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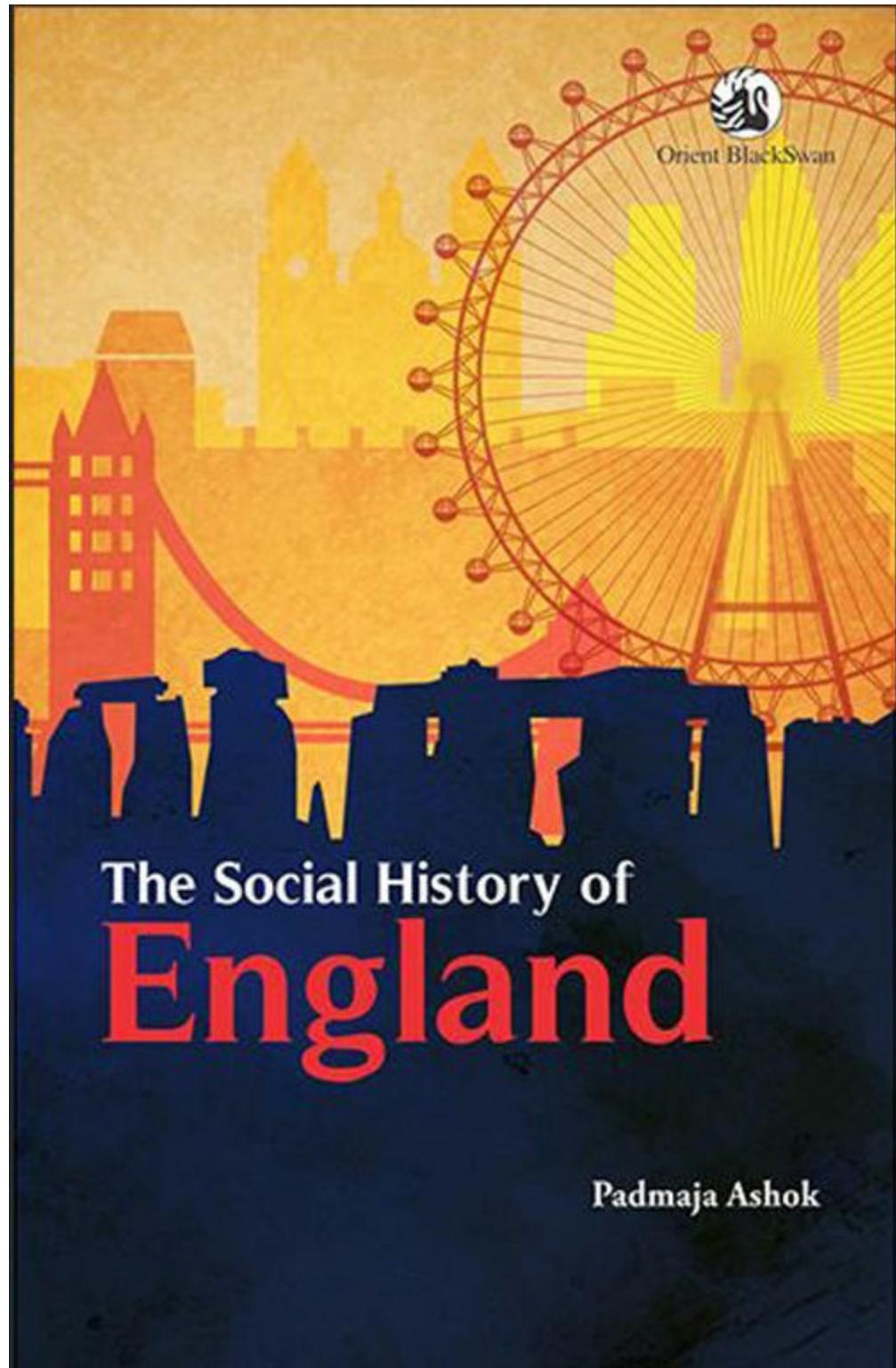


# The Social History of **England**

Padmaja Ashok



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## **The Social History of England**

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**Padmaja Ashok**



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# THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

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# Foreword

Among the various countries of the world which have a hoary past and a rich culture to feel proud of, Great Britain stands supreme. The language of Great Britain is now the language of the world. English is the language of commerce, industry and science. More than all, it is perhaps most profound in its literature, right from the time of King Alfred to our day. We have sound literary histories which offer us chronological accounts of literary creations spanning such a large period as thirteen centuries.

The social history of any nation is an independent discipline most useful for promoting literary scholarship. It supplies us with a knowledge of the past and a glimpse into the future. Literature and society are linked to each other in ever so many ways. A knowledge of the one enhances an understanding of the other. Literature is a social establishment. The social history of England is dazzlingly rich and variegated, full of rewards for an avid student of English literature.

Times have changed. English studies do not mean the study of the narrow confines of British territory only anymore. Horizons have broadened with the proliferation of newer and yet newer areas of study seeking inclusion in this widening spectrum of literary knowledge. A sound knowledge of the social and intellectual background of English history is of utmost necessity, as it is meant to supply the most essential foundations. With greater focus on what has come to occupy central attention in critical studies, New Historicism, history and literature seem to be inextricably bound to each other. Nay, the two are one and the same.

There are not many scholarly resources available to our Indian students at the advanced beginner level. It is here that the present volume *The Social History of England* fills the gap and fulfils the want. The book covers the period 500 BCE to 2018. It is the outcome of Dr Padmaja Ashok's long

experience as one who has been handling the subject for two decades. It is written in a lucid, expository prose and I am quite sure that an average student can rely on the book in order to achieve a reasonable level of competence in the subject. The treatment of the subject is scholarly without being pedantic. The addition of charts, maps, a useful glossary, and the inclusion of more recent historical events make the book user-friendly in every way.

As T.S. Eliot emphasised time and again, historical sense and a sense of facts are central to any serious incursion into literary scholarship. Dr Ashok's *The Social History of England* is an invaluable aid to any serious student of literature who wishes to acquire the spirit, the social ethos and the prevailing world view of England. I cannot think of a better book to complement the work in the classroom. I most heartily recommend it to literature students of the undergraduate class.

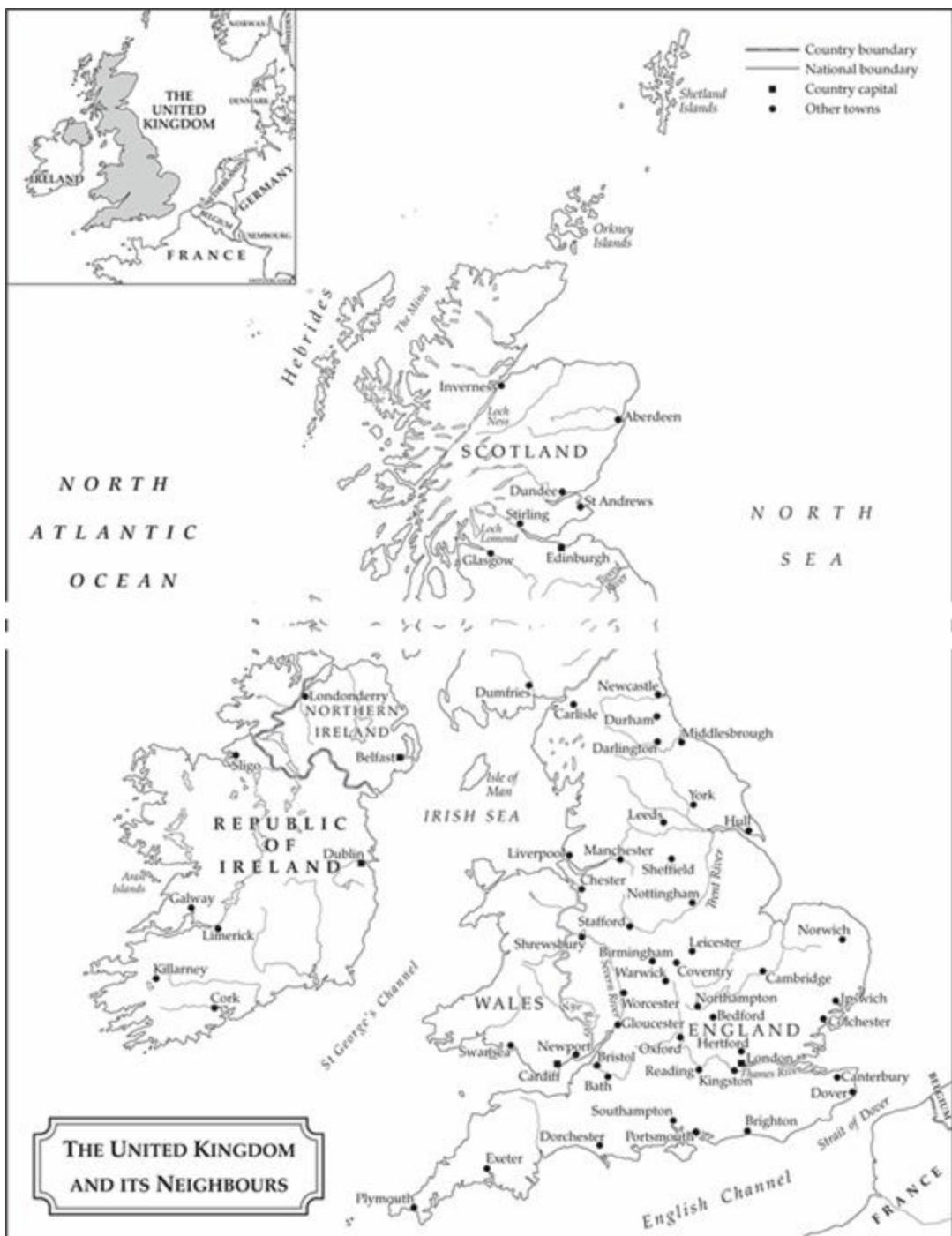
**Dr M.S. Nagarajan**  
Retired Professor and Head  
Department of English  
University of Madras

# Preface

The story of Great Britain is a highly inspiring and fascinating one. For a student of literature, it is necessary to first grasp the main political, historical and social changes of a country before venturing forth to study its literature. This is because literature is the product of a society and cannot exist in a vacuum. The changes and fluctuations in a society are clearly reflected in the literature of its period. Similarly the great writers and thinkers of a period have a tremendous impact upon the society to which they belong. Thus literature and society are inextricably linked together.

The social history of any nation is an independent discipline most useful for promoting literary scholarship. It supplies us with knowledge of the past and a glimpse into the future. The journey through the history of Great Britain, from Anglo Saxon times to the present, is a fascinating one and is sure to give the student of English literature a sound background that is essential for the full appreciation of English literature.

This book has been written especially for the undergraduate students of English literature. By tracing the history of Great Britain from early times up to the present, it sensitises the student to the character and nature of the country. I sincerely hope that the students will receive a comprehensive picture of the country whose literature forms a part of the BA English literature course.



# 1

## The Early History of England

It has been observed that ‘the early history of Britain is essentially the history of its invaders’. The Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons and the Normans were a few of the more important conquerors of England. Each in its own unique manner left an indelible mark on English language and culture. The tapestry of modern English society and culture is woven with the fine threads of its various early invaders. It is astonishing when we compare England’s early history with its more recent history. From being a weak country under constant foreign invasion, it grew into a superpower which had its colonies all over the world till the mid-twentieth century. As a result, English, the language of the people of Great Britain, became an international language. People all over the world speak, write and think in English constantly. How did such a small country manage to emerge from the shadow of its conquerors? How did it extend its political influence over more than half the world? The answers to these questions form the incredible history of Great Britain.

Around 500 BCE, streams of invaders known as ‘**Celts**’ arrived on the shores of England. The Celts were made up of numerous tribes and invaded England in waves. The earliest to arrive were the Gales who invaded the western and northern parts of the country. The Britons came next and occupied most of present-day England and Wales. The name ‘Britain’ is taken from this branch of the Celts.

The Celts were fierce fighters but lacked political skill. The Celtic language was spoken all over the country. It is the origin of modern Welsh. Gaelic was another dialect of the Celts which was spoken in Scotland. The Iron Age began after Celts settled down in Britain. They worshipped nature. Their priests, called **Druids**, wielded considerable power over the chieftains. Druids were not only religious leaders, but also judges who settled disputes.

The power of the Druids was curtailed by the Romans who were the next invaders of the land.

Even as the Celtic tribes kept arriving on English shores, the **Roman Empire** was flourishing. In 55 BCE, Julius Caesar made his first expedition to Britain and learnt that the land was fertile and the people weak. He was, however, more interested in the conquest of Gaul, and Britain was left to itself for nearly a hundred years. The reign of Augustus marked the beginning of a long period of peace and stability known as **Pax Romana** (Roman Peace). The Roman Empire extended its influence over Italy, Spain, Greece and Asia Minor. In 43 CE, Emperor Claudius invaded Britain and the Romans stayed on for nearly three hundred years. England became a province of the vast Roman Empire. The Romans established forts and camps throughout the land and built many roads to connect them. They also constructed walls across the northern part of England to protect the region against invasion from Celtic tribes in northern Britain (present-day Scotland). The most famous of these walls was **Hadrian's Wall** which extended from Carlisle to Newcastle upon Tyne.

The Romans developed the trade and agriculture of the island. Towns were created with well-built houses. Excavations show that those houses had better heating systems than some modern English houses. Christianity was introduced sometime during the second century. The Britons were civilised into an orderly community.

But the Romans had to withdraw from Britain in order to protect themselves from numerous invaders. The Britons were forced to fend for themselves. They discovered that they did not have the power to stand alone against these fierce invaders.

There were constant attacks from Celtic tribes settled in Ireland and Scotland, and even as the Britons were struggling against them, a new danger appeared in the form of Anglo-Saxon sea rovers. For about one and a half centuries (from 450 ce to 600 ce) Britain was under the **Angles** and **Saxons**, who migrated to Britain from northern Germany. They were barbarians when compared to the highly civilised Romans. They were great warriors and worshipped the gods of Norse mythology. They worshipped a deity called Thunor which was the same as Thor, the god of thunder and lightning. It is

after him that 'Thursday' is named. Another important god was Odin, the god of poetry, death and magic. The Old English name for Odin was Woden from which we got 'Wednesday'.

The Anglo-Saxons formed seven kingdoms known as the **Heptarchy** (Greek word meaning 'rule of seven'). The seven kingdoms were Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria. These kingdoms fought amongst each other for supremacy. King Egbert of Wessex, who established the supremacy of his kingdom, is considered to be the first king of England.

The Anglo-Saxons had a greater influence on the Britons than the Romans. English is derived from the Anglo-Saxon language and not from Latin. Anglo-Saxon names have survived to this day such as 'stead' (a dwelling), 'ham' (a farm), 'cot' (a cottage), often in the endings of place names. Another Anglo-Saxon feature in place names is the '–ing' ending, which occurs with '–tun' and '–ham', as in Wokingham.

The Anglo-Saxons were fond of stories, and often gathered around the fire to listen to tales of battle. The wandering minstrel used to narrate tales of courage and endurance, which stirred the spirits of the listeners. The most famous of these is *Beowulf*. It is a collection of pagan tales and historical events containing more than three thousand lines. It is the oldest surviving poem of the Teutonic people and is historically important as it throws light on the Scandinavian–Germanic origins of the English language. *Beowulf* gives us a very accurate picture of the courageous Anglo-Saxons. The first English poet known by name was **Caedmon**, who lived during the 600s. Another poet of Anglo-Saxon times was **Cynewulf**. We see a fusion of paganism and Christianity in their poetry.

Sometime during the 500s, Christianity was reintroduced to England for the second time. A monk named **Augustine** was sent by the pope to convert Ethelbert, king of the Jutes, to Christianity. (The Jutes were a Germanic tribe, like the Angles and the Saxons, that had invaded Britain and settled there.) Augustine built a monastery at Canterbury and preached Christianity in different parts of England. He was the first Archbishop of Canterbury (the leader of the Church in England). The Celts had remained unaffected by the Anglo-Saxon religion and were Christians.

During the 800s, the **Danes** (or **Vikings**), a seafaring people, attacked England and easily conquered the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. **Alfred the Great**, the Anglo-Saxon king of Wessex, resisted the Danish attacks. As long as he continued to rule, the Danes could not extend their Danelaw (the parts of England under Danish rule) in Wessex. After King Alfred died in 899, Wessex became weak and, gradually, the Anglo-Saxons were crushed. The last great Saxon king was **Edward the Confessor**, who ruled till 1066.

In 1066, **Norman** invaders from France conquered England in the famous Battle of Hastings. William, Duke of Normandy, became known as **William the Conqueror**, and was crowned king of England. He was responsible for establishing a strong central government. He appointed Norman lords in the Advisory Council and forced most Anglo-Saxons to become serfs.

The development of **feudalism** in England is associated with the Norman Conquest. The king was the supreme lord and all the land was owned by him. Those barons and knights who paid their rents directly to the king were known as tenants-in-chief. The lesser barons and knights held land from the tenants-in-chief. These tenants and subtenants had to render military service as well as pay feudal taxes. Below them were the peasants and villains. They had to work for the lords in return for food and shelter. They were not free to choose their work. Apart from them were the freemen, who had certain rights to buy and sell land. The **strip system** was also introduced by the Normans. The land was divided into one acre strips and the peasants' strips were intermingled with the lord's. The land was ploughed in common and sown with the same crop.

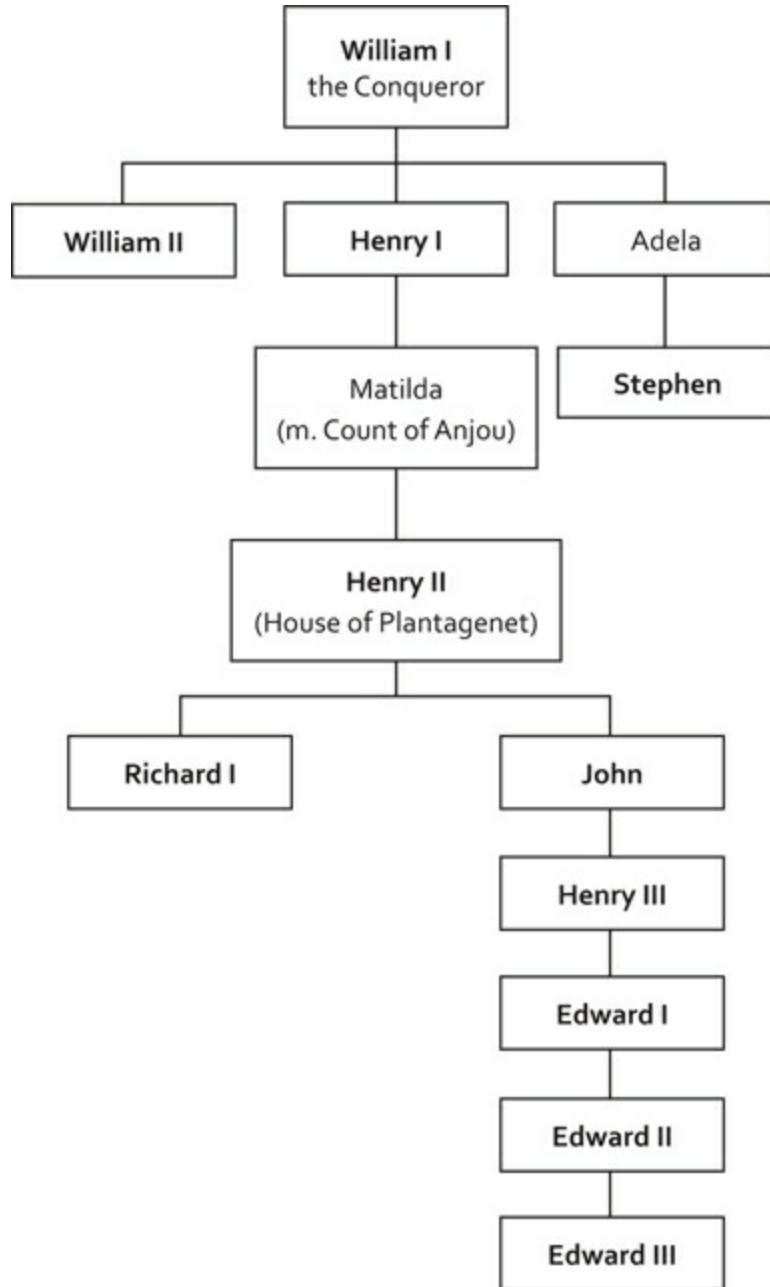
William conducted a survey to determine the details of the land in England. He used the information from the survey to fix the taxes and to divide the large estates among his followers. This record of William's survey is known as the **Domesday Book**.

For a long time, the Normans treated the Anglo-Saxons as the conquered people and kept themselves aloof from them. But as the years passed, the two races intermingled and blended into one. At first the Normans spoke French, but later the Norman French blended with the Germanic tongue of the Anglo-Saxons and became English. But French and Latin were considered to be the languages of the cultured and the fashionable, and English was relegated to a

lower position. Latin was the language which was used for writing and French was the preferred spoken language in polite society. With the Norman Conquest, the Saxon language languished for a while.

After the death of William the Conqueror, his son **William Rufus** ascended the throne as **William II**, and was followed by his brother, **Henry I**. When Henry I died, his grandson (his daughter Matilda's son) Henry II was only two years old. Therefore **Stephen**, the nephew of Henry I, became king next. Following his death, **Henry II**, son of Matilda and Geoffrey, Count of Anjou (a province in France), became the first king of the **Plantagenet** family. The name 'Plantagenet' was given to the family as Geoffrey used to wear a sprig of the broom (genet) plant in his cap. This family is also known by the name of **Angevins**, which means 'from Anjou'.

## THE NORMAN KINGS AND THE PLANTAGENET FAMILY



Henry II brought order among the rebellious barons and strengthened kingship. He claimed to rule Scotland, Wales and a part of Ireland. He next wanted to control the Roman Catholic church in England which led to the bitter and well-known conflict between Henry II and **Thomas Becket**, Archbishop of Canterbury. Henry II is also remembered for favouring the Anglo-Saxon common law over the Roman law. He introduced trial by jury and **circuit courts** (the custom of having judges ride around the countryside

each year to hear appeals, instead of having people to bring their appeals to them).

**Richard I**, Henry II's successor is remembered as Richard the Lion-Hearted. He spent most of his time in the Holy Land fighting in the Third Crusade. (The **Crusades** were a series of wars fought between Christians and Muslims over the issue of control over the Holy Land of Jerusalem. These wars took place between 1095 and 1291.) After he died, his brother **John** ruled over England. He was a poor ruler and had several enemies. He fought with the barons and Pope Innocent III. In order to reduce John's power, the barons, along with the leaders of the Church, drew up a document known as the **Magna Carta** (the Great Charter) in 1215, and forced him to sign it. It set a precedent which altered the political face of England forever by establishing that the king was not above the law. This was the first attempt made by the English people to safeguard their liberty by legally limiting the powers of the king and protecting the privileges of the people.

After John, his eldest son, **Henry III**, ascended the throne. His most memorable work was the construction of the magnificent Westminster Abbey. It was built on the exact spot where Edward the Confessor had earlier erected a church. During the reign of Henry III, the Dominican and Franciscan Friars began to arrive in England. These monks were the followers of St Dominic of Spain and of St Francis of Assisi, respectively. The Dominicans wore black coats and were called the Black Friars, and the Franciscans wore grey coats and were known as the Grey Friars. They contributed significantly to the religious and social life of the age. One such well-known Franciscan friar was **Roger Bacon**, the greatest scientist of the thirteenth century. Another was the famous theologian and philosopher, **John Duns Scotus**.

It was during the reign of **Edward I** that the Parliament began to develop. Edward I used to call meetings of nobles, churchmen, knights and a few representatives of towns. Historians refer to one such meeting he called in 1295 as the **Model Parliament**. It set the pattern for later Parliaments.

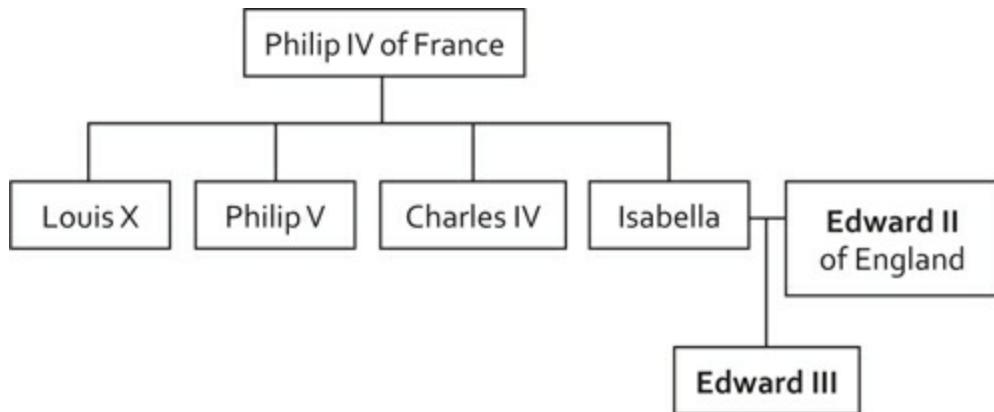
During the reign of Edward I, Wales was brought under English control. In 1301, he gave the title '**Prince of Wales**' to his son who was born in Wales. Ever since, it has become tradition to refer to all male heirs to the throne by

that title. Edward I made several attempts to become the king of Scotland, but he was defeated by **Robert Bruce**.

His son, **Edward II**, too tried to conquer Scotland, but was defeated in the famous **Battle of Bannockburn**. As a result, England was forced to recognise Robert Bruce as the king of Scotland.

**Edward III**, the son of Edward II and Isabella (daughter of the French king Philip IV), claimed the throne of France. This led to the **Hundred Years' War** which began when Edward landed an army in Normandy. England enjoyed a few victories, but the war dragged on.

### EDWARD III's CLAIM TO THE FRENCH THRONE



The greatest writer of the Middle English period, **Geoffrey Chaucer**, lived during Edward III's reign. His famous masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, accurately captures the life and habits of the people of his day. Other poets of that period were **John Gower** and **William Langland**. Langland's *Piers Plowman*, like *The Canterbury Tales*, gives us a fascinating glimpse of English life during the fourteenth century.

There were societies and institutions which not only conducted but were also centres for common feasting and drinking. These societies protected industry and were called '**guilds**'. In the 1300s, there were a number of guilds in England. These guilds maintained a high standard in the goods that were produced.

A significant event that occurred during that time was the pandemic of bubonic plague known as the '**Black Death**'. The disease, highly contagious and spread by fleas from infected rats, wiped out nearly a third of the population. Since labour became scarce, the lower classes could call the shots. The plague was instrumental in giving freedom to the serfs. As it was the first time that England was being exposed to the disease, there were no medicines to check its rapid devastation.

It was an age that experienced several upheavals, both political as well as religious. The occurrences taking place raised doubts in the minds of the people. They began to question the authority of the Church, and in **John Wycliffe** these questions found a voice. He firmly believed that the clergy stood between man and God, and highlighted the importance of the Bible. He also opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation, according to which priests changed bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ during the Mass. His followers translated the Bible into English in 1382. His views were adopted by a number of people who became known as the 'Lollards'. However, both the medieval Church and the Crown stifled all attempts at reform by Wycliffe and the Lollards, and the Catholic Church remained the same till the Reformation.

Edward III had a lavish court and encouraged feasts and tournaments. It was an age of chivalry that was influenced by the stories of King Arthur and his Round Table. Edward III created the famous Order of the Garter around 1348. It was an exclusive honour given to just twenty-six knights including the king. The members of this Order were expected to be loyal and close to each other.

The Hundred Years' War continued during the reign of **Richard II**. The English people grew restless and began to oppose the long-drawn-out war with France. The Parliament refused to approve the high taxes needed to support the war. It was during this time that there was a rebellion of the people in 1381 led by **Wat Tyler**, a blacksmith. This was also known as the **Peasants' Revolt** as it was an uprising by farm labourers. They revolted against the heavy taxes and the harsh living conditions. More than 1,00,000 angry peasants marched to London and demanded to see the king who was only fourteen years old then. The king, who was abandoned by his royal

advisers, was forced to concede to their demands. In spite of that, the peasants continued to make more demands. This eventually led to the murder of Wat Tyler. The king, who was now supported by his troops, was quickly able to suppress the rebellion. All his promises to the peasants were revoked, and they continued to be oppressed for the next two hundred years.

After the rebellion, Richard tried to rule without the Parliament. He became very unpopular and the country turned against him. He was forced to abdicate, and the Duke of Lancaster was crowned as Henry IV.

**Henry IV** did not pay much attention to the war with France as he was busy fighting small wars with the English nobles. But his son **Henry V** revived the Hundred Years' War. He won a great victory at Agincourt in 1415, and forced the French king to accept him as regent and heir to the French throne. Soon after Henry V died, the French refused to recognise England's claim to their throne. The war began once again and the English forces were winning several victories by 1428. Suddenly, in a dramatic turn of events, the French forces, led by a peasant girl, **Joan of Arc**, defeated the English at Orléans. With that battle, French successes continued. The war came to an end in 1453, with the English holding only the city of Calais.

Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI belonged to the House of Lancaster which ruled from 1399 to 1461. After 1461, the throne was occupied by the House of York till 1485. The Yorkist kings were Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III.

During **Henry VI**'s reign, the Duke of York, a descendant of Edward III, claimed the English throne. This led to a civil war between the two houses of York and Lancaster, known as the **Wars of the Roses**. The name was derived from their symbols, the White Rose of the Yorkists and the Red Rose of the Lancastrians. The Wars lasted from 1455 to 1485.

In 1461, Henry VI was defeated by **Edward IV** of York. After Edward died, his brother Richard imprisoned the minor sons of Edward and proclaimed himself King **Richard III**.

Henry Tudor was the heir to the House of Lancaster. He defeated Richard and became England's ruler as **Henry VII**. The Wars of the Roses was brought to an end when Henry VII married Edward IV's daughter Elizabeth.

Through this marriage, the Houses of York and Lancaster were finally united. The Tudors ruled very successfully over England from 1485 to 1603. They gave England internal order and peace.

## 2

### **Tudor England (1485 to 1603)**

Henry VII            1485–1509

Henry VIII            1509–1547

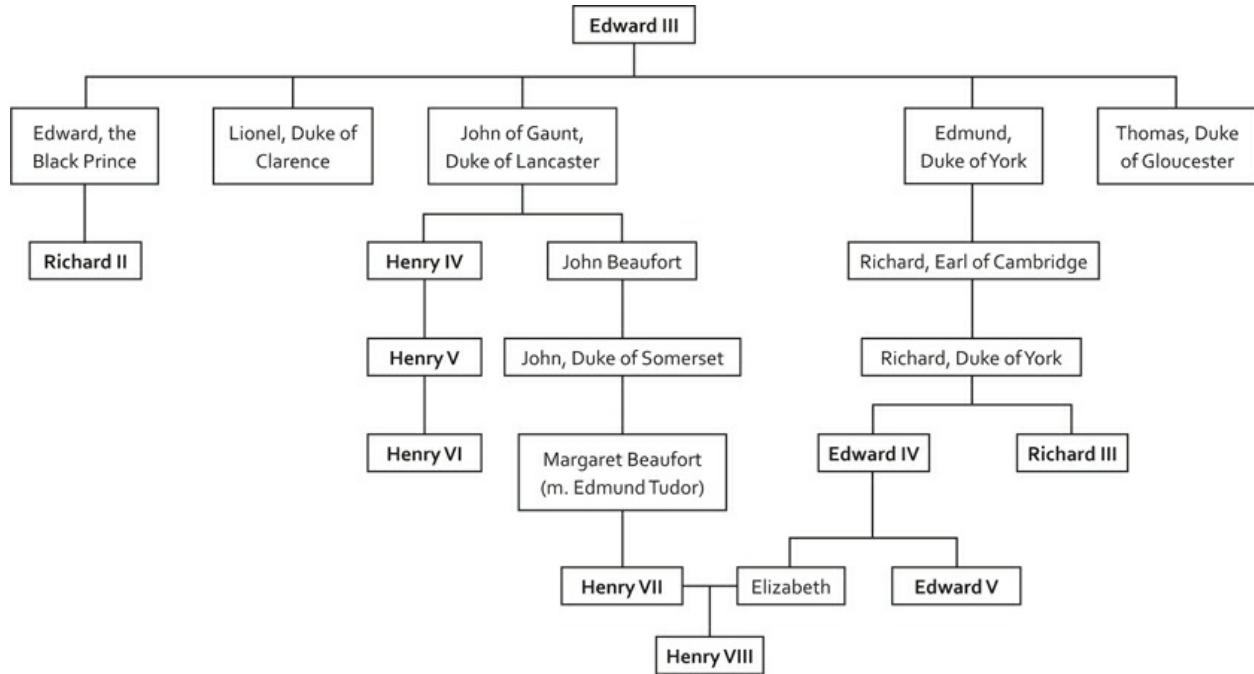
Edward VI            1547–1553

Mary I            1553–1558

Elizabeth I            1558–1603

When **Henry VII** came to the throne, a new era may be said to have begun. During the period of Tudor sovereignty, England passed from the medieval to early modern times. It was a remarkable period when English life and thought were stirred by the Renaissance and the Reformation. The five Tudor rulers gave to England the much longed-for peace after the tumultuous Wars of the Roses. England emerged as the Queen of the Seas under the encouragement of the Tudors. All these events mark off the age of the Tudors from the medieval age.

