came up which were removed from the closed precincts of the monastic libraries in to the hustle and bustle of commercial establishments.

Printed editions of works also facilitated a new the trajectory of knowledge generation. The job of sorting out of knowledge could now be done by a wider community of readers who had the same text more easily available to them. They could now develop coordinated efforts in comparing and collating the textual information. They could put their heads together in correcting errors, finding anomalies and bringing in new information. A feedback process developed which brought in emendations in the knowledge put forward by the texts. Learning then changed from the process of recovery promoted by the scribal culture to that of discovery as progressive strides were made from the efforts of copying texts to enhancing the knowledge contained in them. This knowledge could then be further printed and disseminated facilitating further knowledge generation.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Distinguish between the two phases of Renaissance. How did the emergence of the print culture help in broadbasing the Renaissance?

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- 2) Discuss how the knowledge process changed from recovery of knowledge to the discovery of knowledge.

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10.3 RISE OF THE PRINT CULTURE AND REFORMATION

While studies of Renaissance often overlook the impact of the print culture in the case of Reformation it can hardly be missed. As Geoffroy Atkinson points out ‘the Reformation was the first religious movement which had the aid of the printing press.’ We then actually see a movement which was from the beginning

was shaped by the powers of the press. In fact the printing press played an important role in ushering in the Reformation. It may be further argued that the Reformation was the first movement to exploit press as a mass medium aimed at arousing popular support for its cause. Luther himself pointed out that printing was 'God's highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of Gospel is driven forward.'

This theme of assigning a providential role to printing for the masses was reaffirmed by Johann Sleidan in 1542 when he argued that "as if to offer proof that God has chosen us to accomplish a special mission, there was invented in our land a marvelous new and subtle art, the art of printing. This opened German eyes even as it is now bringing enlightenment to other countries. Each man became eager for knowledge, not without feeling a sense of amazement at his former blindness." In fact printing was seen by both the religious and secular (protestant divines and the enlightenment thinkers) as a marvelous device that ended the monopoly of learning by the priests, that did away with ignorance and superstition, countered the popes and helped western Europe to come out of the Dark Age.

As various historians have pointed out the very act of disputation with the established church was nothing new. That is what Luther did was only to extend the already existing space for academic disputations existing within the church to his Ninety Five theses. This action in itself was not revolutionary since conventionally professors of theology held disputations over issues such as indulgences. Luther himself told Pope Leo X that "it is a mystery to me how my theses, more so than my other writings, indeed those of other professors were spread to so many places. They were meant exclusively for our academic circles here... They were written in such a language that the common people could hardly understand them. They use academic categories."

It is the translation in to German, the printing of the theses and their distribution that made possible the wide publicity they received. Unless we look at these processes it would not be possible to understand how a message directed at a few people in the academic circles could acquire such immense popularity. This in turn means we need to look in to precisely the activities of the printers, translators, proof readers and distributors singly and in combination that it becomes possible to see how three different editions of the theses were printed almost simultaneously in three separate towns of Germany and disseminated. Moreover as Nauert points out the audience for academic disputations at this point in time due to the emergence of the scholar printer extended to laymen beyond the church and the university. This meant that this small groups of laymen in different towns due to their access to printing culture could take the process of selling the Lutheran disputations far forward due to the already existing practices of selling books to different towns and villages through a network of peddlers who were already doing house to house selling of printed works and books. Thus the new publicity techniques ushered in by printing helped in taking the message of Luther far and wide.

With reformation came the Catholic-Protestant divide. This was to become the most important turning point in the history of Christianity in the West. It entailed reexamination of the biblical tradition and transmission of the Bible itself. Questions such as what was to be included in the biblical tradition indeed got a

fillip with the rise of the printing press whence a large number of works appeared on the biblical oral, folk and written tradition. Indeed it gave a fillip to the investigation of that tradition by a large number of people. The number of works appearing in pursuit of this tradition testifies to this.

An important question which comes up with the rise of Protestantism is the rise of new attitudes often linked to the culture of thrift and hard work in the emergence of rising capitalism. The rise of these new attitudes is often debated by adherents of the Marxist or the Weberian point of views. However what is often glossed over is the unsterotyped behaviours of the real people. Dr. Eisestein points out that here by drawing a contrast between life styles and work habits of scribes with the printers we may reach a more nuanced understanding of the emerging behaviours of the people of early modern Europe. Here it may be [pointed out that the copyist working in a monastery scriptorium for atoning for his sins could write devotional works or would come to regard theology as a queen of sciences. But when a profit making printer worked to bring out devotional and theological works he evaluated them in terms of their sales value. To stay in business he was less likely to turn to orthodox theology or the Christian virtues preached by the monks.

The printers publishing the new volumes infact basked in the reflected glory of the new trends in religion and reform. They invariably reinforced the impression that they were serving an elevated calling. But the emphasis was on their relatively autonomous status. On the one hand they fought against being relegated to a low and servile mercenary calling and on the other hand they struggled equally against being incorporated in to monkish or other religious prejudices. In that sense they tried to carve out an autonomy for themselves and often portrayed themselves as 'freemen working voluntarily at an excellent and noble calling'.

Indeed they determined a work rhythm for themselves in a situation where they were peculiarly vulnerable to work stoppages by strikes or theological infighting. Their pace of work was determined by the requirements of their relentless machines. Copying jobs were farmed out and the early printers even developed time and motion studies to keep their workers engaged all the time. In the process a work culture developed which discouraged idle chatter and subordinated friendship to impersonal efficiency. Moreover a culture of humour and satire developed which was directed at religious clericalism and inconsistencies of monkish way of life. As hand illumination was replaced by wood cuts and engravings new opportunities for anti clerical themes developed. Gradually jokes and humour were converted in to public scandal directed against the clergy.

The antipathy against clericalism was by no means restricted to one class of people. Infact it cut across class lines and found expression amongst nobles and commoners, middle class and the bourgeois sections of the society and as Hexter points out new polarities of lay-clerical, secular-religious or church-state emerged which cut across class and status lines.

Moreover a new culture of emphasis on reading developed. As John Hale points out nobles who only focused on dueling and hunting and did not know how to handle books suffered a loss of prestige. Lawrence Stone points out that royal councilors were increasingly called upon to 'think clearly, analyze a situation,

draft a minute, know law's technicalities and speak a foreign language.' This required an ability to read and assimilate books on diverse topics to hold a place in the court. Since the early sixteenth century nobles started acquiring private libraries leaving the nobility of the sword and the clergy behind. Learning by reading was now becoming as important as learning by doing. A legal bureaucracy sprang up which by the dint of its proficiency in reading and interpretation of rules, privileges etc. was carving out a space for itself.

However the coming up of literate and educated lay establishment did not mean the rise and growth of a new social class. It meant rather a new and different kind of schooling for the children of the privileged elite. It was emphasized that 'when the king needs someone to reply to a foreign ambassador, he will turn not to the horn blowing gentleman but the educated rustic.' It is in this context that when the Spanish courtiers complained to Habsburg Emperor Charles V about his appointing low born councilors he told them to see to it that their children were better educated. Dr. Eisestein points out in the sixteenth century schoolmasters and text book publishers came in to their own. This she points out needs to be differentiated from the rise of the bourgeoisie. This process in fact brought about the reconstruction of the European aristocracy. The rise of 'bookish education' led to the clergy being outed from some schools and then the bookish learning spread to the scattered countryside with the country gentry who had studied in the urban schools returning to their estates and manors. In the early modern Europe then it would not do to equate the rise of the reading public with the rise of the middle class. It was the aristocracy itself which was now reconstructed as men of letters. They in fact come up as freethinkers and libertines and also as connoisseurs, dillittants and amateurs who were no longer impressed with pedantry and jargons and used vernacular rather than Latin language.

Moreover the shift in book production from the abbeys to the printers workshop contributed to the decline of ecclesiastical influence in the longer run. The bringing out of text books and the issues of shaping of the curricula became the site of an intense conflict between the church and lay officials. Earlier the shops and bookstalls of university stationers were subservient to the university and its colleges but now with the rise of the scholar printers the print workshops became independent centres which not only had the ability to confer reward and prestige but also the ability to attract wandering students and scholars like the monasteries of the earlier times. The leaders of the new firms now themselves gave patronage, jobs and boarding and lodging facilities to the needy students and scholars. In this context the scholars themselves led the way in challenging clerical monopolies of knowledge and learning. It made possible the rise of new humanism of scholars like Erasmus who could openly challenge clerical orthodoxies to build a new culture of learning and studying. As Dr. Eisestein points out 'Erasmus showed how men of letters could be emancipated from client status.. by harnessing their pens to the new powers of the press.'

Likewise the spread of printing workshops in Europe was also non stereotypical. Though on the whole the printing presses gravitated towards the protestant regions it was affected by many different variables and concurrent changes. Dr. Eisestein points to the role of wealthy religious refugees in providing the fillip to printing in Geneva in the 1550s. It may be argued following her argument that religion did play a role but in unexpected and paradoxical ways in the growth of printing

centres so we may not see the rise of printing purely in terms of catholic-protestant divide. Here she also points to trade patterns coming down from the medieval ages and the new patterns which emerged in the wake of capitalist and mercantile developments. However even here the specificity of developments of the printing industry has to be kept in mind. As she [points out] moreover the expansion of the printing industry probably affected the rate of development of many other enterprises—not merely because typefounding is related to metallurgy; paper mills to textile manufacture; publicity and advertising to sales; but also because the rate of technological innovation and supplies of skilled labour were likely to develop most rapidly in regions where printers also flourished and book markets were growing’.

It was this manner of growth of the print industry that set the parameters for the culture of print. This culture was against dogmatic approaches to lived experience and also theology. To quote Dr. Eisestein again ‘from the days of Castello to those of Voltaire, the printing industry was the principal natural ally of libertarian, heterodox and ecumenical philosophers. Eager to expand markets and diversify production, the enterprising publisher was the natural enemy of narrow minds.’ It was this feature of the printing industry which was to give a specific focus to the growth of what Hegel called the human mind over the next few centuries. Even as we come across the development of reading publics and the growth of an independent press in the later centuries this particular broad mindedness stands out. It is this feature again which characterized the rise of the enlightenment philosophes whose lineages cannot be reduced to particular religions or orthodoxies but can be regarded as an attempt to push human thought towards the broadest humanist dimensions even when some religious dimension can be attributed to them.

