

Amerigo Vespucci and Ferdinand Magellan.

Americo Vespucci was a known navigator and explorer of the age of the discovery. He was born in Florence and tutored by his uncle, who was a Dominican and a humanist. He eventually sought work in the de Medici family of Florence. He visited Spain and it is possible in Spain that he encountered Christopher Columbus as the de Medici family that he worked for had an agent who fitted their ships of Columbus. It is possible that he was inspired by Columbus and his famous voyages that inspired him to do the same. He also was aware of the interest of the Spanish Crown in funding explorations, and it is probable that he approached the Crown to do the same for him. It is uncertain as to how many voyages that he led. Some letters of his claim that he went on four, other letters claimed that he went for two voyages. But it is now certain whether all these letters were actually penned by him. However, it is verified that he went for at least two voyages. One of them was under the command of Alonso de Ojeda and was under the patronage of Spain. This was between 1499 and 1500. They went to Guyana. They discovered the mouth of the Amazon River and went as far as Cape Saint Augustine, which is in today's Brazil. On the way it is believed he reached Trinidad and then went to Haiti. He later returned to Spain.

He was convinced that he had reached up to the Eastern Peninsula of Asia, and he made plans for a fresh expedition, but unfortunately, they were rejected by Spain.

In 1500 he went to Portugal. The King of Portugal welcomed him knowing his experience as a navigator, and they fitted a new expedition in 1501 which was to discover the land mass that Pedro Cabral had seen when on a voyage to India, he had mistakenly reached in what we know as today's Brazil. In this new voyage in which America went, they went up to the Cape Verde Islands, the coast of Brazil, Cape

Saint Augustine. After that it is a little bit of a disputed matter. He claimed that he went up to Patagonia, which is in today's Argentina. Finally, they reached back in Lisbon in 1502.

It is uncertain whether he took part in any other expressions. In 1505, the King of Spain, who greatly valued him, summoned him and gave him the office of **Piloto Mayor** or the master navigator of Spain. In this capacity, he was supposed to recruit and examine and train other navigators as well as prepare a map of the newly discovered lands and routes for Spain.

Legacy of Vespucci

Vespucci, in one of his disputed letters, says that some of the lands that were discovered were not Asia but actually part of a new world. In 1507 a humanist, Martin Waldseemüller, was preparing an introduction to cosmography and he believed that since Vespucci had discovered this new world according to his letters, at least they should be named after him. And therefore Amerigo's name was now called as America and given to the lands discovered first of all, it was given for South America and then later on, it was used also for North America.

Many historians have criticised him greatly and said that he has usurped the achievements of Columbus. It is uncertain if this is true, but one thing for sure is that he was a pioneer in the discoveries along the Atlantic Ocean and his writings contributed a great deal to the early literature around the New World.

Ferdinand Magellan.

He was originally known as Fernão de Magalhães and belong to a family of lesser nobility in Portugal. It is believed he saw the return of Vasco da Gama from his

famous voyage and he was part of an expedition going to India under the first viceroy of Portuguese India- Francis Almeida and he spent seven years in the East. During which part he is supposed to have been part of that team that went and conquered Malacca. One of his friends Francisco Serrão was sent to Moluccas (The Spice Islands), and he wrote to Magellan, in which he spoke about a land, which was larger and richer in the production of spices than that discovered by Vasco de Gama. It is said that the letter of Serrão inspired Magellan and he vowed to one day reach the Spice Islands. In the meanwhile, he was sent on a campaign to Morocco, but unfortunately here he was accused. of trading illegally with the Moors. He returned to Portugal and asked the King of Portugal to send him an expedition to reach the Spice Islands but from the West. And he also asked for a promotion, an increase in his stipend. The King of Portugal rejected him outright and was quite rude to him. Magellan realized that it was no point wasting time. He asked for permission to leave and went on to Spain. In the meanwhile, he studied charts and maps for a way to find a channel which would link the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. He approached the King of Spain. Now at that time, the Pope had divided the world into two parts according to the Treaty of Tordesillas. Territories on the East were those under the sway of the Portuguese and the West was under the Spanish. Magellan came up with a remarkably interesting idea of reaching the Spice Islands through the West so that he could try to claim the spice islands for Spain. The King of Spain Charles I (later Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire), approved his expedition. However, it was not all easy going. He had a lot of opposition to face. First, the Spanish were not happy on having a Portuguese commander. Secondly, the Portuguese themselves were not happy that their own person was now serving the Spanish King. Eventually he set off for the fleet of five ships and a crew of around 270 men made up of different nationalities. They left Spain on 1519 and sailed West towards South America. He had to face at least one mutiny attempt in which he

lost control of his ship, but he was able to suppress it and punish those responsible. Eventually, after a long time they were able to find this Straits i.e. the passage which linked the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and today the **Straits of Magellan**. It is said that when he first glanced at the waters of the Pacific Ocean, he broke down and cried for joy. He named it eventually, as ***Mare Pacificum*** which means peaceful because at the time that he travelled, the winds were peaceful and the sea was calm. But unfortunately, it took them much longer than expected to cross the Pacific, almost four months by the time of which they had exhausted their food and water supply, and many had died of scurvy. Eventually they landed in Guam, which is part of French Polynesia. Then they went to the Philippines where they remained for about a month and a half, but unfortunately Magellan died in a battle with the natives in the island of Mactan. The voyage continued; however, they went to the Moluccas or the Spice Island which Magellan had dreamed of going to. And here they brought huge quantity of spices. Eventually only one ship of the five reached back to Spain in 1522, commanded by Sebastian Elcano, also known as Del Cano and only 18 to 19 survivors were left out of the 270 men.

Legacy of Magellan

Many have criticised him. The Portuguese viewed him as a traitor. because he chose to serve Spain while for the Spanish, they criticised him and they instead spoke about Elcano as having completed this circumnavigation of the globe. Whatever the case may be, he was a man of courage, tenacity. Who possessed a never die spirit. He was known to be a man of action and was renown for his great navigational skills.

His journey was considered one of the greatest voyages in the age of Discovery, a. And though many tried for some time after the journey was over, it could not be replicated for at least another 50 years.

The voyage provided a lot of information especially information of the channel which linked the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean. And this came to be the most important route for ships till the time that the Panama Canal was constructed.

He was best known for leading the first expedition to successfully circumnavigate the globe, even though he himself died halfway. One of his most important achievement was being able to cross the Pacific Ocean. Through his voyage, he was able to confirm that the world indeed was a sphere or a globe. And because of his voyage, An idea was provided of the correct proportions of the land and the water which hitherto unknown.