### **THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK**



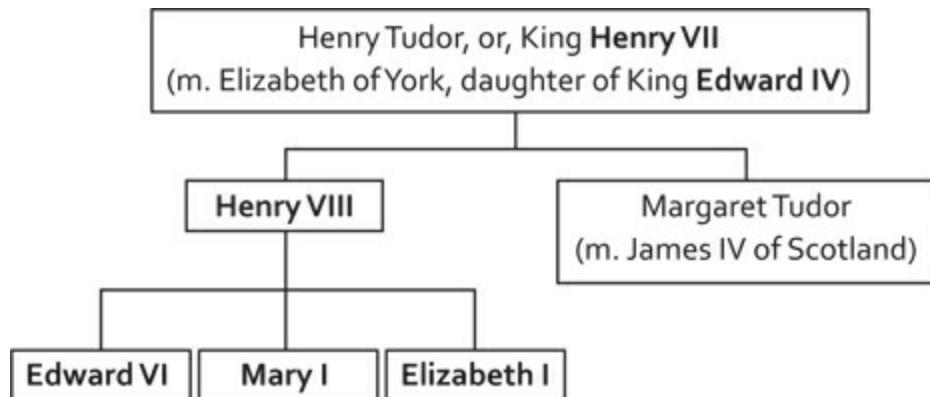
When Henry VII ascended the throne in 1485, the nobles were very powerful. They had huge armies and were a threat to the monarch. Henry checked the power of the nobles and restored the ancient strength of the monarchy. He strengthened himself through matrimonial alliances with Spain and Scotland. His eldest son, Arthur, married Catherine of Aragon, daughter of King Ferdinand of Spain; and his daughter, Margaret, married James IV of Scotland. The first voyages of discovery began during his reign when **John Cabot** and his son discovered Newfoundland and Labrador in northern America. Henry gave to his subjects the much longed-for peace and tranquility and established his dynasty on a very firm foundation.

The king appointed judges who travelled from one county to another, settling disputes—a practice begun by Henry II. Minor cases were handled by **Justices of Peace**. These justices controlled local working conditions and supervised wage fixation. They had to take care of the periodic repair of roads, license ale-houses, and prevent gambling. This system was extremely popular with the kings as it was cheap and the officials too enjoyed the power and prestige that went with the post.

The Star Chamber, which was extremely famous during the reign of Henry VII, was not created by him. It consisted of members of the king's council

who met at Westminster Palace in a room with star-shaped ornaments on the ceiling. The **Star Chamber** tried disputes between rich and powerful people. It did not have the power to award death sentences and could only levy fines. The judgments of this Chamber were very arbitrary and it abused its power. The Stuarts, especially, used it to suppress the nobles who did not fall in line with the autocratic rule of James I and Charles I. Charles I used it in place of the Parliament for eleven years, after he dismissed the Parliament. It was finally abolished in 1641 by the Long Parliament under the leadership of **John Pym**.

## THE TUDORS



**Henry VIII** who succeeded his father is well remembered for his six marriages with Catherine of Aragon (the widow of Henry's brother, Arthur), Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleaves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr. Their fates are summarised in a rhyme:

‘Divorced, beheaded, died,  
Divorced, beheaded, survived.’

It was Henry VIII who was responsible for bringing the Reformation to English shores. His famous fight with the pope over his divorce, brought about the breach with Rome. Henry declared himself the supreme head of the Church in England through the **Act of Supremacy**. He ordered the **dissolution of the monasteries** in order to curb the power of the pope. This affected English society in several ways. People from different walks of life came forward to buy the monastic property. Henry gave the bulk of the

property to squires or local gentry. In Tudor England, land was synonymous with power and prestige. The emergence of the landed class may be considered as the most important social consequence of the dissolution of the monasteries.

The poor were particularly affected by the dissolution of the monasteries. Many people who depended on the monasteries were thrown out of work. Thus the problem of the poor became more acute. In the plundering of the monasteries, many priceless libraries were destroyed and many irreplaceable manuscripts were lost.

By and large, social life during Henry VIII's time was unaffected by the major political change of the time—England's break with Rome. This was because Henry VIII was a Catholic at heart. Though he rejected the authority of the pope, he retained the customs and rituals of the Catholic Church.

It was during **Edward VI**'s reign that England became a Protestant country for the first time. Since Edward was only nine, his uncle, the Duke of Somerset, got himself declared Lord Protector of the Realm. Somerset was rash and hasty in religious, political and social matters. He tried to push England into Puritanism before she was fully prepared to accept the change. He abolished the Mass and the use of Latin in church services. He sent commissioners round the country to pull down images in churches and to destroy the pictures on the walls. Even as the people were reeling under the shock of having to abandon a form of service they were accustomed to for generations, another blow was dealt. The old guilds were closed and all their property was confiscated by an act. The guilds played an important role in the lives of the poor. They were a source of entertainment—organising miracle plays and festivities—and also a source of solace when a guildsman was sick or suffered loss. The sudden closure of the guilds angered the masses.

After Edward VI, **Mary** ascended the throne. Her main object was to restore the Catholic Church to its full medieval power. She ardently wished to revive the Catholic religion and reunite England with Rome. Mary repealed the Act of Supremacy and the rest of the anti-papal laws of Henry VIII. Many Protestants were persecuted and burnt at the stake. Many of them died a martyr's death. The determination which took them to an agonising death by fire, rather than renouncing their faith, made the Protestant cause fiercely

popular. Mary hoped by her persecution to convert England, and she did much to convert it—but it was to the other side.

When Elizabeth succeeded her sister, the most pressing problem was religion. The past thirty years had witnessed violent changes in the Church—Henry VIII's political Reformation, Edward VI's radical Protestantism and Mary's obsessive return to Catholicism. Elizabeth herself was a Protestant and restored Protestantism in England through a diplomatic church settlement. This **Anglican Settlement** was opposed by both the Catholics and the Puritans. By the end of Elizabeth's reign there were three religious parties in England—the Anglicans who supported Elizabeth, the Catholics who rejected the Act of Supremacy, and the Puritans who wished for further Protestant reforms.

Elizabeth had to guard herself from several plots against her. Most of the plots were hatched in support of her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary too was an heir to the English throne as she was a direct descendant from Henry VII. What made her case stronger among Catholics was the fact that she was a Catholic and was banished from Protestant Scotland. Elizabeth put up with Mary and her plots for almost twenty years before finally beheading her.

The Elizabethan age was filled with enthusiasm and a zest for life. A broad view of the society in the age of Queen Elizabeth reveals a young and vigorous people emerging from the Middle Ages into the intense life of the Renaissance. They were uninhibited, proud and self-confident. They revelled in a sense of success and achievement arising from good government. The Elizabethans were filled with a sense of patriotism due to the defeat of the **Spanish Armada**. King Philip II of Spain built a powerful fleet of warships called the *Armada* to conquer England. In 1588, the English fleet, led by Admiral Lord Howard of Effingham, defeated the seemingly invincible Spanish fleet.

The Elizabethans were eager not only to climb the social ladder but also to respond to intellectual and artistic impulses. It was an age of superb writing in prose and verse. The upper classes were better educated than they had ever been before. The introduction of the **printing press** was vastly responsible for the growing interest in literature.

Some of the men of that period were highly versatile. For example, **Sir Walter Raleigh** was a courtier, soldier, sailor, discoverer, coloniser, poet and a writer of prose. **Sir Francis Drake** was another outstanding personality of the age. He successfully navigated around the world from 1577 to 1580.

The Elizabethans were more interested in the pursuit of physical pleasure like wealth, knowledge and adventure than of the spiritual. They had a childlike joy in possessing fine clothes and trinkets. They dressed in bright colours, and loved shows, parades and plays. Dancing around the maypole and singing were the other popular activities of that age. Bear baiting, cock fighting, and hunting were the hobbies of the men.

There were several reasons for the vitality and exuberance of the Elizabethans. The full impact of the Renaissance was felt in England at that time. The earlier part of the sixteenth century was devoted to the new learning and the theological debates. As the century progressed, intellectuals began focusing on **humanism** which was the study of ancient Greek and Roman literature. The humanist's view of life was in stark contrast to that of the medieval thinker. According to the medieval scholar, life on earth was something to be ashamed of and despised. They viewed man as a sinful creature who should devote his entire life in trying to attain heaven after death. The humanists, on the other hand, rejected this view completely. They celebrated the human body and life on this earth.

The break with Rome, in spite of unpleasantness, brought with it freedom of religious discussion. The advances made in the world of science filled the people with a new zest for life. The **geographical discoveries** added a touch of bold adventure and romance to the already intoxicated people. It is little wonder that **Shakespeare** turned out so many plays of such great variety and splendour. Theatre-going was the rage of the time. The new upsurge of interest in the individual rather than in the Church or any other group led to an outburst of lyrical verse.

English society was made up of the nobility, the gentry and the yeomen. The nobility consisted of eminent and wealthy people with an ancient lineage. A nobleman could be asked to perform high public functions without remuneration. They owned town houses in London and added splendour to the court. They lived in a grand style with elaborate households, fine

furniture and exquisite clothes.

Next to the nobility came the gentry. The gentry, as a class, played a more vital role than the nobles in the Elizabethan period. These country gentlemen were becoming powerful and wealthy due to the land of the monasteries. They acted as Justices of Peace and controlled the rural administration of England. They were very friendly with the lawyers and merchants of the town. They formed a part of the House of Commons and generally set the pattern of social behaviour.

The gentry was a very fluid class. Younger sons of the nobility and some rich yeomen could also belong to this category. There were some who fell upon evil days and were forced to sell their property. Essentially, the country gentleman was a landlord who lived upon rents, and who knew something about crops, soil, agriculture and orchards.

Sir Philip Sidney belonged to the gentry and was related to several members of the nobility. He moved freely with the nobles and lived lavishly. On the other end of the scale was the rustic squire who lived in the countryside. The squire was friendly with the tenant farmers and was fond of hunting. Some of this class were more intellectual and had libraries at home.

The Tudor gentry were great builders and some of their fine Tudor houses may still be seen. Tudor homes combined the medieval with the Renaissance, which resulted in a pleasing artistic style.

Below the gentry was the yeomen class. They were the farmers who owned their lands. Then came the tenants and the copyholders who held a permanent lease. The bottom rung was occupied by the large class of landless agricultural labourers.

There were a lot of poor people during the Elizabethan age. They were far too many to live on charity alone. So they turned to a life of crime. There were different types of con men such as the 'Abraham-men' (who pretended to be mad), 'hookers' (who stole clothes and linen through windows with hooked poles), 'clappendogens' (who pretended to be physically challenged) and 'prygmen' (who stole poultry). All these offenders were punished severely: they were sentenced to death by hanging. Other means of punishment included being put on the rack, and having hands or ears chopped

off. The prisons were in a terrible condition and often the prisoners contracted fatal diseases and died. Slowly, some places like Norwich and London devised a way of collecting 'poor rate' from the rich citizens, and utilising that money to maintain hospitals for the sick and to provide work for the healthy. This practice slowly spread across the entire country. The Great Poor Law was passed in 1601 which empowered the parish to administer the poor rate in each village or town. This gave rise to the principle that each parish was responsible for its poor and needy—a practice that continued well into the nineteenth century.

# 3

## The Renaissance

The great cultural movement that began in Italy during the early 1300s and spread all over Europe is known as the **Renaissance**. The changes that were brought about by the Renaissance were gradual and hardly affected the people. However, it influenced future generations in many areas such as art, literature, education and history.

The word ‘Renaissance’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*rinascer*’ which means the act of being reborn. It is an appropriate name for the movement since many European scholars and artists of that period turned to ancient Greek and Roman cultures. By studying the cultures of Greece and Rome, which are known as ‘classical antiquity’, they wished to revive them in their own times. The Renaissance represented a rebirth of these cultures.

The Renaissance is an important landmark in the history of the world since it marked the end of the Middle Ages. Many of the concepts and ideas of the Middle Ages were abandoned by the leaders of the Renaissance. For example, medieval thinkers believed that the most important responsibility of the people was to pray to God and to aim at saving their souls. Society was believed to be full of evil temptations. Renaissance thinkers, on the contrary, believed sincerely that the people owed a responsibility to the society in which they lived. Society was not seen as an evil temptation but as a civilising agency.

The study of theology, which was an important subject in the Middle Ages, was replaced by the study of humanity. The Renaissance thinkers spent their time studying the achievements of different cultures. They were particularly interested in the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome.

There was a revolution in the field of art also. Medieval artists painted human figures that looked stiff and artificial. Renaissance artists focused

upon the beauty of the human body. Their paintings and sculptures were lifelike.

The Renaissance began in Italy. **Petrarch** and **Boccaccio** were the first Renaissance humanists. These two scholars recovered many ancient manuscripts during the 1300s. They studied and imitated the ancient writings. Much importance was given to style. Petrarch, through his poetry, and Boccaccio, through his stories, tried to describe human feelings. They felt that understanding and dealing with human problems was more important than trying to understand the mysteries of God's will.

In the field of art also, Italy was the pioneer. During the early 1300s, the Florentine painter Giotto became the first artist to portray nature realistically. Art during the late 1400s and early 1500s was dominated by three men —**Michelangelo**, **Raphael** and **Leonardo da Vinci**. The focus of Renaissance art was on realism. They tried to make their work as lifelike as possible. Michelangelo's statue of Moses, his paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Raphael's portrait of the Madonna, and Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa* rank among the greatest achievements of Renaissance art.

During the 1400s, the Renaissance spread from Italy to the rest of Europe. Politically, some of the countries of Europe were undergoing changes. By the late 1400s, England was being united into a nation under the monarchs of the House of Tudors. The Tudors who ruled from 1485 to 1603 were the most important patrons of the Renaissance. Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch invited many Italian humanists to his court. These men influenced English scholars. The study of ancient Greek and Roman literature became fashionable in England during this period. The writings of Greek and Latin philosophers and scientists were translated by English scholars. As a result, the Englishman of that age was familiar with the works of Aristotle and other classical authors.

The new learning promoted the growth of universities. The first universities were merely groups of teachers and students without any particular university building. The students stayed in lodgings and their lecturers lived in rented halls. Exams were conducted in the form of open discussions. There were a number of distinguished scholars in England

during the 1400s. During Henry VII's reign, **Grocyn** and **Linacre** taught Greek at Oxford and **Colet** lectured on the Greek Testament. Colet founded St Paul's Grammar School, the first school in England that was completely devoted to the study of classical literature. William Lily was its first headmaster and his book on Latin grammar continued to be the standard textbook for the next two hundred years. Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, was herself a patroness of the New Learning. She founded two Cambridge colleges—Christ's and St John's. **Erasmus** was another great scholar who taught at Cambridge and inspired Latimer and Fisher with his ideas. **Thomas More**, in his book *Utopia*, described the ideal land. More was far ahead of his time in his ideas and principles.

Two other notable men, the **Earl of Surrey** and **Thomas Wyatt**, had travelled to Italy and brought back the sonnet form of poetry which had flourished since Petrarch's time. After Chaucer, poetry had languished in England. But with Surrey and Wyatt, the tradition was renewed again, such that during Elizabeth's reign, England became 'a nest of singing birds'. The sonnet became very fashionable and great masters like **Spenser**, **Sidney** and **Shakespeare** wrote several poems in this form.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 had far-reaching effects. There was a regular exodus of Greek scholars who were welcomed all over Europe. They infused an interest in the ancient classics. Enthusiasm for learning was therefore characteristic of the Renaissance.

The Renaissance period, filled with its love for education, gave rise to an interest in science. In the Middle Ages, people meekly accepted the scientific theories of the ancients. For centuries, hardly any scientific discoveries were made. Modern science began its history with the Renaissance. Some of the important inventions which contributed to the spread of the Renaissance were the printing press, invented by **John Gutenberg**, the mariner's compass and the telescope. While the printing press made books freely available, the mariner's compass encouraged sea travel. The first printing press was set up in England by **William Caxton**. It was established at Westminster in 1476. The greatest shock to medieval notions of the universe was given by **Nicolaus Copernicus**. For two thousand years, mankind had believed that the earth was the centre of the universe. Copernicus proved that the sun was

the centre around which the earth and other planets revolved. This new idea and the invention of the telescope encouraged the study of astronomy.

In the field of geographical discovery, no other age in the history of the world had made so much progress. **Christopher Columbus** discovered America; **Vasco da Gama** found the sea route to India via the Cape of Good Hope; and **Ferdinand Magellan** was the first to sail around the world. Some of the well-known British mariners were **Sir John Hawkins**, **Sir Francis Drake** and **Sir Walter Raleigh**.

The spirit of enquiry that resulted due to the New Learning of the Renaissance inspired people to question old values. This acted as a disturbing force in the realm of religion. People of the medieval age unquestioningly accepted the authority of the Catholic Church. This submissive attitude was replaced by that of an enquiring generation that was shocked by the moral decay of the Church and of the pope. Scholars like Colet and Erasmus tried to apply humanistic methods to the study of Christianity. Others like Luther rejected the authority of the Church of Rome. This resulted in the religious revolution in Europe known as the **Reformation**.

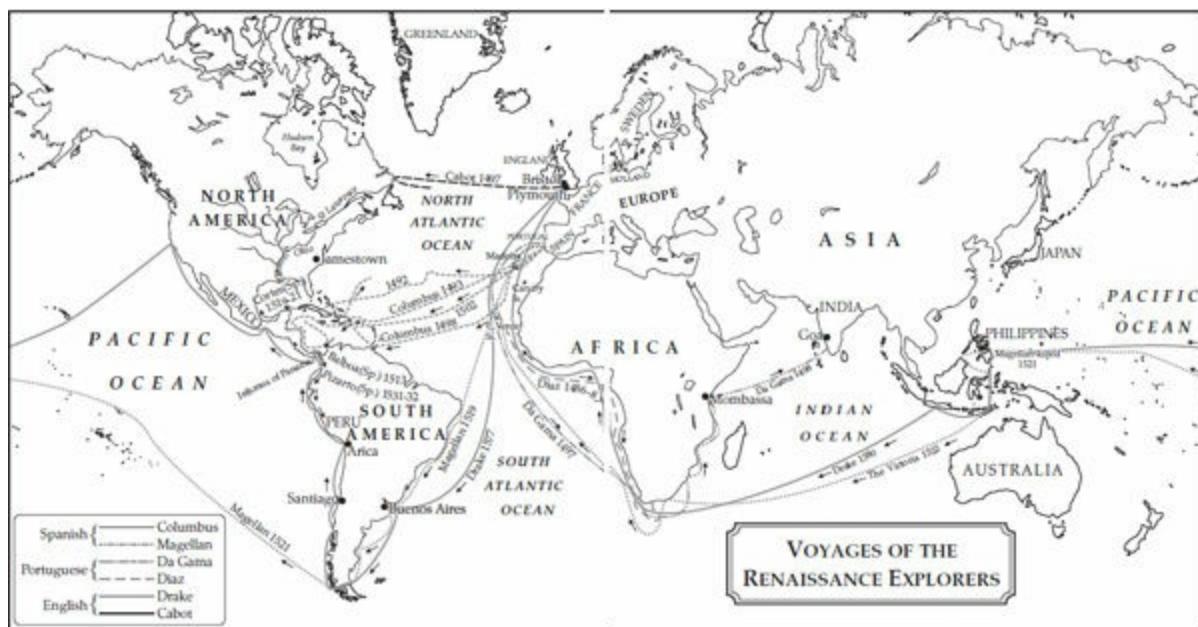
The economic conditions of England experienced tremendous change. The population increased, causing old villages to expand. Many new villages sprang up, and boroughs and towns expanded. Industry received a boost due to the large quantities of coal, tin and iron which were mined. The discovery of new sea routes brought countries closer. As a result, sea traffic developed, and with it, trade and commerce.

Society during the Renaissance was sharply distinguished into two classes—the very wealthy and the very poor. Farmers were very wealthy and the nobles and barons possessed huge estates. They lived in a lavish style in huge palaces. The feudal system was in practice. According to this, the king was at the top and below him were the barons and nobles. On the next rung were the tenants. The barons could raise an army whenever the king ordered it. The poor had no rights of their own. They were protected by the lord for whom they worked.

The men of the Renaissance lived life to the full. They enjoyed several outdoor activities and sports. The favourite hobbies of the men were hunting,

snaring and trapping. The poaching of deer was very common. They also loved horses and dogs and spent much time with them. **Theatre-going** was another fashion of the age.

The impact of the Renaissance has been remarkable. For hundreds of years, artists, sculptors and writers have tried to reach the heights achieved by the men of the Renaissance, but in vain. Renaissance figures like Petrarch, Boccaccio, da Vinci and Michelangelo have set such high standards that they remain celebrated to this day. In almost every sphere of life—intellectual, scientific and artistic—the Renaissance is a period of tremendous achievement. To ‘drink Life to the lees’ seemed to be the motto of the Renaissance men.



## The Reformation and the Counter Reformation

The religious movement that led to Protestantism is known as the **Reformation**. The Reformation brought about great changes in the social, political and economic life of the people of Europe. This revolution, which tore the Church of Rome apart, has shaped the course of English history from the 1500s to the present.

The movement began in 1517 when **Martin Luther**, a German monk, criticised certain practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church, with its headquarters in Rome, was one of the oldest continuous religious institutions in the world. The Catholic religion is based on the faith that it was founded by Jesus Christ and that its bishops are the descendants of his apostles. The pope is believed to be the successor of St Peter and is therefore a symbol of holiness. Other principles of the Catholic Church include the **Eucharist** (the consecrated bread and wine which, according to the faith, become the body and blood of Christ during Mass), **purgatory** (a process of purification before souls can enter heaven) and **indulgence** (the full or partial reduction of earthly punishment, granted by the Church after the sinner has confessed and received absolution or forgiveness).

In the later Middle Ages, the church deviated from its ideals and possessed many weaknesses. Among its many corruptions was the indiscriminate sale of indulgences. Luther was revolted by the abuse of the practice, and he wrote out ninety-five points attacking the abuse. He nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the church door at Wittenberg. This proved to be one of the main catalysts of the Reformation. Luther believed that people could be saved solely through faith in Jesus Christ, and not through human effort or good works as held by the Catholic Church. He was excommunicated by Pope Leo X, but **Lutheranism** soon became popular. After the Reformation, Europe had several large Protestant churches and some smaller Protestant religious

groups. An important one among them was **Calvinism**, founded by John Calvin of France. Calvin firmly believed that the final authority in the state was not the prince (as with Luther) but the community, ruled by elders or 'Presbyters'. His followers in Scotland, in England, and later in America, were known as **Presbyterians** and **Puritans**.

Though Lutheranism had spread in Germany, no powerful state had put Luther's views into practice by rejecting the authority of the pope. It was England which first took this momentous step. As a result, the English Reformation is seen as an event of paramount importance all over Europe.

English scholars were as enthusiastic as the Germans in seeking the New Learning. Yet they could make little progress in the real task of reform by themselves. Only Henry VIII or **Cardinal Wolsey** (Henry's powerful chief minister) was in a position to start the action in England. But Henry VIII had no quarrel with the pope. On the contrary, he heartily condemned Luther and even wrote a book against him. For this Pope Leo X gave Henry the title of '**Defender of the Faith**'.

However it was Henry VIII who was ultimately responsible for the English Reformation. The immediate cause of the quarrel with the pope was Henry's desire to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon. Henry VIII was very eager to marry Anne Boleyn with whom he had fallen in love. But Pope Clement VII refused to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine. The most the pope would do was to order the case to be tried before a court which included Cardinal Wolsey as the pope's representative in England. The court adjourned without coming to a decision. An enraged Henry directed his wrath on Wolsey and dismissed him. Next, the king summoned a Parliament known as the **Reformation Parliament**. It proceeded at once to carry out the king's policy towards the Church. A number of decisions were taken to curb the pope's power over the English Church. Henry then decided to proceed without the pope and got married secretly to Anne Boleyn in 1533. It must be noted that in all his attacks on the Church, Henry was only aiming at destroying papal power in England. He never attacked Roman Catholic doctrine. On the contrary, he insisted on his subjects observing it.

Two important acts passed by the Reformation Parliament were the **Act of Succession** and the **Act of Supremacy**. The Act of Supremacy declared that

the king was the supreme head of the Church of England. Englishmen were instructed to refer to the pope as ‘the Bishop of Rome’. According to the Act of Succession, the children born of Henry and Anne Boleyn were heirs to the throne. Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher, who refused to recognise these Acts, were charged with high treason and executed.

The Reformation Parliament further ordered the closure of the smaller monasteries. The monasteries were in decay in the early sixteenth century. One by one, all the monasteries were dissolved and their property was taken over by the Crown. At that time, the monasteries owned a quarter of England’s land and their annual income was greater than that of even the king.

With the **dissolution of the monasteries** an important form of religious life ceased to exist. Monks and nuns disappeared from the English scene. Their absence made the transition to Protestantism easier during Edward VI’s time, for the monks were the chief representatives of the Catholic Church. **Thomas Cromwell**, a new minister who gained power during this period, aided Henry in plundering the monasteries.

Most of England remained mute witnesses to the dissolution of the monasteries. In Catholic Yorkshire, however, an army of disgruntled people, calling themselves the ‘**Pilgrimage of Grace for the Commonwealth**’, marched under the leadership of **Robert Aske**. Aske was invited to see the king. An enraged Henry promised to look into the Pilgrims’ demands, but the moment Aske disbanded his forces, the king went back on his word and rounded the leaders who were immediately executed. The failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace quickened the closure of even the larger monasteries.

The Reformation in England at this juncture was only a political one where the king became the supreme head of the Church. In fact, Henry’s Parliament passed the **Statute of the Six Articles** in 1539, according to which Catholic beliefs and worship were made compulsory. Anyone who disobeyed these articles was severely punished and Protestants referred to this act as the ‘whip with six strings’. The dogma and the ritual of the Church therefore remained virtually unchanged. But the Church could not continue in this condition without the intrusion of Protestant doctrine for long.

It was during the reign of **Edward VI** that the Church of England became definitely Protestant. Henry's break with Rome was the first step towards Protestantism, but during his time he prevented the introduction of Protestant doctrine. Alterations in religion came rapidly in Edward VI's reign. As David Harris Wilson put it, 'The Church *in* England was becoming the Church *of* England'. This was due to a number of reasons: the restraints imposed by Henry were removed; an English Bible was introduced which paved the way for individual interpretation; continental reformers brought variations of continental Protestant thought into the country; and finally, there were political advantages to England adopting Protestantism. The Catholic form of worship was strictly banned in England. The Parliament met and the first **Act of Uniformity** was passed. By this act, a Common Prayer Book in English was introduced and made compulsory. Priests were permitted to marry. The Bible was accepted as the sole repository of religious truth. The Church of England became more radically Protestant than at any other time in its history.

When **Mary** ascended the throne, there was a swing back to the Catholic religion. This sudden change of direction checked the headlong rush towards Protestantism. She revoked the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy and reintroduced Catholicism with a vengeance. She gave the people a choice to either 'turn or burn'. The Marian persecutions began with the burning of John Rogers, the editor of a Protestant Bible. Soon Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer followed a similar fate. **Hugh Latimer** was a devout Protestant who had questioned Henry VIII for not following Protestant customs in the Church of England. He had enjoyed a period of popularity during Edward VI's time but became the target of Queen Mary's wrath. **Nicholas Ridley** had been a part of the committee that had drafted the first Prayer Book that was introduced and made compulsory during Edward VI's reign. **Thomas Cranmer** was the Archbishop of Canterbury who had supported Henry VIII when he wished to divorce Catherine of Aragon, Mary's mother. Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer are known as the **Oxford Martyrs**, and the place of their execution in Oxford was commemorated by Queen Victoria in 1843 as the *Martyrs' Memorial*. Mary's 'holy bonfires' however had the opposite effect. Several gruesome incidents were reported, such as the one about a man who continued to sing the Psalms until his lips were burnt away, and about a mother who delivered

her child even as she burnt and who lived long enough to witness the baby being thrown into the fire—these filled the people's hearts with a new passion. Famous last words like Latimer's to Ridley, 'We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out', were a great inspiration to the Protestant cause. This implanted in the English people a deep rooted suspicion of Rome which was to last for centuries. All this prepared the way for the religious compromise of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Religion was a vital question when **Elizabeth** ascended the throne. Within a short span of hardly thirty years, the country had experienced three religious settlements: the Anglo-Catholicism of Henry, the radical Protestantism of Edward, and the return to Roman Catholicism under Mary. Elizabeth chose to be Protestant and brought about the *Anglican Settlement*. She restored the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, but with alterations. The queen now called herself the 'Supreme Governor' of the Church and not the 'Supreme Head'. This change of title was a concession to Catholics. The new Act of Uniformity introduced a modified **Prayer Book** all over the nation. The queen made the transition to Protestantism with relative ease. The national religion of England, which is **Anglicanism**, dates from the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's Church was attacked by a sect called the **Puritans**. They were English Protestants who had fled England during Queen Mary's reign. Living on the continent, they were strongly influenced by **John Calvin** and returned to England as radicals during Elizabeth's reign. The Puritans disapproved of the compromise in Elizabeth's Church. Elizabeth was highly irritated by the Puritans and appointed **John Whitgift** as the Archbishop of Canterbury. He hated the Puritans and managed to silence them through imprisonment and execution.

The English Reformation was complete during the reign of Queen Elizabeth in the sense that the Church broke off from Rome and became Protestant. It was known henceforth as the **Anglican Church**. Under the able guidance of Elizabeth, there was peace and prosperity in England.

## Counter Reformation

The **Counter Reformation** is the name generally given to the sustained and intense effort by the Catholic Church to set right the lapses in their religion. Its chief aim was to arrest the spread of Protestantism and to revive the Catholic Church that had earned so much disrepute during the Reformation movement.

There were two important aspects of the Counter Reformation. One was an attempt to combat Protestantism, taken up by a series of enthusiastic popes. The other was the Jesuit order, which educated and trained priests to propagate the Catholic religion among the people.

Drastic reforms in the discipline of the church were brought about. Men like Pope Pius V and Pope Sixtus V were very different from the luxury-loving popes of the Renaissance. These popes stopped paying attention to art, literature and temporal power, and instead concentrated on improving the Church. A Church Council known as the **Council of Trent** was formed, and, during its various sittings between 1545–63, Catholic doctrine was more sharply defined and the need for reform was recognised. The aim of the Council was to counter Protestant teachings. The Council declared that scriptures and traditions were equally valid. Traditions included the writings of the apostles, the decrees of popes and councils, and the customs of the Catholic Church. It rejected Protestant views on salvation and sin. The Council reaffirmed Catholic practices such as transubstantiation and the sale of indulgences. It also recognised prayers to saints and defined the sacrifice of the Mass. Pope Pius IV confirmed all the recommendations of the Council in 1564 and they became part of Catholic doctrine.

Some countries like Spain and Italy, which had strong Catholic rulers, introduced the **Inquisition**. This was an ecclesiastical court which tried to stamp out heresy. Philip of Spain was the strongest of Catholic rulers and he became the temporal head of the Counter Reformation.

In the early 1500s, a serious attempt was made by Catholics to strengthen their religion. **Ignatius Loyola** founded the Society of Jesus in 1534. Its members were known as **Jesuits**. The Jesuits were the vanguard of the Catholic crusade against heretics and infidels. They had an elaborate system of education which trained them to practise selflessness and complete devotion to the Church. They acted as missionaries to spread the teachings of

the Catholic Church. There had been no such enthusiastic teachers and preachers since the days of St Dominic. The Jesuits founded several colleges all over Europe.

Through a reformed papacy and Church, and through the missionary zeal of the Jesuits, the Catholics tried to fight the disgrace brought by the Reformation movement and revive the ancient glory of the Church of Rome.