Here it may be pointed out that the ground for the spread of broad minded humanist ideas was prepared to a large extent by the reformers, the Erasmians and the men of letters. This led to the widening of the reading public. Though certain sections of the clergy objected to Bible reading by women, apprentices and husbandmen these objections were overcome and the way was cleared towards bringing more social groups in to the folds of a reading public. Moreover the social penetration of literacy which came about with the expansion of bible reading also changed the character of group identity and fuelled rising expectations from education. Indeed as various historians have pointed out many ‘low born’ Londoners cited the importance of printing press and education in their lives. They engaged in book learning and brought out tracts and pamphlets proclaiming themselves as ‘free born’. With education there also arose an informed political culture. Debates and political mobilization marked the rise of this new political culture. Changes in the position of the householders also occurred with the rise of the new printing culture. Do it yourself manuals for the householders like ‘A Werke for Householders’(1530) had help for the householder in terms of putting him in charge of how he would worship and even carry out his lay activities. As Wright points out: “ Through prayer and meditation, models for which they could find in scores of books, the draper, the butcher... soon learned to approach God without ecclesiastical assistance... The London citizen learned to hold worship in his own household... the private citizen had become articulate in the presence of the Deity...”

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How did Luther's academic disputation with the Church become the great Reformation? Discuss.

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- 2) Discuss the changes in attitudes which came about with the rise of the print culture during the Reformation.

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10.4 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, you were able to understand:

- how the print culture emerged from the culture of manuscripts writing and dissemination in the early modern Europe,
- how the emergence of the print culture influenced the nature of Renaissance,
- how the emergence of print culture shaped the Reformation.

10.5 KEYWORDS

Humanism: The movement within Renaissance which placed man or human being at the centre of universe instead of God as was the case in the medieval times.

Heterogeneous careers: Variety of career options which open up after early industrial and commercial developments.

10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 10.2
2) See Section 10.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 10.3
2) See Section 10.3

10.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as Agent of Change*, Volumes 1&2, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, London, 1979

Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, Volume 1, Polity Press, London, 2000



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THE PEOPLE'S
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UNIT 11 EUROPEAN STATE SYSTEM

Structure

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Emergence of New Absolute Monarchies

11.3 Features of Western Absolutism

11.3.1 The King's Bureaucracy

11.3.2 The Army

11.3.3 Trade

11.3.4 Diplomacy

11.3.5 Finance and Taxation

11.4 Features of Eastern Absolutism

11.4.1 Feudal Nobility

11.4.2 Consolidation of Serfdom

11.4.3 International Pressures

11.4.4 Role of Wars

11.4.5 Absence of Bourgeoisie

11.5 European Absolutism — Some Case Studies

11.5.1 Western Absolutism

1) Spain

2) France

3) England

4) Sweden

11.5.2 Eastern Absolutism

1) Prussia

2) Austria

3) Russia

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 Keywords

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

11.9 Suggested Readings

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to understand:

- how state systems developed in the early modern west;
- how the development of the state systems was marked by rise of absolute monarchies;
- how these absolute monarchies reflected the quest for by wars and expansion;
- how in the eastern and western Europe there were different forms of these absolute monarchies; and
- how as compared to the eastern Europe the western Europe was marked by the development of the bourgeoisie which made for a different balance of power as compared to the East where the bourgeoisie was absent.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Absolutism refers to absolute monarchies created after the breakdown of the medieval monarchies in early modern Europe. The new monarchies were strong nation-states and depended on strong individual leaders. To strengthen both, it was necessary to curtail the restraints on centralized government that had been exercised by the church, feudal lords, and medieval customary law. By claiming the absolute authority of the states against such former restraints, the new monarchs claimed his own absolute authority. The most common defence of monarchical absolutism asserted that kings derived their authority from God. The new national monarchs asserted their authority in all matters and tended to become heads of church as well as of state.

The metamorphoses of European monarchies to new levels of power, efficiency and development during the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries were needed to escape from the crises of feudal monarchies and the ravages of war, plague and economic hardships. Before 1453 European states were more feudal than sovereign in nature, after 1559 they were more sovereign than feudal. In a feudal state the prerogatives of the State namely, the authority to wage war, to tax, to administer and enforce the law were privately owned as legal and hereditary rights by members of a military landed aristocracy. The division of power between monarch and magnate, royal lord and great vassal was the central characteristic of medieval monarchies. This kind of monarchy was an intermediate political model standing between decentralised feudal government on the one hand and the sovereign state on the other. The feudal monarch was linked to the people by a network of personal loyalties and obligations created by the feudal bond between lord and vassal.

But in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Europe witnessed the emergence of a different genre of monarchies which were absolutist and sovereign in nature known as Absolutist Monarchies. This transition was largely the royal response to a massive general crisis which swept Europe in the fourteenth century brought about by the inefficiencies and internal conflicts in the feudal mode of production that prevailed in the Middle Ages, long destructive wars and the devastating outbreaks of bubonic plague or Black Death.

The feudal lord's growing demand for revenue for military purposes and increasingly extravagant lifestyles imposed additional stress on the feudal mode of production. This feudal crisis of the fourteenth century was a watershed dividing the destinies of Europe.

The horrors of incessant wars devastated the fortunes of many European states. The Christian princes were engaged in driving out the Moors from the Spanish peninsula. Germany witnessed sporadic civil wars. Central Europe was busy warding off the Turkish advances and quelling the heresy of Bohemian subjects. France and England were engaged in the devastating Hundred Years War.

11.2 EMERGENCE OF NEW ABSOLUTE MONARCHIES

The New monarchies that emerged from this crisis were different from the preceding feudal monarchies. Absolutism vested complete and unrestricted

powers in the government. As the political theorist **Jean Bodin** said, “the distinguishing mark of the sovereign is that he cannot in any way be subject to the commands of another, for it is he who makes law for the subject, abrogates laws already made and amends obsolete law.”

Karl Marx defined Absolutism as a system of centralised state power with a standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, judiciary, national taxation, codified laws and the beginnings of a unified market serving the nascent middle order of society in its struggle against feudalism.

Friedrich Engels said that Absolutism was the product of a class equilibrium between the old feudal nobility and the new urban bourgeoisie as the nobility's domination had come to an end. But this does not hold true for eastern Europe where the bourgeois class was suppressed.

In the words of **Perry Anderson**, Absolutism was a redeployed and recharged apparatus of feudal domination designed to clamp the peasant masses back into their traditional social position despite widespread commutation of dues into money rent. The Absolutist state was never an arbiter between the aristocracy and the bureaucracy, and still less an instrument of the nascent bourgeoisie against the aristocracy.

Christopher Hill was of the view that Absolute monarchy was a different form of feudal monarchy and that the ruling class remained the same. The new form of state power of the nobility was determined by the spread of commodity production and exchange.

The new monarchs were outspoken about their pursuit of power, unadorned with medieval trappings. They tried to augment their power by exploiting the national feelings that were developing in their subjects. And they developed better instruments of governance, better soldiers and bureaucrats. This was an epoch of reconciliation between the monarchy and the nobility throughout Europe.

But there were marked differences in the Absolutist monarchies in Western and Eastern Europe. The reasons for the differences were differences in the social formations in which Absolutism evolved. And the social formations in western and eastern Europe differed crucially in respect of serfdom and the bourgeoisie. Serfdom had disappeared in western Europe with the commutation of dues into money rent, whereas serfdom was re-strengthened in eastern Europe. The new bourgeoisie emerged in western Europe but was suppressed in eastern Europe.

And it needs to be noted that not all new monarchs tried to build model nation-states. Some German princes and some Italian states were trying to establish proto nation-states on a regional basis, like what the monarchies along the Atlantic sea-board were achieving.

11.3 FEATURES OF WESTERN ABSOLUTISM

The centralised monarchies of France, England and Spain were different from the earlier feudal social formations. There has been a continuing debate about the nature of these absolutist states.

The class power of the feudal lords was weakened by the gradual disappearance of serfdom, gradual decline of the system of vassalage, the ending of obligation

of paying feudal taxes to the overlords, and the emergence of the mercantile bourgeoisie which had developed in the medieval towns.

The system of politico-legal coercion was displaced upwards to a centralised militarised Absolutist State. New and extraordinary powers were conferred on the new monarch. This reinforced the apparatus of royal power which served to repress the peasant masses that stood at the end of social hierarchy.

From the extreme chaos and turmoil of the Wars of the Roses, the Hundred Years War and the second Castilian civil war, the first new monarchies emerged almost simultaneously during the reigns of Louis XI in France, Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain, Henry VII in England and Maximilian in Austria.

These new Absolutist States were machines built for war. They pioneered the professional army, which was a mixed contingent of national recruits and foreign mercenaries who played a crucial role.

The feudal nobility was integrated into the Absolutist States by selling to them offices in the bureaucracy. The growth of the sale of offices was a by-product of (a) the increased monetarization of early modern economies and (b) the relative rise of mercantile and manufacturing bourgeoisie within them. This provided additional revenue to the State.

By 1560, giant steps had been taken by the monarchies of Western Europe in the sphere of territorial unification, administrative centralisation and expansion of royal power which led to their transformation from feudal monarchies into sovereign territorial states. They were known as the New Monarchies because of their novel methods of governance. On the foundations of these novel administrative institutions the great sovereign monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries built their greatness.

The “new monarchs” of France, Spain and England exercised sovereign rule with innovations in the bureaucracy, army, taxation, trade and diplomacy.

11.3.1 The King’s Bureaucracy

At the top of the governmental hierarchy the king was supreme both in theory and practice. He ruled through his council and officers of the state. By the middle of the sixteenth century the council became an instrument of absolute government dependent on him alone. Its composition was determined by the king himself. The function of the council was simply to carry out the wishes and policies of the king.

At the local level, though the King was supreme, it was the officer of local government or *corregidor* as in Castile who exercised real authority. In England local government rested in the hands of the justices of peace who served the Tudor kings efficiently. These officers functioned remarkably well under Henry-VIII and Queen Elizabeth which helped them establish a tradition of public service and political activity among the economically powerful.

In France the main officers of local government were the *baillis* who were recruited from the higher ranks of nobility. But most of the time they were absent from their administrative duties and the real task of local administration was

done by a subordinate officer, the lieutenant who was either a graduate in law or a bourgeois. But the lieutenant was very often appointed by the bailli himself or was chosen on the advice of the notables.

The sale of royal offices during this period was the most important administrative innovation of the period. Kings sacrificed some of their royal powers and control over the appointment of financial and judicial officers in return for money. In the early sixteenth century the venality (corruption) of royal offices became very common in France and Spain. But the practice of venality of offices created obstacles to the effective exercise of royal power.

But the significant fact is that for the first time effective political power was largely concentrated in the hands of the king and his officers instead of being divided among a multitude of spiritual and temporal lords.

11.3.2 The Army

Another notable feature of the new monarchies was the maintenance of a permanent mercenary army. Under feudalism the standing army was maintained and privately owned by the magnates or the feudal lords. But once the monarchy became the sovereign power the ownership and maintenance of the army vested in him. Between 1460 and 1560 the rapidly growing wealth of Europe and the various technological innovations associated with gunpowder, new European states began to build new armies.

