

# **RENAISSANCE**

What is the Renaissance?

According to French, the word means rebirth.

Giorgio Vasari in the 16th century used the term 'Rinascita' to describe the previous two centuries.

The French naturalist Pierre Belon uses the term 'Renaissance' to mean classical antiquity in a new spirit, which meant the old in a new spirit.

. Analysed from the point of history, 'Renaissance' means the love, eagerness and interest which were shown towards the art and literature of Greece and Rome in the fifteenth century A.D. The Renaissance became a transition from medieval to modern times It was a bridge between the medieval period and the modern period of Europe.

In the fifteenth century A.D. people of Europe developed interest for the literature, art, architecture, painting and culture of Greece and Rome.

## **CAUSES FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE RENAISSANCE IN EUROPE**

The Renaissance was an important event in European history that stretched from the 14th century to the 17th century. It was preceded by the Middle Ages in Europe and eventually led to the major events of the Age of Enlightenment. In historical terms the Renaissance is important because it led to a major shift in European thought and worldview. While the Renaissance is considered to have begun in the city-states of the Italian peninsula in the 14th century, the main ideas of the movement eventually spread to all of Europe by the 16th century. The most significant changes that emerged as a result of the Renaissance can be seen in European architecture, art, literature, mathematics, music, philosophy, politics, religion and science. Historians have identified several causes for the emergence of the Renaissance following the Middle Ages, such as:

## **REDISCOVERY OF ANCIENT TEXTS**

The next main cause of the Renaissance was the rediscovery by European thinkers of ancient Greek and Roman ideas and texts. Many of these ancient texts were preserved by Islamic and Jewish cultures in the Middle East and were not rediscovered by Europeans until the time of the Renaissance.

### **INCREASED INTERACTION BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST**

The first main cause of the Renaissance was the increased interaction between different cultures and societies in the time before and during the start of the Renaissance. This is important because at the time Europe was in the midst of the Middle Ages.

First, vast trade networks across Europe, Asia and Africa led to increased interaction between different societies which caused not only an exchange of goods, but also an exchange of people, beliefs, ideas and values.

Furthermore, religious and philosophical beliefs from the time period spread easily along the routes and had a profound impact on later events such as the Renaissance.

### **ROLE OF THINKERS (PETER ABELARD, FRANCIS BACON, ROGER BACON)**

Finally, the men with new thoughts paved the way for Renaissance. They advised not to accept anything blindly which is not proved properly.

### **IMPACT OF THE CRUSADES.**

As a result of the Crusades the Western scholars came in contact with the East. A number of Western scholars went to the universities of Cairo, Kufa and Cardona etc and learnt many new ideas, which they subsequently spread in Europe. The crusades were a major event and had a profound impact on the world at the time. For example, one of the first major was that it increased interaction between different societies and groups of people. Beyond religion, the interaction between different groups of people led to a spread of scientific and philosophical knowledge.

### **REFORMATION**

The Church which dominated the medieval society suffered a setback in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This gave a serious blow to the power and prestige of the Pope. Even the common people lost faith in Church due to rise of numerous rituals. They preferred to pay greater attention to the present life rather than the life after death.

### **INVENTION OF PRINTING PRESS:**

The invention of the printing press in 1454 by Gutenberg of Mainz also greatly assisted in the revival of the learning. The printing press was one of the most significant innovations in all of world history. developed the first printing press in the mid-1400s and it quickly had a profound impact on the events of the Renaissance (as well as later events such as the Enlightenment).

The invention and use of the printing press in Europe was important for the Renaissance because it allowed new ideas and worldviews to spread across the continent more easily.

### **ENCOURAGEMENT OF ART & LEARNING**

A host of progressive rulers, Popes and nobles also played an important role in the ushering of the renaissance. Rulers like Francis I of France, Henry VIII of England, Charles V of Spain, Christian II of Denmark etc. extended patronage to scholars and men of learning and greatly contributed to the revival of Graeco-Roman classics.

Popes like Nicholas V, and Leo X contributed to renaissance by encouraging study of ancient Greek and Roman classical and patronizing classical art, sculpture, music etc. Apart from them certain nobles also patronized literary men, artists and scientists eg Medici family.

### **FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE:**

The Fall of Constantinople, in the hands of the Turks in 1453 A.D. provided an indirect impetus to Renaissance. A large number of Greek and Roman scholars who were working in the libraries at Constantinople, fled to different parts of Europe with valuable literature. They began teaching Greek and Latin in various European countries.

They searched for lost manuscripts of Greek and Latin literature and discovered works which had been hitherto ignored and neglected.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF RENAISSANCE**

### **Cultural aristocracy (marked by revival of classical thought)**

The foremost among the characteristics of the renaissance was the idea of 'classicism', which meant the admiration and adoption of the best features of the classic civilisations of Greece and Rome. Renaissance art and literature were deeply influenced by ancient classical civilisation. They turned to the classical literature and developed great admiration for the same.

**Humanism was another interesting characteristic of Renaissance.** Scholars and artists paid attention to human interest and human values. The great humanist scholar, Erasmus, laid emphasis on human values and criticised the church for ignoring them. The study of old classics fostered human values. Even the medieval universities spread the gospel of humanism through its subjects (today classified as humanities). Humanist scholars eulogised "the natural, the human, and the sensual.

Humanism also placed a greater emphasis on the pleasures and social values as opposed to the spiritual values that prepared for a better life after death.

**Renaissance introduced a new type of thinking** for example, some renaissance artists considered Gothic style of architecture as barbaric. Their contempt for the Middle ages was so great they considered it the "dark age". Original thinking was a main feature of the renaissance.

**Spirit of Inquiry:** It was an Intellectual movement: Intellectual curiosity and criticism marked the "New Learning" and those who pursued their studies relentlessly searched for the lost manuscripts of classical writers. They searched all the the old libraries and monasteries and

discovered some ancient works. Thus, collection of old classical works were considered treasures to be preserved for the prosperity.

**Spirit of Curiosity:** The critical approach of this period enabled culture and learning to free itself from religious control and thus there was a growth of large secular literature which openly revolted against the Church control over culture. Secularism was yet another feature of Renaissance, the focus shifted from Christianity or God to that of Human being

**Individualism** was a main trait found among all the scholars, poets and artists of renaissance. They became free from controls and placed man on the highest pedestal in the universe . It laid great emphasis on humanism. The scholars during this period took to the study of subjects of human interests rather than religious works which formed the most important part of education during the Middle Ages.

Finally, this period witnessed **enormous growth of vernacular literature**. The people were not willing to produce literature in Latin, which was not the language of the masses, and could not be easily comprehended by them. Therefore, they wrote in the language which could easily understood by the people.