# 5

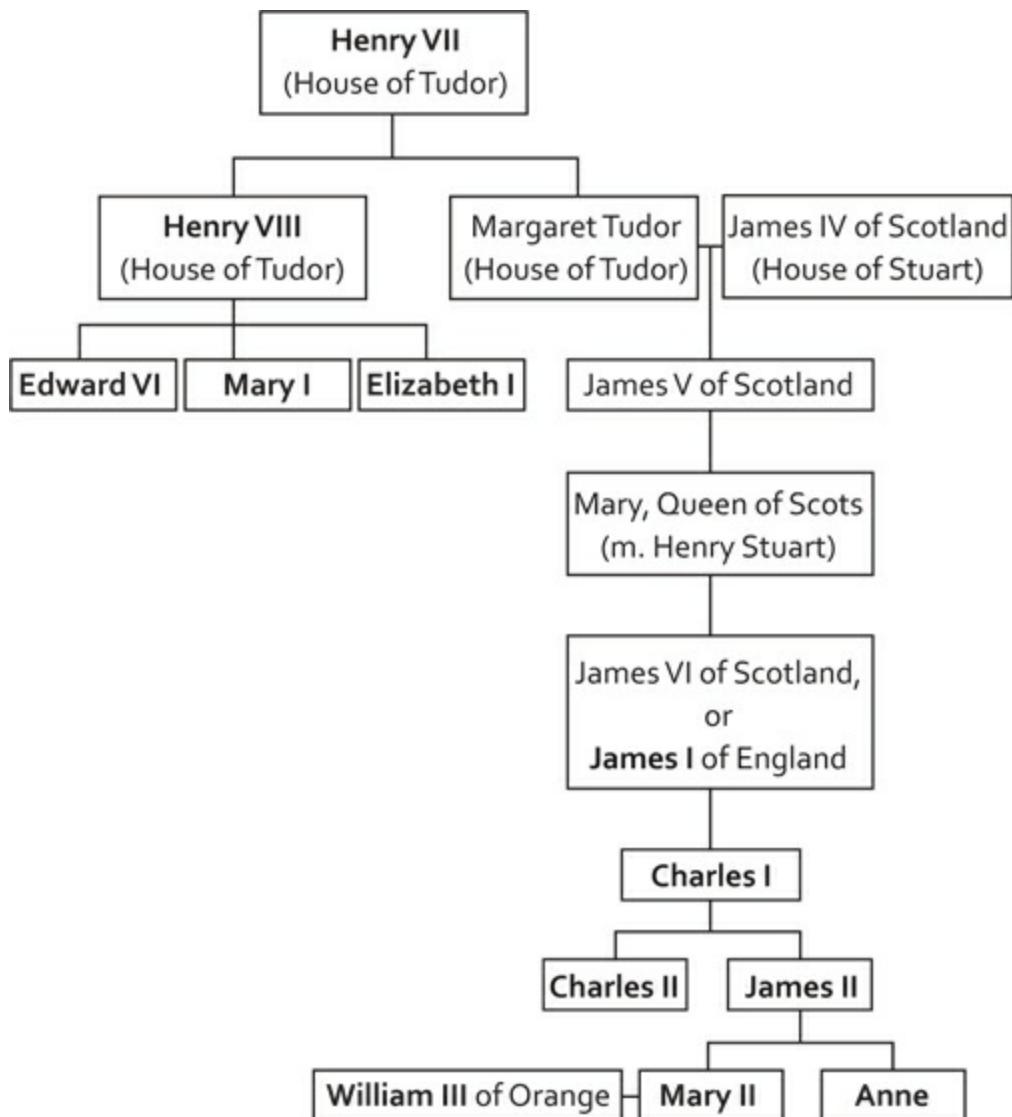
## **The Stuart Age (1603 to 1649, 1660 to 1714)**

James I	1603– 1625
Charles I	1625– 1649
The Commonwealth	1649– 1653
The Protectorate	1653– 1659
Charles II	1660– 1685
James II	1685– 1688
Mary II and William III	1689– 1694
William III	1689– 1702
Anne	1702– 1714

Under the stable rule of the Tudors the people learnt that loyalty to the Crown was the greatest of virtues and disloyalty the worst of crimes. Yet, ironically, a mere forty years after Queen Elizabeth died, there was a bloody civil war in

England in which the people executed their king. What were the causes of this dramatic reversal? On one hand, the Stuarts were inept rulers, and on the other, Elizabeth bequeathed to them a lot of problems along with the throne. Her religious settlement left the Catholics and the Puritans dissatisfied. Parliament had become more aggressive and difficult to manage. Public finance was also in an unstable condition.

## THE HOUSE OF STUART



James VI of Scotland became **James I** of England. He was the great

grandson of Henry VII's daughter. When he ascended the throne, he called himself the 'King of Great Britain'. He has been described as the most learned man who has ever occupied the British throne. At the same time, he was conceited and enjoyed being called the 'Solomon of England'.

The Roman Catholics in England hoped for much from a son of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. As soon as he became king, James was inclined to be tolerant and waived the fine that Roman Catholics had to pay for not going to their Anglican parish churches. Encouraged by this move, hundreds of Catholic priests from abroad came to England and James was forced to re-introduce the fines. This prompted the **Gunpowder Plot** of 1605. Robert Catesby and several others planned to blow up the houses of Parliament so that the king and the members of the Houses of Lords and Commons would perish. The plot was discovered and one of the conspirators, **Guy Fawkes** was captured. The result of this plot was that severe laws were passed against Catholics.

The Puritans, who were dissatisfied with the Anglican Settlement, expected a lot from James who had been brought up in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. They presented the 'Millenary Petition' signed by one thousand Puritan clergymen. James did not want Puritanism to spread in England. He strongly believed in the phrase 'No bishop, no king'. He therefore called a conference of Anglican and Puritan clergymen at Hampton Court and made his position clear to the Puritans. It was during the reign of James I that the rift between the Puritans and the House of Stuart began. Many of them decided to flee to Holland and later sailed in the *Mayflower* to America. The only good outcome of the Hampton Court Conference was the translation of the Bible. The king appointed a committee to carry out this task and thus the **Authorised Version** was published in 1611.

James firmly believed in the **divine right of kings** (the belief that kings were appointed by God and were answerable to none but God). He expected to find a quiet and submissive Parliament, but was disappointed. The House of Commons exhibited an independent temper which clearly indicated that the nation would not tolerate any high-handed ruling on the part of the king and his ministers. Apart from this, there were many Puritans in the House of Commons who were ready to oppose the king. There were several clashes of

opinion regarding the powers of the monarchy. The ‘divine right’ theory was questioned. The Parliament felt that the king could not raise money without their consent and could not imprison people without trial. The king’s party held equally strong opinions regarding the powers of kingship.

By the time James died, the situation in England was explosive. Into this tense scene, **Charles I** stepped in. He was brought up to believe in the theory of the divine right of kings. He could not understand the moral force of Puritanism or the aspirations of the Commons. In his mind, the Church of England was the only possible church and monarchy by divine right the only possible government. It is hardly surprising that soon a civil war broke out.

Charles had married a Catholic, the sister of Louis XIII of France, and this was resented by the Puritans. To make matters worse, the queen interfered in all political matters. Charles called three Parliaments in four years and quarrelled with each one of them. The parliamentarians presented the **Petition of Rights** in 1628 to the king. In it, they demanded that taxes could not be collected without the consensus of the Parliament and that there should be no imprisonment without a trial. They also condemned the practice of lodging troops in private houses and the enforcing of military laws on civilians. Charles was forced to accept the petition.

The next problem Charles had to encounter was the issue of religion. Charles loved the Anglican Church. **William Laud**, the Archbishop of Canterbury, too, loved the ceremonies of the Anglican Church. Charles did not wish to entertain any recommendations for change in the practices of the Church. There were several **dissenters** (those who broke away from the established church), like the Puritans and the Quakers, who wished to worship in a different manner. **Quakerism** was founded in England in the 1600s by George Fox. According to Fox, the ‘Inner Light of Christ’ dwells in every heart and those who followed that Light were truly spiritual. The word ‘Quaker’ was first used as a derogatory term by a judge who called Fox a ‘quaker’ when the former was asked by him to ‘tremble at the Word of the Lord’.

Troubles from the Parliament forced Charles to dismiss it, and, for the next eleven years, he ruled without the Parliament. Finally, a war with Scotland and the need for money forced him to summon the **Long Parliament**, which

was to sit for thirteen long years and completely change the course of English history. The Long Parliament went about severely restricting the powers of the king. A Triennial Act allowed regular meetings of Parliament with or without Charles's permission. 'Ship money' (a tax paid by ports for the upkeep of the navy) and other illegal taxes were abolished. The Star Chamber and other royal courts were also abolished. The power passed effectively from the king to the Parliament.

The increasing tension between the king and the Parliament led to a bloody civil war which eventually broke out in 1642. The nobles, gentry and the king were on one side, and were known as the **Royalists**. The majority of the townsmen and yeomen fought for the Parliament, and were known as the **Roundheads**. The Roundheads were led by **Oliver Cromwell** and, after three years of severe fighting, they emerged victorious.

The defeated king sought the help of the Scots to restore him to the throne. A second civil war followed in 1648 but was soon put down by the English army. The people were very angry with the king for conspiring with the Scots. Charles I was tried and found guilty of treason. He was executed in January 1649. With the execution of Charles I, the Stuart rule came to an abrupt end. The Stuarts came back again after eleven years when the monarchy was restored.

After the English Civil War, England was known as a **Commonwealth** or Republic. England was ruled by the **Rump Parliament**. This was the name given to the English Parliament during the civil war. There was a difference of opinion among the members of the Long Parliament over the issue of the trial of Charles. Forty-seven members, who opposed the trial, were arrested on the order of Colonel Thomas Pride. This event was known as **Pride's Purge**. The remaining members of the Parliament were known as the Rump Parliament because they were the 'rump' or the end of the larger body. The Commonwealth faced the hatred of the Royalists and the Presbyterians. Cromwell found the reforms made by the Rump Parliament too slow for his taste. With the aid of his soldiers, he disbanded the Rump Parliament in 1653. With this, the Long Parliament, which had fought a civil war and beheaded a king, came to an end.

The government was then known as the **Protectorate** with Oliver

Cromwell as the **Lord Protector**. There then began what in modern times would be called a dictatorship. Cromwell was the head of the state, and he ruled England for the next six years with the help of the army. Acts were passed against swearing, duelling, horse racing, cock fighting, and bear baiting. The Sabbath was enforced strictly. Theatres were closed. In spite of these attempts at enforced virtuousness, there was much to admire in Cromwell. He saved England from anarchy and raised it from the low position it had reached during the time of the Stuarts. Colonial expansion received a new lease from Cromwell.

After Cromwell died, things changed quickly. Oliver Cromwell's son, Richard, was unsuited to the task of ruling a nation that was in a state of unrest. The army and the Parliament quarrelled. In the meantime, the people grew disillusioned with the new government and wished to return to the old order—king, Lords and Commons. **Charles II**, the son of Charles I, was invited to return to England, and the monarchy was reinstated as the Stuarts came back to power.

When Charles II came back in 1660, there was a restoration not only of the monarchy, but also a restoration of the bishops, of the Prayer Book, and of the Anglican Church. Socially, the nobles and the gentry were restored to their original place. For a generation after the **Restoration**, the Puritans were often bitterly persecuted. The relaxing of the strict moral code led to licentiousness and corruption in the Court.

After Charles II died in 1685, his brother ascended the throne as **James II**. James was a Roman Catholic who was keen on restoring Catholicism and absolute monarchy. The people were not happy, but tolerated him for the sake of peace. They expected his Protestant daughter Mary to become queen after him. But when James had a son, the people realised that Catholicism had come to stay. Therefore many people demanded James's abdication and invited Mary's husband, William of Orange, to invade England. As soon as William landed on English territory, James fled to France and gave up his throne. This was known as the **Glorious Revolution**.

**William and Mary** ruled England jointly from 1689. They accepted the **Bill of Rights** which assured certain basic rights to the people. It also declared that it was illegal for a king (or queen) of England to keep a standing

army, to levy taxes without the approval of the Parliament, or to be a Roman Catholic. A group of people known as the **Jacobites** opposed the deposition of James II and wished to restore the Stuart kings to the throne. The Jacobites formed a strong political movement. The movement took its name from the Latin form *Jacobus* of the name James. The son of the deposed James II, James Francis Edward Stuart, was disparagingly called the **Old Pretender**. Following his death, his son, Charles Edward Stuart, became the next claimant to the throne, and he was referred to as the **Young Pretender**.

It was during the reign of William and Mary that the **Bank of England** was founded. A Scotsman called **William Paterson** first mooted the idea of a bank which would loan money to the government in return for regular interest payments guaranteed by Parliament. Forty years after its foundation, it was moved to Threadneedle Street, where it has remained to date. The Bank of England is affectionately referred to as 'the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street'.

William and Mary ruled jointly till Mary's death in 1694, after which William reigned as sole ruler till he died in 1702. Fort William in Calcutta was named after him. After William, Mary's younger sister Anne became queen. Queen Anne was the last of the Stuarts.

# 6

## Puritanism

Puritanism was a religious movement that began in England in the 1500s and 1600s and spread to America. After the Reformation, some extreme Protestants were not satisfied with the changes brought about during the reigns of King Henry VIII, Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth. They were called 'Puritans' by other Protestants, because of their proposals to 'purify' the church. The age of Puritanism may be roughly defined as the century following the Reformation. It extended from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to 1660.

The Puritans patterned their lives on the teachings of the religious reformers John Wycliffe and John Calvin. They believed that the Bible represented the true law of God and they wished to shape their lives and the Church on the ideals represented in the Bible. They were against episcopacy or the rule of the bishops. Instead they wanted the Church to be managed by a group of 'presbyters' or elders. They were against rituals and wanted a more personal form of prayer. The Puritans were strict disciplinarians who stressed on grace, devotion, prayer and self-examination. Austerity was the keynote of their lives. They disliked ornaments and grand dresses.

As early as the 1520s, English Protestant leaders demanded reforms that were later to be called 'Puritan'. The Bible was translated into English by William Tyndale about that time. Later, Latimer also raised protests to purify the Church. They influenced people to believe that the Bible governed all human affairs.

The Puritans, accepting Calvin's teachings, challenged Elizabeth's religious settlement and were highly critical of her Church. They were resentful of the Tudor doctrine that every member of the state was automatically a member of the state church. They hated to see the Church being reduced to a political body. The Church, to them, was an independent

body of believers with no earthly head. God was the supreme power and Christ was his mediator. They disliked the element of compromise in Elizabeth's Church. The Puritans found a leader in **Thomas Cartwright**. He gave the Puritans a battle cry: 'the bishops must be unlorded'. Other Puritan leaders were **Robert Browne** and **Henry Barrow**. Elizabeth was highly irritated by the Puritans. She described the new ideas as 'new-fangledness' and appointed **Grindal** as the Archbishop of Canterbury to control the Puritans. He refused to comply with the queen, so he was replaced by **John Whitgift**. Whitgift, who hated the Puritans, forced the clergy to accept the Anglican Church. All those who did not were suspended. Puritan leaders were imprisoned and a few were executed.

During the 1600s, the Puritans increasingly opposed the political and religious policies of the Stuart rulers. James I was presented with the 'Millenary Petition' which was supposed to have been signed by a thousand clergymen. They wanted Puritan practices to be tolerated. James called the Hampton Court Conference to settle disagreements within the Church. James, who was afraid of the spread of Puritanism in England, refused to bring about the reforms the Puritans sought. Many disillusioned Puritans fled to Holland and from there sailed to the New World in a ship called the *Mayflower*. They were known as the **Pilgrim Fathers**. Thus, during the Stuart era, Puritanism spread to America.

Charles I became the king after his father. He was very unpopular with the Puritans due to his marriage with a Roman Catholic. His partiality to Anglican churchmen and the fact that the anti-Catholic laws were not enforced whereas the anti-Puritan ones were strictly enforced made the Puritans dislike Charles. He became even more unpopular after he made William Laud the Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud put down the Puritans with a firm hand. Thousands of Puritans immigrated to America to escape his tyranny.

Meanwhile the king was having several problems with the Parliament regarding finance and religion. John Pym was the leader of the Commons. By 1641, the situation became very dangerous with the king and the Cavaliers on one side and Pym and the Puritans on the other. In 1642, civil war finally broke out. During the course of the war, Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan, rose to

eminence. With the **New Model Army**, the parliamentary forces won a complete victory in 1646.

The Puritans took control of the government in 1649. Cromwell became the head of the state and his rule rested on the army. Although he personally believed in religious toleration, the Puritans did not. The Parliament, which consisted primarily of Puritans, proposed to abolish toleration. So Cromwell dissolved the Parliament and proceeded to rule England with the help of the army. The Long Parliament had already closed the theatres. Various laws relating to conduct and morality were passed, and officials called 'Major Generals' were appointed to enforce them strictly. Duelling, cock fighting, horse racing and bear baiting were banned, and the Sabbath was observed strictly. There were incidents of soldiers entering houses in order to check whether there was any food cooked on Sundays. Those who broke the rules were punished or fined. Individual liberty and the right of free speech were threatened to a great degree under the Commonwealth.

Yet, for all that, there was much to admire. The Commonwealth maintained good order, and succeeded in suppressing some amusements of a highly undesirable character. The Puritans left their mark on England forever. They were known for their integrity and uprightness. Their contribution to English literature was abundant. ***Paradise Lost***, the greatest epic in English, was written by **John Milton**, a true Puritan. The greatest prose work of the period was ***The Pilgrim's Progress*** by **John Bunyan**, who derived his inspiration from a constant reading of the Bible. In spite of the above advantages, the Puritan revolution failed. After the death of Oliver Cromwell, the people preferred to go back to the old ways. There could be three reasons for the disillusionment of the people: first, the people were tired of Puritan discipline which attempted to make people good by force; secondly, they resented the military dictatorship; and finally, they were tired of revolutions and wished to return to 'the good old times'.

Although Puritanism came to an end with the restoration of the monarchy, its political aspects lived on in the policies of the Whig party in England. The religious ideas of Puritanism were revived by the Methodists in the eighteenth century.

## Colonial Expansion

The wonderful voyages of oceanic discovery in the sixteenth century are a mark of the cleavage between medieval and modern times. All over Europe, adventurous men, inspired by the Renaissance, set out across the wide oceans in search of wealth or liberty. England too joined the race, and soon became known as the 'Queen of the Seas'. She was so successful in her attempts at colonial expansion that, within a century or two, the British Empire became vast enough for it to be claimed that the sun never set on it.

The Tudors played a major role in the overseas expansion of England. The first of the Tudors, Henry VII, did much to build up a merchant navy. He encouraged an Italian seaman called **John Cabot** in his voyages. Henry ordered several fine ships to be built at his own expense. These ships were much larger than any seen in English harbours till then, and could be used in war or trade. Henry VII thus laid the foundation for England's colonial expansion.

Henry VIII continued his father's work. He inherited seven ships from his father and he increased the number to fifty-three by the end of his reign. He was an enthusiastic ship builder. Till Henry VIII's time, ships were not divided into fighting ships and merchant ships. During his reign, special ships were built exclusively for war. It was these ships that helped Queen Elizabeth to defeat the Spanish Armada. Henry VIII is known as the 'father of the Royal Navy'.

The greatest social change in Elizabethan England was the expansion of overseas enterprise. Englishmen spent a lot of their time thinking about the ocean. An extensive literature arose in the Tudor period dealing with maritime stories—strange adventures of explorers, descriptions of distant lands, and accounts of unimaginable wealth. The Englishmen were inspired by these stories and made heroes of their sailors. In this regard, the most

influential writer of the Elizabethan age was **Richard Hakluyt** who wrote a book named *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*. In it, the author narrated the deeds of English explorers and seamen. His book inspired many adventurous young men, scholars, statesmen and merchants to invest in overseas trade.

The Elizabethans never established a permanent colony in the New World. In spite of this, they were the pioneers of the movement which was to people the Atlantic Coast of North America with Englishmen. During Elizabeth's reign, three famous men were connected with colonisation—**Sir Humphrey Gilbert**, **Sir Walter Raleigh** and **Sir Richard Grenville**. Gilbert left England in 1578 to establish colonies in America, but his efforts were a failure. In 1583, after several false starts, he claimed Newfoundland for English sovereignty. On the return journey, Gilbert's ship, the *Squirrel*, was lost in a gale.

The task of planting a colony in America was carried out by Sir Walter Raleigh. With the queen's permission, he set off on a voyage to America and made a settlement off the coast of what is now North Carolina. He named the colony Virginia, in honour of Elizabeth (who was known as the 'Virgin Queen'), but it was not a success.

Further attempts at colonisation were thwarted as the war had begun with Spain. Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins led the sea battle against Spain. Before the war, Sir Francis Drake had added another feather in England's cap by sailing around the world. Drake and Hawkins inflicted heavy damage upon King Philip's fleet and destroyed the Spanish Armada. This made England the undisputed 'Queen of the Seas'.

Voyages of commercial expansion became very popular. There was an expedition to Russia by **Sir Hugh Willoughby** and Richard Chancellor. They established trade between Russia and England which continued to flourish for many years. This was followed by a search to establish a trade route to Persia. **Anthony Jenkinson** opened a new trade route through the Volga River down to the Caspian Sea, and established trade relations with Persia. England was eager to establish trade links with India. Two Englishmen, George Raymond and **James Lancaster**, sailed for the East in 1591. Raymond's ship sank in a storm, but Lancaster reached the East Indies

(southeastern Asia). This paved the way for the eastern project. The famous **East India Company** was formed in 1600, and Lancaster sailed again for the East in the following year. This venture was a great success, and he returned with plenty of pepper and spices from Java. The East India Company had begun its glorious career.

Trade connections with Africa paved the way for the establishment of British power in South Africa. Gold and slaves were the main attraction for Englishmen. As early as in 1562, Sir John Hawkins managed to capture 300 slaves from the Guinea coast.

It was during the Stuart era that England flourished and developed as an empire. There was mass migration to North America and the West Indies. In 1606, two companies were founded in Plymouth and in London to establish colonies in North America. The London Company planted a colony at Jamestown in Virginia which James I made into a Crown colony. Settlements were made along the coast of Guyana which led to colonies in the West Indies.

In 1620, the Pilgrim Fathers sailed across the Atlantic aboard the Mayflower and founded a colony named Plymouth (after the city in England from which they sailed). Ten years later, some Puritans formed the Massachusetts Bay Company and founded the city of Boston. Persecuted by Laud, large numbers of Puritans fled to New England (in America). These men harboured a deep hostility toward England which became a part of the American tradition.

The reign of Charles II was very important in the history of the American colonies. North and South Carolina were founded and named after the king. New Amsterdam was renamed New York after James, Duke of York (who later became James II of England). The colonies of New Jersey and Delaware were founded by Lord De La Warr. Pennsylvania was founded by the Quaker, William Penn.

There were many causes for the colonial expansion. These may be categorised under three headings—economic, social and religious. With the development of trade, there was a desire for products that were not available at home, such as precious metals, cotton, tobacco, sugar and spices.

Englishmen were inspired by the stories of the immense wealth of unknown lands and this desire took them across the seas.

England was becoming overpopulated. There were many beggars, and people felt that the colonies might drain off the surplus population. Another social cause was that in the New Land, all people could cross the social barriers that were so rigidly maintained in England. Anyone could become a rich landlord by merely fencing off as much land as he wished.

Persecution in the name of religion was becoming too difficult to bear. Especially at the beginning of the Stuart era, the Puritans were punished and fined in a most unreasonable manner. Therefore, they fled to the New Land in search of religious freedom.

Whatever the causes might have been, the colonial expansion of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries made England emerge as a European superpower for the next two hundred years. Apart from paving the way for England's political supremacy, colonial expansion had a great impact upon its literature too. Shakespeare and his contemporaries made several references to voyages, sailing and travelling. For example, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth*

*Night* and *The Tempest* begin with references to the sea. Sea-faring activities had captured the imagination of the people, as could be witnessed in the literature of the period. Later, during Queen Anne's age, when British overseas trade was at its zenith, there are several references to all the imported goods that were available to the people of England as seen, for example, in the famous toilet scene of Belinda in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

## **Restoration England (1660 to 1688): Social Life**

The Restoration of 1660 was a return to the ancient form of government by king, Lords and Commons. The English, fed up with the constitutional experiments of the Puritans, welcomed Charles II back to the throne. He was extremely popular because of his good looks, wit and good humour.

The term 'Restoration' refers not only to the restoration of monarchy, but also to the restoration of the Church of England and of the old social hierarchy and customs. An extreme reaction was witnessed against the strict morality of the Puritans. The Restoration period, coming as it did after eleven years of enforced morality, became synonymous with licentiousness and loose living. The court of Charles II was the centre of gaiety and colour, where wit and cleverness were valued more than wisdom and integrity.

There was evidence of the Restoration in three areas: politically, it restored the king, the Parliament and its laws in place of a military dictatorship; ecclesiastically, it restored the position of the bishop, the Prayer Book and the Anglican Church in place of Puritanism; socially, it restored the nobles and the gentry to their hereditary place as the acknowledged leaders of local and national life.

With the Restoration in 1660, monarchy was restored, but it was a very different kind of monarchy. The Restoration brought about many changes in the powers of the Crown and the Parliament. The monarch's powers were limited greatly, and those of the Parliament increased. The king was entirely dependent on the Parliament for money. He granted a general pardon to all the old Roundheads, except those who had actually taken part in the execution of Charles I. The Ironside army (Cromwell's cavalry) was paid off and dismissed. It was decided that no king could keep a standing army during peacetime.

A major political event of the period was the formation of political parties. The supporters of Charles I in the English Civil War developed into the **Tory Party**, and the **Whig Party**, formed in opposition to the Court, stood for the rights of the Parliament. **Lord Danby**, Charles II's new minister founded the Tory Party, and **Anthony Ashley-Cooper**, Earl of Shaftesbury, formed the Whig Party.

The Cavalier Parliament, which assembled in 1661, decided to restore the Anglican Church with its bishops and Prayer Book. Charles II and his chief minister, the **Earl of Clarendon**, wished to be less harsh in the persecution of the sects. But the Parliament overruled their sentiments and insisted on passing the persecuting acts known as the '**Clarendon Code**'. The first act, which was the Corporation Act, placed the government of town corporations in the hands of Anglicans. The Act of Uniformity made the use of the Prayer Book compulsory in England. The Puritans who refused to conform were punished. These two acts succeeded in deepening the rift between the Anglican Church and the dissenters. Only those who belonged to the Church of England could play an active role in the government of the country. The result was that for centuries, Anglicans ruled England and the dissenters occupied a lower rung of the social ladder. The Quaker Act banned Quaker meetings, and those who disobeyed it were imprisoned. John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was imprisoned under this act and spent twelve years in jail. Harsh steps were taken to harass the Puritans. The Roman Catholics too were kept away from all participation in local and national government.

After the Restoration, all the lands confiscated by the Commonwealth Government were returned to their previous owners. These landowners were therefore loyal to the Anglican Church. They formed the upper class and were socially united by the Church of England. The upper class ladies and gentlemen were patrons of their respective parish church. Addison's essay 'Sir Roger at Church' gives us an accurate picture of the social side of rural worship.

During the Restoration period, an extreme reaction set in against the strict morality of the Puritans. Englishmen turned with relief to all outdoor activities that were forbidden earlier. Hunting, trapping, snaring and shooting

were revived with a vengeance. Gambling and other sports were the rage of the age. In general, a holiday mood gripped the country which paved the way for the licentious nature that was characteristic of the Restoration period. Drunkenness and public brawls were very common.

The theatres that had remained closed under the Puritans were thrown open. The people, who were forced to lead a chaste life under the Puritans, went berserk when all restrictions were removed during the Restoration. The licentiousness of the age affected the theatre and society. Many of the Restoration plays were vulgar and far below the literary standards of Shakespeare and Marlowe. Restoration theatres depended upon the patronage of the royal court. The plays therefore reflected the degenerate taste of Charles's court. Heroic tragedies, melodramas and comedies of manners were popular with Restoration audiences. Wit and repartee were the two qualities cherished in writers. The technique of the theatre improved. Stage setting and drop curtains were introduced. Female parts were performed by women, and not by boys as in Elizabethan theatre. William Congreve and William Wycherley were two of the favourite dramatists of the period.

It was in the seventeenth century that the scientific spirit first touched the English people. The **Royal Society** was founded in 1662 to encourage studies in physics and mathematics. In the field of mathematics, **Isaac Newton** developed infinitesimal calculus. He also contributed to other branches of science, especially physics. His laws of motion and gravitation occupy an important place in physics even today. **Robert Boyle** gave us Boyle's Law. **Edmond Halley** did a lot of research on the movement of comets and calculated the periodicity of the famous Halley's Comet. In the area of human anatomy, **William Harvey** discovered the circulation of blood.

Another feature of the Restoration period was its strict censorship. The Cavalier Parliament passed the **Licensing Act** to prevent Puritan writings. This act was revoked after the Glorious Revolution.

Private libraries were very fashionable. Many fine country houses owned excellent libraries. Novel reading was considered to be fashionable among ladies. Writing in diaries was another favourite pastime and we have valuable records of daily life in the diaries of **John Evelyn** and **Samuel Pepys**.

The violin was introduced into England during the reign of Charles II. In architecture, we have the outstanding figure of **Sir Christopher Wren**. The Restoration affected every sphere of English life—political, religious, social and literary.

## The Great Plague of 1665

There were two great calamities in the Restoration age. One was the **Plague of London** and the other was the **Fire of London**. These calamities changed the lives and the landscapes of the English people considerably.

The Great Plague of 1665 was not the first instance of the disease in London. In fact, it was the last of a series of outbreaks. The plague or the Black Death had appeared in England suddenly in 1348. Its germs were carried by fleas on black rats that came into the country on ships from abroad. The first time it attacked the people, it was very severe as the people had no immunity against it. It is estimated that about a third to half of the contemporaries of Chaucer perished due to that epidemic. Once the bubonic plague came to England, it took root and broke out constantly in different localities. It was particularly rampant in towns and ports.

Between 1348 and 1377, there were three visitations of the plague and there was a sharp drop in population. It wiped out the monks in some monasteries, and sometimes whole villages were deserted. Right through the reigns of the Lancastrians, the Yorks and the Tudors, the plague continued to harass the people.

During the reign of the Stuarts, it became rare; but the outbursts, when they did occur, were violent. There was one outbreak in the middle of the celebrations of James I's accession. Another occurred when Charles I became king. There was a mild one in 1636. Then, after a gap of thirty years, a major plague swept the country in 1665.

In the spring of 1665, the plague appeared in London, destroying about 68,000 persons before it subsided in 1666. All those who could leave London, did so. Several houses were closed or had a red cross painted on the door to indicate that the plague was within. This was the last visitation of the bubonic plague. It may take one by surprise to know that the favourite

nursery rhyme has a very macabre meaning and origin. It originated sometime during 1665 when the great plague was at its worst. ‘Ring-a-ring o’ roses’ refers to the reddish sores that appear on the skin as a result of infection. ‘A pocket full of posies’ refers to the medicines that a victim had to take. The third line is a reference to the chills and colds which usually accompanied the disease. The death of the victim is indicated through the final line, ‘We all fall down’.

Ring-a-ring o’ roses  
A pocket full of posies  
A-tishoo! A-tishoo!  
We all fall down

## The Great Fire of 1666

The summer of 1666 had been very dry. The Great Fire raged for five days from 2–7 September. In those five days, almost half of London was destroyed. It is supposed to have begun in Pudding Lane. The first district to be destroyed was Lower Thames Street, where the houses were made chiefly of timber and plaster. It spread very rapidly as no one made an effort to stop it. Each person was more preoccupied with removing his own goods to a safer place. It destroyed the heart of the city from the Tower to Fleet Street. Westminster, the West End, and the slums of Whitechapel and Stepney were untouched. These slums might have been better off if they had been destroyed in the fire, for the terrible housing conditions there remained unaltered for centuries. St Paul’s and eighty-eight other churches were destroyed. Four hundred streets and 13,200 houses were destroyed. The people had to rebuild the city again brick by brick.

We have a graphic account of the Fire in the *Diary of Samuel Pepys*: ‘The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruin’.

The fire, however, proved a blessing in disguise as it wiped out the terrible plague for ever from London. It also gave the people an excellent opportunity to rebuild London. **Christopher Wren**, the architect, was just rising in popularity. He rebuilt St Paul’s Cathedral in the Renaissance style. It took

thirty-five years for the cathedral to be completed. He designed fifty other churches in London. He also did a lot of work at the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Houses were re-built with bricks by the merchants. Sanitation also improved in the city by the enforced rebuilding of so many ancient dwellings. London emerged with better churches, buildings and streets after the fire.

## **The Age of Queen Anne (1702 to 1714)**

The eighteenth century began with the reign of Queen Anne. It was a prosperous period which turned its back firmly on the religious fervour and political violence of the previous century. In literature, it is often compared to the glorious period of Augustus in ancient Rome and is thus known as the Augustan age. Socially, the age was very interesting as a number of new fashions were introduced.

The Anglican Church, which was threatened by James II, was safely restored by William and Mary. In Queen Anne's time, a number of religious societies were formed to strengthen religious life and practice. These societies inspired people to go to church regularly. Bible study was also revived. There were societies to control vices like drunkenness, swearing and gambling. Two societies that did much to revive Christianity were the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* and the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*. These societies were to inspire the Wesley brothers later.

There was a lot of healthy rivalry between the Anglican Church and the dissenters. The latter, who were excluded from prominent universities and schools, began several schools and academies of their own. The Anglican Church reacted by opening several 'charity schools' all over England. This was a real blessing as there were hardly any schools for the poor till then. The poor could go only to a few 'dame schools' or 'grammar schools' that were not enough.

There was fierce rivalry between the Tories and the Whigs. The Tories were the supporters of the Church of England while the Whigs favoured toleration. There was a difference of opinion between the two parties over the matter of the successor to the throne after Queen Anne. The Tories who were popular during Queen Anne's time had to withdraw to the background when

the **House of Hanover** came to power after the Stuarts. There was a close connection between politics and literature. In those days, it was forbidden to report the proceedings of Parliament, and there were no public meetings. At the same time, the two rival parties were keen to influence the country. This was done through the papers and pamphlets of literary men. Joseph Addison was a Whig and ultimately became a Secretary of State. Jonathan Swift, a Tory, wrote several pamphlets which had great political influence.

An important political event that took place during the reign of Queen Anne was the political and economic union of Scotland with England by the **Union Act of 1707**. The Scots retained their Presbyterian system and their own laws. The Scottish Parliament was abolished and instead, forty-five Scottish MPs took their seats in the British Parliament. Sixteen Scottish peers were also unwillingly admitted into the English House of Lords. On 1 May 1707, the United Kingdom of Great Britain was proclaimed.

Agriculture expanded greatly. Wheat, barley, rye and oats were cultivated. England produced so much that she was able to export large quantities of corn. There was a lot of give-and-take of agricultural products between the districts. Rivers were a popular means of transport. The roads were not in a good condition as there was no proper administrative body to maintain them. People preferred to travel by boats and there were several passenger and commercial boats. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* describes Belinda's journey to Hampton Court on a boat.