The new French army was formed during the reign of Francis I. But it was during the last years of the Hundred Years' War that Charles VII took the first steps in creating an army comprising of heavy cavalry supported by mounted archers. These men were paid volunteers from the nobility rank in the regular and permanent service of the crown. In 1448 Charles VII ordered each parish to train and furnish one archer for the royal army. By the time Francis I became King (1515-1547) the infantry had become a professional mercenary force. Captains appointed or hired by the French King organised foot soldiers equipped with pikes and muskets. But the recruitment was royal but not national in the sense that some infantrymen were French, royal bodyguards were Scots and pikemen were Swiss.

In France and Spain armies of this type provided strength behind royal efforts to build centralised sovereign states. But these armies were imperfect mechanisms of royal control. When they were left unpaid, they became pillaging mobs, mercilessly sacking cities and countryside. Even when paid they did not give their loyalty to the Crown exclusively. Most towns retained their own militias. The greatest nobles of France and England however remained the centres of complex webs of patronage, family ties and relationship ties with lesser nobles. Sixteenth century monarchs commanded military machines far more effectively than those of their medieval predecessors.

11.3.3 Trade

Mercantilism advocated the intervention of the political state in the workings of the economy in the joint interests of the prosperity of the economy and the power of the state. Mercantilism demanded the suppression of barriers to trade within

the national realm and strove to create a unified domestic market for commodity production. The export of goods was encouraged while the export of bullion was banned to increase the power of the state relative to all other states.

As **Duc de Choiseul** said: Upon the navy depend the colonies, upon the colonies depend commerce and upon commerce depends the capacity of the state to maintain numerous armies, increase its population and make possible the most glorious and useful enterprises.

11.3.4 Diplomacy

Diplomacy was another external activity of the western Absolutist State — a great institutional invention of the epoch, a birthmark of the Renaissance States. It was inaugurated in Italy in the 15th century and it was adopted in Spain, France, England, Germany and throughout Europe in the 16th century.

11.3.5 Finance and Taxation

Renaissance princes were desperate for money on many fronts. The major problem of every Renaissance ruler was that their expenses were more than their incomes. They had to finance their recurrent war expenses. Major campaigns were launched by important powers between 1494 and the end of the sixteenth century. The average sizes of the French and Spanish armies were approximately 20,000 and 25,000 men respectively. International diplomacy required steep state expenditures (France paid huge sums to secure the friendship of the Swiss, the German princes and Henry VIII of England). Finance was also required for salaries of royal officers, expenses of the royal households, maintenance of magnificent courts and building palaces.

The rulers obtained their revenues from a variety of sources:

- a) The royal domain yielded rents and dues to the chief of the feudal hierarchy.
- b) Custom duties and sales taxes were levied on various commodities. Almost everywhere the burden of taxation fell on the poor (the “taille” or “gabelle” in France and “servitor” in Spain). **Boris Porshnev** called these new taxes “centralised feudal rent” imposed in place of the earlier “local feudal rent”.
- c) Borrowing (Some loans were forced and the bourgeoisie of the larger cities were largely the victims). When the kings could no longer survive on royal credit, they started selling government bonds and floating public loans.
- d) Selling offices in the Bureaucracy to the nobility and the emerging bourgeoisie.
- e) Direct taxation. This contravened the traditional view that a king should live off the revenues from the royal domain and from indirect taxation and no taxation could be imposed by the king without the consent of the subject. However, the kings of France and Spain refused to accept the principle of public consent and thus weakened the representative institutions in their State. Throughout the sixteenth century the royal ministers negotiated with these representative institutions for direct taxes. It was largely due to the power of the Crown and the efficiency of the financial bureaucracy that made the population submit to the policies of direct taxation.

English kings had no overwhelming military motive to tax regularly without consent because England was protected by the Channel and after the middle of the fifteenth century was hardly engaged in wars. England had no permanent army and hired few mercenaries. The soldiers were recruited and trained by local notables not by professionals. More over everyone paid taxes, nobles as well as commons.

But in the seventeenth century there was a transition towards limited monarchy in England and growth of absolutism in France. The French kings bought the cooperation of the ruling class by tax exemption and the English kings showed willingness to tailor their policies according to the wishes of the Parliament in return for supply of money and mobilise public opinion and support during the political crisis of his great struggle with Pope Clement VII.

11.4 FEATURES OF EASTERN ABSOLUTISM

The Eastern Absolutism was marked by the absence of bourgeoisie in its social structures. This was to have important consequences in the way it shaped up.

11.4.1 Feudal Nobility

Eastern Absolutism emerged to defend the class position of the feudal nobility against both, its rivals abroad and its peasants at home. Eastern Absolutism was hyper centralised because the feudal class was absorbed into the state structure by recruitment into a service nobility required for military purposes. Either people with land were to serve the state or only those serving the state could own land. The service nobility was like the fief system that existed in the west earlier. It had not taken serious hold in the east earlier. When the fief system was disappearing in the west because of Absolutism, it emerged in the east because of Absolutism. The nobility drew its wealth and power from a stable possession of land, not from temporary sojourn in the state. The great bulk of agrarian property remained hereditary within the noble class.

11.4.2 Consolidation of Serfdom

The Absolutist State in the East was also a device for the consolidation of serfdom, and the elimination of autonomous urban life or resistance. Perry Anderson wrote that “it was the repressive machine of a feudal class that had just erased the traditional communal freedom of the poor.” Wars and civil disorders had caused acute labour crisis. Demographic losses had created or aggravated a constant shortage of rural labour for demesne cultivation. The landlord class sought to arrest the mobility of the peasants. And the class struggle of the peasants was the collective desertion of feudal lands. Seigneurial laws tying the peasantry to the soil could not be implemented perfectly.

In Russia the installation of serfdom and the erection of Absolutism were closely coordinated. In 1648 serfdom for the rural population was codified and universalised; state control over towns and inhabitants was instituted; the formal liability of noble lands for military service was confirmed and clinched. The social pact between the Russian monarchy and nobility was sealed, establishing Absolutism in exchange for finalising serfdom.

In Poland, the classical land of the ‘second serfdom’ no Absolutist state ever emerged. In Hungary the enslavement of the peasantry was accomplished after the Austria-Turkish war at the turn of the seventeenth century.

11.4.3 International Pressures

Eastern Absolutism was determined by the international political system into which the whole region was integrated. This was essentially the pressure of Western Absolutism which believed that the primary form of expansion was conquest, not commerce. The eastern region was obliged to match the state structures of the west before a comparable transition to capitalism. It was the price of their survival in a civilisation of unremitting territorial warfare.

11.4.4 Role of Wars

The influence of war was more preponderant in eastern Europe than in the west. In Prussia the state apparatus was a by-product of the military machine of the ruling class, and the bureaucracy was an offshoot of the army. In Austria the machinery of war was the constant escort of Absolutism, but not as much as Prussia. The construction of Prussian Absolutism by the Great Elector from the 1650’s onwards was in large measure a direct response to the impending Swedish menace. The standing army which was to be the corner-stone of Hohenzollern autocracy and its tax system was accepted by the Junkers in 1653 to deal with an imminent war situation in the Baltic areas. In Russia too, the really decisive phases of the transition towards Absolutism occurred during successive phases of Swedish expansion. Sweden was thus a serious trigger for Eastern Absolutism.

11.4.5 Absence of Bourgeoisie

There was no bourgeoisie in the east. And there was no sale of bureaucratic offices. The feudal lords had taken up trade and commerce themselves

In the 18th century, eastern Absolutism surpassed western Absolutism.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Discuss the features of western absolutism.

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2) Discuss the features of eastern absolutism.

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11.5 EUROPEAN ABSOLUTISM – SOME CASE STUDIES

To understand Absolutism, we need to study the ways in which Monarchs tried to establish their power over restraints exercised by the church, feudal lords, and medieval customary laws internally, and rival countries abroad. From an efficient and effective bureaucracy and administration for domestic control to war and diplomacy for ascendancy abroad and trade, taxation and socio-legal reforms to finance it all, the Absolutist Monarchies empowered themselves in different ways that suited them. This would be noticeable in the complex ways in which the kings, princes, cities and estates exercised, shared or competed for political authority better. It will help to study the making of the modern state-system in Spain, France, England and Sweden in Western Europe and Russia, Prussia and Austria in Eastern Europe.

11.5.1 Western Absolutism

1) Spain

Spain suffered the most political upheavals in Europe prior to the sixteenth century because of seven centuries of conquests by the Moors and conflicts between Christian kingdoms. Some rulers like Ferdinand the Great of Castile, Alfonso the Warrior of Aragon, and brave military commanders like Rodrigo Diaz were determined to drive the Moors out of the Peninsula by *Reconquista* (reconquest). The conflicts between Christian kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, Navarre and Portugal were reduced when **Isabella, Queen of Castile**, married **Ferdinand, King of Aragon** in 1469 and ruled their respective kingdoms on the basis of a shared heritage, culture and religion.

The main achievement of the reigns of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella was the extension of royal authority at the expense of the nobility which had amassed considerable powers including military orders capable of fighting as independent units because of constant warfare with the Moors. The consolidation of royal authority was gradually achieved by:

- a) reducing the power of the legislatures of both Aragon and Castile
- b) giving the two Royal Councils of Aragon and Castile the responsibility of supervising all internal affairs and justice;
- c) more effective control over the nobility;
- d) replacing leading members of the nobility with royal servants with legal training in the *Curia Regis* or Great Councils of Aragon and Castile to advise the monarchs and in other Councils set up to govern Spain;
- e) forfeiting the nobility's right to vote;
- f) elevating the lower nobility and bourgeoisie as rewards for loyal service for curbing the powers of the great feudal lords; and
- g) the appointment of royal officials in local government.

New royal officials known as *Corregidores* were appointed to assume joint responsibility for judicial and administrative duties in Castile which had been granted semi-independence in the Middle Ages with their own assemblies and

officials called *regidores*. Banditry, a by-product of the violent period of *Reconquista* was reduced by the end of the fifteenth century with the revival of the *Santa Hermandad* (Holy Brotherhood) which was given the powers of arrest, detention and summary justice.

The monarchies gradually reduced dependence on the *Cortes* (legislatures) by building up financial reserves through the resumption of previously alienated lands and property and a more intense application of a tax known as the *alcabala*. In the twenty-eight years between 1475 and 1503 the legislature of Castile was called only nine times. And it was not convened at all in the sixteen years between 1482 and 1498.

Charles I was the king of Spain from 1516-1556 and Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V from 1519 to 1558. As the Holy Roman Emperor his political ambitions increased and he considered himself the secular leader of Christendom whose role was to establish a universal empire and overcome heresy.

