

Impact of Renaissance during 16th and 17th Century

Manju Kataria

Asstt. Prof. of History, C.I.S.K.M.V, Pundri

Abstract

Renaissance means the rebirth or re-awakening which was the term that was commonly used for the various developments during the sixteenth century. Its development could have been felt in the field of literature and art. Apart from literature and art, its presence could have been felt in the field of science and social and religious fields. Economics effects could be felt in the fields of trade and commerce, industry, encouragement to colonialism; the political effects could have been felt in the rise of monarchy, downfall of feudalism, and in new modes of warfare etc.

Paper

Renaissance is a word that has been derived from the French word Renascor which means revival of something. One of the most prominent writers from Italy, Besari has used it in context of art and construction. If we go through deeply then we will find the fact that renaissance was an intellectual and cultural movement that took inspiration from ancient Rome and due to the

interest in ancient it was also called classical revival. J.E. Swain rightly says in this connection: “ Renaissance is a collective term used to include all the intellectual changes that were in evidence at the close of the Middle Age and at the beginning of Modern times”. Davis says while stressing on the freedom of ideas that renaissance is a word that is closely related to the freedom of ideas which was captured by the religious people.

Lord Acton clearly explains the term Renaissance when he says,” The Renaissance signifies the renewed study of Greek and the consequences that ensued from it, during the century and a half between Petrarca and Erasmus. Various factors were responsible for the rise of Renaissance in which the growth of cities and trade and commerce is one of the main factors that were the source of inspiration. The other factor that played an important role was the importance of Mangole Empire. During the

thirteenth century, in the Mangole Empire of Changej Khan and Mangu Khan, apart from China and Mangolia the states of Russia, Polland and Hungary were also included. The capture of Turks on Constantinople is considered to be the beginning or starting point of Renaissance in 1453. The geographical discoveries like the discovery of America by Columbus in 1498 and the new routes discovered by the European also contributed a great deal to Renaissance. The invention of printing press and paper was also one of the important factors in the direction of Renaissance. Coxton invented the printing press due to which the writings of different countries migrated from one place to another.

In the real sense of words the Renaissance started in Italy and after that it spread to different parts of Europe. It was because Italy was the main trade centre and the goods were exported to the different parts of the Europe which encouraged the tendencies of the Renaissance. The prosperity of Italy encouraged the new commercial section in the country and

they did not care for the dictates of pope. Italy was also the birth of birth place of Ancient Roman Civilization that reminds us of the Renaissance. Rome was also the famous centre of Christianity where Pope resided. From the political point of view, Italy was the appropriate place for Renaissance and there was an environment of freedom and purity. During that time there was also spread of education and in Italy education was free from the bondages of religion and as a result science and reason got strength

Many scientific discoveries helped to give momentum to Renaissance. Bacon started a new system based on scientific terms. Copernicus stressed the fact that the earth is static and the sun revolves round it. Newton gave the revolutionary theory of gravitational which was an important achievement in the field of science. Because of all these scientific discoveries the domination of the church was minimized and there was an atmosphere of free mental state which was the basis of the development of renaissance. Apart from this there was also

growth of vernacular languages because earlier the people were not able to understand the Greek and Latin languages as these languages were complex, but during the 15th and 16th centuries there developed a number of vernacular languages like English, French, German which made the people aware of Greek and other languages. All these activities enforced the concept of Renaissance and there was development all around as says Lord Acton “The Renaissance signifies the renewed study of Greek and the consequences that ensued from it, during the century and a half between Petrarca and Erasmus.”¹

Due to the concept of Renaissance, there was stress on reasoning all around. The Renaissance liberated the people from the bondage of superstitions of the middle ages. In this direction, Aristotle’s concept of reasoning provided light to people. All the colleges and universities preferred those ideas which were logical and based on reasons. Importance of experiments was one of the chief merits of the Renaissance. Roger Bacon said in this direction

that we can achieve knowledge by two means: first by argument and secondly by experiment, but argument can never satisfy our quest, and the truth cannot be found out. But, it is the reverse in case of experiment. Humanism is also one of the chief features of Renaissance which means to take interest in mankind and also to respect human beings. Humanism studies the problems of man and also accepts the importance of man’s life and also tries to improve and make prosper man’s life. The world in which we are living is signifies the real meaning of Renaissance not the world after death. Petrarch has been considered as the real humanist who criticized the superstitions of the past life. He also stressed on secularism which was one of the important merits of Humanism. Another important feature of Renaissance was the worship of beauty and in that there was neither any physical pressure nor any intellectual pressure. Man’s feelings are considered to be free and are to be expressed in a natural manner. In art also this concept of beauty was followed by different artists as says one critic ‘The Renaissance gave to Europe

freedom of thought a critical scientific temper, freedom of art and letters from ecclesiastical tutelage and the development of vernacular literature’2

Renaissance played an important role in the field of literature. There were many scholars whose contribution was important. There was development in literature in English, German, and Spanish languages and the writers stressed on humanity and secularism in their literature. The religion was replaced by the present and welfare of individuals was the main concern of the writers.

References:

1. Lord Acton, Lectures on History,2002,p.71
2. Ferguson Brunn, Cambridge Modern History,2001,p.24
3. McKendrick, N., Brewer, J., & Plumb, J. H. (1985). *The birth of a consumer society*(p. 145). Bloomington: Indiana university press.
4. Wallerstein, I. (2011). *The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in*

the sixteenth century, with a new prologue (Vol. 1). Univ of California Press.

5. Cox, V. (2008). *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary dialogue in its social and political contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press.