Coal mining and the cloth trade were two important industries during Anne's time. There was a heavy demand for coal since every house made use of it. The cloth merchants found a ready market in the American colonies. Still, England had a long way to go before the Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions of the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The top of the social ladder was occupied by the duke and at the lowest level was the yeoman. The squire occupied the middle position. The dukes lived a life of luxury. They received several thousand pounds a year from their rural estates. The squires had to pay heavy land taxes and they were forced to lead a hand-to-mouth existence. The yeomen formed about one-eighth of the population. Some of the yeomen were freeholders and enjoyed the benefit of voting for the Parliament. The tenant farmer neither had the

vote nor freedom. It was however difficult to distinguish between the class of freeholders and the class of tenants.

The houses that were considered stylish during Queen Anne's time were influenced by the Dutch. They were dignified but simple. Wooden panels replaced tapestry, and large glass windows took the place of Elizabethan lattices. The rooms had high ceilings and were bright. With the development of overseas trade, several imported goods were finding their way into these houses. Chinaware became a rage with the ladies. Beautiful furniture was made with mahogany that was brought from the American Indies. **Christopher Wren** and **James Gibbs** were the two great architects of the period and they gave England a unique style which was maintained throughout the eighteenth century.

Education was rooted deeply in the study of the classics and the classical languages. The upper and middle classes sent their children to grammar schools and public schools. Flogging was common with schoolmasters, to help them to teach as well as to maintain discipline. Women's education was not considered to be important. A girl's place was the home and she learnt the art of housekeeping from her mother. Women learnt just enough to enable them to write and read letters.

During Queen Anne's time, marriages were arranged by parents. At the same time, there were several runaway marriages. One interesting fact is the near total absence of divorce. In the twelve years of Queen Anne's reign, there were only six recorded divorces.

The gentlemen and ladies of Queen Anne's age led a life of luxury and leisure. They enjoyed playing cards and gambling. Gentlemen of all classes were addicted to drinking heavily. Smoking tobacco in long and ornamental pipes was considered to be fashionable with the men. Most country houses had smoking parlours for the purpose. Taking snuff was yet another habit of the age and men carried their snuff in boxes made of amber or silver. Duelling was common among gentlemen and most disputes were settled with a duel. This was a harmful social evil, since a duel ended with the death of one of the two men.

Outdoor activities like cock fighting, horse racing, horse riding, fishing,

shooting, and snaring birds were very popular. Cricket was a new game that emerged during Queen Anne's time. Foreigners admired the vast English greens. The Englishmen loved nature and the open fields.

Great attention was paid to dressing. Men used to wear elaborate wigs and women wore intricately-stitched gowns and several petticoats. Whalebone was used to give shape to gowns. Women used to stick little black patches on their faces to enhance their beauty.

A greater variety was possible in the English daily diet due to overseas trade. Coffee and tea were the two new drinks that were introduced in England and they were popular with both men and women.

An important feature of Queen Anne's reign was the establishment of **coffee houses**. It has been estimated that there were about five hundred coffee houses in London alone. The coffee houses played an important role in the social life of the period. They were the centres of social and political discussions. There were distinct coffee houses for different groups of people. For instance, the Tories went to the *Cocoa Tree Chocolate House*, while the Whigs visited the *St James Coffee House*. The poets, their patrons and critics met at the *Wills Coffee House*. The favourite of the scholars was the *Grecian Coffee House*. There were coffee houses exclusively for the Quakers and the other dissenters. Coffee houses served as a levelling influence over a society that was based on hierarchy. In an age when there were no newspapers, the coffee houses served the purpose of keeping its patrons well informed about current events.

It was a rich period in literature. Giants like **Defoe, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele, Wycherley** and **Congreve** dominated the various forms of literature. Satire and fiction were very popular. The heroic couplet was perfected by poets like Dryden and Pope. Heroic poems and non-lyrical poetry of different kinds were written. The age saw the birth of the periodical essay.

Looking at Queen Anne's age from a distance of almost three centuries, one might say that English civilisation reached its climax during this period. The horrors of the English Civil War, the harshness of the military rule under the Puritans, and the disasters of the Great Plague and the Great Fire were

forgotten by the people of Queen Anne's age. It was an age that was as yet untouched by the evils of industrialisation. It was an oasis of peace and harmony. As the eighteenth century progressed and came to an end, it witnessed the bloody French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

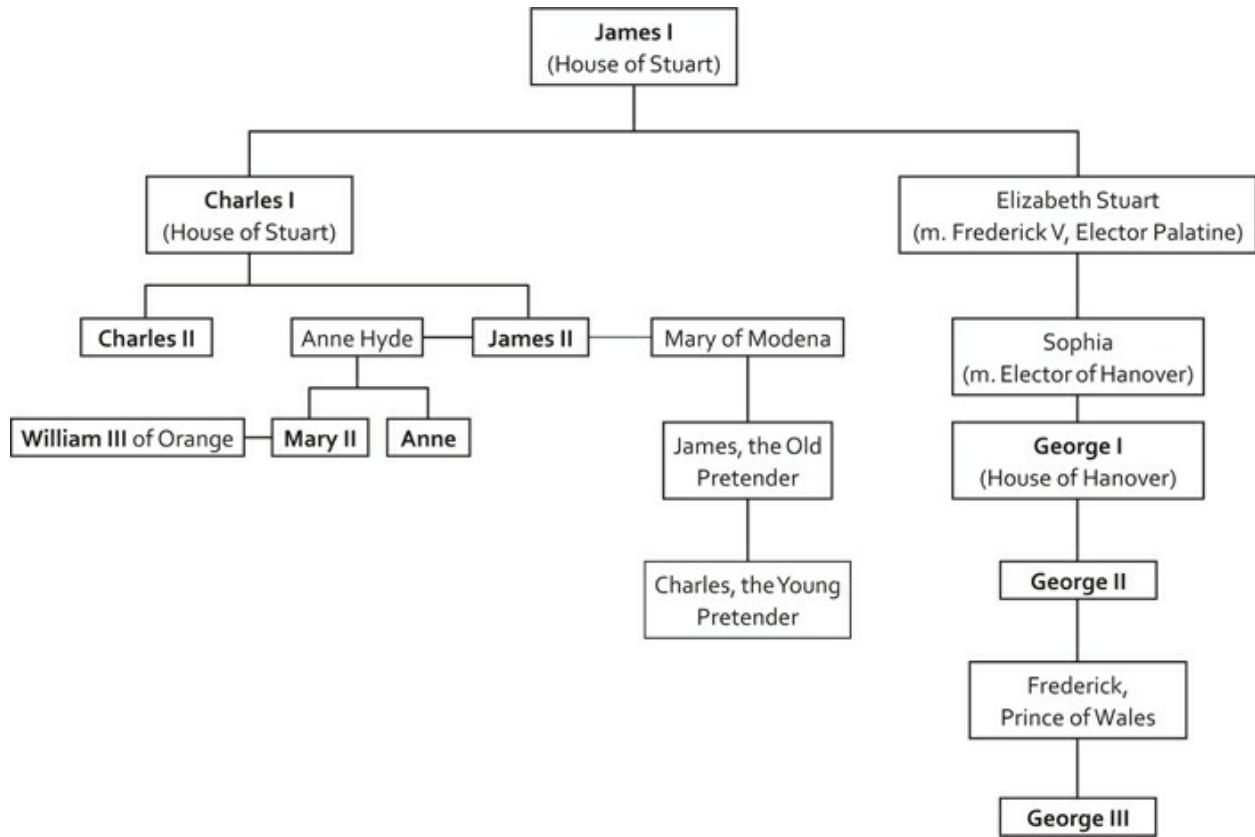
## Hanoverian England

George I	1714–1727
George II	1727–1760
George III	1760–1820
George IV	1820–1830
William IV	1830–1837
Victoria	1837–1901

The **House of Hanover** ruled over England for almost two centuries. The first two Georges were completely German and did not even bother to learn English. They were foreigners who did not understand English ways or sentiments. The only reason the people accepted them was that they were Protestants. The other option for the English was to call **James, the Old Pretender**, who was a Stuart. But James was a Catholic and he refused to change his religion. On religious grounds, the people were prepared to put up with the two Georges after Queen Anne died.

Since the Whigs were responsible for bringing the House of Hanover to England, both the Georges showed them favour. No Tory ministry was appointed for a period of nearly fifty years. The Whigs became very powerful and controlled the Crown and the House of Commons.

### THE CLAIM OF THE HOUSE OF HANOVER TO THE BRITISH THRONE



This state of affairs continued till **George III** became the king. He was brought up by his mother to assert himself as a king. Besides, he had been brought up like an English gentleman. He genuinely loved England. Since he was so simple in his tastes and he loved the countryside, he was affectionately called 'Farmer George'. When George III ascended the throne, he began to attack the Whigs and brought their long reign to an end.

An event of great historical importance that occurred during the reign of George III was the **American War of Independence**. The loss of the American colonies was a great blow to the British. This made George III extremely unpopular. The power passed into the hands of **William Pitt** who remained in power for almost twenty years. During that period, England developed as a commercial power. It witnessed a period of immense progress and prosperity. Two movements that completely altered the face of England were the Industrial and the Agrarian Revolutions.

The social hierarchy was very much like what it was at the beginning of the century under Queen Anne. The nobles were the privileged class which

enjoyed every type of power and privilege. Next came the gentry, or the squires, who varied in wealth and influence. The lower classes were made up of yeomen, tenant farmers, copyholders and landless labourers.

The city of London was different from other places in England. People from the countryside who visited London gazed in wonder at its busy roads, magnificent buildings, street lamps and shops. It was the seat of fashion and society. Literature, drama and music flourished in London. The London season (a period of the year marked by special events or activities) extended from October to May. The royal court was no longer the centre of fashionable life as it was during Elizabeth's reign. People of high fashion congregated in the houses of noblemen or at public places like clubs, gambling houses or theatres.

The Mall near St James's Park was very popular with fashionable ladies and gentlemen. They used to parade around in grand coaches or were carried in sedan chairs. Gambling was very common among both ladies and gentlemen. Drinking was a common vice in the eighteenth century. The disorderly conduct that resulted from drinking and gambling made society coarse and brutal.

Crime was very rampant in the first half of the century. Purses, hats and wigs were snatched from people. Often these were accompanied by violence. In 1749, **Henry Fielding**, who was both lawyer and novelist, was made the Chief Magistrate. He established a police station, but it was extremely difficult to chase thieves through the maze of London streets. Most petty crimes carried the death penalty, so the jury was reluctant to declare the criminal guilty.

Around the middle of the century, matters began to improve. The fundamental reason for this was the availability of more food and clothing due to the Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions.

Most of the writers of the day lived in London and knew each other well due to the coffee house meetings. The first two decades of the century were dominated by the presence of **Joseph Addison**. After he died, **Alexander Pope** rose to prominence. He perfected the heroic couplet and wrote poetry that appealed to the mind rather than to the heart. For several years,

**Congreve** presided over the gathering of literary men at Will's Coffee House. Two important literary developments of the century were the growth of the periodical essay and the growth of the novel. The well-known novelists of this period were **Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Lawrence Sterne** and **Fanny Burney**. The political rivalry of the Tories and the Whigs gave rise to a lot of political pamphlets. The social and political climate was just correct for the growth of satire. With the appearance of his *Dictionary* in 1755, **Samuel Johnson** became a prominent figure in the literary world. He became very influential in the Literary Club that was founded in the 1760s. Other well-known literary figures in the Club were **James Boswell, Edmund Burke**, the economist **Adam Smith, Richard Sheridan, Oliver Goldsmith** and **Sir Walter Scott**. **Charles Lamb** and **William Hazlitt** were the prominent essayists of the period.

## The Industrial Revolution

During the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, several changes took place in England and a few other countries in the field of industry. These important changes may be classified under the heading of '**Industrial Revolution**'. The term is used to describe both the changes that took place and the period itself.

The movement, which began in England in the eighteenth century, spread all over Europe and America in the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the western world had taken great strides in industrialisation. The invention of various heavy machines to do the work that was hitherto done manually and the great advance of technology were responsible for the Industrial Revolution.

As a result of industrialisation, there was an enormous increase in the production of goods. England became a prosperous country, and changed from being a land of farmers to a land of factories. This rapid change occurred during the reign of George III. The England over which 'Farmer George' began to rule in 1760 was still very much rural. But by the time he died in 1820, most of the farmers and craftsmen were replaced by mechanics and factory workers.

As industries began to develop, there was a growing need for money. This resulted in the flourishing of private investors and financial institutions. Financiers and banks thus became as important as industrialists and factories. For the first time in European history was born a class of people known as 'capitalists' who with their wealth controlled organisations.

Before the Industrial Revolution, nearly 90 per cent of the population lived in small towns and villages. The cities were mainly centres of fashion and culture and were inhabited by the rich and the aristocratic. The villagers were

mostly farmers and spent their time cultivating food or looking after their cattle and sheep. There were a few cottage industries scattered here and there. These were found in the homes of the rustics where the entire family worked together. They produced cloth, pickles, jams and wooden carvings. Agriculture dominated the people's lives and they organised themselves according to the seasons of sowing, cultivating and harvesting. The poor had to work really hard and they earned hardly enough to keep body and soul together. Life changed little from one generation to another until industrialisation. The rich landlords and aristocrats enjoyed all the benefits and even enjoyed political influence. The poor farmers were unrepresented and were exploited. All these social, economic and political conditions changed in England due to the Industrial Revolution.

There are several reasons why the Industrial Revolution began in England. The most important reason was that there were great deposits of coal and iron in England. These were the two natural resources that were necessary for industrialisation in its early stages. During the reign of George III, England had become a great colonial power. Its colonies all over the world not only provided the mother country with raw materials, but also served as a ready market for its finished products. There was a great demand for British goods in the 1700s. In order to meet this demand, English merchants had to increase their production manifold. True to the saying that 'necessity is the mother of invention', the hard-pressed Englishmen began to devise ways of multiplying their production. These resulted in the introduction of machines that ultimately brought about a revolution.

The Industrial Revolution affected and altered every sphere of British life. The chief industries to be modernised were the textile industry and the iron and coal industries. With the development of these industries, transport also was forced to undergo a transformation. With so many changes taking place it was only natural that society also underwent a drastic change.

The textile industry was the industry that was most affected by the revolution. Between 1750 and 1800, power-driven machinery was introduced into the textile industry. As the demand for cloth increased, merchants often had to compete with one another for the limited number of workers available. Since the number of workers was insufficient to satisfy the huge bulk of

orders, there was an increasing demand for machinery in order to increase production.

For hundreds of years, spinning was done with the help of a spinning wheel. This allowed a person to produce only one thread at a time. Two new inventions altered this condition. One was the '**spinning jenny**' invented by **James Hargreaves** and the other was the '**waterframe**' invented by **Sir Richard Arkwright**. Both these inventions increased the speed of spinning and the production of yarn. A machine called the '**spinning mule**' was invented by **Samuel Crompton** in the 1770s. This machine combined the features of the spinning jenny and the water frame and slowly replaced both. It was possible to spin fine yarn for high quality cloth. Earlier, such cloth had to be imported from India. With these inventions, the spinning wheel disappeared completely from English life.

Weaving was another problematic area since most of it was done on handlooms. In 1733, **John Kay** invented the '**flying shuttle**', which performed the task of weaving (but often went out of control). In the mid 1780s, **Edmund Cartwright** invented a steam-powered loom. After the invention of the power loom, British textile industry took giant leaps forward.

Tremendous power was required to run the machines. Mere horse or water power was not sufficient. Industry needed a new, cheap and efficient source of power. It found a solution in the steam engine. As early as 1698, **Thomas Savery** had invented a pumping engine whose source of power was steam. In 1712, **Thomas Newcomen** improved on this engine. Yet there were many defects. Finally, it was **James Watt** who gave to the world the steam engine.

For the manufacture of these machines and engines, it was necessary to have good machine tools. James Watt found it extremely difficult to drill a perfectly round hole. **John Wilkinson** invented a boring machine that drilled precise holes. By 1830, nearly all the basic tools that were necessary for modern industry were available.

The two raw materials needed for industrialisation were iron and coal. Earlier, very primitive methods were used for smelting iron ore. From the 1720s, iron-making techniques began to improve. As coal was necessary to smelt iron, most of the iron industries were concentrated in coal-mining

regions.

Transport played an important role in the industrialisation of England. Raw materials and finished goods had to be transferred across long distances. There was a revolution in the field of transport also. The rivers were widened and deepened in order to make them navigable. British engineers built canals, bridges and lighthouses. Roads were also improved since they were in a very bad condition. A Scottish engineer, **John McAdam** revolutionised road building and turnpikes received a new lease of life. The new roads were stronger and lasted longer.

One of the most significant developments in the world of transport was the introduction of the railway. The earliest railroads were used to transport coal. In 1804, **Richard Trevithick** built the first steam locomotive. **George Stephenson** introduced the first passenger line between Stockton and Darlington in 1825, and with that the railway age began.

The Industrial Revolution caused great changes in the economic and social life of the people. First of all, it enhanced Britain's position in the world. Since goods were available at a cheaper rate, England captured world markets. She earned various titles like 'the Workshop of the World' and the 'Paymaster of Europe'. Her economic strength, in turn, was responsible for her ultimate victory against France in the Napoleonic Wars.

Socially, it altered the relationship between the workers and the employers. Earlier, a close and warm rapport existed between them; but with industrialisation, it became cold and impersonal. Besides, the workers were forced to work under harsh conditions and live in the crowded and filthy slums of the big cities. Work was monotonous and women and children were exploited. Most workers were very poor and lived in extremely unsanitary conditions. They had no right to vote and could do nothing to improve their conditions.

The middle and the upper-middle classes made a lot of money and they prospered tremendously because of the Industrial Revolution. Their living conditions improved. These people, who invested a lot of money in industries, claimed the right to manage their affairs in their own way. The French economists coined a phrase to describe this attitude—'*laissez faire*',

which means ‘Leave things alone’. The people who invested in industry wished to have complete freedom to manage their factories, with absolutely no interference from the State. In the Middle Ages, there was the guild system to regulate trade. Even in Tudor and Stuart times, the State played an active part in regulating the wages and the hours of labour. The policy of *laissez faire* wanted to do away with such a practice and it was accomplished in the first half of the nineteenth century. **Adam Smith** was the upholder of this principle. He argued that any government interference was harmful to trade.

The revolution created a need for engineers, skilled workers and managers. Before the Industrial Revolution there were only two universities—Oxford and Cambridge. These were no longer enough to meet the new demands of the nation.

With the Industrial Revolution, the traditional way of life disappeared and there was a change in the attitudes of the people. What **Mathew Arnold** said in a different context could be used here to sum up the effect that industrialisation had on Victorian society: it ‘materialises the upper class, vulgarises the middle class, and brutalises the lower class’.

# 12

## The Agrarian Revolution

The great development in farming that resulted from a series of discoveries and inventions during the 1700s is known as the **Agrarian Revolution**. This revolution changed not only the landscapes of England but also the lifestyle of its people.

Before the revolution, a lot of time and land were wasted. A farmer was forced to allow one-third of his land to lie fallow since the soil would not bear crops continuously. The old strip system, where a farmer's holdings were scattered, forced the farmer to waste a lot of his time walking about from one strip to another. Methods of cultivating had hardly changed since Saxon times. The open field system was in use. This consisted of large open fields with no fences. Each village was surrounded by such fields.

The Agrarian Revolution was brought about primarily by four main developments:

1. The Enclosure Acts
2. Improved methods of growing crops
3. Improved methods of breeding livestock
4. Invention of new farm equipment

With the increase in population, there was a pressing need for greater production. The strip system was wasteful but the farmers were disinclined to try out any new methods. **The Enclosure Acts** were passed and strips of land of thousands of acres were enclosed to make compact fields. There were two kinds of enclosures— enclosure of common land or wasteland and enclosure of the open fields by redistributing the land. The second kind of enclosure caused a lot of distress to poor farmers as they did not have proper legal

documents to claim their land at the time of redistribution. Some poor farmers were unable to pay the cost of fencing their land and were forced to sell. The age-old system where every householder had his own bit of land disappeared from England. The Enclosure Acts paved the way for better farming with reduced wastage. But it destroyed a whole way of life. The poor villagers who lost their land were driven to the cities in search of new jobs. This mass exodus of the people brought about the greatest change in English history: by the end of the century, England had changed from a rural to an urban country.

**Charles Townshend** experimented with crop rotation. He introduced the four-field rotation system in England. He pointed out that by growing turnips, along with two kinds of grain and clover, the soil could be enriched. Each crop either added nutrients to the soil or absorbed different kinds of nutrients. By this method, farmers did not have to leave any part of their land fallow. Another advantage was that fodder was available for the livestock even during winter. This system was used and popularised by an English nobleman named **Thomas Coke** who also experimented with the idea of enriching the soil with manure.

**Robert Bakewell** was one of the pioneers who experimented with livestock. He experimented with the 'longhorn' breed of cattle. He produced improved breeds of cattle, sheep and horses. He became famous for developing a breed of sheep that could be raised for meat as well as for wool. Earlier, sheep were raised only for wool. Bakewell's new breed of sheep was called the 'Leicester Sheep'. **Charles Colling** followed Bakewell's method and succeeded in developing the 'shorthorn' breed of cattle which are now famous all over the world. There were others, such as **George Culley** and **John Ellman**, who did pioneering work in cattle rearing and breeding.

The first important inventor of the Agrarian Revolution was **Jethro Tull**. Tull, who was a farmer himself, invented a machine to drill holes for sowing seeds. Earlier, sowing was done by scattering, which involved a lot of wastage. Tull's drill is the ancestor of all farm machinery.

The enclosure system forced even the rich landlords to borrow money to meet fencing costs. Thus, the English banking system developed. It has been mentioned that poor farmers were badly affected by the enclosure system.

Earlier, every man had his own bit of land. Now, he lost the land and also the right to graze his animals on wastelands. He either became a paid labourer or went to the city. Although the Agrarian Revolution had several advantages, such as better production and greater efficiency, it involved a lot of hardships too. **Oliver Goldsmith** expresses them most eloquently in his poem ‘The Deserted Village’:

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.  
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

# 13

## The Rise of Methodism

During the eighteenth century, the condition of society in England was deplorable. Due to the revolutions in the spheres of industry and agriculture, there was a mass migration of the poor to the cities. Desperate for work, these people were prepared to take up whatever was offered. Working conditions were terrible and they were forced to live in slums that were unsanitary and crowded. The poor had no protection against unemployment. Under the system of apprenticeship, where the parents of a boy paid the master for teaching the trade, a lot of exploitation existed.

The moral condition of such people was as wretched as their physical state. Drinking and gambling were the two vices that were rampant. The people were very fond of brutal sports like cock fighting and bear baiting. Football matches played on the streets ended in bloody brawls. Boxing matches between women attracted large crowds. People indulged in smuggling and ‘wrecking’ (the dangerous practice of wrecking unwary ships on the western shores of England and looting their goods). The taverns became the focal point of the poor and the helpless. Quite a few taverns became notorious for riot and debauchery.

As a result of drinking and gambling, the poor often landed in the debtors’ prison. Conditions in these prisons were terrible. Church-going became irregular. Thousands of slum dwellers in the cities did not go to church at all and were ignorant heathens. This was the condition of English society when the **Wesley brothers** appeared on the scene.

Methodism was a movement begun by a group of students at Oxford University in the 1720s. Their aim was to lead disciplined and methodical lives. They were very spiritual and practised good habits. These activities earned them the name ‘Methodists’. The Wesley brothers, John and Charles, along with **George Whitefield**, all of whom were Methodists, began a

missionary crusade in England and Wales. Methodism was a purely religious movement. They wished to reach the vast mass of human beings who were neglected by the Church and the State. The founders of the movement not only preached all over the country themselves, but sent out preachers on similar missions. Both the Wesley brothers and Whitefield preached in the open air to enormous congregations, sometimes numbering 30,000 or 40,000 people.

The Methodists tried to teach the people to lead an active, selfless, Christian life. They focused on thrift, toil, abstinence and discipline. They wanted to save their own souls and also to help others. They were filled with humanitarian feelings and began to visit prisoners in jail. Service was the keynote of the Methodists. Many of them began to teach the poor children living in the slums.

John Wesley had a marvellous ability for organisation, and he formed many societies. He employed members of the laity as preachers, and some of these lay preachers were very prominent men. There were two reasons behind the success of the Methodist movement. One was their extraordinary energy and the other was their remarkable power as preachers. George Whitefield was especially good. His speeches were so astonishingly excellent that he often had his whole congregation weeping or falling upon the ground in utter remorse.

The early reaction to the Methodists by the established clergy was one of extreme hostility. The clergy lacked the religious zeal of the Methodists, so they could not bear their enthusiasm. The Methodists were able to attract the people who were neglected by the clergy. This irritated the clergy who tried to obstruct the Methodists. They would let loose hostile mobs upon the Wesley brothers. The initial years were therefore very painful for the Methodists. But they faced all these difficulties with a smile, and eventually won the respect of their enemies. After 1745, the persecution died down and the new movement began to flourish.

The most important effect of Methodism was that an awareness of good and evil was created among the mass of people who were abandoned by polite society. The Methodists tried to teach people to lead a Christian and civilised life. Wesley forbade his followers from indulging in gambling,

fighting and drinking. He tried to inspire the people to lead good and virtuous lives with his own life as an example.

The **Evangelical Movement** in the Church of England was a direct outcome of the Methodist movement. The Evangelical Movement tried to fight against the indifference of the eighteenth century and attempted to revive Puritanism. Spiritual devotion was the chief aim of this movement. Many devout and earnest men became preachers of its doctrines. It particularly influenced the members of Cambridge University.

Methodism gave to eighteenth-century England another immortal gift. It enhanced the beauty of the Christian religion with joyful hymns. People like **Isaac Watts** and **Charles Wesley** produced several hymns which became popular at once.

Above all else, we may see the influence of the Methodists on the religious life of the entire British nation. There is no doubt that the early period of Hanoverian rule was singularly lacking in religious activities and enthusiasm. It was the spiritual zeal of John Wesley that restored Christianity as a living force in the daily life of the nation.

There is, however, another side to the picture. Wesley's power was founded largely on an appeal to the emotion of fear. He was himself an extremely superstitious man who believed in witches and in quack medicines. Methodism was anti-intellectual. It was hostile to Jews and Catholics, and put up with child labour in the factories. Nevertheless, with the spread of Methodism, a new spirit of kindness and mercy took possession of the people, leading to a spirit of humanitarian activities throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. These acts of kindness engendered the famous humanitarian movements which will be taken up in the next chapter.

## 14

### Humanitarian Movements

The Methodist movement triggered off several humanitarian movements in the eighteenth century. A systematic attempt was made to help the people of the lower classes. There was a great gulf between the rich and the poor. Inspired by the teachings of the Wesley brothers, many benevolent people came forward to help the downtrodden. The spirit of mercy led to the abolition of the slave trade, to prison reform, to medical care for the poor, and to the reform of the legal system.

The grammar schools that were already there existed only for a few select clever boys of the lower classes. Many Sunday schools and charity schools were now established in order to impart knowledge to the bulk of the working people. Women like **Hannah More** worked tremendously for the upliftment of the agricultural poor of England. She focused on educating the poor in religion and good manners.

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, cities and towns became overcrowded. They grew in a haphazard manner without proper planning. The workers needed houses urgently, so these were built in a great hurry without much attention being given to sanitation, proper lighting or ventilation. Due to such unhealthy surroundings, there were many diseases, such as smallpox, which spread rapidly. To control the spread of smallpox, **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu** introduced inoculation from Turkey. An inoculation camp was set up in London and poor workers were given protection from the disease. Towards the end of the century, **Edward Jenner** discovered a vaccine for smallpox, and slowly the disease itself was eradicated.

An important development in the history of medicine was the establishment of lying-in hospitals for patients who were too ill to go home. Most of these hospitals were a result of the good work of philanthropists.

**Captain Thomas Coram**, for example, founded a hospital for babies that were abandoned. These hospitals attempted to lessen the pain and suffering of the poor and the neglected.

The pioneer in the field of prison reform was **John Howard**. He visited several prisons throughout England and found their condition appalling. The jails were filthy and unhealthy dungeons where prisoners were kept in chains. They had to pay the jailor for their stay and food. Since they had no means of doing so, they often remained in prison for years altogether and some eventually lost their minds. Howard published his findings in a book entitled *State of the Prisons*. This attracted the attention of the Parliament, which passed a legislation reforming several of the evils. **Elizabeth Fry** was another person who tried to improve the lot of prisoners. Her work mostly focused upon women prisoners. General **James Oglethorpe** is another name associated with prison reform. He drew the attention of the public to the horrifying conditions of the debtors' prison.

In the eighteenth century, the legal system was in utter confusion. There was a long list of crimes that were punishable by death. These included such petty crimes like stealing even a loaf of bread. The severity of the punishment caused the jury to often declare a criminal 'not guilty'. Hence crime went on unchecked. Another fact that allowed crime to flourish was the absence of a police force. The **Fielding brothers** tried to check crime in the middle of the century. In 1829, **Robert Peel** introduced the police system, and gradually it developed so much that **Scotland Yard** became a model for the rest of the world.

There was an active slave trade in England since the establishment of the American colonies. Slaves were captured like animals and shipped to America to work in the cotton plantations. Many people like **Dr Samuel Johnson** and **Horace Walpole** criticised this inhuman practice. An anti-slavery movement started, and it attracted attention at the national level under the leadership of **William Wilberforce**. Public awareness was created and people's attention was drawn to the pitiable plight of the slaves. Apart from their anti-slavery propaganda, Wilberforce and his men taught England the valuable lesson of public discussion and public agitation.

Due to the policy of *laissez faire*, exploitation of the poor was very

common. Women and children were forced to work long hours and for very low wages. There was no one to fight for them or to represent their troubles. Philanthropists such as **Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper** drew the attention of the authorities to the problem. This slowly resulted in the growth of trade unions in the nineteenth century. Due to the growing power of the trade unions, a number of **Factory Acts** were passed in the next century which protected the workers.

The philanthropists of the eighteenth century did much to wipe the tears of the poor and the miserable. This reformatory zeal continued into the next century until England started marching gradually towards a classless society.

## The American War of Independence (1775 to 1783)

Economic opportunities and religious freedom were the twin forces that made Englishmen seek the New World. Those who had heard tales of the fertile and vast lands that were available were driven by a desire to become rich quickly. These men settled on the southern shores of the East Coast, in what is now Virginia. Another band of early settlers were the Puritans who wished to flee from the religious persecution of the Stuarts. They settled mostly in the northern part, known as the New England region. These early impulses which made men leave a well-organised world, and go in search of a new and unknown land clearly defines the character of the Americans.

By 1700, all these early settlements were formed into thirteen British colonies. Although each colony had its own governor and legislature, they were under the ultimate control of the British government. The British colonies in America were very well treated. They had a lot of freedom and enjoyed a large measure of self-government. Britain gave the colonies complete freedom in matters of legislation. Only in matters pertaining to trade, did Great Britain impose certain regulations through the **Navigation Act**, according to which the colonies could not manufacture goods that would compete with British imports. All goods from Europe had to be sent to England first, and only then were to proceed to the colonies. The Navigation Act stipulated that colonies could export some of its products such as tobacco and cotton only to England. In return, the colonies enjoyed certain privileges. They got the protection of the British fleet and the army. These laws however were not enforced very strictly for several years.

Relations between the colonies and England began to break down during the mid-eighteenth century. Britain had incurred a lot of debts due to the **Seven Years' War**. (The Seven Years' War was fought from 1756 to 1763 in Europe, India and America between France and England for colonial

supremacy.) England attempted to tax the colonies in order to meet the great expenses that fell upon her. This naturally caused resentment among the Puritan democrats of the north and the aristocratic slave owners of the south.

When George III became the king in 1760, he instructed the Parliament to pass laws that would restrict the freedom of the colonies and also tax them. Accordingly, the Parliament voted to station a standing army in North America. The colonies had to maintain this army, which they resented. In 1764, the **Sugar Act** was passed, and the next year, the **Stamp Act**. The colonies hated the new British policies. They maintained that England had no right to restrict their freedom in any manner and that they could not tax them without representation. They began to boycott British goods. Britain was forced to repeal the Stamp Act. But at the same time, she passed the **Declaratory Act**, which claimed that Britain had every right to tax the colonies. For a short while, the tension was relaxed. In 1767, the British government passed the **Townshend Acts** which taxed the lead, glass, paint, paper and tea that were imported by the colonies. Due to strong opposition by the colonies, England abolished the tax on lead, glass, paint and paper, but foolishly retained that on tea. This led to the famous **Boston Tea Party** of 1773, in which a group of colonists dressed as Indians boarded the British ships carrying a cargo of tea and threw the entire contents into the sea. The angry British government passed a number of punitive laws, such as closing the port of Boston and restricting the freedom of Massachusetts. The other colonies rallied around Massachusetts, and a Congress was held at Philadelphia. The **Declaration of Rights** was drawn up, demanding the repeal of the acts and initiating a boycott of British goods. In 1776, the second Continental Congress drew up the famous **Declaration of Independence**. This was the work of **Thomas Jefferson**, and it said that 'all men were created equal' and had the right to 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'.

At first the odds seemed to be against the colonies. They were challenging the world's greatest empire and one of the world's most experienced armies. The colonies, on the other hand, had the advantage of fighting on their home territory. The main disadvantage for the British was that they had to fight a war three thousand miles away from home.