His territorial responsibilities were enormous because it included Spain, the Holy Roman Empire extending from Germany to northern Italy including Austria and Burgundy (which he ruled as Charles V), and the southern Italian possessions of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia. He could not create a single system of government for his entire empire. The result was that each dominion developed its own constitutional arrangements, the guiding principle of which was usually to maintain an administration which could function in Charles's absence.

The system of councils as developed by Ferdinand and Isabella was used to increase the power of the Crown. To the advisory and departmental councils were added the Council of War, the Council of State, the Council of Finance, and the Council of the Indies for its American territories. No doubt the system of Councils became complex, but it worked well because of the exceptional ability of the administrators to whom Charles I dedicated his authority during his absences. While the bureaucracy grew the legislature continued to decline, reducing its scope for opposition to royal policy. All Spanish institutions were subordinated to the principle of providing resources for an ambitious foreign policy which affected most of Europe.

Charles spent the better part of his reign, engaged in military conflicts with the Ottomans, the French and the Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire and in maintaining a balance of power in Europe.

Under the Hapsburg dynasty (1516-1700), Spain became the first global superpower. The first majority of the Spanish empire was built in a frenetic burst of activity from 1492 to 1540. During this time Spain explored, conquered and settled the Caribbean, conquered and annexed the territories of the Incas of Peru and the Aztecs of Mexico and established itself as the dominant power in Italy. In Europe, Spain also controlled the Low Countries.

In 1556 Charles I renounced his claim to the Netherlands and Spain in favour of his son, Philip and to the imperial Crown in favour of his brother, Ferdinand. His legacy was left in ruins: Germany was bitterly divided over religion, Spain was near bankruptcy and the Netherlands were in revolt.

Charles's son Philip became the king of Spain as **Philip II** upon the abdication of his father in 1556 and ruled until his own death in 1598. During the reign of

Philip II, the Spanish Empire witnessed its greatest power and influence and covered its largest extent. The Spanish Conquistadores had been conquering new territories in the Americas since Columbus's encounter with the New World in 1492. By the time Philip ascended the throne, Spain controlled the Caribbean, parts of North America and all of Central and South America except for Portuguese controlled Brazil. Philip II also established a colony in Philippine Islands in the Pacific Ocean and Portugal was annexed to the empire in 1580.

While the Spanish empire was at its height during Philip II's reign, the seeds of decline were also sown through damage to the Spanish economy. Philip II inherited an empire with significant debts. The various wars that Catholic Spain fought against the Protestant nations cost the empire a great deal of money as did the efforts to suppress rebellions in the Netherlands. Spain had become dependent upon the gold and silver wealth that was brought in from the American mines to maintain the government. In fact, Spain declared bankruptcy in 1557, 1560, 1575 and 1596. This overextension of the Spanish economy was a major factor in the decline of the empire in next century.

Philip II believed in close personal involvement in administration and that his main duties were to ensure impartial dispensation of justice, to protect the Church and the Inquisition, and to uproot heresy. His inability to delegate responsibility and focus on formulating policy slowed the administration down. The system of Councils continued to expand on territorial bases with Council of Portugal and the Council of Flanders. The Councils of Italy and Portugal were successful but the Council of Flanders could not stem the revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish rule.

At the time of the accession of **Philip III** who ruled from 1598-1621 Spain had an enormous national debt and unresolved conflicts. The year 1610 saw the peak of silver imports from South America. But this resulted in a massive inflation leading to an economic slowdown.

The Spanish nobility or Grandees whose powers had been severely curtailed by Philip II soon became stronger as Philip III handed over his powers to them. The decadence of the royal court was reflected in the general weakness of the state. The financial exhaustion of the realm was accompanied by war fatigue which eventually led to a truce with Netherland, England and France.

Charles II (1665-1700) was the last king of the Spanish Hapsburg dynasty and Sovereign of the overseas Spanish Empire, from Mexico up to the Philippines. Due to his mental and physical incapacities, the reign of Charles II were years of agony for Spain and his mother acted as the Regent Queen for most of his reign. Upon his death in 1700 the Spanish branch of the house of Hapsburgs became extinct. His death triggered off the Spanish War of Succession in 1701.

2) France

The King of the Franks, **Charlemagne** (c.768-814) united the majority of western and central Europe for the first time since the classical era of the Roman Empire. But after the death of Charlemagne, the vast Carolingian Empire broke up and the title of emperor was passed to German rulers in the eastern part of Europe. At the end of the tenth century, **Hugh Capet (c.987– 996)** founded the **Capetian dynasty** of French kings that ruled the country for the next eight hundred years.

France was divided into numerous fiefs (called duchies) that were ruled by dukes. The Capetians were a family who controlled the region centred on Paris and the land adjacent and extending to Orleans. At first the Capetians' control over the other duchies of France was in name only because many were semi-independent kingdoms. Gradually, the kings established a strong monarchy that ruled all duchies in France. The partnership with the Church greatly strengthened the early Capetian kings. Within the royal domain itself the Capetians increased their control over the *Curia-Regis* or the king's court.

The most important single factor in the development of Capetian France, was the relationship of the kings with their most powerful vassals, the Dukes of Normandy. By the mid-eleventh century the Dukes had centralised the administration of their own duchy, compelling their vassals to render military service. Even after Duke William of Normandy (also known as William the Conqueror) conquered England in 1066, he and his successors still remained vassals of the Capetians. Gradually the Normans became so much more powerful than their Capetian overlords that they never hesitated to conduct regular warfare against them.

Philip II or Philip Augustus (1180- 1223) quadrupled the size of the French Empire. His predecessors had been known as kings of Franks but from 1190 onwards Philip became the first ruler to style himself King of France. In the Anglo-French wars (1202-1214) Philip not only succeeded in destroying the powerful Angevin Empire under the English Crown; he also defeated a coalition of three powers comprising of the English, Germans and the Flemish forces at the battle of Bouvines in 1214.

New advances in royal power came with **Louis IX (1226-1270)** perhaps the greatest of all medieval kings. He did not let his personal devotion to the Church prevent him from defending his royal prerogatives against the infringement being made by the bishops or the Pope. Louis IX declared that church property in France was for the requirements of the King and his realm and was not to be despoiled by Rome. The extension of royal justice to the towns was secured by bringing into the *parlements'* deliberations the representatives of the middle classes or the king's bourgeois.

During the reign of Louis's grandson, **Philip IV (1285-1314)** also known as Philip the Fair old conventions began to be followed. He extended royal power ruthlessly and consolidated his royal hold over towns, nobles and the Church. The King's men used propaganda, lies and trickery to undermine all authority except that of the king. The system of royal justice swallowed up the system of feudal justice. The royal courts or the *Cura Regis* became the secret council comprising of his close advisers. The larger group of advisers consisting of other lords and high clerics was called the full council.

War with England kept Philip pressed for cash during much of his reign. Forced loans, debasement of coinage, additional custom dues and royal levies on commercial transactions added to the royal income. In 1296 Pope Boniface VIII forbade kings and princes to tax the clergy of their countries without papal consent. In response, Philip imposed an embargo on exports from France of precious metals, jewellery and currency. This embargo threatened the financial system of the Papacy and the Pope had to withdraw his order. But further quarrels with the Pope led Philip to elect a French Pope who never went to Rome at all which

began the period of Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy at Avignon (1305- 1378). He also stripped the Jews and agents of Italian bankers of their money and property. By the time of Philip IV's death in 1314, the Capetian monarchy of France had established a new model state manned by efficient and loyal bureaucrats. Soon France became embroiled in an interminable contest with England (Hundred Years' War) that crippled the monarchy for a century.

After 1328 the Crown passed to **Philip of Valois, Philip VI (1328- 1350)**, a nephew of Philip IV. The **Valois dynasty** thereby succeeded the Capetian dynasty, but the succession had to be made legal since Edward III, King of England was the son of Isabella, who was the daughter of Philip IV.

Edward's claim to the French throne was not the only reason for the outbreak of war in 1378. England's continued possession of Aquitaine and the port of Bordeaux was an anomaly in a unified France. The Kings of France also encroached upon the feudal rights of the Kings of England.

The French king **Louis XI (1461-1483)** laid the foundations for a strong monarchy by his consolidation of territorial unity and competent central administration. He forced his subjects to pay higher taxes, granted favours and administrative posts to the middle-class men. He restricted Papal control over the Gallican Church. But the greatest threat which Louis XI had to confront was the threat from the Duchy of Burgundy. The power of the dukes of Burgundy spread to parts of Eastern France and encompassed a large portion of the Low Countries. The decisive trial of strength between France and Burgundy took place under Charles the Bold, the duke of Burgundy. Subsidized by Louis XI, the Swiss forces defeated Charles three times in 1476 and 1477 and later he was slain. The duchy of Burgundy and other parts of eastern France were assimilated in the French kingdom. The only major region which remained outside the control of the Crown was the Duchy of Brittany and this region was brought under royal control by his son **Charles VIII (1483-1498)**.

French Absolutism was a gradual progression towards a centralised monarchical State, interrupted by lapses into provincial disintegration and anarchy until finally a stable political structure was established. The three great political events which disrupted the state formation were the Hundred Years War, the religious wars of the sixteenth century and the Fronde revolts of the seventeenth century. But by the reign of **Louis XIV, Sun King (1643-1715)** a cult of royal authority was created. His words, "I am the State" expresses the spirit of absolute monarchy by which the king held all political authority. He viewed himself as the direct representative of God. He began his reign with administrative and fiscal reforms. He chose Jean Baptiste Colbert as his Controller General of finance, who soon implemented reforms that sharply reduced the deficit and fostered the growth of industry. Colbert believed in the mercantilist doctrine that the expansion of commerce and a favourable balance of trade was the key to State wealth. His war minister Louvois expanded and reorganised the French army. The Hundred Years War succeeded in freeing the monarchy from fiscal and military limits of medieval polity. The war was won only by abandoning the seigneurial ban system of knightly service and creating a regular paid army whose artillery proved to be a decisive weapon. With the consent of the French aristocracy the *taille-royale* of 1439 was collected. The nobility, the clergy and certain towns were exempted from this payment. Between the reigns of **Charles VII (1422-1461)** and the death of Louis XII (1498- 1515), new *Parlements* were founded in Toulouse.

Bordeaux, Dijon and Rouen. The position of the aristocratic oligarchy in the *Parlements* was reinforced at the expense of the guilds.

After the Hundred Years' War, with the revival of the monarchy the Estates-General found a new lease of life. But with the political devolution of monarchical power the consolidation of the Estates General as a permanent national institution was thwarted. The result was that the French kings were unable to get the financial contributions they wanted from the national Estates. The deep rootedness of local seigneurial power hampered the growth of a national Parliament in Renaissance France.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, **Francis I (1515- 1547)** and **Henry II (1547-1559)** presided over a prosperous country and foreign policies tended to become an exclusive royal prerogative. Legal officials extended the judicial rights of the monarchy and special sessions of *Parlement* of Paris or *lits de justice* were conducted in the presence of the king. But the national bureaucracy was still in a rudimentary stage.

In 1589 **Henry of Navarre or Henry IV (1589-1610)** ascended the throne as the first king of the **Bourbon dynasty**. By the late sixteenth century the Protestants were strongest in south-central and south-west France. The French nobility took up the cause of Protestantism as the local feudal independence among the nobles encouraged resistance to the centralised Catholic monarchy. The French Wars of Religion broke in 1562 and the Catholic nobles organised a powerful league led by the Guise family and both sides took to negotiating with foreigners for help, the Catholics with Spain and the Protestants with England. But Henry IV laid siege to Paris and by the Edict of Nantes in 1598 the French religious wars were ended. The Edict of Nantes was a major symbol of religious toleration which established Catholicism as the official religion of France, but also granted rights and freedoms to the Protestants. In 1598, the Treaty of Vervins with Spain put an end to Spanish intervention and restored to the French Crown all Spanish conquests in France. This marked the emergence of France as a major power in early modern Europe.

After the assassination of Henry IV, the Queen mother Marie de Medicis ruled on behalf of her son **Louis-XIII (1610-1617)**. But the security of the country was threatened as factions disputed around the throne. But the Bourbon dynasty was rescued by its greatest minister Cardinal Richelieu. His first objective was to crush a number of revolts staged by the nobles. In the course of strengthening royal absolutism, Richelieu came into conflict with the Huguenots who were defeated in due course of time. To promote economic self-sufficiency, Richelieu encouraged the manufacture of tapestry, glass, silk, linen and woollen cloth. To protect the trading and colonial interests of France, he created a navy which by 1642 had 63 ships.

Richelieu's foreign policy was not only ambitious but extremely expensive. Annual government expenditure tripled from 1620 to 1640, two-thirds of the money going to the military. The drastic increase in taxes needed to pay for the wars sparked a series of provincial rebellions in the 1630s. The population's resentment of the monarchy's rising demands was exacerbated by the fact that these years marked the end of a long cycle of prosperity, encompassing most of the 16th century and the beginning of a period of economic difficulties that would

extend through the reign of Louis XIV. Crop failures, great fluctuations in prices, and outbreaks of famine further accentuated the misery.

Although these revolts were unwelcome distractions from the minister's efforts to project French power abroad, they did not pose a revolutionary threat. Dispersed and uncoordinated, they were put down by a combination of temporary concessions, such as the suspension of efforts to collect unpopular taxes, and the exemplary execution of a few ringleaders.

Richelieu was no innovator, he devised neither new administrative procedures nor novel methods of taxation to secure the king's authority. Indeed, the power of the great financier grew with the government's need for additional war revenue, posing a different threat to royal absolutism.

3) England

England had first emerged as a major power after the Norman conquest in 1066. The Anglo-Saxon forces were defeated by the Norman forces led by **William the Conqueror**. This marked an important stage in the process of Norman expansion which spanned the tenth and eleventh centuries and reached from the British Isles to the south of Italy. By the time of William's death in 1087, the English monarchy was stronger than the French was to be for more than two hundred years.

Between the death of the strong and successful **Edward I** in 1307 and the end of the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) royal authority was weakened by political dissensions caused by the Hundred Years' War and mediocre rulers who surrendered their authority to the nobility or the Parliament, which gained control of monetary and domestic affairs. The War of Roses between rival factions of the royal family (House of Lancaster symbolised by a Red Rose and the House of York symbolised by a white rose) plunged England into a bitter Civil War for thirty years.

But with the end of the War of Roses at the close of the fifteenth century England emerged as a national monarchy when Henry VII of the Tudor dynasty asserted his royal power.

Henry VII (1485-1509) was confronted with many problems when he ascended the English throne. Henry formally healed the breach between the Houses of Lancaster and York by marrying the Yorkist heiress, Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV. Henry dealt firmly with the factional strife led by an imposter Perkin Warbeck who claimed to be Elizabeth's brother. He deprived the nobles of their private armies by forbidding their liveries (lords' uniforms) and maintenance. He also took steps to ban the nobles' habits of interfering in the royal courts. At the local level he utilised the Justices of Peace and at the centre he worked through an administrative court known as the Star Chamber, a special committee of the King's Council, charged with the task of seeing that the apparatus of law was not misused to back up local abuses and privileges. To make justice swift the customary procedures of the common law including trial by jury was bypassed. Henry VII left a well-filled treasury and a prosperous country. He re-established law and order in England after a long period of civil rebellion. His policies set the stage for the most dramatic reigns of his illustrious successors Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

Tudor England under **Henry VIII (1509-1547)** enjoyed both, solvent government finances and a prosperous society. This national wealth was not unduly expended in foreign wars. Henry's six wives and his lavish court did not beggar England as the wars of Charles V and Philip II did beggar Spain. Henry VIII never really risked his army on the Continent and played a cautious game of balance of power. He made use of the opportunities afforded by the English Reformation to add to the royal revenues by confiscation of monastic property and by rewarding his loyal followers with these confiscated lands. A new class of nobles loyal to the Crown was thus created. Henry VIII continued the administrative policies of his father, strengthened his central administration and maintained adequate supervision over the justices of peace who were the keystone of English local government.

Henry VIII was succeeded by his son Edward VI and then by his elder daughter Mary. In 1558, the English throne passed to **Elizabeth I (1558-1603)** youngest daughter of Henry VIII. Elizabeth was brought up as a Protestant and the Anglican Church was firmly established. The Prayer Book and Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 issued under Elizabeth have remained to this day the essential documents of the Anglican faith. Royal authority was greatly enhanced as the personal popularity of the queen rose to new heights. Institutionally, the Privy Council was stabilised in the first part of her reign. The espionage and police networks were mainly concerned with suppression of Catholic activity. Factional rivalries within the higher nobility now mainly took the form of corridor intrigues for honours and offices at Court. Parliament started to show independent criticism of government policies. Over the century, the House of Commons grew greatly in size from 300 to 460 members, of whom the numbers of country gentlemen steadily grew. The last years of Tudor rule were marked by an unruly and restive Parliament whose fiscal obstruction led Elizabeth to further sales of royal lands to minimize her reliance on the Parliament. Elizabethan England did not produce a permanent or professional army. The militia contingents were combined with mercenary soldiers, Scots or Germans. The military inferiority of English Absolutism prevented any expansionist goals on the mainland.

Elizabeth never married and in the early years of her reign she played off foreign and domestic suitors one against the other with excellent results for her foreign policy. The dramatic crisis of her reign was the war with Spain which was resolved in the defeat of the great Spanish Armada in 1588.

The Elizabethan Age was an age of wars, rebellions, personal and party strife and intense competition. There was a solid foundation under the state and society that produced the literature, music, architecture, science and wealth and victories of the Elizabethan Age. The age of Elizabeth I was a flowering of English culture symbolized by the writings of Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, Spenser and many others.

The succession of the Tudor dynasty by the Stuarts in 1603 created a new political situation for the monarchy. With the accession of **James I (1603-1625)**, Scotland was united with England. The Scottish impact on the pattern of English development was to prove critical for the fortunes of English Absolutism. The Parliament now represented the central locus of noble power. Divine right doctrines of monarchy were matched by High Church ritualism in religion. Prerogative justice was used against common law, sale of monopolies and offices against parliamentary refusal of taxation. Agrarian and mercantile capitalism

had registered more rapid advances than in any other nation except the Netherlands.

Charles I (1625-1649) undertook the task of building a more advanced Absolutism. English failure to intervene in the Thirty Years' War was compounded by an unsuccessful war with France. Parliament was dissolved indefinitely as it had denounced Lord Buckingham and England's failure in the conduct of war. The monarchy drew closer to the higher nobility by reinvigorating the hierarchy of birth and rank within the aristocracy by granting privileges to the peers. But the bulk of the gentry and newer mercantile interests were excluded from such royal grants. Charles I resorted to every possible feudal and other sources of revenue in order to sustain his growing war expenses and an enlarged State machinery without seeking Parliament's help. The struggle to control the English army in order to suppress the Irish insurrection, drove Parliament and King to the Civil War (1642-1651) and led to a successful bourgeois revolution. The conflicts between the Stuart Kings and Parliament were primarily over the issues of the Crown's prerogatives and the Parliamentary privileges. These disagreements were aggravated by religious animosities and financial disputes. The Monarchy tried to enhance its authority by attempting to impose extra-legal taxes without the consent of the Parliament. The English gentry whose status and influence came from the ownership of land and the powerful bourgeois class who were in majority in the Parliament emerged from the Civil War with their Parliamentary prerogatives secured.

James II (1685-1688)'s pro-French and pro-Catholic policies and his own ambitious designs of becoming an Absolute Monarch, and the birth of a Catholic heir led to the escalation of tensions between the King and the Parliament resulting in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. His three-year reign was a struggle for supremacy between the Crown and the Parliament, resulting in his deposition. It led to the passage of the Bill of Rights which severely curtailed the prerogative powers of the King. After 1689, the Monarchy became a Parliamentary Monarchy.

4) Sweden

The emergence of Absolutism in Sweden was rapid compared to other countries in western Europe. It was not caused by the crisis of serfdom or the internal contradictions of feudalism or the emergence of the mercantile capital and urban economy. It was triggered by the Danish invasion which defeated and executed the ruling Sture oligarchy and imposed its authority over Sweden.

Swedish Absolutism was unique. While western Absolutism was created around an un-servile peasantry and ascendant towns, and eastern Absolutism was created around servile peasantry and subjugated towns, Swedish Absolutism was created around un-servile peasantry and insignificant towns and was driven by foreign subjugation.

The social structure was stable because the aristocracy was inadequate to make any assault on the peasantry and there were no wealthy bourgeoisie in the insignificant towns to challenge the political power of the aristocracy.

In politics there were oscillations in the power of the monarch and his relationship with aristocrats. When the monarch was in minority the aristocrats curbed his powers through charters. When the monarch regained support, he also regained lost powers. Divisions and conflicts within the nobility were important causes

for these oscillations. But the aristocrats adjusted easily to the swings from royal state to representative state. There were no upheavals as in Spain, France or England.

Only foreign pressure could and did destabilize Sweden. Swedish Absolutism functioned most smoothly during aggressive expansion abroad. The harmony between monarchy and nobility was greatest during reigns of royal generals like **Gustavus Adolphus** (1611-1632), **Charles X** and **Charles XII** (1697-1718).

The secret of Swedish Absolutism's economic and military strength were mineral resources. Sweden was rich in iron and copper. They can be compared to Spanish gold and silver in their impact on local absolutism.