Ultimately, the colonies emerged successful from the Revolutionary War, and forged a nation that rejected both monarchy and hereditary aristocracy. The constitution of the United States sought to recognise the rights of the individual. The ideals of liberty and equality were, however, not extended to all citizens—slaves were denied freedom and women were deprived of equal opportunity and the right to vote.

The independence of the United States had far-reaching effects. Reformers in other parts of Europe were quick to recognise in it the victory of liberty over tyranny. Britain lost one of her most important colonies, and King George III became very unpopular due to the American War of Independence. Great Britain was forced to acknowledge the independence of the United States of America by the **Treaty of Versailles**. It was a great loss to the British Empire as she had controlled the colonies for a century and a half.

The loss of the American colonies brought about a change in British politics. The people felt that they should have greater power to influence events in Parliament. The Parliament had opposed the war and had urged the king to give it up. One of the most eloquent members to speak on the subject was **Edmund Burke**, whose speeches are still read for their literary value. George III did not heed their advice as he felt the loss of the colonies would severely hamper the political and economic power of Britain. After the war ended, the irate Parliament opposed the excessive power of the Crown.

The Revolutionary War inspired the French soldiers who had aided the colonies. For the first time, the Americans proved to the world that it was justified to raise arms against an unfair government. This in turn inspired the peasants of France so much that it led to the famous French Revolution six years later. The French Revolution was a major event that had repercussions all over Europe.

## 16

### **The Effects of the French Revolution on British Life**

The French Revolution that began in 1789 altered the political landscape of feudal Europe irrevocably. Centuries of oppression came to an end, bringing about great changes in the social and political framework of France. This revolution, which lasted from 1789 to 1799, affected and altered the rest of Europe also. People everywhere were inspired with democratic ideals, and the power of the king and the aristocrats came crumbling down. Nowhere in Europe could royalty and nobility ever again take their powers for granted after the uprising of the peasants in France.

There were several causes for the French Revolution—socio-economic, political and intellectual. The aristocratic structure of society before the revolution consisted of three orders or ‘estates’: the clergy constituted the First Estate; the nobility, the Second Estate; and the rest of the population, which was more than 95 per cent, belonged to the Third Estate. The first two estates enjoyed special privileges (for example, exemption from paying taxes), while the Third Estate suffered untold misery and poverty. The Old Order was thus based on privilege, despotism and exploitation.

If the nobles represented the wealthy class, the bourgeoisie were the intelligentsia of society. They were mostly advocates, doctors or merchants. Most of them were intelligent and educated. But since an accident of birth placed them below the nobles, they were excluded from enjoying any privileges. This naturally led to frustration and discontent.

The lowest rung of the social ladder was occupied by peasants. They were the majority of the country. Their lives were extremely difficult. They could never shake off the cloak of poverty since they had to pay taxes to the State, the Church and the nobles. They barely managed to get by on what little they had.

The court of **Louis XVI** was known for its extravagance and pomp. The king believed in the divine right theory and ruled in an arbitrary manner. The people had no share in the government and the States-General (a sort of a Parliament) had not met since 1614. Queen **Marie Antoinette** was unpopular and arrogant and irritated the already frustrated people further. There was confusion in every department of administration. There was an urgent need for reform, and the king was incapable of it.

French writers like **Voltaire** and **Rousseau** had a profound effect on the middle class. Voltaire pointed an accusing finger at several lapses in French law, which doled out harsh punishments for small offenses. His writings helped to awaken a public conscience in France. In his famous book *The Social Contract*, Rousseau explained that the king governed a state owing to a contract with his subjects. He established the fact that the people had every right to question the ruler if he failed in his duty towards them. This reasoning inspired many thinkers of the day, and they joined the revolution. Motivated by Rousseau, they were ready to destroy the old system of government altogether.

The American War of Independence was an inspiration to the French people. The way in which the Americans rose against the unfair taxation of the British government, and their ultimate triumph, acted as a great stimulus to the oppressed people of France.

All these brought matters to a boiling point and with the attack on the state prison, the Bastille, in 1789, the French Revolution began. The Old Order was overthrown. The French drew up a declaration called the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. The concept of absolute monarchy was rejected. Louis XVI was not happy about these developments and he sought foreign help. This enraged the mob further and it resulted in the horrifying **September Massacres**. Thousands of royalists, priests and nobles were killed on the streets. From 1793 to 1794, there was a **Reign of Terror**. Louis XVI was beheaded. In the name of '*liberty, equality and fraternity*', more than a million people were cruelly butchered. The revolution came to an end in 1799.

The first events of the revolution were well received in England. Many progressive Englishmen were happy to see France emerging from the shadow

of absolute monarchy. Others who were less progressive rejoiced nonetheless in the fact that France was weakening herself by internal strife. This was the initial reaction in England.

But as the revolution took a bloody turn with the September Massacres and the Reign of Terror, English opinion altered. The upper classes were alarmed to note the passing of power from the monarch to the lower classes in France. At first they were disgusted by the sadism of the peasants, and later this disgust gave way to fear and panic. They feared that a similar situation could be created in England. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* sounded a note of terror. In it, he upheld the authority of the ancient institutions and claimed that the revolution was a disaster. He also pointed out that if it was not controlled, it would spread all over Europe and ruin its fine civilisation. His opinions had a profound effect on the people and changed their attitude towards the revolution.

A reply to Burke was made by **Tom Paine** in his *Rights of Man*. Paine, an English Quaker's son, who lived in America, was a strong supporter of the American and French Revolutions. He maintained that the people had the right to alter any existing government if they were not satisfied with it. These two diametrically opposite views typically represented the two extremes of English thought. The majority of the people however shared Burke's anxiety about the future of Europe.

Meanwhile, Austria and Prussia had invaded France, but had been defeated. The French, drunk with victory, wished to spread their influence to other European countries. They promised assistance to any nation that sought to overthrow its ruler. Reluctantly, England entered into a war with France in 1793. A kind of an emergency situation was created in England. The king and the nobles were panic-stricken, and even the mildest suggestion of reform was frowned upon. Outspoken proponents of reform were suspected of being 'Jacobins'. (Jacobins were entirely hostile to aristocratic privileges and to all feudal forms of government.)

One famous Jacobin was **Napoleon Bonaparte**, who wished to make France a democratic republic. After the execution of King Louis XVI in 1793, a group of Jacobins led by Maximilien Robespierre gained control of the French government. When some of the French cities revolted against

Robespierre, they were supported by Britain. Napoleon was sent to command the army at Toulon. Napoleon succeeded in driving the British-aided rebels back and gained control over Toulon. Unfortunately for Napoleon, his rapid rise to success suffered a setback with the fall and execution of Robespierre in 1794. He regained his power the following year when he defended the royal palace, the Tuilleries, from attacks by angry mobs who wanted to destroy the ruling National Convention that was being held there. He was hailed as a hero and made a major general.

Between 1792 and 1795, France had been at war with several states of Europe. Under the leadership of Napoleon, France defeated Austria in 1797. After several years of civil disturbance, the French longed for peace and welcomed the leadership of Napoleon who seized control of the French government in 1799. He now ruled France as a dictator. Several people who held democratic opinions were arrested. The press had no freedom and people could not form clubs or societies.

Napoleon however was not content with ruling France. He wished to conquer the neighbouring countries. He was crowned emperor in 1802, and he began his attacks on Europe by 1805. He defeated Prussia, several German states, Naples, Holland, Warsaw and Tuscany. Britain was forced to enter the war in order to curb the rising power of Napoleon. The war came to an end after the **Battle of Waterloo** in 1815 when **Lord Wellington** defeated Napoleon.

These Napoleonic Wars affected British life in several ways. England had borrowed heavily to meet the expenses of the war. The first problem therefore was the huge national debt. As a result, taxes were raised, food became scarce, and there was inflation all around. After the war came to an end, nearly half a million soldiers and sailors were sent home. They added heavily to the long list of the unemployed. Unemployment became a serious problem for the authorities.

The import of corn was stopped during the twenty years of the war. Soon after the war, this ban was removed and European corn flooded the market. The price of English corn therefore had to be reduced drastically. This was resented by English farmers, and to protect them, the **Corn Law** was passed in 1816. The Corn Law hit the poor people the hardest since they had to pay

more. The poor were very discontented and there were riots here and there. These were quickly suppressed, but matters did not improve till 1832 when the first Reform Bill was passed.

The Napoleonic Wars gave England an excellent opportunity to reveal her strength on land and sea. Lord Nelson's victory in the **Battle of Trafalgar** and Wellington's victory at Waterloo made the British proud of their military skill. England emerged from these wars as a superpower.

The French Revolution stirred the British people and affected their literature in a major way. There was a complete break with the Age of Reason, and a new kind of literature known as the **Romantic Revival** was born. The chief characteristics of the poetry of this period were closeness to nature, simplicity of style, and the employment of the language of the common man. **Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley** and **Keats** were the poets who specialised in this style of poetry.

The drastic change from the rural to the urban that was brought about by the Industrial Revolution had repercussions on literature also. Many writers, repelled by the coldness of the machine age, looked back to the past and tried to recapture the glory of an earlier age. This was another aspect of the Romantic Revival, seen in **Scott**'s historical novels and Keats' medieval-style narrative poems.

## **England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (1800 to 1837)**

As seen in the previous chapter, the Napoleonic Wars came to an end in 1815. Apart from the various other effects they had on England, it has already been noted that the upper classes became extremely paranoid. There was a deep and unreasonable fear of the mob, and any attempt at even the mildest reform was frowned upon. This was very unfortunate because there was a desperate need for reform in England after the upheavals caused by the Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions. The transition from war to peace was very painful. On one hand, there was rapid urbanisation and industrial development, and on the other hand, were antiquated institutions, a vast national debt and inflation. There was suffering among the poor and apprehension among the rich. The years between 1815 and 1830 were filled with stress and conflict.

After 1830, people gradually began to forget the horrors of the Reign of Terror. Men like Robert Peel brought about important reforms in criminal law, which until then was very savage. Men were hanged even for petty crimes like stealing fish. For some years, many men tried in vain to modify the criminal laws. People like John Howard and Elizabeth Fry worked for prison reform. Peel took up the task begun by all those humanitarians and succeeded in reducing drastically the number of crimes punishable by death.

Peel also tried to turn his attention to the condition of the prisons. He recognised the need for a good police force in order to check crime. He established a new metropolitan police force with its headquarters in Scotland Yard. Mounted patrols dealt with highwaymen, and soon the dreaded highway robber disappeared from the English scene.

These mild and cautious reforms that were not followed by any upheaval or revolution made the upper classes get over their fear of change. The

middle classes were quick to realise the advantage of reform as they were tired of the old aristocratic world of special privilege. Slowly, the climate became suitable for the first **Reform Bill** of 1832. This was the first step taken by England towards a democratic form of government. Through this bill, the middle classes were admitted to the franchise.

The **Factory Act** was passed in 1833 for the protection of children working in textile factories. Evangelical Tories started a new agitation in 1830 and a bill was passed prohibiting the working of more than ten hours for persons under eighteen. It also prohibited the employment of children under nine. One of the principal features of the Factory Act of 1833 was the introduction of government inspectors. Other Factory Acts were passed during the reign of Victoria in 1842 and in 1844. These made working conditions better for men, women and children.

**Jeremy Bentham** was an important figure and was responsible for bringing about a change in the attitudes of the people of that period. He founded the philosophy known as '**Utilitarianism**'. He based his theory on the concept that a person should always do what will produce the greatest good for the greatest number of people. He tried to shake the people out of their complacent idea that British society, the government, and its laws were perfect. He declared that all aspects of law and the government were continual experiments for the welfare of the people and could never be regarded as final. He was a strong advocate for the extension of the franchise to all householders. He and his followers had a tremendous impact on the people and the way was paved for reform.

By the time Queen Victoria ascended the throne, the stage was set for advancement. She ruled for the best part of the nineteenth century. It was indeed a fortunate century sandwiched between two tumultuous centuries. The eighteenth century was shattered by the evils of industrialisation, the American and French Revolutions, and the Napoleonic Wars. The twentieth century would bring the two devastating world wars that would cripple England. But the nineteenth century was a safe sanctuary when England grew and progressed in a climate of peace. Except for a mild disturbance through the **Crimean War** and the **First War of Indian Independence** (referred to as the **Sepoy Mutiny** by English historians), England enjoyed a long period

of peace and prosperity.

# 18

## The Victorian Age (1837 to 1901)

Queen Victoria ruled from 1837 to 1901 and became one of the most famous rulers in English history. Great Britain reached the height of its power during this period. It built a great colonial empire and the British proudly claimed that the sun never set upon it. It was an eventful period with changes taking place in every sphere of life. In several ways, it was the harbinger of the twentieth century. Due to a number of inventions, life in England was becoming modern and comfortable. Industrially, England was at the vanguard, since it was here that the Industrial Revolution had begun. Politically, the last traces of the ancient hierarchical system came crumbling down and England emerged as a democracy where every citizen had the right to vote. As far as religion was concerned, doubt and scepticism crept into the minds of the people for the first time during the nineteenth century.

Victoria's long reign saw many changes in the attitudes of the people. The initial years of her reign passed in a series of reforms that touched various spheres of life. The people expected a great deal from all these reforms, but they were disappointed. The first part of Queen Victoria's reign was therefore filled with discontent and bitterness.

The middle classes were resentful of the privileges enjoyed by the aristocracy. They agitated against the Corn Laws which were seen as a tax on the whole community for the enrichment of the landowners. A campaign was organised to repeal the Corn Laws and finally they succeeded in 1846.

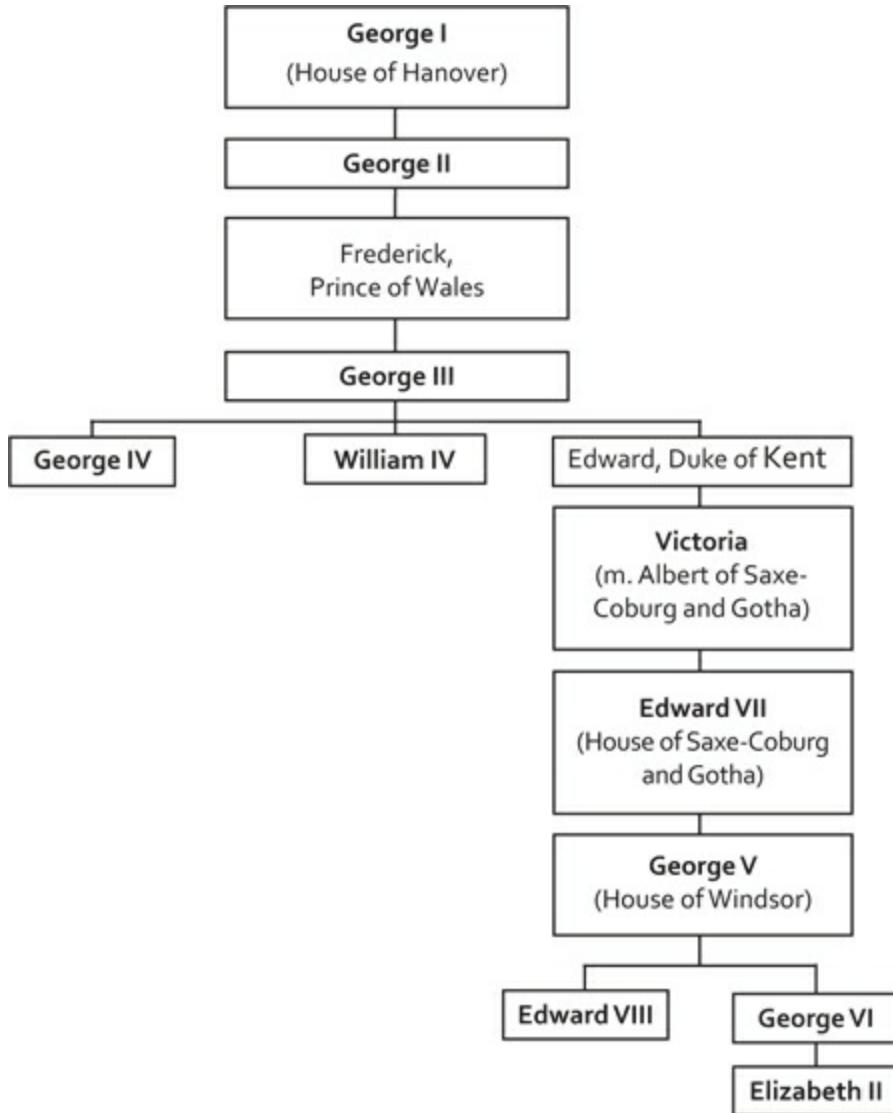
The lower classes were disappointed with the Reform Bill of 1832 as they were totally ignored. The discontent of the poor expressed itself through **Chartism**, which was a passionate protest against the harsh conditions in which they had to live and work. The working class demanded franchise and a radical reform of the Parliament. After the disturbance caused by Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League, there was a pause for a period of almost

twenty years.

The years between 1846 and 1868 constitute what is generally known as the mid-Victorian era. This was the most prosperous part of the century, and the British slipped into a complacent mood. Britain was considered to be the most industrially advanced country in the world and earned the title ‘the Workshop of the World’. Agriculturally, England continued to do well in spite of repealing the Corn Laws. The nobility and gentry continued to hold the reigns of the government. The lot of the working class also was not very bad. They received higher wages and enjoyed better food. Due to the overall improvement of the economy, there was a lessening of class tension. This in turn led to a sense of well-being and satisfaction. It was an optimistic period and the people looked forward to the great opportunities that lay before them. ‘Progress’ was the catchword of the age. Tennyson’s poem ‘Ulysses’ captures the mood of the people accurately:

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever ...

## **THE HOUSES OF HANOVER AND WINDSOR**



There is another side to the Victorians. They were quite materialistic. Businessmen showed little respect for the sufferings of the working classes and were more interested in profit-making. In their race to become wealthy, they neglected the aesthetic side of life. Due to the Industrial Revolution, building material was available at a very low price. The people who had become rich overnight began to construct huge mansions that lacked artistic taste. The interiors were equally inartistic. The furniture was bulky and a typical Victorian drawing room was crowded and over-decorated.

It is this aspect of Victorian life that Matthew Arnold, a distinguished poet and critic of the age, criticises in his book *Culture and Anarchy*. He expressed his distrust of an age whose sole aim was materialistic progress. He

tried to educate the ‘Philistines’ to appreciate good art, architecture and literature. He hated Victorian buildings and their ugliness.

Women’s clothes in the latter half of the Victorian age were uncomfortable and cumbersome. In the 1870s and 1880s, it was fashionable to have narrow waistlines. Many unhygienic contrivances were incorporated into dresses in order to produce such a waist. Men like **William Morris** and **Edward Burne-Jones** tried to change these unhealthy practices by introducing dresses that were more beautiful and comfortable.

In the nineteenth century, England occupied a prominent position in the world as far as trade, industry and science were concerned. The first steam engines and the first railways were invented in England. Britain led the world in shipping. The quality of English ships was superior to that of other ships due to the usage of steel and iron in shipbuilding. British trade increased remarkably in the nineteenth century. France, Germany and the USA, though they did well, could not catch up with Great Britain. The Victorians were filled with confidence, and the thought that any other country could supersede them did not cross their minds.

In the field of medicine, great strides were taken by doctors and chemists. Modern surgery will forever remain indebted to **James Simpson** for discovering the advantages of chloroform. Operations could be performed painlessly and a great deal of human suffering was eliminated. It was during this period that **Louis Pasteur**, the French chemist, introduced pasteurisation. A British surgeon called **Joseph Lister** helped save thousands of lives by the introduction of antiseptics. The cause for the dreaded disease of malaria was discovered by **Sir Ronald Ross**, another Englishman.

The Victorian age also witnessed a series of inventions that made life more comfortable. Some outstanding inventions were the bicycle, the typewriter, the camera, devices running on gas and electricity, and the telephone. Although all these were not invented in England, the English nevertheless benefited a great deal through this progress in science.

The scientific discovery that caused turmoil in the minds of the Victorians was **Charles Darwin**’s theory of the evolution of man. Darwin established beyond any doubt that man had evolved over a great period of time from the

ape. Evangelical religion was shaken and many people lost their faith in the very existence of God. Orthodox Christians could not accept the fact that the natural world worked according to laws in which there was no room for any divine intervention. Darwin's books *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* undermined the very foundations of Christianity and its Book of Genesis. The utter despair of a floundering society is reflected in the poems of Tennyson and Arnold.

**Karl Marx**, the great German philosopher and political economist, published his *Das Kapital* in 1867. In it, he traced the root of all economic injustice to the concept of capitalism. His social and economic theories completely revolutionised political thought and had far-reaching effects all over Europe, including England.

Another personality who had an impact on the age was **Sigmund Freud**. Through his pathbreaking book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), he showed the world that the motives for our behaviour lie not in our rational and conscious minds but in the irrational realm of the unconscious which manifests itself only in our dreams. All these thinkers greatly contributed to the altered thinking of England in the next century.

The **Great Exhibition** of 1851 was a clear proof of the achievements of industrialisation. It was held in the specially-constructed Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. The Crystal Palace was a magnificent construction using over a million feet of glass. It was specially designed by **Sir Joseph Paxton** in order to showcase England's greatness to the world. About six million people were supposed to have visited the exhibition, which was the first of its kind. The exhibition revealed to the world the tremendous strides that England had taken.

The **Crimean War** and the **First War of Indian Independence** (the **Sepoy Mutiny**) were two significant events that marred the peace of the age. The Crimean War was fought between Russia and the allied forces of Great Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and Sardinia. The allied forces wished to restrain the Russian expansion in the Black Sea region. The war came to an end with the Treaty of Paris in 1856. According to the treaty, Russia was forced to return the territories that it had occupied in the Ottoman Empire. Further, Russia was prohibited from sending its warships on the

Black Sea and from building any fortification in that area. The Crimean War was the first war to be covered by journalists. The newspaper articles and the photographs from the war front stirred the emotions of the people. The famous poem 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' by Lord Tennyson is based on the Battle of Balaklava. The Crimean War brought to the forefront **Florence Nightingale**, who made nursing a respectable profession. Nightingale, along with thirty-eight dedicated women, went to help the wounded soldiers in the hospitals at Scutari. This proved to be the origin of modern nursing and the Red Cross Movement.

After the end of the Crimean War in 1856, trouble broke out in India in 1857. The British trading company that came to India in 1600 gradually became very powerful in the Indian subcontinent. At the time of the rebellion, most of India was under the control of the British East India Company. The immediate cause was the introduction of cartridges greased in the fat of cows and pigs which had to be bitten off before usage. This was anathema to both the Hindus and the Muslims who formed the majority of the army. Apart from this, the Indians were unhappy with the British over several other issues such as forced conversions by missionaries, the Doctrine of Lapse by Lord Dalhousie (according to which the kingdoms of childless kings would 'lapse' to the British), and the near total destruction of indigenous cottage industries through the flooding of finished British goods. The rebellion broke out in Meerut and rapidly spread to several parts of the country. Although it began as a rebellion by the sepoys, soon princes, nobles and other people who resented the British presence in India also joined it. It gave rise to several great leaders like Mangal Pandey, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, and Tantya Tope. The rebellion ended in failure as the rebels lacked proper leadership and ammunitions. It, however, made clear that the Company could no longer control the administration of such a large country. After it ended, the British government took over India from the East India Company. Queen Victoria was declared Empress of India. This was a very proud moment for the Victorians.

Yet another significant overseas involvement of Great Britain that had considerable impact upon the world was that with China. Till the nineteenth century, China had closely guarded its ports and European merchants could have commercial activity only in the port of Guangzhou. While China earned

a lot of money through its export of tea and silk, European countries profited very little as China imported very few goods. To balance this, countries like Great Britain began to smuggle opium into China. Slowly, there was a great demand for opium from those who were addicted and there was a large outflow of silver to buy it. In a bid to check this, Chinese officials seized 20,000 crates of opium from the British merchants in Guangzhou. This led to the **Opium War** in which Britain emerged victorious and forced China to sign the Treaty of Nanjing. Through this treaty, China had to give Hong Kong to Britain and was forced to open five of its ports to British trade and residence.

The Church of England had been the target of criticism at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign. There were several abuses such as absenteeism and pluralism. The bishops were unpopular as they had voted against the Reform Bill. There was a lot of discrepancy between the incomes of the upper and the lower clergy. While the upper clergy enjoyed princely incomes, the lower clergy lived in abject poverty. These matters were corrected by Sir Robert Peel who established an **Ecclesiastical Commission** to look into the problems of the clergy. Many changes were brought about and the Church of England was saved.

A certain section of scholars and churchmen resented the ecclesiastical reforms as they considered them to be interference by the government into church affairs. Since these scholars and churchmen belonged to Oxford University, the movement was known as the **Oxford Movement**. The prominent leaders of the group were Newman, Keble, Pusey and Froude. They published their ideas through pamphlets known as *Tracts for the Times*. From this they got the name '**Tractarians**'. They were disgusted with the materialistic and liberal attitude of the age. John Keble preached a sermon to highlight the evils that were threatening the Church. The other leaders stressed upon the importance of ritual and other practices that inclined towards Roman Catholicism. In 1845, Newman joined the Roman Catholic Church and was eventually made a cardinal.

The influence of the Oxford Movement upon the Anglican world was great. It emphasised faith in the Church and rebelled against the interference of the State. The Anglican service was affected by the movement and was

made more beautiful and refined. A deeper sense of the spiritual significance of the Church was awakened in the clergy.

The mid-Victorians took their religion seriously. Religion was evangelical in tone with an emphasis on moral conduct. They were god-fearing and earnest men and woman who kept the Sabbath and read the Bible. Hymns and religious verses were very popular. This revival in religious activity had its origin in eighteenth-century Methodism.

This evangelical movement turned into a social code and sharply distinguished the population into two groups—those who were godly and those who were not. The people who were religious had to follow certain codes of conduct and etiquette. They had to be respectable and vigilant always or become the victims of their neighbour's criticism. This strong emphasis on character and behaviour led to the super-morality of the age. It is this aspect of life that has made the word 'Victorian' almost a synonym for prudishness. It was considered improper even to refer to the human body. Girls wore long gowns that covered almost every inch of the body. This strict code of conduct was a reaction to the brutality of the eighteenth century. The mid-Victorians marched towards a more decent and civilised society.

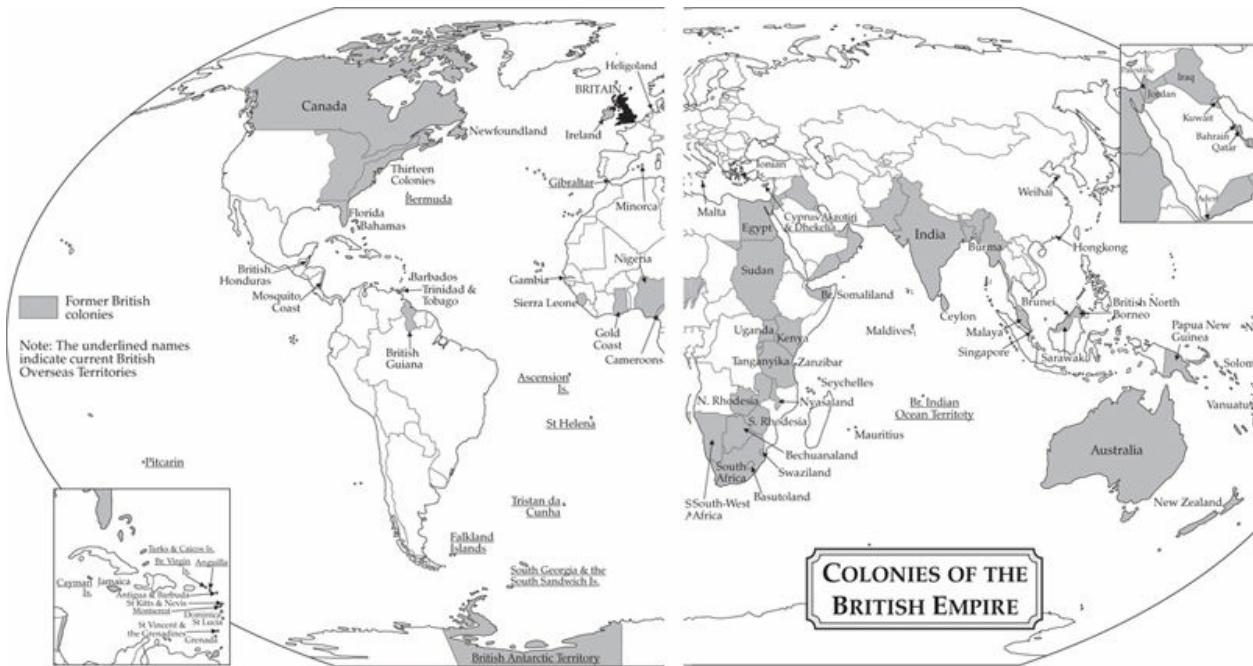
This does not mean that every man and woman of the mid-Victorian period was religious. A large section of the poor did not belong to any church. There were several reasons for this, such as lack of space in the churches and lack of proper Sunday clothes. The poor were also resentful of being told that their suffering was due to their idleness and vice. There was yet another section of society that did not share the religious zeal of the period. These were the sceptics who had lost faith in religion due to the progress of science. But seen as a whole, religion was a strong force in the mid-Victorian period.

There was a marked decline in the religious belief of the Victorians by the end of the century. They no longer observed the Sabbath, and evangelical religion was losing its hold on the educated classes. The number of brilliant young men at the universities who studied to become churchmen greatly diminished. They had a greater choice as far as career options were concerned. Church attendance fell off greatly and family prayers declined. Children failed to attend Sunday schools. Since Sunday lost its sacredness, there was a need to provide suitable entertainment for passing the time.

Museums and art galleries were opened on Sunday afternoons. Weekend excursions and picnics became fashionable. After Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, evangelical religion was never the same again. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* eloquently reflects the religious doubt of the age.

In the sixty-four years of Queen Victoria's reign, religion went through several changes. It began with a Church that had many malpractices. Then the State took matters into its hands and a series of reforms were made to improve the condition of the Church. There was a strong reaction to this by the Tractarians or the Oxford scholars. The mid-Victorian took religion seriously and a kind of moral rigidity set in. Towards the end of the century, there was a general relaxation of morals and a loss of religious fervour. Religion, which had always been at the centre of life in England, was slowly pushed to the periphery. Religion never regained its hold on society in the twentieth century.

The reign of Queen Victoria, which extended from 1837 to the beginning of the twentieth century, covered a great variety of writing. Prose, poetry and fiction flourished during this period. Drama, however, declined after the brilliance of Sheridan. The end of the century witnessed the revival of drama in the witty plays of Oscar Wilde (*Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*) and George Bernard Shaw. Shaw, however, is considered more as a twentieth-century dramatist since he began his career in the last decade of the nineteenth century.



In the field of prose, we have the works of brilliant men like **Thomas Carlyle**, **John Ruskin**, **Matthew Arnold**, **William Cobbett** and **Walter Pater**. Men like Carlyle were opposed to the spreading of scientific ideas. He believed that only a return to Puritanism could restore discipline to the country. Politically, also, Carlyle believed in the concept of one great leader who could lead his countrymen with his wisdom and strength. Ruskin and Walter Pater wrote on art, among other subjects, and paved the way for the Pre-Raphaelite Movement.

Poetry blossomed in the Victorian age. A new form of poetry called the dramatic monologue became very popular. **Robert Browning** perfected this form through several delightful poems. **Lord Alfred Tennyson** was the most representative poet whose poetry reflected the varying nuances of Victorian life and character. Matthew Arnold wrote a great deal of poetry that had a tremendous impact upon the age.

A separate group of poets called the **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood** believed that art should exist for art's sake. They admired the Italian painters who lived before Raphael. The poets who belonged to this school were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti and William Hunt.

Victorian literature includes some of the most popular novels ever written.

**Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy** are some of the shining stars who belonged to this galaxy. Their novels give us accurate pictures of the social life of this age. Victorian writers wrote about the prosperity of the upper classes and the wretched condition of the poor. They reflected in turn Victorian optimism and pessimism. At no other period did literature and society affect one another as they did in the nineteenth century.

## The Reform Bills

The most outstanding change that took place in the nineteenth century was the gradual emergence of England as a democracy. This change was brought about by a series of Reform Bills. With the passing of each bill, a larger section of the population was given the right to vote. By the time the last bill was passed in 1928, every adult male and female could vote.

There had been no major change in the representative system of England and Wales since Tudor times. Each borough and county could send two representatives to the Parliament. After the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions, most of the people living in boroughs migrated to the cities. Some boroughs even disappeared completely. Yet they enjoyed the benefit of sending two representatives to the Parliament. Ironically, big industrial towns did not have any representation. The workers resented this as they had no scope for expressing their grievances to the government.

Another factor which led to the passing of the **Reform Bill of 1832** was the unjust qualification for a person to have the right to vote. According to the old custom, any freeholder with an income of forty shillings could vote while wealthy tenant farmers could not. This caused a lot of discontent in the minds of the people.

The Whig government appointed a committee to study parliamentary reform. **Lord Durham**, the chairman of this committee, made a thorough study of the existing state of affairs and submitted his report. **Earl Grey**, the Prime Minister, accepted the changes recommended by the **Durham Committee** and introduced the Reform Bill in Parliament in 1831. The House of Lords opposed the bill, and as a result, Grey requested King William IV to dissolve the Parliament. In the general election which followed the dismissal of the government, the Whigs were re-elected. This clearly indicated that the people wanted reform very badly. The Reform Bill was

once again rejected by the House of Lords. Earl Grey resigned, and **Wellington** was asked to form the ministry. Wellington could not do so and Grey was asked to return. When the bill was proposed for the third time in 1832, it was finally passed.