Gustavus Vasa, a noble, overthrew the Danish and established his rule over Sweden with the support of aristocrats, independent peasants and Lubeck, an enemy of Denmark from the Hanseatic region comprising of regions of European countries touching the Baltic and North Sea.

Gustavus Vasa took the following steps to establish a stable monarchy in Sweden: took over church estates and two-thirds of the tithe (ten per cent tax) levied by bishops on the people; exploited silver mines; promoted bar-iron exports; minutely supervised state revenue; the administrative apparatus was expanded by trebling the number of bailiffs and the bureaucracy was centralised; the nobility's fiefs were increasingly replaced by an allocation of specific royal revenues for specific administrative assignments (this did not antagonize the nobility because Vasa succeeded in defeating peasant rebellions and Lubeck); the traditional house of magnates was preserved for advice in matters of political importance, but excluded from day-to-day administration; the Estates Assembly (*Riksdag*) was regularly summoned to legitimise royal policies with stamp of popular approval (the Estates Assembly even approved the change from elective monarchy to hereditary monarchy).

Gustavus was able to accumulate a vast surplus without much increase in taxes. And he created a vigorous state that maintained cordial relation with the aristocracy.

His sons and cousin who succeeded him could not match his legacy. At one point, a conflict with the aristocracy was brewing because benefices (rewards for services rendered) were increasingly conferred on people of humble origin until the nobility had only one-third of all benefices.

When Gustavus Vasa's nephew, **Gustavus Adolphus** became monarch of Sweden the aristocrats reclaimed their pre-eminence with a Charter of 1612 which guaranteed noble primacy in appointments to the bureaucracy. There was reconciliation and integration of monarchy and aristocracy. They became part of the modern and powerful administration and army in Europe. The executive system was re-organised into five central colleges staffed by noble bureaucrats. A Privy Council regularly deliberated public policy. The aristocracy was divided into three grades. Sweden was divided into twenty-four provincial units with noble as lord-lieutenant. Adolphus built the basis of the finest army in Europe by introducing a modified form of conscription in 1620 and by ensuring that his troupes used advanced weapons, notably shorter pikes, and lighter firearms, both of which enhanced the manoeuvrability of Swedish columns in battle. With the

advanced degree of discipline instilled into his troupes, Adolphus was able to achieve notable victories in the Thirty Years War. The education system was modernised. The Gothic ethnicity of the Swedish ruling class was eulogised. Heavy tolls were levied on copper mines. A royal export company was organised to corner copper supplies and fix price levels. Large Dutch loans were taken against iron and copper resources for his wars. Prussian tolls, German booty and French subsidies completed its war budget for the Thirty Years War and enabled the hiring of vast numbers of mercenaries into its army. There was six-fold increase in expenditure on the navy and the native army quadrupled. Copper and iron were not just sources of revenue for the Absolutist state, they were also indispensable for its arms industry. This provided the platform for military expansion abroad.

Gustavus Adolphus started with a costly treaty with Denmark to end an unsuccessful war started by his father. Ingria and Karelia were acquired by the Treaty of Stolbovo in 1617, giving Sweden total control of the Gulf of Finland. Riga was seized from Poland in 1621 and Livonia was conquered in 1625-26. In 1629 Sweden attacked Poland, and in 1630 it landed in Pomerania, which was spread across Poland and Germany on the southern Baltic sea shore. Then it intervened in the struggle for Germany in the Thirty Years' War. The Treaty of Westphalia gave Sweden the stature of a co-victor with France of the long war in Germany.

In 1644, **Christina** acceded to the throne and increased the ranks to the nobility and gave away lands and taxes on an enormous scale to the nobles. State incomes decreased equally. The peasantry became dependent on the nobles and reacted vigorously. The hostility of the lower gentry who did not benefit from the profligacy of the queen ensured that old property patterns would be restored.

Charles X who replaced Christina after her abdication in 1654 returned Sweden to aggressive expansionism. They took Poznan, Warsaw and Cracow in Poland. East Prussia became a Swedish fief and Lithuania joined to Sweden. But retaliations and a Danish assault on Sweden undid these conquests.

Charles XI used the *Riksdag* to compromise the privileges of the magnates and reclaimed alienated lands and revenues of the dynasty. Eighty per cent of alienated lands were recovered without compensation. The creation of new tax-exempt properties was forbidden. Territorial counties and baronies were liquidated. These recoveries were more thorough in overseas possessions. Higher tax was imposed on the peasantry. The *Riksdag* (Estates Assembly) submissively approved his increased powers. Payments to troops at home were reduced by allotting them special lands. The army and navy were scaled up. The *Riksdag* ended by approving the divine right of the king to absolute sovereignty over his realm.

Charles XII, the last Vasa warrior-king, surpassed his father in autocratic power. He was able to spend eighteen years abroad (nine years in Turkish captivity) without any disruption of his administration. But Sweden had expanded beyond manageable proportions. Its demographic and economic base was too small to sustain its spread against the combined enmity of its neighbours and rivals.

The imperious autocracy of Charles XII disappeared with him. The nobility deftly engineered a constitutional system which left the Estates politically supreme and the monarchy temporarily a cipher.

The accession of **Gustavus III** restored the Absolutist state and the power of the monarch. When the nobility resisted the king promised the lower estate socially egalitarian reliefs such as access to civil service and judiciary and the right to purchase noble lands.

The last hours of Swedish Absolutism were lived in the anomalous atmosphere of a 'career open to talents' and curbs on the privileges of the nobility.

11.5.2 Eastern Absolutism

Russia, Prussia and Austria in eastern Europe manifested social formations different from western Europe within the feudal mode of production. So, the Absolutism that evolved in eastern Europe was different from the west.

1) Prussia

Prussia, which was to become a byword for German militarism and authoritarianism, began its history outside Germany. The people called Preussen in German, who inhabited the land on the south-eastern coast of the Baltic, were Slavs, related to the Lithuanians and Latvians. They were conquered and forcibly Christianised in the thirteenth century by the Teutonic Knights, diverted from the Holy Land. German peasants were brought in to farm the land and by around 1350 the majority of the population was German. The Poles annexed part of Prussia in the following century, leaving the Knights with East Prussia. Meanwhile Germans had conquered the Brandenburg area to the west and the margraves, or marcher lords, of Brandenburg became Electors of the Holy Roman Empire. Both Brandenburg and East Prussia fell under control of the Hohenzollern family, which mastered the Brandenburg hereditary nobility, the Junkers, and began the long march to power in Europe which was to end with the First World War and the abdication of the Kaiser in 1918.

The story of Brandenburg-Prussia has exemplified the triumph of political skill and audacity over unfavourable conditions. Sparsely populated and deficient in resources, Brandenburg in 1648 held sovereignty over a patchwork of scattered territories. Its ruler, **Frederick William (1640–88)** faced the problem of integrating and defending widely separated possessions, which included the duchy of Prussia, inherited in 1619 but remaining under Polish suzerainty and geographically separated from the electorate of Brandenburg; the counties of Cleves, Mark, and Ravensberg in the Rhineland and Westphalia regions, gained in 1614, also distant from Brandenburg and not contiguous with each other; and eastern Pomerania and various small lands acquired in the Treaty of 1648. Through diplomatic manoeuvring such as changing sides several times between Sweden and Poland and between France and the emperor, he augmented and solidified his realm and his authority within it; moreover, he won direct rule over Prussia as its duke and acquired the important bishops' territory of Magdeburg.

Frederick William's instrument in the attainment of these and subsequent prizes was the army, a permanent force of 30,000 disciplined professionals, the adequate financial support of which dictated every aspect of his government. Large revenues from taxes required a flourishing economy, the stimulation and direction of which by mercantilist principles was a main undertaking. Economic growth was further accelerated late in the Great Elector's reign by the influx of nearly 20,000 skilled Huguenot refugees. A territory wide system of state administration began this

economic and fiscal effort and resulted in the creation of a professional bureaucracy that permitted the Great Elector to govern essentially without estate participation. The landowning nobility supported their prince in exchange for the freedom to exploit their peasants as they saw fit. In these ways Frederick William laid the foundation for what was to become an autocratically ruled state, enabled by its strong economy, tightly run administration, efficient fiscal organization, and powerful army to play a prominent role in the empire's and Europe's affairs.

The Great Elector's efforts were rewarded in 1701 when his successor, **Frederick III (1688–1713)**, obtained from the emperor (who needed the Brandenburg army for the impending War of the Spanish Succession) the right to style himself Frederick I, King of Prussia (Prussian rulers renumbered themselves upon bestowal of the royal title). The title of king, recognized internationally upon the conclusion of the war in 1713, was of considerable importance to Brandenburg in its competition with Saxony, whose ruler had become king of Poland in 1697, for pre-eminence in northern Germany.

The formidable Frederick William of Brandenburg, known as the Great Elector, made Brandenburg-Prussia the strongest of the northern German states, created an efficient army and fortified Berlin. His son, the Elector Frederick III (1657-1713), was not a chip off the old block, he was besotted with all things French and looked for a crown as a reward for aiding the Emperor Leopold I. There could not be a king of Brandenburg, which was part of the Empire, and there could not be a king of Prussia, because part of it was in Poland. By an ingenious formula, however, Frederick was permitted to call himself king in Poland. He put the crown on his head with great ceremony at Königsberg as Frederick I and so created the Prussian kingdom, with its capital at Berlin. Brandenburg from then on, though still theoretically part of Germany owing allegiance to the Emperor, was treated in practice as part of the Prussian kingdom.

Frederick and his second wife, Sophia Charlotte of Hanover, sister of George I of England, turned their court at Berlin into a miniature Versailles where French was the first language and French etiquette was followed

It was Frederick's son and successor, **Frederick William I (1713-1740)** one of history's sergeant-majors, who transformed his realm into the military autocracy that gave Prussia its lasting reputation. He ruled until 1740 and his son in turn, **Frederick the Great (1740-1786)** used his army to turn Prussia into a major European power later in the eighteenth century. He perfected the combination of state-structure, productive energy, military power and ethical drive that came to be identified with modern Prussia. Known as the "soldier-king," Frederick William built his standing army into a force of more than 80,000 men. Although Prussia was only the 13th most populous country in Europe, it had the continent's fourth largest army (after those of France, Russia and Austria), a superbly drilled and equipped force that served mainly defensive purposes. Only peasants and journeymen served in the ranks, while the middle classes were safe from the draft but obliged to quarter soldiers in their homes. A huge war chest obviated foreign subsidies, and reliable revenues, more than 70 per cent of which went to the army, provided ample support.

For the state to continue to draw high taxes without ruining land and people, the country's level of wealth had to be raised. Frederick William therefore pursued

an aggressive policy (known as cameralism) of stimulating agriculture and manufacturing while reducing unnecessary expenditures; even his court was stripped of many of its royal trappings. Export bans preserved raw materials, and sumptuary laws limited indulgence in luxuries. Town governments were subordinated to royal commissioners, whose powers included supervision of urban production. A work ethos suffused society from the top.