The total number of seats in the House of Commons remained unaltered. Fifty-six 'rotten boroughs' were disfranchised and thirty others could send only one member. As a result, a hundred and forty-three seats were released. Of these, sixty-five were given to large towns and cities that had been unrepresented so far. Sixty-five others were given to newly-created rural constituencies that were thickly populated. The remaining thirteen were given to Ireland and Scotland.

As far as the question of franchise was concerned, the forty-shilling freeholders retained the right to vote, but the franchise was extended to copyholders and leaseholders whose lands were worth £10 a year. Short lease holders and tenants whose lands were worth £50 a year were also given the right to vote.

These changes, although they might appear impressive at first glance, were not all that revolutionary. The people expected a great deal from the Reform Bill, but in reality only one section of society benefited—the middle class. It nevertheless broke the monopoly of power possessed by the gentry and the nobility. By giving the vote to the middle class, the centre of gravity in politics was shifted. A major result of the Reform Bill of 1832 was that it had set the ball rolling. Once one section of society got the franchise, the other sections were bound to make demands too. The working classes, who did not benefit through the Reform Bill, remained disgruntled. This led to several agitations and movements. Of these, the most important were **socialism**, **trade unionism** and **Chartism**.

Chartism was an uprising demanding reform. It was a movement started by **William Lovett** in 1836. It was a fervent and tempestuous protest by the poor against the sordid conditions under which they lived. A demand for the franchise was made for the working class. Lovett, with the help of Francis Place, drew up a programme outlining the reform of Parliament. This programme, which had six points, was known as the **People's Charter**. It was from this that the movement got the name of **Chartism**. The Chartists'

demands were rejected by the Parliament in 1839 and in 1842. A general strike was declared and hundreds of Chartists were imprisoned. Although the movement appeared a failure, ultimately, most of their demands were conceded.

The **Second Reform Bill** was introduced by **Gladstone** in 1866 and was rejected in the House of Commons itself. Later, there was a wave of resentment among the working classes and the lower middle classes. They demanded reform and held demonstrations at Hyde Park. **Lord Derby**, who was the Prime Minister then, passed the Second Reform Bill in 1867 with the support of **Disraeli**. This gave the vote to artisans and small householders. By the Reform Bill of 1867, all workmen who lived in towns got the franchise. After 1867, one out of twelve people had the right to vote. However, agricultural labourers and miners were excluded.

The **Third Reform Bill** was passed by Gladstone when he was Prime Minister. It was rejected by the House of Lords and was finally passed only after a series of conferences between Gladstone and Salisbury. Through this bill, all householders in the counties were given the right to vote. By this move, about two million new voters were created in England. It also increased the electorate in Ireland and thus gave it a greater representation in Parliament.

The most important effect of the third act was that it did away with the old practice of representation by counties and boroughs. The country was divided into single-member constituencies of equal population. Every man who lived in a permanent house, either as a landlord or as a tenant, had the right to vote. This act made England a democracy and dealt a severe blow to the power of the aristocracy. The power now passed over completely to the people.

The **Representation of the People Act of 1918** gave the vote to all men above the age of twenty-one and to all women over thirty. For the first time, women were given the franchise. This age difference was abolished in 1928 and since then both men and women were considered equals as far as the electorate was concerned.

A study of these Reform Bills unfolds before us the gradual emergence of England from the clutches of the king and the nobles. Step by step, the

various sections of society were given the franchise until every adult male and female had a role to play in choosing the government. Today, England is one of the leading democratic countries of the world and serves as an example to the rest.

## The Development of Transport and Communication

The Victorian era witnessed great strides being taken in the fields of transport and communications. With the introduction of steamships, railways, penny posts, telegraph and cables, the entire society underwent a dramatic change. Life was never the same again. The slow pace of the stage coach disappeared and the age of speed arrived.

The first efficient steam engine was made by **James Watt** in 1769. These engines, which were stationary, were used at first to pump water out of mines or to operate the power loom in factories. It was only later that these engines were used in vehicles. Steamboats were used for short sea journeys. The year 1819 is an important one in the history of the steamship because the Atlantic Ocean was crossed for the first time by a ship fitted with steam engines, the *Savannah*. A ship called the *Great Western*, designed by Brunel, made regular voyages across the Atlantic. Next came the huge ocean liners which carried both passengers and mail from England to all parts of the world. Today, we have magnificent floating palaces that cruise all over the world.

The story of the railways is even more exciting. It brought about a complete revolution in the way of life and in the landscape of the country. **Richard Trevithick** was a pioneer of locomotives. In 1804, his 'steam carriage' transported a carload of passengers for the first time. **George Stephenson** produced an engine which was used chiefly to carry coal. From this, he got the idea of attaching carriages to the engines. The idea was put into action and the first two railways lines in the world were built—one, between Stockton and Darlington, and another, between Liverpool and Manchester. With this, England entered the railway era. To England goes the proud privilege of introducing railways to the world. The speed of the first train was thirty miles per hour.

The stage coach was the standard means of transport and people did not

expect trains to replace them. Eventually, trains began to pick up speed and forced stage coaches into oblivion. In the beginning, railway carriages were not very comfortable, but gradually improvements were made. The 1840s was the decade when the railways became very popular.

The effects of the railways upon society were tremendous. Distribution of goods was made easy. Highly perishable items like milk and fish could be transported to every corner of the kingdom. Postal communication also received a boost due to the railways. Travelling became a passion with the people. The idea of going to the countryside for a holiday became popular with all classes of society. There were a few disadvantages also. In the process of laying railway tracks and building bridges and tunnels, a lot of irreparable damage was done to the beautiful English countryside. This was the price modern man had to pay for the luxuries that he wished to enjoy.

Many innovations were made in the area of communications in the nineteenth century. Posts had been a government monopoly in England since the reign of James I. There was a tax on letters but it was very difficult to impose it strictly since private travellers smuggled letters. During the reign of Queen Victoria, **Rowland Hill** campaigned for much-needed postal reforms which led to the establishment of the **Uniform Penny Post** for all letters within the kingdom. In 1840, the Penny Black stamp, with Queen Victoria's image, was issued. Britain was the first country in the world to use stamps for letters and soon other countries copied the example.

The transport of mail has undergone dramatic changes since 1600. Till 1750, mail used to be transported through pack horses. Later, from 1750 to 1840, mail coaches were used, and since 1850 the railways played a major role in this field. Airmail service was introduced in 1919.

Another major breakthrough in the field of communication was the introduction of the electric telegraph. The telegraph was the product of several inventors. **Sir Charles Wheatstone** made the earliest workable telegraph in England. Soon telegraph wires were seen crisscrossing the country along with the railways. **Reuter's News Agency** was begun in London, and the telegraph helped in conveying news very rapidly. The year 1868 was an important one in the history of the telegraph since the first Atlantic cable was laid from Ireland to Newfoundland. Eventually, cables

were laid connecting all the countries of the world, and greater speed was brought into communications. England had come a long way from the days of the pack horse.

There was a revolution in the press as well. The newspapers of the mid-Victorians had been very serious and dignified. The presentation of news was very dull and boring. They appealed only to intellectual readers. Towards the end of the century, cheap and sensational newspapers replaced the stuffy papers of the earlier age. News was presented in the form of a story. Sentences and paragraphs were deliberately kept short. The style was informal and casual, and therefore appealed to a wider section of society. The primary aim of such newspapers was not to inform, but to amuse. This change was brought about by **Lord Northcliffe** and his brother **Harold Harmsworth**. In 1896, Lord Northcliffe founded the *Daily Mail* which became extremely popular.

The telephone, which is now the easiest and the most popular means of communication, was invented by **Alexander Graham Bell**. The first telephone exchange was opened in London in 1879 with just seven or eight subscribers. Today, the telephone has become so common that people have almost forgotten the art of letter writing. **Rudyard Kipling**, paying a tribute to the marvels of science, especially those facilitating transport and communication, exclaims:

Would you call a friend from half across the world?  
If you'll let us have his name and town and state,  
You shall see and hear your crackling question hurled  
Across the arch of heaven while you wait.  
Has he answered? Does he need you at his side?  
You can start this very evening if you choose,  
And take the Western Ocean in the stride  
Of seventy thousand horses and some screws!

## The Development of Education in the Nineteenth Century

The Industrial Revolution, with its dislocation of the population, created many problems. There was a concentration of population around the industrial centres which led to problems concerning health and housing. It also raised the question of the education of the people more sharply than before. There was no state educational system for the common people, and a majority of the working class was completely illiterate. The only schools available for the working classes were of three kinds—the dame schools, the schools supported by private subscription, and the charity and Sunday schools.

In many villages, 'dames' (old women) taught the children the alphabet for a small fee. These schools were places of 'periodical confinement' where children were looked after, rather than places of instruction. The children belonging to the working class attended these schools till they were old enough to work in the factories.

Most of the schools run with the help of private subscription were not very good. These schools used the monitorial system. By this system, a whole school could be run by one teacher in one room with the help of child monitors. Clever boys or girls learnt a short lesson from the teacher and repeated it over and over again to the other children until they learnt it by rote.

Charity and Sunday schools were mostly free and had been conducted since the end of the seventeenth century by the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*. They taught reading and writing and the children were expected to learn the catechism by heart. Sunday schools normally aimed at teaching children to read the Bible. The only aim of these charity and Sunday Schools was to save the souls of men and women by bringing them up as

Bible-reading, evangelical Christians.

Children from well-to-do families were luckier than those from poor ones. When they were very young, they had nannies to look after them. Then, when the boys were older, they attended public schools such as Eton and Rugby. The girls continued their education from home under the supervision of governesses. They were taught singing, sewing and piano playing. All this changed by the end of the Victorian age as all children below the age of twelve had to attend schools.

In 1818, an official report described the educational activity in Great Britain as a 'lamentable deficiency'. This was particularly true of the education of the poor. Voluntary effort was confined almost entirely to the towns and cities; country districts were completely neglected. Even in cities like London, thousands of people were illiterate.

Though primary education of the masses was neglected, the secondary education of the upper classes underwent remarkable development. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were three kinds of secondary schools—grammar schools, public schools and private academies.

**Grammar schools** were founded mostly between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries by endowment as free schools for instructing poor boys in Greek and Latin grammar. Due to inflation, the endowments became inadequate to run these schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They started taking paying students along with free students and gradually the former replaced the latter completely. Slowly, the rich and the aristocracy began to claim the education of these schools. So, instead of local schools for the poor, they became famous as exclusive **public schools** for the rich. In spite of this change, these schools still clung tenaciously to their old function of teaching Greek and Latin grammar.

There was little reform of the public schools by the government in the first half of the nineteenth century. Educational reform was aimed at the elementary system only. But there were several headmasters whose zeal brought about a lot of changes in the public schools and made them prestigious institutions. Outstanding headmasters were **Samuel Butler** of Shrewsbury and **Thomas Arnold** of Rugby. The public schools were

notorious for indiscipline. Arnold focused on the moral education of the boys. Education for Arnold was inseparable from religion, and his constant aim was to train a boy to be 'a Christian, a gentleman and a scholar'—in that order. He believed that senior boys of the sixth form could influence the whole school. He retained the practice of flogging and he insisted on the right to expel any boy whose influence on the school he felt was bad. As far as studies were concerned, Arnold continued the classical tradition, but he introduced modern history, geography and modern languages. Through the work of such headmasters, public schools became very popular in the Victorian age. Some of the famous public schools were **Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Westminster**.

**Private academies**, founded by dissenters, were meant for the middle class. The discipline here was better than in the public schools. These schools imparted a more scientific and modern education, but were not considered to be as important as the public schools.

Secondary education of girls was not given any importance in the nineteenth century. Attention was focused on women's education only in the last few years of Queen Victoria's reign.

Several changes were brought about in university education also. These changes could be examined under three headings—changes in staff, in syllabus and in students. Up to the nineteenth century, the staff of Oxford and Cambridge comprised of clergymen only. By the end of the century, many of the staff were laymen. This was a major change since, for centuries, it was the tradition of these universities to appoint only clergymen. Anyone aspiring to an academic career had to take a religious test. **The Test Act of 1871** abolished this practice and threw open the gates of universities to any deserving candidate.

Another change in the universities concerned the syllabus. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the 'classics' was the chief subject that was taught. Slowly, the study of sciences and modern languages was included in the syllabus. Scientific education became so predominant that it almost displaced humanism in the twentieth century. Today, value-based education is hardly considered valuable. It is true that technologically and scientifically, the youth of the twentieth century are very advanced, but as far as high

culture and civilisation in the true sense of the word are concerned, they lag far behind the youth of mid-nineteenth-century England.

Slowly, universities began to admit woman students also. Some colleges were created exclusively for women, such as St Hilda's, St Hugh's and Somerville. There were others, such as All Soul's and Christ Church, which were co-educational. Although women were admitted into colleges in the nineteenth century, they were not granted degrees till 1920.

After the passing of the Reforms Bills of 1832 and 1867, the middle classes and the working classes were given the franchise. The authorities felt that without a proper education, these people would not be able to exercise their franchise properly. Hence educational reforms became necessary in order to enlighten the masses.

The first step taken in this direction was the establishment of a grant of twenty thousand pounds a year to help private agencies in the field of education. An educational committee was set up to look into the running of schools. Matthew Arnold was one such inspector and, like his father, contributed greatly to the field of education. Training colleges for teachers were set up in order to improve teaching methods.

Gladstone's **Education Act of 1870** was the greatest of all reform acts. Before 1870, there was hardly any national system of education in England. Through this act, primary education was made available for every child in England. Ten years later, Gladstone's government made attendance at elementary schools compulsory. Primary schooling was made free in all public elementary schools in 1891. Another innovation that Gladstone brought about in 1870 was the throwing open of all posts in the civil service to the public. These posts were decided by a competitive examination and not by superiority of birth.

By Gladstone's act, there was to be at least one public elementary school in each district. These were under state supervision. The act also decided that these elementary schools should exclude from their teaching any 'catechism'. Elementary education improved tremendously after 1870. Between 1870 and 1890, attendance at school rose from 1.25 to 4.50 million.

Another important act in the field of education was Balfour's **Education**

**Act of 1902.** By this act, elementary education was restricted to children under fifteen. For older children, central schools were started. Slowly, provisions were made for the control of secondary schools by the State.

## The Dawn of the Twentieth Century

Edward VII            1901–1910

George V            1910–1936

The Edwardian and Georgian eras witnessed far-reaching changes that were never seen by any previous period in human history. The Edwardian era, which coincided with the first decade of the century, proved to be the last period of relative peace before the world was ripped apart by the terrible World War in 1914. It was also a decade of startling new discoveries in the world of science. The Georgian era was more troubled with the World War on one side and the Irish problem on the other. It was a period of change not only in England but all over the world. By the end of George V's reign, the world had limped back to normalcy after one war and was almost on the brink of another.

Let us take a quick look at the first twenty years of the century. Those early years were a mixture of pride, progress, war, revolution, poverty and prosperity. In short, it was a harbinger of a century that has bewildered historians who have not been able to decide whether it was a century of great progress or one of materialistic barbarity.

At the dawn of the new century, one-fifth of the world's entire land mass was under British sovereignty. On the international scene, Britain was a supreme power and enjoyed her 'splendid isolation'. It was a term coined to describe the complacency of the British people and their indifference to and isolation from other European countries.

This attitude underwent a change after the **Boer War** (1899–1902) which was fought between the British and the Boers (the Dutch settlers of the Orange Free State and the Republic of Transvaal, both in southern Africa).

Although the British succeeded in suppressing the Boers, they were made aware of the unfriendly and hostile attitude of the European countries. This startled them out of their complacency and made them eager to form allies. Britain entered into an agreement first with Japan and later with France.

Domestically, it was a period of liberal reformation. In 1906, the Liberal Party won a landslide victory over the Conservative Party. Their victory clearly revealed the people's urge towards social democracy. There was a growing demand by the labour class for a better standard of living. The first step in this direction was the **Old Age Pension Act** (1908). According to this act, a weekly pension was given to men and women over seventy. Next was the **People's Budget** (1909) which aimed at giving the utmost relief to the poor. Another social reform of importance was the **National Insurance** (1911). For the first time, the idea of insurance was introduced. This gave protection to workmen who lost their jobs due to illness or accidents. Earlier, such men could only appeal to the Poor Law or the trade unions and 'friendly societies'. This was the background for the rise of socialism in England, and the eventual popularity of the Labour Party.

Soon after the curtain was raised over the second decade of the century, Britain found herself embroiled in one of the worst wars the world had ever seen—the **First World War**. It was for the first time that the world was witnessing war on such a large scale. It was originally called the Great War, and began seemingly inconsequentially with the assassination of **Archduke Francis Ferdinand** of Austria-Hungary in Sarajevo. Historians have, however, traced the roots of the war as going much deeper. Some of the deep-seated causes for the First Word War were the growing spirit of nationalism, a race for colonies, and military alliances that tilted the balance of power. The two opposing sides in the war were known as the **Allies** and the **Central Powers**. France, Great Britain, Russia and later the United States of America were the Allies and they supported Serbia. The Central Powers were made up of Austria-Hungary and Germany. As the war progressed, several other countries were drawn into it. In the beginning, thousands of young men, burning with patriotic zeal, volunteered for the armed forces. What began as a patriotic crusade against the tyranny of the Kaiser of Germany, ended in a nightmare in which almost an entire generation was killed on the Western Front. Britain suffered heavy casualties. Her economy

was badly shaken.

The war had far-reaching effects on the world. It altered the political landscape of several countries. The world was never the same again. Four monarchies came crashing down with the fall of **Czar Nicholas II** of Russia, **Kaiser Wilhelm II** of Germany, **Emperor Charles** of Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Sultan, **Muhammad VI**. With the fall of these empires, new countries were carved out, changing the map of the world irrevocably. The end of the war brought the United States to the forefront as a country rich in natural resources and one with tremendous political influence. Slowly but surely, Britain was receding to the background.

Socially, too, the war had a tremendous impact. During the war, when there was a shortage of male workers, women took up jobs in factories and offices. After the war came to an end, women were reluctant to give up their economic independence and began to demand an equal status in society. Many countries granted women the right to vote. Another interesting social change was the blurring of class distinctions. The men, who had shared the same trenches and faced the same dangers during the war, could never go back to the old social hierarchy. The power of the aristocracy was reduced, and the men who had bled for the country were recognised as the real heroes and were given importance in the government. There was also a change in the attitude of the people towards life in general. Their belief in the superiority of the civilisation of Europe was shattered for ever.

The first two decades of the century saw undreamt of inventions and discoveries in the world of science and technology. New scientific theories were proposed. Some outstanding discoveries were those of X-rays by **Wilhelm Roentgen**, radium by **Marie and Pierre Curie**, and wireless communication by **Guglielmo Marconi**. It was at this time that **Ernest Rutherford** split the atom and showed the world its great potential. **Albert Einstein** gave the world his famous *theory of relativity*. The science of psychoanalysis was developed after the publication of **Sigmund Freud**'s *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900.

There was a revolution in the field of transport too. The event which altered the lifestyle of the people was the invention of the motor car. At first, it was looked upon with suspicion and people insisted on a man walking

ahead of it with a red flag. When King Edward VII started using a car, automobiles became more popular. The idea of mass production of the car, first conceived by **Henry Ford** in the USA and later taken up in England by **Herbert Austin** and **William Morris**, made it affordable. Soon motor cars began to replace horse-driven carriages.

The development of the omnibus had a greater impact upon the working classes. They could now afford to live in the less crowded suburbs and travel daily to their place of work. Holidays away from home became a reality for the majority of the people.

This change from horse-driven to horsepower vehicles necessitated sturdier roads that would not raise a dust storm. The beginning of the century introduced the shining black roads which replaced the white roads so characteristic of Britain since early times.

Up to the end of the nineteenth century, man had established his supremacy over land and sea. For a long time, man had dreamt of conquering the air. Some attempts had been made in the Victorian age to use huge balloons, but they were not successful. In 1903, a major breakthrough was made in the USA by the **Wright brothers**. The first flight across the Atlantic was made by two Englishmen— **John Alcock** and **Arthur Whitten Brown**. Again, the first solo flight by a woman was by the British **Amy Johnson**.

The full potential of electricity was realised when it was put to domestic use. Heat and cold could be controlled and life became comfortable. One now wonders how people managed to live through the long, cold winters in England before electricity was discovered. The fireplace and candles seem to be poor substitutes for central heating and electric lights which fill homes with warmth and light at the touch of a switch.

The development of refrigeration was another scientific marvel that had an impact upon society. Due to refrigeration, a greater variety was introduced into the diet of the Englishman. For the first time, the banana and the grapefruit made an appearance in England, and people were excited about these strange new flavours.

With so many revolutionary changes taking place all around, it was but inevitable that architecture should also be affected. New styles of architecture

were introduced through the use of steel framework and concrete. Old buildings were pulled down and replaced with high-rise flats and shops. It is difficult to say whether this innovation in architecture was for better or for worse, for it destroyed many beautiful houses built in the classical style of the eighteenth century.

A marked change in the twentieth century is the one seen in the position of women. Politically, women were given an equal right to vote. In social life also, women received a greater measure of equality as both boys and girls received similar state-sponsored education. Women were allowed to enter into professions that were earlier meant exclusively for men. A woman could drive a car or fly an aeroplane. Even women's dresses revealed the greater freedom enjoyed by the twentieth-century woman. Gone were the cumbersome skirts of the Victorian. Short, comfortable dresses, which gave greater freedom of movement, became popular and fashionable.

With the opening of the twentieth century, a new school of painting made its influence felt. This new school, called **Post-Impressionism**, was inspired by French painters. Its artists made interesting use of vivid colours, and were not afraid to distort the form of their subjects in order to create artistic effects. This style was in sharp contrast to the Victorian's attempt to reproduce faithfully the object that he was studying.

There were several prominent writers who gained fame between 1901 and 1914. A number of them wrote novels and plays of social criticism. The term 'Edwardian' is often applied to the period of Edward VII's reign. The techniques of realism and naturalism were very popular with the writers of this period. The leading Edwardian novelists include **Arnold Bennett** and **HG Wells**. Bennett focused his attention on the dull, narrow lives of the middle class in the small towns of England. Wells wrote political satire as well as science fiction. **Joseph Conrad** wrote psychologically probing novels on such themes as guilt, heroism and honour. *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* are some of his outstanding works. **DH Lawrence** attacked industrialism, the class system and the prudishness of Britain through his novels. The British short story received a new impetus due to the contribution of writers such as HH Munro, who wrote under the pen name 'Saki', and the New Zealand-born **Katherine Mansfield**. **George Bernard Shaw** took the

London stage by storm, attacking social values in plays like *Major Barbara* and *A Doctor's Dilemma*. Other dramatists of the Edwardian era include **JM Barrie**, whose *Peter Pan* became a classic, and **John Galsworthy**, who concentrated on the social issues of the day.

Beginning about 1905, a group of writers and artists met frequently in a section of London called Bloomsbury. They were known as the **Bloomsbury group**. The most prominent among them were **Virginia Woolf** and **Lytton Strachey**. In novels like *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf captured very sensitively the upper middle class life. She used a technique called the '**stream of consciousness**' to reveal the inner thoughts of her characters. Strachey revolutionised the concept of the biography by introducing the method of debunking in his *Eminent Victorians*.

The leading poets of the early twentieth century were known as the **Georgians**. They wrote romantic poetry about nature and the pleasures of rural life. It was very idealistic and traditional poetry. Well-known poets of this school were **Rupert Brooke** and **John Masefield**. Many other poets, who wrote during and after World War I, became known as the **War Poets**. Some of the important ones were Siegfried Sassoon, Ivor Gurney, Wilfred Owen and Robert Graves.

A startling change took place due to the invention of the cinema and the radio. The cinema proved to be one of the most universal sources of amusement. Hollywood, in the USA, became the centre of the movie world. The radio brought music and entertainment into almost every home, and was the centre of attraction till it was replaced by television.

## Life Between the Two World Wars (1919 to 1939)

Since the beginning of civilisation, the world had not seen a war on as large a scale as during World War I. Millions of people were either killed or maimed, and several countries of Europe were near collapse. Naturally, the end of such a war was heartily welcomed when the peace treaty was signed at Versailles in 1919. Britain, which was very much affected by the war, looked forward to a period of peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, the years after World War I were very difficult ones for Great Britain.

Although Britain had not been invaded or defeated like France and Germany, she was badly shaken up. Her position as the world's foremost economic superpower was usurped by the USA. British trade and economy were in ruins. During the war, Britain had borrowed heavily from the USA—both for herself and for her allies. Now, she had to repay the great national debt all by herself since her allies were totally crushed economically.

In 1918, the Parliament was elected on an almost universal suffrage. According to the **Representation of the People's Act (1918)**, all men over twenty-one and all women over twenty-five were given the franchise. Women had played an active part in the war and could no longer be ignored.

The end of the war resulted in the demobilisation of the army. This meant that several hundreds of men were now unemployed. The cost of living had shot up during the war and did not fall to its original levels. Employers wished to reduce wages since the profit margin was very narrow. Coal mining and railways—the two flourishing industries of Great Britain—were badly hit due to the substitution of oil for coal and the advance of petrol-driven cars. There was discontent and disappointment all around.

In 1924, the Labour Party won the election and formed its first government with **Ramsay MacDonald** as Prime Minister. The party, which consisted of

socialists and workers' groups, was looked upon with apprehension initially. The first term of the Labour Party however saw nothing startling since it depended on the Liberal Party for a majority in the House of Commons. It remained in power for just eleven months. This was only the beginning: through the years, the Labour Party gradually grew stronger, and today, along with the Conservative Party, it is one of the two chief political parties of England.

The time between 1924 and 1929, when the Conservatives held the reins, was a grim period in England. Trade had declined drastically and the problem of unemployment became more serious. Due to the decline in the demand for coal, miners suffered greatly. Mine owners decided to lower wages since the cost of production had gone up. This led to a miners' strike. They were soon supported by railwaymen, transport workers and engineers. A **General Strike of all Trade Unions** was declared in 1926. It failed very quickly since the government took steps to provide transport and food. Police and soldiers were called to help the volunteer workers. All essential services were in operation and after a week, the unions were forced to acknowledge defeat. Although the General Strike was a failure, the workers used their votes after three years to defeat the Conservative government and to elect the Labour Party once more in 1929.

It was the wrong time for the Labour Party to assume power. Economic conditions had not improved, and, to make matters worse, a crash in the New York Stock Exchange in 1929 led to a **depression** which engulfed the whole of Europe. The financial crisis created a panic and the Labour government could not deal with the disaster. MacDonald called for a National Government (consisting of Conservatives, Liberals and the Labour) to handle the situation. Drastic measures were adopted by the National Government to face the crisis. Gradually, the panic subsided and the economy began to improve. Between 1923 and 1938, certain new industries began to expand. Companies involved in all kinds of electrical work, such as wiring, cables and lamps, grew rapidly.

In 1936, **George V** died after reigning over England through a very difficult period. He was succeeded by his eldest son, **Edward VIII**, who abdicated after a reign of just ten months. His brother Prince Albert was

crowned King **George VI**.

Soon after World War I ended, the **Irish problem** became explosive. In 1919, the Irish leaders declared Ireland independent. Bitter fighting followed between the Irish rebels and a special British police force. The British police force was nicknamed the Black and Tans because of their khaki uniforms and black helmets. Both sides committed a lot of atrocities till George V pleaded for an end to hostilities. A settlement was reached in 1921 in which southern Ireland agreed to become a British dominion. The new dominion was called the **Irish Free State**. Northern Ireland continued to remain a part of the United Kingdom, which was renamed the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.

Soon after the war came to an end, there was the immediate post-war mood of frivolity and gay abandon. This was very short-lived as it soon gave way to doubt and uncertainty. People's expectations of peacetime prosperity were dashed as inflation and unemployment continued to rage. This led them into a self-questioning mood, and subjects like ethics and religion were closely scrutinised. The people were slowly becoming disillusioned with the ideas of empire and democracy.

Political enfranchisement went far ahead of education with the result that the man in the street had become important politically. The experience of the First World War, with its large scale devastations, coloured the thinking of the people. A deep sense of despair and hopelessness cast a long shadow on the literature of the age. A mood of pessimism and uncertainty prevailed and was reflected in the literature of the time. TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* accurately captures the post-war mood of the Western world in all its unsure feverishness:

you know only  
Am heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water ...  
I think we are in rats' alley  
Where the dead men lost their bones.

In all areas of art, innovators tried to create new art forms that would

reflect the chaos and frenzy of the times. The twenties saw the publication of such experimental works as **James Joyce**'s stream-of-consciousness novel *Ulysses* and the novels of **Virginia Woolf**. The various innovations of the twenties came to be grouped under the heading of **modernism**. The distinguishing feature of modernism was its experimental quality. Some of the influences on modernism were **imaging** and **symbolism**. Imagism, introduced to England by **Ezra Pound**, uses images to communicate a message. These images used details that could be perceived by the senses. For example, Pound, in his poem 'L'Art 1910', describes a modernist painting in the following words:

Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,  
Crushed strawberries! Come, let us feast our eyes.

Symbolism originated in France in the eighteenth century and made use of imaginative symbols that would evoke emotions in the readers. The use of images as subtle symbols became a favourite device for **WB Yeats** and **TS Eliot**.

**WB Yeats**, the poet and dramatist, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. **DH Lawrence**'s novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* created a sensation in 1928. Other novelists who were popular between the two world wars were **Pearl S Buck**, **Aldous Huxley**, **Christopher Isherwood** and **Graham Greene**.

The **Irish Literary Movement**, also known as the **Irish Renaissance** or the Celtic Renaissance, began during the late Victorian age. It tried to revive the dying Gaelic language and early Celtic history and literature. It led to the founding of an Irish national theatre known as the **Abbey Theatre of Dublin**. Plays of dramatists like **JM Synge** and **Sean O'Casey** were produced by this theatre.

The comic strip became popular with children. Characters like Tintin and a host of Walt Disney creations began to endear themselves to the public. **Walt Disney** then went on to make full-length cartoon films with sound. **Charlie Chaplin** became the most popular film star of his day. **Laurel and Hardy** were rated as the most comic pair and they made several films. In 1939, Margaret Mitchell's novel ***Gone with the Wind*** was made into a film and it

broke all records. The ‘golden age’ of Hollywood had arrived, with such classics as *It Happened One Night*, *Stagecoach*, *It’s a Wonderful World*, *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* and *The Wizard of Oz* being produced during this period.

In the world of art, **Pablo Picasso** had become the world’s most famous painter and was responsible for creating a new style called *Cubism*. In music, a whole new form called jazz became a rage. Jazzmen like Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver and Duke Ellington created innovative sounds that were widely welcomed by the younger generation.

## **The Effects of World War II**

World War II had a devastating effect on Britain. About 3,60,000 British citizens were killed in the war, and great sections of London and other cities were destroyed by German bombs. British economy was shattered and once again a huge pile of debts posed difficulties to the government. England was forced to recognise the fact that she was no longer the power that she used to be in global politics. Russia and the USA clearly emerged as the two giants of the world.

The Labour Party won a landslide victory in 1945. The party promised a socialistic programme in its election manifesto. They assured the people of full employment, social security, housing, and the nationalisation of industry and public health services. The war-weary people were only too eager to give the Labour Party a chance. **Clement Attlee** became the Prime Minister and the Labour Party remained in power till 1951. During those six years, it made Britain into a '**welfare state**'. The social security system was expanded to provide welfare for the people 'from the cradle to the grave'. Private business was brought under public control by the Labour government through nationalisation. The nationalised industries included the Bank of England, the coal mines, the railways, the iron and steel industry, and the trucking industry.

Housing and inflation were the two major problems of the Labour government. The sudden end of the war meant the return of several servicemen to England. These men found work easily enough since the factories had to produce goods that were needed in times of peace and labourers were scarce. The chief problem was that several houses were destroyed during the war and needed rebuilding urgently. It took almost a decade for the government to meet the demands of the people.

There was severe inflation due to shortage of goods after the war. The

prices of imports shot up and the country had spent huge amounts on defence and social services. Increase in prices led to a demand for higher wages. When wages were increased, the cost of production went up and the prices of goods had to be raised again. It was very difficult to get out of this vicious circle.

There was a general shortage of food in the world. As a result, the price of meat, sugar and wheat was very high. Britain, wishing to cut down on her imports, continued wartime rationing of food. In fact, the situation became even worse after the war, for bread rationing was introduced for the first time. The country, faced with so many problems, had to make many sacrifices. There was no relaxation even after the war came to an end.

After World War II, several colonies of the British Empire began to increase their demands for independence. In 1947, India and Pakistan were given independence, followed by Ceylon and Burma in 1948. In 1949, the Republic of Ireland, and in 1961, South Africa, were declared independent nations. Britain adopted a policy of liberalism towards her colonies and gradually and quietly the Empire was vastly reduced. Since the year 1947, the usage of the word 'Dominion' was dropped. Instead a new term 'Commonwealth' was used to describe British territories, whatever their status. The Commonwealth countries include many parts of Asia, Africa and Europe.

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of another kind of war—the **Cold War**. This refers to the mutual distrust between the **Eastern Bloc** and the **Western Bloc**. Almost the entire world was engulfed by the Cold War and Britain was also involved in it. Britain was a part of the Western Bloc which stood for democracy. The phrase 'Iron Curtain', used famously by **Winston Churchill** in a speech he made in 1946, became a popular metaphor to describe the Soviet barriers against the West.