1740 was an ideal year for king Frederick William. Charles VI (Archduke of Austria and Holy Roman Emperor) had just died without leaving a male heir. He had spent the last years of his life trying to persuade the European powers to sign the Pragmatic Sanction, which would guarantee his daughter Maria Theresa as ruler of the Habsburg dominions. On becoming Archduchess of Austria, Queen of Bohemia and Queen of Hungary, Maria Theresa found herself challenged by the Elector of Bavaria, who advanced his candidature for the Habsburg dominions. Frederick seized the opportunity and stated that he would give Prussia's guarantee that Austria's territory would not be violated; in exchange he wanted part of Silesia. He sent Prussian troops across the border and occupied Silesia. Frederick immediately provided justification for his action, 'By our geographical position we are neighbours of the greatest Princess of Europe; all these neighbours alike are jealous of us and secret enemies of our power.' Of these Austria was the most dangerous and Silesia acted as a springboard from which could be launched an invasion into the heart of Prussia. In Prussian hands, Silesia would be a definite military advantage since it would greatly increase the distance which Austrian armies would have to march in hostile territory before threatening Berlin. Strategically, it would separate Saxony from Poland, both of which were under the same ruler and friendly towards Austria. Silesia was also desirable for commercial reasons, since it contained the main trade routes down the Oder River valley to the Baltic and was the pivot of east-west trade in north Central Europe. By the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) Prussia received recognition of her claim to Silesia. But Frederick was to pay dearly for his success. Maria Theresa would not let the matter rest and conceived a strong personal animosity towards Frederick.

Prussia may have been poor, but the monarchs had a great deal of control over peasants and nobility alike. Like many other German states of the late 17th and 18th centuries, Prussia had been damaged by domestic and foreign armies. Depopulation was the major problem. The total wealth of society and its productive capacity had dropped drastically. Every prince had to be very concerned with creating wealth, and needed an up-to-date, well-disciplined, well-supplied army. Frederick William was able to lay claim to 30% of land in the kingdom, thanks to his strong army, and thus cutting down the independence of the nobility and gaining for himself an independent power base and income.

This wealth was used to implement an impressive bureaucratic government. Compared to France, where offices had been sold for generation, in Prussia offices had seldom been sold, and were not sold at all after 1740. Frederick William I and Frederick II were able to do this because they were solvent and so powerful that they could keep discipline among nobles and officers alike.

The greatest accomplishment of these wealthy, puritanical kings was perhaps the new ruling class that they created. Both Frederick William and his more cultured son thought of themselves as protectors and patrons of the old landed nobility, the Junkers, whom they depended upon to command the army on which

their power was ultimately based. But at the same time they knew that they needed educated men to plan and oversee the technical aspects of government including industrial and trade policy. Prussia, as usual, was most successful in creating such a class, drawn from both nobility and middle class.

These Prussian bureaucrats were both more business-like than any merchants of the eighteenth century and also were the original socialist technocrats. Prussia was successful in building not just an army, but a core of skilled industrial workers, and became the fourth manufacturing country in eighteenth century Europe.

But Prussian absolutist system had some limitations. Prussia, though economically progressive, was entirely authoritarian in its attitudes. In particular, the welfare that the Prussian welfare state sought to create was the welfare of the state. The individual meant nothing, except in so far as his or her existence benefited the corporate body and the interests of the ruler. The peasants as a class was protected, but any peasant family could be expropriated if replaced by another one. Nobles were also regulated very strictly in their private lives. For instance, they were not even allowed to leave the country without permission, which was almost never granted.

The success of the system is consistently exaggerated by the neglect of significant factors:

For instance, the role of plunder: success largely financed by confiscations of Frederick William I (used to build an army), the use of that army, by Frederick II to conquer Silesia (increase in size of state by 25%). Even this plunder did not guarantee success. Frederick II's savings (four years' state revenue) ran out long before the end of the Seven Years' War. War had to be financed by savage taxation of conquered Saxony, and later partition of Poland. Much of Prussian economy was theft on a grand scale.

Some facts which are often overlooked in discussions on the nature of Prussian welfare state is that almost 1/9 of Prussian population died in Seven Years' War. Fighting such wars was not an unfortunate necessity for Frederick. The Prussian system was not immune from the normal problems of a monarchical, centralized regime. The chief danger was that the rulers got comfortable and spent their loot in totally unproductive ways, on patronage and palaces, rather than on production or even armies.

Frederick William II, Frederick the Great's son, spent his father's savings of 52 million thalers and ran up a debt of 40 million thalers. Fortunately, he died before he could completely wreck the state. New reforms (after humiliating defeats by Napoleon) gave Prussia a new lease on life. The nineteenth century success of Prussia is partly due to the fact that in this crisis, the absolutist government took the daring step of eliminating mercantilist restrictions on trade, dysfunctional privileges, and most features of the society of orders.

2) Austria

The Habsburgs were the last to emerge of a series of royal houses that vied for possession of the thrones governing the medieval states of Central-Eastern and North Eastern Europe during the 14th through early 16th centuries. The family started out within the Holy Roman Empire as obscure minor German aristocrats holding lands in the eastern regions of Switzerland. The Habsburg rise from

obscurity began in 1273 when **Count Rudolf of Habsburg was chosen Holy Roman Emperor (1273–91)** by the German Electors of the empire precisely because of his very obscurity and perceived weakness as a prince. During Rudolf's reign, the Grand Principality of Austria was established as the new heartland of Habsburg possessions. The family thereafter continued to enlarge its lands and to maintain claims on the imperial throne in Germany primarily through a deft political policy of marriage alliances that transformed the Habsburgs into the wealthiest and most politically powerful ruling house in all of Europe by the sixteenth century.

The Habsburgs became known as the House of Austria after the Swiss peasantry ousted them from their original family seat in Habichtsburg in the Swiss canton of Aargau in 1386. The name Austria subsequently became an informal way to refer to all the lands possessed by the House of Austria.

Because the elector-princes of the Holy Roman Empire generally preferred a weak, dependent emperor, the powerful Habsburg Dynasty only occasionally held the imperial title in the 150 years after Rudolf's death in 1291. After the election of Frederick III in 1452 (r. 1452-93), however, the dynasty came to enjoy such a dominant position among the German nobility that only one non-Habsburg was elected emperor in the remaining 354 years history of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Habsburg Empire was a super national collection of territories united only through the accident of common rule by the Habsburgs, and many of the territories were not part of the Holy Roman Empire. In contrast, the Holy Roman Empire was a defined political and territorial entity that became identified with the German nation as the nation-state assumed greater importance in European politics.

Although the succession of Holy Roman Emperors from the Habsburg line gave the House of Austria great prestige in Germany and Europe, the family's real power base was the lands in its possession, that is, the Habsburg Empire. This was because the Holy Roman Empire was a loosely organized feudal state in which the power of the emperor was counterbalanced by the rights and privileges of the empire's other princes, lords, and institutions, both secular and ecclesiastical.

The Habsburg power was significantly enhanced in 1453, when Emperor Frederick III confirmed a set of rights and privileges, dubiously claimed by the Habsburgs, that paralleled those of the elector-princes, in whose ranks the family did not yet sit. In addition, the lands the Habsburgs' possessed in 1453 were made inheritable which strengthened the Habsburgs. The lands they held in 1453 became known collectively as the Hereditary Lands, and, with the exception of territories possessed by the archbishops of Salzburg and Brixen, encompassed most of modern Austria and portions of Germany, France, Italy, Croatia and Slovenia.

While it is certain that to strengthen the authority of the monarchy remained the Habsburgs' ideal, an absolute monarchy can be seen only as a distant goal, given the peculiar structure of the Austrian monarchy, composed of a number of kingdoms forming a free alliance in which the various estates (*Stände*) remained powerful. Eager to play their part as heads of state, the Habsburgs had always been concerned to strengthen the monarchy's power, but they had been obliged

to content themselves with the Bohemian model. The power of the estates in turn reflected that of the aristocracy (*Herrenstand*), which held absolute supremacy, for the person who owned the landed property controlled not only the production of primary foodstuffs, but also a major part of the economic activities and authority over his subjects which the state had more or less devolved upon him. In Hungary or in Austria, even if the peasant was not legally bound to the landlord, he never considered leaving the village over which the vicar and the landlord held control. By means of the right of patronage, the landlord had succeeded in making the minister of the Church into a subordinate.

The Hapsburg emperor **Leopold I (1658-1705)** a lifelong rival of Louis-XIV, successfully contained France's bid for dominance in European affairs, thus maintaining the balance of power. His reign too was marked by warfare. Positioned between the French in the West and the Turks in the East, Leopold often had to fight both at the same time. In 1683, Turkish forces under the leadership of the Ottoman Grand Vizier, Kara Mustafa besieged Vienna. Leopold tried to rally support from Christian princes and finally a united force which had the Pope's blessings defeated the Turks. By 1687, Leopold was once again the master of his kingdom and the principality of Transylvania. In 1690 the Turks attempted to retake Hungary only to be defeated again.

Turkish occupation and the war of reconquest had devastated the Hungarian countryside and vast stretches of farmland lay unoccupied. To restore agriculture and also to neutralise possible Hungarian rebellions, Leopold encouraged Serb, Bohemian and German peasants to resettle the lands, promising them limited freedom from royal taxes and the obligations of serfdom. This resettlement complicated the religious situation in Hungary, where for a century, Hungarians had been split over religion, along with Catholics, there were Calvinists, Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox and Muslims.

The Hapsburgs ruled over lands that were far more socially polarized than Louis XIV's France. At the top were the Magnates who were fabulously rich. The Magnate families were few in number, but their cooperation with the Hapsburgs was essential for the smooth functioning of the government and they dominated Hapsburg administration at the central and local levels. The vast majority of people tied to the land as serfs lived in the countryside. Serfdom had expanded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as East European landlords, had successfully bound peasants to the soil as a labour force producing grain and timber for the western European market. During the dislocations of the Thirty Years' War, they also bound them to the soil to prevent them from fleeing to more peaceful areas.

Landlords used their serfs to work their estates without compensation. Leopold tried to reduce uncompensated work to three days a week, but his success was limited because direct control of serfs lay with the landlord class, not the Hapsburgs. Leopold's policies thus had to accommodate the self-interest of nobles before it could be effective.

Since Leopold's direct rule over the mass of his subjects was very limited, he never established the kind of centralized and intrusive state that Louis XIV and Louis XV created in France. The Hapsburg state was also characterised by a high degree of ethnic and religious diversity, particularly in Hungary. The

Hapsburgs manipulated these groups for their own purposes, with the result of enhancing the sense of difference between communities.

3) Russia

The impact of the Tartar invasion of Russia between the mid thirteenth to late fifteenth centuries has been the focus of a debate among historians. One school has argued that the experience of the invasions was somehow beneficial because it enabled the centralizing influence of the princes of Moscow to prevail. On the other side, there are scholars who argue that despite the military efficiency of the Tartars, they were the bearers of an inferior culture as compared to the Russians. It was during this period of political chaos that the princes of Moscow asserted themselves and assumed leadership.

Moscow had a favourable geographical position, near the great watershed from which the Russian rivers flow north into the Baltic or south into Black Sea. Once the Tartars ended their attacks, trade reopened through these routes. Moscow was also blessed with a line of remarkable and shrewd princes and administrators who were anxious to increase and consolidate their authority within their territories. They married into powerful families, acquired land by purchase, by foreclosing mortgages and by inheritance. Later these princes claimed victories over the Tartars and became the champions of liberation in Russia. The princes also secured the support of the Russian Church.

Ivan-III (1462-1505) put his candidature forward as the heir to the princes of Kiev and declared that he intended to regain the ancient Russian lands that had been lost to the Tartars and Poles. In 1492, the Prince of Lithuania was forced to recognise Ivan III as sovereign of all the Russians. This national appeal was fortified by a religious appeal also, for in addition to being sovereign Ivan, he was also the champion of Orthodoxy against the Catholic Poles and the Moslem Tartars. Ivan adopted the Byzantine title of *autocrat* (after the death of his father-in-law Constantine XI) and even used the Byzantine double eagle as his seal. Ivan III laid the foundation of Russian Absolutism during this overall resurgence with his *pomest'e* system, which expropriated large tracts of land from Russia's landowning class (princes and aristocrats, many of Tartar and Oriental origin) and settled a new gentry (military service class) on them. The *pomest'e* required seasonal campaigns in the Tsar's armies. Most *pomest'e* lands were allocated in the central and southern Russia, close to its permanent battlefield with the Tartars (central Asian forces, including Mongols and Turks). The *pomest'e* lands were small with 5 to 6 peasant households in each compared to the lands of aristocrats and princes with an average of 520 peasant households. Productivity was low because of small size and government control over the exploitation of these lands. The first step to legal enserfment of Russian peasantry was Ivan III's Sudebnik decree which restricted the mobility of serfs to two weeks per annum.

His successor **Tsar Ivan IV, the Terrible (1534-1584)** even discontinued the practice of consulting his nobles, he freely bestowed favours on his slaves and inflicted punishment on them as he chose. He extended and radicalised the administration by taking over lands of hostile landowners and creating a terrorist guard corps (*oprichniki*) who were granted confiscated lands for their services. He introduced the widespread use of heavy artillery in the army, and an infantry of musketeers, both critical for foreign expansion. He annexed the Khanate of Astrakhan, breaking Tartar power in the east. The *pomest'e* system (land tenure

system) was escalated to shift the balance of power between the *boyars* (aristocrats) and the tsar in favour of the tsar. *Votchina* estates, whose ownership could be inherited, and whose owners had administrative and legal rights, were made liable for service. The growth of monastic estates was checked. The role of the Boyar Duma or the Assembly was diminished. The first *Zemski Sobor* (land assembly) a consultative body consisting of nobles, clerics and representatives from the towns to assist the Tsar in matters of war and peace was set up. In which smaller gentry were represented prominently was called. The military service class settled in *pomest'ie* lands were given the right to determine the rent to be extracted from the peasantry on their lands. The administrative and tax system was modernised. Salaries in kind for provincial officials was abolished. A central treasury was created for fiscal receipts. The service gentry manned local self-administration and got further integrated into the governmental apparatus of the monarchy. All these measures enhanced the political power of the Tsarist State.

Russia lived in a constant state of war or preparation for war. A prolonged national emergency over centuries led to the creation of an autocratic state-system. More significantly, in Moscow, feudalism had not developed a united class of self-conscious nobles who would fight against the rising monarchy for their privileges. Rather the Muscovite nobility produced various factions with which the monarch could deal individually. In the West, the Church was part of a feudal society and overzealous of its prerogatives. But in Russia, the Church became an ally of the monarchy. With the fall of Constantinople, the Churchmen elaborated a famous theory that made Moscow the successor to the two former world capitals: Rome and Constantinople. The Church also claimed that the Russian Tsars had inherited certain insignia and regalia from the Byzantines and even Babylonians.

Between the accession of Ivan III in 1462 and the accession of Peter the Great in 1689, the autocracy succeeded in overcoming the opposition of the old nobility. A new class of military-service gentry was created who owed everything to the Tsar. Their estates (*pomestie*) initially granted for life in exchange for service, eventually became hereditary. The estates (*votchina*) of the old nobility which had always been hereditary but for which they had owed no service, became service-estates.

In 1613, the *Zemski Sobor* elected **Michael Romanov** as the next Tsar. The Romanov dynasty thus continued in power from 1613 to the Russian Revolution of 1917. However after 1623, the *Zemski Sobor* was summoned only to help declare war or make peace, to approve new taxation and to sanction important new legislation. All lands, *votchina* and *pomest'ie*, were made hereditary and liable to military service. Poor merchants and artisans were made state serfs. Under the *Ulozhenie* code, all slaves and free peasants were consolidated as new class of unchangeable hereditary serfs, which served as one of the foundations of Russian Absolutism. The other foundation of Absolutism was the understanding and unity between monarchy and nobility by which the nobility owed loyalty to the king and the king granted the nobility serfdom as part of the estate that could be inherited from father or ancestor. The Romanov dynasty abolished the *Guba* or the self-administration mechanism of provincial squires and replaced with governorships appointed from Moscow.

Under **Peter the Great (1682-1725)** service to the state became universal. A central bureau in Moscow kept a census of the service men and of their obligations, in time of war. Together with the absolute autocracy, the institution of serfdom

was the most characteristic feature of Russian society. In a period of bitter agrarian and political crisis such as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it became advisable for the government to help the service gentry to keep their farmers fixed to the soil. The Russian serfs were not emancipated until 1861.

He created a new ranking system which aligned nobles and squires in a similar way into the political framework. A sophisticated hierarchy was introduced in the aristocracy with new titles like Count and Baron borrowed from Denmark and Sweden. Independent magnate power was ruthlessly suppressed. The Boyar Duma was replaced by an appointed senate. The gentry were reincorporated as the core of a modernised army and administration. Serfs were bound to their lords instead of the land they tilled and thus could be sold.

The Church was subordinated to the State. The Patriarchate, i.e. the offices of those who exercised autocratic authority over an extended Christian family, was abolished.

The Tsar started an industrialization effort that was slow but largely successful. Russia's main exports were based on the mining and lumber industries.

A new, westernised capital was built in St. Petersburg. The administrative system was divided into gubernias, provinces and districts. The bureaucracy was doubled. There were nine centralised government colleges, or departments, run by collective boards. The budget was quadrupled largely by increasing peasant taxes five-fold between 1700 and 1708. Around three-fourths of the budget was used to build a modern and professional army and navy. But the tradition of corruption and embezzlement implied that perhaps only one-third of the taxes reached the state.

Catherine II (1762-1796) became Tsarina in 1762. She wanted to be reputed for political Enlightenment. So, she introduced a new education system, secularised Church lands and promoted mercantilism to develop the Russian economy. The currency was stabilised, the iron industry expanded and foreign trade increased.

Organised serf agriculture was extended to Ukraine after pushing back the Turks and Tartar Khanate of Crimea. Free and semi-free inhabitants were reduced to the status of central peasantry and money rents paid by serfs increased manifold. State serfs were handed over to nobles for private exploitation. This led to a great rebellion of all groups in the lower classes against the ruling class. But the revolt was crushed.

The Charter of Nobility of 1785 guaranteed nobles all privileges, ended their compulsory duties, gave them control over rural labour and transferred provincial administration to the gentry. There was harmony between the Monarchy and nobility.

Catherine faced more than a dozen uprisings during her reign.

Of the various uprisings that threatened Catherine's rule, the most dangerous came in 1773, when a group of armed Cossacks and peasants led by Emelyan Pugachev rebelled against the harsh socioeconomic conditions of Russia's lowest class, the serfs.

International successes corroborated the strength of Russian Absolutism. Russia became the main initiator and beneficiary of the partition of Poland. It was the

only country in the ancient regime which could withstand the French attack during the Napoleonic Wars. For the first time Russian armies were dispatched deep into western countries (Italy, Switzerland and Holland) to suppress the bourgeois revolution still fanned by the Consulate.

The structure of the Tsarist state which emerged from the Vienna Settlement (1815) had no parallel anywhere in Europe. The State was officially proclaimed as an Autocracy. A feudal hierarchy was cemented into the State system itself. Aristocratic titles and privileges continued to be related by the political system to different administrative functions down to 1917

Check Your Progress 2

1) Compare and contrast the cases of the French and Swedish monarchies.

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2) Compare and contrast the cases of the Russian and Austrian monarchies.

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11.6 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, you have been able to:

- Understand the different features of Absolutism in the Western Europe and Eastern Europe;
- Understand how the absence of bourgeoisie in the Eastern Europe led to shaping up of absolutism there in a different way from western Europe;
- Understand through different case studies how the shaping up of absolutism in the Western and Eastern Europe specifically took place.

11.7 KEYWORDS

- Corregidore** : Chief Officer of Magistrate of a town in Spain
- Baillis** : High officers having judicial, financial and military powers
- Taille** : Direct Land Tax in France
- Gabelle** : Salt Tax in France

Servitor	:	Serving the social superiors
Cortes	:	Legislature in Spain
Seigneurial	:	Feudal Lord
Curia Regis	:	Royal Council or King's Court
Parlement	:	French Provincial Appellate Courts
Lits de Justice	:	Sessions of Parlement of Paris headed by the King
Gallican	:	Ancient Church of France
Bailiffs	:	Law Officers who have power to seize a person's property or possessions if they failed to pay their debts
Privy Council	:	A body of Councillors or Advisors appointed by the King
Herrenstand	:	Higher nobility or aristocrats of Austria
Stände	:	Different social status groups
Pomest'e	:	Feudal landed property granted to the gentry class in exchange for military service
Oprichniki	:	Terrorist Guards Corps in Russia
Zemsky Sobor	:	Assembly of representatives of different social classes
Votchina	:	Heritable landed estates in Russia
Riksdag	:	Estates Assembly in Sweden.

11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section.11.3 especially Sub-Section.s 11.3.1 to 11.3.5
- 2) See Section.11.4 especially Sub-Section.s 11.4.1 to 11.4.5

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-Section. 11.5.1 and especially France and Sweden
- 2) See Sub-Section. 11.5.2 especially Russia and Austria.

11.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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