One of the most outstanding changes to be seen in post-war England was the social levelling up. Class consciousness was reduced to a great degree. There are several reasons for this social change. During the war, soldiers drawn from different ranks of society shared the same trenches and faced the same bullets. Another reason was the mass production of clothes. It was easy for any woman to follow the fashions set by ladies of rank. Educational

institutions also played a part in paving the way for a classless society. Oxford and Cambridge threw open its doors to the sons of workers and miners after the war.

In fact, the working classes were in a better position after the war since the Labour government favoured them. The upper and middle classes were taxed heavily and the wide gulf between the three classes was narrowed considerably. There was an almost complete disintegration of class boundaries.

It did not, however, mean that the upper class was completely wiped out. Whatever party was in office, the higher civil service continued to be dominated by the upper class. For generations, the traditional occupation of the upper classes was politics. In the new age, they began to move into other jobs. By the mid-1950s, journalism, publishing, films, radio, television and advertising became popular with the upper class.

Similarly, the working class also remained distinct as a class. Although educational opportunities were given to them, a majority of the working class received only elementary education. Individual members could move upwards and enter Oxford and Cambridge; but by large, conditions within the working class and their attitudes discouraged educational aspirations.

The upheavals of World War II had its repercussions on family life. The war had disrupted several families and as a result divorce became very common. In 1947, there were 60,000 divorces, which was ten times the pre-war figures. Statistics show that by the mid-fifties, there were about 25,000 divorces a year.

Writers like **Graham Greene** and **WH Auden** continued to write after World War II ended. Some of the important post-war writers were **George Orwell**, **JD Salinger**, **Ernest Hemingway** and **William Golding**.

During the fifties, a group of writers expressed their dissatisfaction with traditional English politics, education and literature. These writers were known as the **Angry Young Men**. They included the dramatist **John Osborne** and the novelist **John Braine**. Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956) describes a young working-class man's resentment of the British class system.

Other writers whose works reflect the changes in English society included **Sir CP Snow** and **Anthony Powell**. In America, there was a spurt of dramatists who became popular in England. **Arthur Miller**, **Tennessee Williams** and **Eugene O'Neill** were some of the dramatists whose plays were welcomed by the people.

Cinema attendance reached a peak during the 1940s. The films of **Alfred Hitchcock** and classics such as **David Lean's** *The Bridge on the River Kwai* contributed greatly to this. Cinema continued to remain popular, though a slow decline began to set in during the early fifties due to the advent of television. Football was another favourite leisure activity in the fifties.

## Social Security and the Welfare State

The government programme that helps workers—both in service and retired—and their families achieve a degree of financial security is known as **social security**. Social security gives financial aid to people who are retired or who have lost their jobs. It also aids the disabled. In order to become eligible for this, one has to work in a job covered by social security for a certain period.

**Welfare** is different from social security. It helps the needy, irrespective of their work records. It generally refers to government programmes that provide money, medical care, food and housing for the economically weaker sections. People who receive welfare include children, the aged, the handicapped and others who are not able to provide for themselves.

Soon after World War II came to an end, the Labour Party came to power with Clement Attlee as the Prime Minister. The Labour Party's electoral manifesto clearly promised to provide a programme of social services and nationalisation. In the six years after the war, England transformed into a **welfare state** under the Labour government. The government passed a number of acts to ensure social security and welfare for the people. Some of the important measures they adopted were:

- a. Nationalisation of
  - i. The Bank of England
  - ii. The coal industry
  - iii. Electricity
  - iv. Inland transport
  - v. The gas industry
  - vi. National Insurance Act

- vii. Family Allowance Act
- viii. National Health Service Act
- ix. Housing Acts
- x. Education Act
- xi. New Towns Act

When the total assets of an industry are purchased by the State, it may be said to be a nationalised industry. **Nationalisation** is in direct opposition to the theory of *laissez faire*. Private owners are given compensation and the control of the industry passes on to the State. Nationalisation can be done only through an act of Parliament. After the Labour government came to power, it nationalised the Bank of England in 1946. By the **Coal Industry Nationalisation Act**, about eight hundred mining companies were brought under central regulation. Civil aviation, cables and wireless, electricity, and gas were also nationalised. When railways, canals, docks, harbours and buses were brought under government control, inland transport was also nationalised.

The **National Insurance Act** extended the social service programme of the Labour government. According to this act, every adult had to pay a small sum to the government. Similar payments were made by the employer for each employee. These contributions amounted to about thirty per cent of the cost of the insurance plan. The rest was made up by general taxation. The insurance plan made weekly payments during periods of illness and unemployment. Old-age pensions were given. At times of emergencies, such as pregnancy, childbirth, widowhood, or death, the National Insurance stepped forward with a helping hand. The **Family Allowance Act** provided small sums to every family for each child (except the first) until that child reached the age of fifteen.

The **National Health Service Act** provided free medical and dental services, such as free glasses, dentures and prescriptions for medicine. Hospitalisation was also included and it was the responsibility of the regional boards to provide for an adequate range of hospitals within their area. The **Health Service Act** was very flexible and allowed doctors to continue their

private practice. This act helped improve the general health of the nation. Families were relieved of the worry of not being able to afford medical help in case of illness.

Two **Housing Acts** were passed which provided homes to those whose houses were destroyed during the war. The first act prohibited private building and encouraged the construction of low-priced houses which the State could rent at a very low rate. The second act encouraged the improvement of large city houses which had degenerated through subdivision into apartments and cheap lodgings. The housing programme was criticised severely, but, within five years, 8,06,000 permanent houses and 1,57,000 temporary houses were built, and 3,33,000 new units were created through the conservation of older dwellings.

The government had ambitious plans for education. But they were badly handicapped due to a shortage of trained teachers and inadequate school buildings. An attempt was made to train teachers and the school-leaving age was raised to fifteen. Some assistance was given to universities and to university students.

According to the **New Towns Act**, the government could build new industrial and residential towns on the outskirts of large cities. This removed the focus from the congested urban centres and people began to move to the suburbs.

Within six years of the end of World War II, the social services provided by the government had greatly expanded. The level of unemployment was vastly reduced. Sufficient income to meet the cost of food and shelter was guaranteed to all. Free medical aid was provided. The housing problem was solved to a large extent and education became more democratic. There was a greater concern for the welfare of the population as a whole.

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# The Effects of the Cold War

The **Cold War** is the term used to describe the extreme political unfriendliness that existed from the end of World War II to the late eighties between groups of communist and non-communist countries. On one side were the USSR and its communist allies, known as the **Eastern Bloc**, and on the other side were the Western powers of the USA and its allies.

There was mutual suspicion, distrust and misunderstanding between the two blocs. The USA and its allies felt that the USSR's aim of spreading communism throughout the world threatened their security and economic interests. The Soviets, on the other hand, accused the USA of practising imperialism and of attempting to stop revolutionary activities in other nations. Each bloc had its own political ideals which were diametrically opposed to the other.

Soon after World War II, the two great blocs were formed and the Cold War began. It intensified during the 1940s and the 1950s, and reached its peak in the 1960s. World peace was severely threatened. The arms race began afresh with both sides experimenting with nuclear weapons. At the same time, there was a space race between the USA and the USSR: the world watched in astonishment as the Americans and the Soviets tried to outdo each other in conquering space. By the seventies, both sides began to recognise the dangers involved in recklessly amassing powerful weapons that could wipe out large cities and populations in minutes. In the eighties, many efforts were made to improve relations between the two superpowers.

Most historians agree that the Cold War began after the **Yalta Conference**. The 'Big Three'—President **Franklin D Roosevelt** of the USA, Premier **Joseph Stalin** of the USSR and Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** of Great Britain—met at Yalta (in modern-day Ukraine) in February 1945 to plan for the peace that would follow the war. Stalin would not cooperate with the

other leaders regarding the peacetime programme. Great Britain joined the USA in criticising the USSR's plan to spread communism in Eastern Europe. During 1945 and 1946, the USSR broke off all contacts between the West and the occupied territories of Eastern Europe. In March 1946, Churchill warned that an 'Iron Curtain' had descended across the continent. (The phrase 'Iron Curtain' became a popular expression to refer to communist barriers against the West.)

In the 1940s, the arms race between the two blocs began and continued into the 1950s. The Berlin Wall was a symbol of the confrontation between the two blocs. In the sixties, the world came dangerously close to a nuclear war. An attempt was made in the seventies to improve relations between the USA and the USSR. The Cold War took a fresh turn in the eighties when **Mikhail Gorbachev** took over the leadership of the USSR. '**Glasnost**' (openness) and '**perestroika**' (reconstruction) were the terms which came to be associated with the campaign of Gorbachev to reform the economic and political machinery of the USSR.

Great Britain, as one of the countries belonging to the Western Bloc, had to support the USA in any action that the latter took against the USSR. Britain had to pay a high price for the Cold War. She had to face very high military expenditure and there was uneasiness in the minds of the British that they were playing second fiddle to the USA. In the seventies, Britain's role as Washington's partner was reduced due to her economic deterioration.

When **Margaret Thatcher** became the Prime Minister in 1979, she paved the way for an economic revival and sought to avoid any public conflict with the USA. Through her personal friendship with President Reagan of the USA, she was able to make Britain's position more respectable. Up to 1982–83, Thatcher continued to repeat the anti-Soviet rhetoric of the Reagan administration. She was known as the 'Iron Lady' in the USSR. After she was re-elected in 1983, she changed her approach. The British government began to establish contacts with the Warsaw Pact countries. (The Warsaw Pact was a treaty signed by the communist nations of Europe that were under Soviet military command. They were Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania.) First, Thatcher paid a visit to Hungary, and later she went to Moscow.

Thatcher pursued her characteristic policy of supporting the USA while at the same time wishing to safeguard British and European interests. In 1984, she made a visit to the USA and secured the **Camp David pacts** which said that the USA would not seek nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. The USA agreed to maintain the balance between the superpowers. Gorbachev stopped over in Britain before going to Washington for one of his summit meetings with President Reagan. The Soviet Union believed that Thatcher exercised influence over Reagan through her personal friendship. In 1987, Reagan and Gorbachev signed an arms treaty agreeing to eliminate all medium-range missiles in both nations. Thatcher played a major role in the negotiations leading to the signing of this treaty. President Reagan spoke of a 'fresh start' in East-West relations.

The breaking of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was a symbolic act which signalled the end of bitterness between the power blocs. The Cold War became a thing of the past with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

## 27

### Life in the Sixties

The sixties was a decade of tremendous change in international, social and cultural affairs. It was a decade in which man walked on the moon and the first ever human heart transplant was carried out. Human life seemed to reach the very pinnacle of civilisation.

After a long time, England emerged into a period of remarkable stability and prosperity. The two world wars had caused havoc in Great Britain. The forties and the fifties witnessed a crippled country slowly limping back to health. After facing so many trials, the people of Britain were finding life easier in the sixties.

British society was quite static and conservative till the late fifties. Its main concern was reconstruction and stabilisation. As the fifties came to an end, there were many changes in living standards, lifestyles and attitudes. The society of the late sixties was relatively freewheeling and differed remarkably from the strait-laced and traditionalist society of the forties and the fifties.

In 1964, **Harold Wilson** became the Prime Minister, ending thirteen years of Conservative rule. The new Prime Minister promised a 'classless dynamic New Britain'. The Labour Party remained in power till 1970. With the Labour Party in power, the labour movement in Great Britain gathered momentum. Trade unions were becoming quite active in the sixties and would dominate politics in the seventies.

The sixties witnessed a new attitude towards class. One cannot call the decade's society completely 'classless', but the differences between the upper and lower classes were beginning to become almost indistinguishable. The working class enjoyed increased spending power in a way that it had never done before. This was due to their high wages. Back in 1951, the average weekly earnings of men over twenty-one was £8.20; by 1968, the figure had

jumped to £23 per week.

Though there was an increase in the price of food and other necessities, the cost of small cars, television sets and washing machines was much lower. The television, which made its first appearance in the early fifties, was immensely popular in the next decade. By 1961, nearly 75 per cent of homes in Great Britain had television sets. Next in popularity were refrigerators and washing machines.

A new kind of social divide was emerging in the sixties. Until 1950, America was the preferred new home for migrant West Indians. But in 1952, the USA banned West Indian immigration. As a result, they turned to Britain. In the year 1962 alone, 34,000 West Indians landed in England. The new immigrants settled in the poorer sections of London. Violent race riots broke out between the local whites and the West Indian immigrants.

An important aspect of the liberalisation of the 1960s was the major progress in the sphere of higher education. Colleges devoted to the study of art and design were founded. Teacher-training colleges were upgraded and their importance was recognised. Certain colleges of higher technology became full universities, and new universities, such as the universities of Sussex, York and Kent, were created.

Primary schools also underwent a metamorphosis. The primary school curriculum, which was under the shadow of Victorian values, was made more flexible and enjoyable. For a long time, the main focus of primary education was teaching the three R's ('reading, [w]riting and [a]rithmetic') to little children. In 1964, the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations was set up. It was this council that brought about several innovations to make primary education imaginative and enjoyable.

A **youth culture** was emerging with a set of values that was frowned upon by the previous generation. There was a revolution in fashion, music, literature and the arts. The sudden development of mass communication helped create and sustain this youth culture. This youth culture spread all over Europe and the USA. Miniskirts and kaftans made their appearance on the streets of London and San Francisco. This was the time when two singing groups, **The Beatles** and **The Rolling Stones**, gained worldwide popularity.

The new kind of music was symbolic of young people's rejection of parental values. The reality of change was to be perceived in every aspect of life—in fashion, in a new frankness in conversation, and in print. All these were summed up under the label 'permissiveness'. Sexual and social taboos eroded with the introduction of contraceptive pills and recreational drugs. The values of this youth culture exercised sway over half the globe as the **Swinging Sixties** wore on.

As the youth culture moved forward, it began to include such phenomena as Flower Power, the hippie movement, LSD, and hard drugs. Slowly, the glamour of the new generation began to fade in the shadow of violence. As the frenetic decade wore on, it became increasingly clear that its youth culture was heading towards disaster.

In the sixties, the major cities of the world were undergoing the most dramatic transformation. Bulldozers could be seen everywhere, pulling down old buildings; and in their place, mighty skyscrapers mushroomed. The higher the skyscrapers rose, the higher seemed the people's hope for the future. The landscape seemed to be changing faster than at any time earlier in history. In the name of welfare and development, low-cost housing was introduced. Urban motorways and hideous high-rise flats, which were becoming increasingly common, resulted in the destruction of the environment.

Around 1967, people began to feel that things were getting out of hand. The ideal state they seemed to be moving towards since the late fifties suddenly did not seem so ideal after all. A new set of words such as 'conservation', 'the environment', 'pollution' and 'ecology' began to be a part of everyday vocabulary. A growing sense of horror at the destruction caused by runaway technology began to hit mankind for the first time. They began to be aware of the harm being done to the countryside, rivers, seas, and to the other species on the planet.

Historically, it was an important decade, witnessing the death of three great world leaders—**John F Kennedy**, **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Martin Luther King**. There was great unrest among blacks. In the USA, the black civil rights movement gained momentum under the leadership of **Martin Luther King**. The Cold War was becoming more and more serious as the conflicts

between the USA and the USSR increased. The attempted American invasion of Cuba and the missile crisis of 1962 embittered the already-strained relationship between the East and the West. Tension prevailed throughout 1962 in the newly-divided city of Berlin. The **Berlin Wall** symbolised the East–West confrontation.

Mankind seemed to have reached the very pinnacle of technological advancement when **Neil Armstrong** set foot on the moon in 1969. His immortal words ‘That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind’, sent a thrill of excitement among people all over the world. Another major milestone in human history was passed when **Dr Christiaan Barnard** performed the first ever human heart transplant operation. There was a feeling of euphoria and man suddenly seemed to be superman.

In the world of literature, a new type of drama called ‘**kitchensink drama**’ became popular. This type of drama focused very realistically on domestic life, family quarrels, marriage and other matters pertaining to the ordinary bourgeois way of life. Another type of drama called ‘**absurd drama**’ was also enjoying its heyday. **Samuel Beckett**’s *Waiting for Godot* and **Edward Albee**’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* were seen by a large number of people. The historical play which explores the events and figures of the past was another type of drama that was popular in the sixties. One such play was *A Man for All Seasons* by **Robert Bolt** which focused on the life of Sir Thomas More. It was given a contemporary touch by the introduction of a narrator called ‘The Common Man’. **Tom Stoppard**’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* was another well-known play that was written in a similar style.

As far as poetry was concerned, a number of poets of the fifties and the sixties associated themselves with what is known simply as ‘**The Movement**’—the poetic equivalent of the ‘Angry Young Men’ in drama. These poets rejected the Romantic style of writing that was employed by poets like Dylan Thomas and aimed at capturing the day-to-day experiences of the common man. Philip Larkin, Thom Gunn and Donald Davie were some of the poets who belonged to this group.

In America, **Joseph Heller**’s novel *Catch-22* was published in 1961 and **Norman Mailer**’s *An American Dream* in 1965. It was the decade in which

the all-time favourites *Dr Zhivago* and **Barbara Streisand's** *Funny Girl* were screened.

Looking back, the sixties was a crucial period in the history of not only Great Britain, but of the whole world. Tremendous changes were taking place all over the globe. Some of the changes were for the betterment of civilisation, but at the same time, there were changes taking place which would have negative repercussions in the next decade. The climax of scientific advancement in this decade was reached when man first landed on the moon. At the same time, civilisation took a severe beating due to drug abuse by the youth of the sixties. The mood of the sixties, however, was one of exhilaration and youthful optimism such that one could exclaim with Wordsworth:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven!

## 28

### Life in the Seventies

After the dynamic optimism of the sixties, the seventies proved to be a decade of disillusionment. The idealistic belief of millions of young people that they could change the world crumbled into cynicism and bitterness. From their bitter disillusionment arose a wave of terrorism. The seventies ushered in a mood of weary disenchantment.

The Wilson era came to an end. A Conservative government, under **Edward Heath**, was elected in 1970. In the late sixties, people had had enough of radical changes and were longing for a more conservative approach. Unfortunately, Heath, instead of adopting a conservative attitude, attempted to push Britain into a more efficient future. He introduced further changes in politics and technology that were characteristic of the over-optimistic thinking of the sixties. For a while the economy seemed unreal. There was a sharp increase in real estate prices, leading to a great concentration of city development. Inflation rates became alarming. The trade unions were becoming very aggressive and were at odds with the Conservative government over its Industrial Relations Act.

The prices of essential commodities shot up and there began a period of disorder. Heath tried his best to meet the crisis, but his government collapsed in 1974. When Harold Wilson returned as the next Prime Minister, it was a chaotic period of industrial unrest, power cuts and food shortages. Wage demands, high spending by the government, inflation and public borrowing ruined the country. One could clearly discern the Labour Party's decisive turn to the left. Shipbuilding and the aircraft industries were nationalised.

The new government gave in to the unions on everything in the first eighteen months—from raised wages to their demands for unprecedented privileges. The unions, drunk with power, could be seen controlling a wide range of government policies. This was the time when **Jack Jones**, the leader

of the largest union, the *Transport and General Workers Union*, was widely described as ‘the second most powerful man in the country’.

In 1975, when the country was on the very brink of a financial crisis, Wilson resigned. Over the next couple of years, the Conservatives, under Mrs **Margaret Thatcher**, won a long series of by-elections, toppling the huge Labour majorities. With the increasing power of the Conservatives, there was a steady swing back to the right.

Between 1975 and 1976, both of Britain’s major political parties had chosen new leaders. **James Callaghan** replaced Harold Wilson as the leader of the Labour Party and Margaret Thatcher took over from Edward Heath. Callaghan’s modus operandi was very different from that of his predecessor, Wilson. He practised a more conservative approach. As a result, by 1979, people felt that conservative politics might as well be carried out, not by Labour but by the Conservatives themselves.

In 1979, the Conservative Party won, and Margaret Thatcher became the first woman Prime Minister of England. Thatcher’s conservatism was very different from that of Heath. By the end of the seventies, the British people began to feel that a revival of conservative attitudes was essential. They were quite fed up with the heady days of the Wilson government in the mid-seventies when trade unions were having a field day. Various writers and politicians, who were earlier leftist, now warned the people that the power of the unions, if unchecked, would eventually change the country into a Marxist totalitarian state. The vision of a just, equal and compassionate society based on socialism turned sour. The twentieth-century dream of a social and political utopia turned into a nightmare as the darker side of socialism became visible. In the seventies, it was clearly seen how cruelly the socialist dream could betray humanitarianism. Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*, published between 1974 and 1978, revealed to the world the horrifying experience of Russia under socialist totalitarianism. In this climate, Thatcher’s ‘New Conservatism’ was irresistible.

The youth revolution had reached its climax in the sixties. The youth of the previous decade had worked themselves to a hysterical pitch by shaking, deafening, blinding and drugging themselves. There was almost nowhere further to go and no more traditions to break. One of the many reasons why

the seventies had such an air of a hangover was that a psychological climax had been reached and could never be achieved again.

Another aspect of the seventies was the increasing interest in the religions of the East. Western materialism found solace at the feet of the *gurus* of the East. Even The Beatles practised Transcendental Meditation. This inclination towards Eastern mysticism reflected the growing disillusionment of the West with its own values.

The most disturbing development of the decade was the spread of terrorism internationally. Hijackings, kidnappings and bombings were on the increase. In England, the **Irish Republican Army (IRA)** intensified its nationalistic campaign through a series of terrorist activities. Several people were wounded when two car bombs exploded in central London. The IRA was responsible for the disaster. Another explosion caused by the IRA destroyed parts of the eight-hundred-year-old Westminster Hall and the Tower of London. There were several other cases of IRA-backed terrorist activities in the seventies. In fact, Earl Mountbatten, Queen Elizabeth II's cousin, was killed by an IRA bomb.

Giant strides were being taken in the world of science. For example, computers and cheap calculators were flooding the market. History was created in the world of medical science when the world's first test-tube baby was born in England in 1978. However, the climax of technological advancement had been reached when man first landed on the moon. Never again in human experience could there be such a moment. Nothing could startle or excite people to that degree again.

Sometime during the seventies, people began to take another look at the negative effects of science and technology. It was the seventies which, for the first time in history, received the earliest warnings that the earth's supplies of energy and natural resources were getting depleted. The most outstanding feature of the seventies was that, for the first time, mankind began to depend so much on oil, that oil consumption far outbalanced oil production. By the end of the decade, the global energy crisis was a harsh reality. Metals were also slowly disappearing. Gradually, it became obvious to people that the technological explosion would ultimately lead the world into a nightmare.

In the USA, people were getting disillusioned with the **Vietnam War**. The ending of the war highlighted America's failure in keeping South-east Asia from falling under communist domination. The withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam was a shameful retreat. Soon after, Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, was occupied by the communists, and several Vietnamese began to flee the country. A worldwide refugee problem was created as a result of this. The USA had to suffer further loss of face through the **Watergate scandal** and the subsequent resignation of President Richard Nixon. This disillusionment went very deep.

Modernism exhausted itself. It had experimented with form, structure and tonality till there was no structure left to topple. Its place was taken by **postmodernism**, which was essentially a literature of irrealism. Orthodox literature claimed that every work of art should have a meaning and simplify the complexity of life. Modernism rejected the stale modes of meaning-making, but recognised the need to find meaning. Postmodernism celebrated the absence of meaning and reflected man's sense of disorder. The postmodernist novel dislocated meaning for its own sake and did not lead the reader towards comprehension. The play of words upon words resulted in a semantic farce aimed at reflecting man's meaninglessness. **John Barth**, **Susan Sontag** and **John Fowles** are a few of the postmodernist novelists who wrote during this period.

Some of the writers who had begun their careers in the modern period continued to write in the seventies. **Graham Greene** wrote several books which had the Cold War as their backdrop. **PG Wodehouse** continued to be popular and was widely read. **Doris Lessing** and **Iris Murdoch** were some of the prominent women writers of the period.

American novels which drew public attention in the seventies were **Thomas Pynchon's** *Gravity's Rainbow*, **Saul Bellow's** *Humboldt's Gift*, **William Styron's** *Sophie's Choice* and **Alex Haley's** *Roots*. The memorable films of the seventies were Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*, **Steven Spielberg's** *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and the dance-drama film *Saturday Night Fever*.

The seventies was essentially a decade of disillusionment. Of course, there had been several benefits due to the progress of technology, such as hot

baths, colour television, jet travel, and assorted medical marvels. Nevertheless, people began to discern that these were just short-lived luxuries. There was a hankering after a lost simplicity and innocence. To sum up in the words of Christopher Booker, ‘Never before in history had there been an age so distrustful of the present, so fearful of the future, so enamoured of the past’.

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### Life in the Eighties

The eighties witnessed incredible advances in communication and information technologies. Advances in the field of medicine and transport too altered the lives of people irrevocably. In England, the eighties was essentially the decade of Margaret Thatcher, who held the reigns of power in British politics from 1979 to 1990. The eighties may also come to be remembered as the decade in which the environment became the prime concern of the people.

Thatcher strongly opposed the socialist policies of the Labour Party. In the late seventies and the early eighties, the main political problem was the increasing power of the trade unions. The credit for curbing this trend goes to Thatcher. A series of four legislative acts completely altered the position of the trade unions. Inflation and unemployment further weakened the once-powerful unions. Gradually, during the early eighties, the power of the trade unions was restrained, culminating in the crushing of the **Miners' Strike** in 1984–85. At present, the trade union issue has almost disappeared from the political scene. Trade union leaders are no longer feared. The powerful leader **Jack Jones** was replaced by the weak leaders **Moss Evans** and **Ron Todd**. The decline in the power of trade unions clearly revealed Britain's swing back to the right.

Another major policy of the Thatcher government was **privatisation**. This had a tremendous impact upon the British economy of the eighties. There was a dramatic shift from the public to the private sectors. Two-thirds of the state-owned commercial sector of 1979 was in private hands by the 1991–92 election.

The Thatcher government also encouraged property ownership. The common man was encouraged to buy flats and houses. By 1988, the number of people owning their own homes had risen by nearly three million

compared with 1979. Several systems of loans were made available to enable the salaried class to buy themselves a home.

Thatcherism has had a profound effect on British society. Thatcher claimed that her government's chief objective was to fight inflation. Although she succeeded in achieving a new prosperity, she has often been criticised for producing a sharp division between the haves and the have-nots.

An important event of the eighties was the **Falkland War**. The Falkland Islands lie about 350 miles east of Argentina and are a part of the British Empire. In 1982, Argentina invaded the Islands. Britain responded by sending troops, ships and planes to the Falklands. After severe fighting in the air, on sea, and on land, and many casualties, England emerged victorious. There was a lot of negative response to this war as the number of people killed on both sides outnumbered the total population of the Falkland Islands. Simultaneously, Thatcher won a lot of admiration for her brave stand. She proclaimed to a jubilant House of Commons, 'Let every nation know that where there is British sovereign territory, it will be well and truly defended'.

The biggest social event of the decade was the wedding of **Prince Charles** and **Lady Diana Spencer**. An estimated 750 million people worldwide watched the event on television. The wedding day, 29 July 1981, was declared a public holiday in Great Britain.

On the negative side, there was a marked increase in crime and violence. Compared to the previous decade, the crime figures were much higher. Even after increasing the number of policemen and making the punishments more severe, there was no letup in the incidence of violence. Sociologists began to investigate the reason for this violence. Thatcher's government blamed the permissiveness of the sixties. They felt that there was a breakdown of standards, discipline and respect for authority. The opposition found fault with Thatcher and her values. They felt that the new values of the eighties were responsible for the spreading of crime. Importance was being given to the individual over wider social responsibilities. Thatcherism also created a more materialistic attitude. The new generation had a lot of money and very little discipline. They were the children of the youth of the sixties.

The **environment** and its preservation became vital topics in the political

agenda. The world's worst nuclear catastrophe, the **Chernobyl disaster**, left much of Europe reeling under the adverse effects of radiation. The disaster was caused in 1986 by a fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in the Ukrainian republic of the Soviet Union. It showed the world that environmental crises were no longer restricted by national borders.

Concern for the environment was further intensified by the discovery that untold damage had occurred to the earth's ozone layer due to the commercial use of ozone-depleting chemicals. There was evidence of an increase in cases of skin cancer, which was the result of the depletion of the ozone layer which acts as a screen to the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. A pressing need to preserve the tropical rainforests of the world was also recognised. The destruction of these forests was one of the factors responsible for creating the 'greenhouse effect'. In the eighties, the environment thus became a major concern of not only the politician but also of the man on the street.

In the USA, **Ronald Reagan** was elected president. Margaret Thatcher had a special relationship with the American president. In fact, through her influence, she was able to reduce the tension between the USA and the USSR.

A remarkable change in international politics was caused by the rise of **Mikhail Gorbachev** to the leadership of the USSR in 1985. He introduced new words to the international political vocabulary when he spoke of '**glasnost**' and '**perestroika**'. The immediate result of Gorbachev's policies was an improvement in East-West relations. The intensity of the Cold War was considerably reduced.

Mankind was faced with a major threat—the killer disease **AIDS**. To the common man, the very word 'AIDS' symbolised fear and death. People began to feel that it was a judgment on the decadence of modern civilisation. It became a burning issue and there were calls for urgent action on the part of all governments to control the spread of the disease.

Some of the outstanding novels of the decade were William Golding's *Rites of Passage* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*. In America, novelists like Philip Roth and Kurt Vonnegut continued to write. Memorable films of the eighties include Richard Attenborough's

*Gandhi*, Steven Spielberg's *ET* and David Lean's *A Passage to India*.

The eighties opened our eyes to several important issues. For one thing, the possibility of a Third World War was significantly reduced because people around the world realised that it would mean the end of the world. We were rudely woken up to the reality that the world's natural resources were fast disappearing. If this situation continued, the earth would soon be a very unpleasant planet to live in. On the brighter side, the eighties witnessed great strides being taken in science and technology as a result of which we now have highly sophisticated computers and other electronic gadgets.

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## Trade Unionism

Trade unionism, a product of the Industrial Revolution, came of age in the 1820s with the spread of capitalism, industrialism and political radicalism. Historians trace the origin of trade unions to medieval **guilds**. The guilds were associations of skilled workers and craftsmen. The purpose of the guilds was to control trade and protect its members. The guilds settled disputes and undertook responsibility for members in sickness and old age. The meetings held by the guilds were also occasions for feasting, drinking, and the staging of plays, thus fulfilling the social needs of the members. In the fourteenth century, these guilds set standards for the quality of the goods produced. Apart from maintaining the quality of the products, the guilds regulated holidays and hours of work, and fixed prices and wages to a certain extent. These guilds, which were very popular till the fourteenth century, slowly began to decline in the Tudor period.

As Britain became industrialised, the workers made several attempts to improve their conditions. These were not very successful as the authorities resisted them. The workers were totally at the mercy of their capitalist employers due to the doctrine of *laissez faire*. The condition of the working classes was miserable. The wages were low and the working hours were long. Women and children were exploited: their wages were even lower than that of their male counterparts.

There was no job security or insurance against illness or death. Any attempt at organising themselves into trade unions was discouraged by the government. In 1799–1800, the Parliament passed the **Combination Laws** as it was fearful of a repetition of the events of the French Revolution in England. These laws prohibited any combination or union of working men for any purpose whatsoever but did not restrain the union of their employers and owners of factories. The Combination Laws effectively checked the

growth of trade unionism till 1824.

**Francis Place**, a working man, was largely responsible for the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824. The workers however abused their freedom and there was a series of strikes and incidences of violence. So a new act was passed in 1825 which permitted trade unions to bargain about wages and hours of labour but restricted workers from resorting to violence. From that period, the prohibition of trade unions was removed and there was a rapid growth in the next decade.

In the 1840s, the number of trade unions increased. These unions, apart from bargaining with the employers, were engaged in several welfare functions like providing sickness grants and insurance against accidents, old age, death and unemployment. In 1868, when the first trade union congress met, there were about 1,18,000 members. In 1900, more than 2 million workers belonged to various trade unions. By 1970, there were 11 million members. The biggest union was the **Transport and General Workers' Union** which had over 1.5 million members. Other large unions included the **Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers** and the **General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union**. The central body of the British trade union movement is the **Trades Union Congress (TUC)**.

By the late nineteenth century, there was a steady growth of socialist ideas. English socialism, however, did not adopt Karl Marx's violent doctrine of the war of classes or of the overthrow of capitalism. It was idealistic and moderate in nature. Socialism could not make much progress in politics without the support of the trade unions. At first, trade unions were not too interested either in politics or in socialism. However, by 1875, they had, through the TUC, succeeded in placing a few representatives in the Parliament who supported the Liberals. By the 1890s, the new unions, composed of unskilled labourers, wished to have a party independent from the Liberals. Some trade union leaders and a few socialists held a conference and founded the **Independent Labour Party**. From this humble beginning, grew the Labour Party, which is one of the two chief political parties of modern England. The Labour Party was a class party and its formation represented the triumph of the working class.

Around the time of the First World War, trade unions experienced a period

of militancy and growth. There were several strikes such as the miners' strike in 1910 and the dockers' and seamen's strike in 1911. In the same year, there was the national rail strike. The reason for all these strikes was that the workers believed that they deserved, and could get, better wages and conditions of employment from their employers. The largest strike was the **General Strike of 1926**, which arose out of a conflict between miners and coal mine owners.

During the Second World War, trade unions benefited greatly due to their close involvement with the government and the Labour Party. When the Labour Party formed its government in 1945, union leader **Ernest Bevin** was a prominent member of the cabinet.

In 1965, a royal commission was appointed to study the trade union movement. One of the important recommendations made by the commission was that a commission on industrial relations should be set up. This commission would bring together the unions and the employers. The Labour government, wishing to check the powers of the unions, introduced a document entitled *In place of strife*. The document affirmed that the unions enjoyed certain rights, but it also proposed some restraining measures that the unions found totally unacceptable. There was stiff opposition to this document by the unions, forcing the government to shelve its plans for legislation. When the Conservatives returned to power in 1970, the **Industrial Relations Act** was passed. According to this act, the unions had to register with the Registrar of Trade Unions and Employers' Association. The act also set up a commission on industrial relations and a National Industrial Relations Court. It strictly forbade unfair industrial practices by both employers and employees. The TUC was greatly angered by this act, which remained till it was repealed in 1974 by the Labour government. The **Employment Protection Act of 1975** and the **Trade Union and Labour Relations Act of 1976** gave workers many benefits. The trade unions enjoyed great privileges. Jack Jones, the leader of the largest union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, was popularly described as 'the second most powerful man in the country'.

The power of the trade unions was vastly reduced when the Conservatives came to power in 1979 under Margaret Thatcher. Through a series of

legislative acts, the position of the trade unions was completely altered. The crushing of the miners' strike in 1984–85 revealed the limitations of the trade unions. The irreversible loss of power under Thatcher continued under the John Major-led government also. In the election of 1997, the Labour Party made a triumphant comeback. But as far as the trade unions were concerned, it made little difference. Tony Blair, the new Labour leader and Prime Minister, transformed the party from being one largely reflecting working class interests to being a virtually classless one. The party claimed to represent every class and distanced itself from its old partner, organised labour.

## The Origin and Growth of Political Parties in England

The origin of political parties in England may be traced back to the Civil War that took place during the Stuart period. The supporters of the king were known as '**Royalists**', who later came to be known as '**Tories**' (from the Irish term *tóraidhe* meaning 'outlaw'). The Tories are popularly known as the **Conservatives** today. The supporters of the Parliament were called '**Roundheads**' because of their close haircuts. The Roundheads, later known as '**Whigs**' (originating from a Scottish word meaning 'mare drivers'), developed into the modern day **Liberal Party**. Both names, 'Tories' and 'Whigs', were thus originally terms of contempt. Generally, the Tories were associated with the gentry and the Church of England, while the Whigs were considered to lean more towards trade and money matters.



The Whigs and the Tories were the two chief parties during Queen Anne's reign. The Tories were the supporters of the Crown and the Anglican Church, while the Whigs were mostly dissenters. There was a lot of political rivalry during her reign. However, Queen Anne supported the Tories, whom she considered her well-wishers.

After the death of Queen Anne, the question of her successor arose. The Tories wished to continue the Stuart line by inviting James, the Old Pretender, the son of James II and Mary of Modena. It was the Whig party which was responsible for bringing in the Hanoverians. George I, the first

Hanoverian king, therefore regarded the Whigs as his friends and the Tories as his enemies. The Whig politician **Sir Robert Walpole**, generally considered to be the first Prime Minister, controlled the Commons on the king's behalf.

The Whigs continued to hold the reigns of the country for several years. However, during the eighteenth century, more importance was given to individuals rather than to the political party. There were several eminent politicians, such as the **Earl of Bute**, **George Grenville**, **Lord Rockingham**, **William Pitt the Elder**, and **Lord North**, who dominated British politics from 1743 to 1782. There was a lot of political instability during this period. The parties or factions at this time clustered around prominent persons who, when they came to power, brought with them their followers. When these people went out of power, most of their followers also slipped into obscurity.

After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the Tories held office. They feared that any change or reform would pave the way to a revolution in England too. The Tories were determined to preserve the position of the upper classes. One of the most prominent Tory leaders of this time was **William Pitt the Younger**.

In the general election of 1830, the Whigs returned to power. There was a crying need for **reform in England**, which was undergoing drastic changes due to the Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions. The Whigs were filled with a zeal for reform. The first Reform Act of 1832 introduced electoral reforms. Slavery was abolished in 1833, and the Factory Act (which improved conditions for children working in factories) was also passed in the same year.

The Whigs remained in office till 1841, with two brief Tory intervals. In 1841, the Tories came back to power with **Sir Robert Peel** as Prime Minister. They adopted a policy of conservatism. Peel created the world's first professional police force in London.

With the progress of the century, especially during the mid- Victorian era (roughly 1846–68), there was a growing need for liberalism. During that period, the Tories never had a majority in the Commons. The Whigs, whose politics now reflected more liberal overtones, enjoyed greater political

favour. However, one should remember that both political parties were still divided and poorly organised. It was impossible to say who formed a strong majority in the Commons. Political factions still pivoted around individual leaders. It was also during this period that the names 'Conservatives' and 'Liberals' came into usage.

The Whig party, now known as the Liberal Party, dominated political life for almost two decades from 1868. In general, Liberals favoured changes to traditional social and political practices. Two of the most famous Liberal Prime Ministers were **Benjamin Disraeli** and **William Gladstone**. Gladstone's support for Irish home rule weakened the Liberal Party, and once again the Conservatives returned to power in 1886.

The Conservatives enjoyed a long period of success with just two brief Liberal interludes in 1892 and in 1895. Till the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of the two-party system was kept alive and active in England.

In the meanwhile, with the growing problems of the working classes (an offshoot of the Industrial Revolution), **socialism** began to make itself felt in England for the first time. Karl Marx and his *Das Kapital* had an impact on England, and there was a growth of socialist ideas. Agencies such as the **Salvation Army**, founded in 1878 by General William Booth and his wife, and the **Fabian Society**, founded in 1884 and having distinguished members like George Bernard Shaw and Beatrice and Sidney Webb, kindled the Victorian conscience. English socialism was mild and idealistic and did not believe in the violent overthrow of capitalism.

Socialism, however, could not make much political headway without the financial support of the trade unions. The trade unions were not very interested in politics. For a long time, they voted with the Liberals, and their candidates were known as 'Lib-Labs'. Slowly, the need for a separate party was felt, and the **Labour Party** was born from the union representatives of cooperatives, socialists, trade unions and other working-class organisations. From this humble beginning arose the successful Labour Party that we know today.

Till 1924, the Liberals and the Conservatives alternately held the political reigns of England. For a brief period in 1924, the Labour Party won a

majority in the Parliament with the support of the Liberals. **Ramsay MacDonald** became the first Labour Prime Minister. The Labour government could not last long, as most of the ministers were new and inexperienced. They were also acutely conscious of the Liberals' support, and dared not do anything to displease them. The party lost to the Conservatives, who came back in 1924 and remained till 1929. When the Labour Party next won the elections in 1929, it was again an unfortunate period in the history of the country, as it was going through an intense economic depression. Again, the second Labour government ended in frustration and failure. The Conservatives enjoyed political supremacy from 1935 to 1945.

**Sir Winston Churchill** enjoyed great popularity as the wartime Prime Minister. At the end of World War II, however, the war-weary nation wished for a change. The election manifesto of the Labour Party, promising social security and welfare measures for everyone 'from the cradle to the grave', was irresistible. Under the Labour government, Britain became a **welfare state**.

During the next election in 1951, the Labour Party did not have anything new to offer, and the Conservatives were voted back to power and remained there for the next thirteen years. They continued the welfare measures begun by the Labour government. Successive Labour and Conservative governments slowly re-built the country through the 1960s and the 70s. Towards the end of this period, trade unions slowly became very powerful and enjoyed many rights and privileges. The country seemed to be slanting dangerously towards the left.

In 1979, the Conservatives won the elections, and **Margaret Thatcher** became the Prime Minister. There was a well-marked shift back to the right when Thatcher curbed the growing power of the trade unions and brought in privatisation. The Conservatives enjoyed an uninterrupted period of success when **John Major**, the next Conservative leader, took over from Thatcher in 1990. Conservative rule, which began in 1979, came to an end in 1997, when John Major lost to **Tony Blair**, the new Labour leader.

After eighteen long years, the Labour Party came back to power and began making its presence felt. According to a survey, Tony Blair and his government enjoyed a record wave of public popularity. He continued the

liberal economic policies of the Thatcher era, and gradually weakened his party's links with the trade unions. Blair strongly supported American foreign policy, and actively participated in the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and in the 2003 attack on Iraq. Blair holds the record of being the Labour Party's longest-serving Prime Minister, and the only one to have led the party to three consecutive victories in general elections. In 2007, he was succeeded by **Gordon Brown** as the leader of the Labour Party and as Prime Minister.

In 1981, a number of moderate members of the Labour Party quit the party and established the **Social Democratic Party**. The Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party formed an alliance, and eventually merged to form the **Liberal Democratic Party** in 1988. Gradually, The Liberal Democrats gained an increased number of seats in the House of Commons.

In the election of 2010, the Conservatives won the largest number of seats, but fell short of an absolute majority. An agreement was reached between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, and a coalition government was formed with **David Cameron**, the leader of the Conservative Party, as the Prime Minister. The **Fixed-term Parliaments Act** was passed in 2011; according to this, elections could be conducted hereafter only once in five years. Prior to this, the Prime Minister had the power to call for an election at any point.

In the general election of 2015, the Conservatives won again and David Cameron continued as Prime Minister. In his election manifesto, he had promised to hold a referendum to decide if the UK should continue to remain a member of the European Union (EU). Cameron campaigned forcefully to remain within a 'reformed EU'. This referendum came to be known as '**Brexit**', a portmanteau of 'British' and 'Exit'. When the country ignored his entreaties to vote in favour of remaining in the European Union, Cameron felt that he could no longer continue as Prime Minister. He resigned in July 2016, and was replaced by **Theresa May**.

In 2017, Theresa May requested for a snap election (that is, an election called earlier than it is due), which was approved by the Parliament (exercising an exception to the recent Fixed-term Parliaments Act). She wanted to have a clear mandate to lead the country after the division caused by Brexit. She had hoped for a greater majority for the Conservatives, but

was disappointed as it lost seats instead. May and the Conservatives remain in power thanks to the support of a minor party.

The **current British political scene** is dominated by two major parties with nation-wide support: Conservatives and Labour (the latter having replaced the Liberals as the main party contending with the Conservatives to govern the UK). The Conservatives have traditionally favoured British unionism, that is, the belief that England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland should remain a single political unit. The Labour Party is moderate and centrist with socialist leanings.

There exist a number of smaller minority parties that enjoy support at the local level, and sometimes even make their voices heard nationally. The Liberal Democrats support liberal socioeconomic and political reforms. The **Scottish National Party** (SNP), the third-largest party in the UK, supports independence for Scotland. The **Sinn Féin** wants a sovereign and united Ireland, while the **Plaid Cymru** (Party of Wales) would like to see Wales secede from the UK. The **Green Party** is committed to environmentalism and social justice. The **UK Independence Party** (UKIP) is a radical right-wing populist organisation that is anti-immigration and anti- EU.

## Life in the Nineties

The eighties, as seen in previous chapters, was undoubtedly the decade of Margaret Thatcher, the ‘Iron Lady’, who successfully handled issues like the Miners’ Strike, and led Britain to an era of prosperity. The nineties, though, saw Thatcher’s fall from glory; the firmness she demonstrated in the previous decade was interpreted as stubbornness in the next. It was also the decade that witnessed giant leaps being taken in the field of communication and information technology. The world would never be the same again once it was invaded by the ubiquitous mobile phone and the internet.

The Thatcher government had promised to reform the system of taxation known as ‘rates’, which had been in practice since the seventeenth century. According to this system, people had to pay a levy on property which was calculated on the estimated rental value of their homes. These domestic rates were unpopular and were seen by many as a discriminatory way of raising revenue for local councils. One of the election promises of the Thatcher government had been to change this system of taxation.

As a result, a new tax known as the ‘**Community Charge**’ was introduced. According to this, every adult had to pay a fixed rate decided by their local authority. This tax was extremely unpopular, as even students and the unemployed had to pay 20 per cent. As it was a per-head tax, some large families occupying small houses had to pay a lot of money. It was increasingly seen as a measure to protect the interests of the rich by shifting the burden of meeting expenses onto the poor.

This dissatisfaction with the Community Charge gave rise to protests—known as the ‘**poll tax riots**’—against the Thatcher government. The biggest protest took place in central London on 31 March 1990, just before the tax would come into effect in England and Wales. This riot was largely responsible for undermining Thatcher’s popularity, and paved the way to her

eventual resignation in November 1990.

One of the first things Thatcher's Conservative successor **John Major** did on assuming office was to abolish the unpopular tax. Instead, he introduced the '**Council Tax**' in 1992. The Council Tax was similar to the rates system, but with a difference. The tax was levied according to the capital value of the property rather than on the notional rental value of the property. Another concession was that households with only one occupant were entitled to a 25 per cent discount.

Apart from handling the problems of taxation that he had inherited from his predecessor, Major found himself at the helm when Britain was involved in the **Gulf War**. On 2 August 1990, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait, leading to the First Gulf War. This triggered international disapproval, and the UN brought immediate economic sanctions against Iraq. An array of nations joined the coalition against Iraq, and forces were sent from the US, Saudi Arabia, the UK and Egypt. An important offshoot of the Gulf War was the introduction of live news telecast from the war front. CNN, the US news network, was primarily responsible for this. The coalition forces won the war and successfully liberated Kuwait.

Major steered the Conservative Party through yet another victory in the 1992 election and continued in the office till 1997, when the Conservatives suffered their worst general election defeat in over 150 years. Promising a classless society and headed by a dynamic young leader, **Tony Blair**, the Labour Party swept the polls in 1997, and came to power after eighteen years.

Blair's government offered referendums on the **devolution of political power** to Wales and Scotland; both voted for home rule. This was one of the most important socio-political developments of the time. Another major political development was the signing of the **Good Friday Agreement** in 1998 between the UK and the Republic of Ireland (including a multi-party agreement by most of Northern Ireland's political parties). This paved the way for peace after years of unrest. The devolution of powers allowed these regions to mostly govern themselves. However, the British Parliament retains powers related to the constitution, defence, foreign policy, immigration, and so on.

A sense of optimism seemed to pervade the 1990s. An important Labour achievement was the introduction of minimum wage and the turning around of government investment in public services. The opening of the **Channel Tunnel** in May 1994, connecting Folkestone in Kent with Coquelles near Calais (northern France), was the result of a very big Anglo-French project. It has the longest undersea portion of any tunnel in the world, with a total length of about 38 kilometres. The Channel carries high-speed Eurostar passenger trains, as well as a shuttle for passenger and freight vehicles.

It is interesting to note that in a changing world, there are still some things that defy time. The **Church of England** is one such institution. Conceived during the Reformation period and established by Queen Elizabeth I through her Anglican Settlement, the Church of England still stands as a symbol of religious and political authority. The monarch of England still remains the Supreme Governor of the church. The coronation services of the kings and queens of England are conducted, as they have always been, by the church. The crown itself is placed on the head of a new monarch by the Archbishop of Canterbury. One major change that took place in the 1990s was the ordaining of **women priests** for the first time in 1994.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, many were of the opinion that the church had drifted to the margins of society. Regular **church attendance** was observed to have declined steadily in the last century. (The entire membership of all Anglican churches comprises only about 14 per cent of the adult population.) It was also discovered that there were more Roman Catholics than Anglicans in the United Kingdom. England is only a part of the United Kingdom, which also comprises Scotland, which is strongly Presbyterian; Wales, which is mostly Nonconformist; and Northern Ireland, which is very much Roman Catholic. Nevertheless the surveys of sociologists have discovered that most people have continued to believe in God and have gone to church in times of joy and crisis. The Church of England continues to demand public respect, and is the beneficiary of a bench in the House of Lords.

Britain yielded **Hong Kong**, its most successful modern colony, to the government of China on the night of 30 June 1997. The much-awaited handover from a capitalist to a communist state was carried out smoothly.

The then Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, committed his country to allow Hong Kong to develop its democratic system and retain its religious freedom. As far as the local currency was concerned, Hong Kong retained the Hong Kong dollar.

The strained relationship between Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, and his wife, **Princess Diana**, culminated in their divorce in August 1996 after a lot of public mud-slinging. In the midst of active speculation about Charles' remarriage to Camilla Parker Bowles, the world received the shocking news of Diana's death in a car crash in Paris on 31 August 1997. Diana was extremely popular among the people, and had always been under a great deal of media attention. Her sudden death led to an outpouring of public displays of grief, the like of which had never been seen before in British society.

Internationally, the 1990s was an eventful decade. From 1991, the **USSR** ceased to exist after all its constituent republics declared themselves independent. This brought an end to the tension created by the Cold War. Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev announced his resignation in an address to his nation on the night of 25 December 1991. Soon after his declaration, the flag of the Soviet Union was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time and was replaced by the Russian tricolour, bringing to an end nearly seventy years of the existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The new Russian Federation was headed by **Boris Yeltsin**.

In the field of science, great strides continued to take place. **Dolly** the sheep became the first mammal to be successfully cloned. This was achieved by the Roslin Institute in Scotland, and announced to the public in February 1997.

The **environment** continued to be a cause for anxiety in the 90s. NGOs like Greenpeace were dedicated to creating awareness about our environment. The environment was an issue even at the UN, which formed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to discuss the ways and means of reducing our carbon footprint.

The 90s was a revolutionary decade for digital technology. The **World Wide Web** was invented by the English scientist Tim Berners-Lee in 1989, and was made available to the public in 1991. When it was introduced, only a

few people used online services; but by 2001, access to the internet through the World Wide Web became widespread.

Individual computers and cell phones were slowly making their presence felt. **E-mail** was rapidly becoming a popular means of communication, and was easily available after Microsoft acquired the widespread Hotmail webmail service.

The introduction of smaller satellite dishes gave people the opportunity of choosing from up to 500 television channels. This opened up a world of virtually unlimited entertainment. The first MP3 player, the 'MPMan', was released in 1998. Portable CD players became a part of the **youth culture** of the 90s. Digital cameras began gaining popularity in the 90s, slowly but gradually elbowing film cameras out of existence. Pagers were popular, but were soon replaced by **mobile phones**.

As the 90s drew to an end, the world was caught in the grip of pre-millennium anxieties. There was quite a bit of panic regarding what was popularly known as the **Y2K** problem. Most software till then had been programmed such that they used only the last two digits of a year when indicating the date. Programmers speculated that when the date rolled to '00' in the new millennium, it would cause massive software and hardware failures, triggering major catastrophes in a world heavily dependent on computers. Governments, industries and technologists worked feverishly to allay the crisis. This fear ultimately proved to be unfounded.

The youth culture of the 90s saw an increasing trend in body piercing and tattoos. The term '**Millennials**' or 'Generation Y' was used to describe those born in the 1980s and early 1990s. (Some demographers refer to those born after 1995 as 'Generation Z'). Feminism received a shot in the arm in this decade. 1992 was recognised as the **Year of the Woman** after a record number of women were elected to high office in the US. Many countries had women presidents and prime ministers, including Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh, and Mary Robinson in Ireland. The music group the Spice Girls popularised the phrase 'girl power'.

An offshoot of imperialism was the spreading of the English language around the world. This resulted in the appearance of writers from Britain's

former colonies such as VS Naipaul and Derek Walcott from the Caribbean; Doris Lessing, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Chinua Achebe, and Ben Okri from Africa; and several writers from India, such as RK Narayan, Raja Rao, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh, to mention just a few. Some of the outstanding **novels** of the 90s are the first three books of the Harry Potter series by JK Rowling, *Bridget Jones' Diary* by Helen Fielding, and *Possession* by AS Byatt. Across the Atlantic, novels such as *Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton and *A Game of Thrones* by George RR Martin were published. The Booker Prize was won by the Sri Lankan-Canadian Michael Ondaatje for his novel *The English Patient* in 1992, and by the Indian author Arundhati Roy for *The God of Small Things* in 1997.

Some of the most popular **television shows** of this decade were *Full House*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *The Wonder Years*, *Friends*, and *That 70s Show*. Although these were American sitcoms, they were popular all over the world. Many iconic films were produced in the 90s, including *Pretty Woman*, *Jurassic Park*, *Mrs Doubtfire*, *Schindler's List*, *The Lion King*, *Forrest Gump*, *Titanic*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *The Sixth Sense*.

The 1990s saw a boom in **video games** as quality improved and handheld gaming devices became common at home. Both children and adults were addicted to popular games such as *Pokémon*, *Super Mario 64*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Street Fighter II*, *Doom*, the *Tomb Raider* series, and the *Final Fantasy* series.

## England in the Twenty-first Century

When the clock struck the midnight hour on the night of 31 December 1999, people around the globe were filled with excitement, hope, fear and nostalgia. The world witnessed numerous celebrations to welcome the **new millennium**. This was soon followed by a sense of anti-climax when it was pointed out that the new century and millennium would actually begin only on 1 January 2001. (This is because there was no ‘year 0’ between 1 bce and 1 ce. 1 January 1 ce marked the beginning of the first century and the first millennium. The second millennium began in 1001; and thus the third millennium, in 2001.)

The Labour Party continued in power under the leadership of Tony Blair, winning the next two general elections in 2001 and in 2005. In general, the British economy did well, and income levels increased.

The devolution of powers had paved the path to legislative independence for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The **Scottish National Party** won the 2007 general elections to the Scottish Parliament, with a mandate to hold a referendum on whether Scotland should be politically independent from the UK. The referendum on **Scottish independence** was held in September 2014; the majority voted against the proposition.

**David Cameron** became the Prime Minister when the Conservative Party won the election in 2010. Attaining the office at the age of forty-three, Cameron became the youngest Prime Minister in nearly 200 years. The Conservatives, however, did not win an absolute majority, and therefore had to form a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. In the 2015 election, it was able to form a majority government. During their election campaign, the Conservatives had committed themselves to holding a public referendum on whether the UK should leave the European Union—an action popularly known as ‘Brexit’. The British government under Cameron

advocated remaining with the EU; however, the nation voted in favour of Brexit in 2016. Cameron resigned from his post as the leader of the Conservative Party and as Prime Minister, and he was replaced by **Theresa May**, who is the current Prime Minister of the UK.

To understand **Brexit**, we need to examine Britain's relationship with Europe. After World War II, Winston Churchill suggested the idea of a United States of Europe in 1946 to curb extreme nationalism. In 1948, various **European unification** movements and international assemblies of leaders strengthened the idea of a pan-European geo-political body. Faced with the looming threat of a powerful communist USSR and the uphill task of re-building national economies after the devastation of World War II, a few mainland European countries formed international organisations to increase cooperation between member nations. These organisations were eventually combined to constitute what came to be known as the European Communities (EC). The UK joined the European Communities in 1973. In 1993, the EC was re-formed into the **European Union**, and its membership increased steadily.

The EU facilitates the free movement of people, money, goods and services among its member states. This creates better opportunities for business and travel. Through various binding regulations, the EU promotes environmental conservation, human rights, job creation, and improved standards of living, among other things.

However, not everyone in the UK was happy with these arrangements. Critics argued that since members states need to support each other, British money was being spent on the needs of other countries. British trade, industries, and other local institutions had to conform to restrictive standards. Some people saw this as a loss of sovereignty for a nation that was once the foremost global power. Immigration into Britain from poorer countries was a particular sore point. It was argued that immigrants and refugees were taking away jobs from native British people. Right-wing factions wanted a more homogenous English society with closed borders.

In the 1970s and 80s, it was the trade unions that advocated the withdrawal of Britain from the EU. From the 90s, the newly formed UK Independence Party (UKIP) became the main proponent for Britain's withdrawal from the

EU. Pressurised by growing **rightwing sentiments** throughout Britain (and even within his own party), Cameron promised to let the people decide if the UK should remain in the EU. The referendum was held in June 2016, and nearly 52% of the country voted to leave the EU. From March 2019, the UK will no longer be an EU member.

The British government is now negotiating the terms of the UK's separation from the EU. The implications of this decision on the social-economic and cultural life of the British are yet to be seen.

Experts agree that Brexit will adversely affect Britain in the long term, and negatively impact the country's international relations (especially within Europe). Most of Scotland had voted against Brexit, and hence the Scottish Parliament now intends to hold a second referendum on independence from the UK. The majority in Northern Ireland, too, had voted to remain in the EU; consequently, Irish voices calling for separation from the UK have been strengthened in the wake of Brexit. Thus, both the causes and consequences of Brexit are linked to rising nationalist tendencies—the very thing that Churchill had hoped to contain through a union of European nations.

The **royal family** had its share of sorrows when Queen Elizabeth II lost two of her close relatives in 2002: her sister, Princess Margaret, and her mother (the wife of King George VI), popularly known as the Queen Mother. It was also the year that Queen Elizabeth completed fifty years on the throne of England. This milestone had previously been achieved by only four British monarchs—James VI, George III and Queen Victoria. A lavish three-day Golden Jubilee celebration in London was attended by millions—showing that even though the English are indifferent to monarchy in general, they still hold a lot of affection for individual members of the royal family. In 2015, Elizabeth II became the longest reigning British monarch, surpassing the reign of her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria.

An important royal event was the wedding of Prince William, son of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, to Kate Middleton in 2011. The ceremony was viewed live by millions of people around the world. The couple have three children. In 2015, the heir apparent, Prince Charles, married Camilla Parker Bowles. His youngest son, Prince Harry, married an American actress in 2018.

England today is home to several peoples belonging to different races and cultures—a natural consequence of Britain's imperialist history. **Ethnic diversity** is on the increase in major cities. London, especially, is home to several minority groups from Asia and Africa, and it is estimated that over 300 languages are spoken there. Survey polls show that British society is very concerned about immigration. Yet, many people from minority communities have successfully integrated into the fabric of the country, and, indeed, have risen to prominent positions in both business and politics.

A multi-ethnic society comes with its share of problems. Inequalities relating to race, social class, unemployment and poverty brew tensions that surface occasionally. This has led to violent **riots** in English towns and cities in 2001 and in 2011.

A major event in the international scene occurred in the first year of the new century. Members of al-Qaeda, a militant Islamist group, flew hijacked planes into buildings in the USA on 11 September 2001, killing nearly 3,000 people, and injuring twice that number. The USA subsequently declared a '**war on terrorism**' and, along with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (of which the UK is a founding member), invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and overthrew the Taliban government which supported al-Qaeda. Osama Bin Laden, the alleged mastermind behind the September attack, was killed in 2011. The UK has been greatly supportive of the USA's '**war on terrorism**'. Tony Blair's government also supported the USA in its **2003 attack on Iraq** and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, based on the (now believed to be faulty) rationale that Hussein was developing nuclear and biological weapons and had ties to al-Qaeda. The UK has also backed the US-led campaign against the jihadist organisation known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (**ISIS**). Among the British public, support for British involvement in the Middle East has been steadily declining.

Until the last two decades, **terrorism in the UK** had mostly been linked to the socio-political conflict in Northern Ireland. In the twenty-first century, however, most terrorist incidents have been connected to Islamic fundamentalism. One of the deadliest such events on British soil occurred on 7 July 2005, which saw **suicide bombings in London** that left many dead and hundreds injured. The city has been on high alert ever since. England

faced multiple terror attacks in 2017 as well. The government is gravely concerned about the radicalisation of British youth.

The new century has already witnessed a number of global events of great consequence. In a world shrunk by technology, the impact of these events is felt by Britain too. In 2003, a searing heat wave hit Europe that resulted in the death of about 2,000 people in the UK. In December 2004, an undersea earthquake in the Indian Ocean created tsunamis that caused death and destruction on a massive scale in several South-east Asian countries. The 2010 Haiti earthquake was one of the most devastating natural disasters in recorded history. **Pandemics** of swine flu, bird flu, SARS and Ebola fever caused global scares.

**Barack Obama** began his term as America's first black President from 2009. The **Great Recession**, the worst global economic decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s, occurred between 2008 and 2011. Dissatisfaction stemming from the austerity measures imposed by the British government in response to the recession is believed to have contributed towards Brexit. From December 2010 to December 2012, a number of riots and demonstrations took place in some countries of the Middle East and northern Africa. These protests were collectively dubbed 'the **Arab Spring**', and were directed against the ruling regimes of their respective countries. Although the people hoped to end corruption and economic inequality, in most cases, the power vacuums left by the protests led to increased regional instability. The **2012 Summer Olympics** were held in London. The success of this event became a matter of great pride for the British.

A sense of awe fills us when we consider the marvels of the twenty-first century. Science and technology continue to make steady progress, especially in the area of communication. There is an overload of information available at our fingertips, on any topic in any field. E-mail and the internet had shrunk the world in the previous decade. Now, the '**internet of things**' has created a network of homes, wearable devices, vehicles, services, and even cities which can connect to, and exchange information with, each other. All this has made modern life unbelievably convenient. The technological innovations of this century—including the iPod, high-speed internet, Wikipedia, Facebook, the smartphone, streaming media, apps on mobile devices, cryptocurrency,

and driverless cars—have forever changed the way people communicate, do business, govern, travel, learn, entertain themselves, and build relationships, to the extent that every aspect of private and public life has been affected.

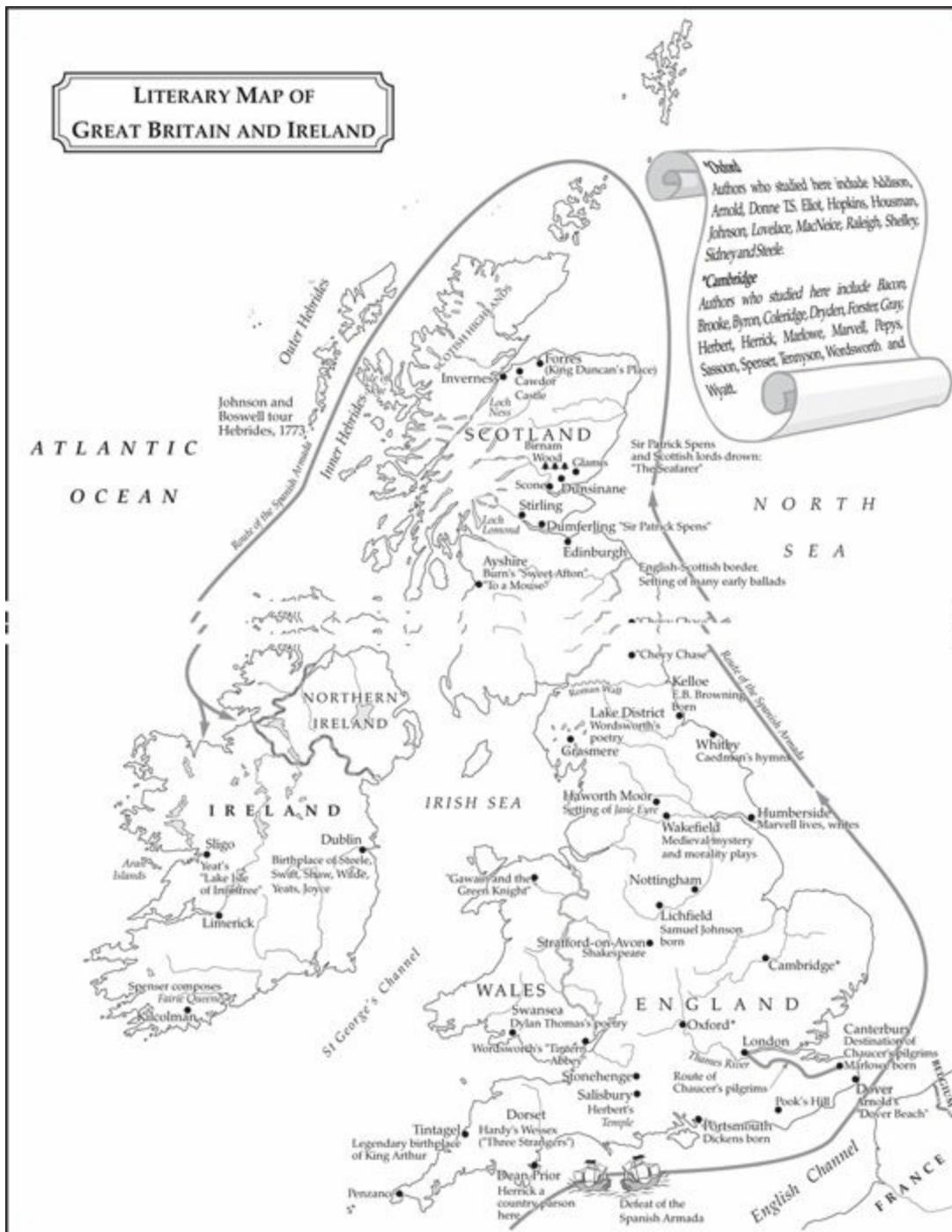
The **Large Hadron Collider**, the world's largest research facility, became operational in 2008. It studies the elementary particles of the universe. **Artificial intelligence**, which has been developing by leaps and bounds since the mid-twentieth century, has become an essential (and invisible) part of a lot of the technology that surrounds us.

But not everything can be considered as progress. With each new stride being taken by science, there is an impact on the natural world. In the twenty-first century, a major cause for grave concern has been the conservation of fast-depleting natural resources and the control of pollution. **Global warming** and **climate change** have led to discernible effects such as rising sea levels, changes to flora and fauna, and extreme weather events of increasing intensity around the world. We have been forced to acknowledge that we must do our best to preserve this planet for future generations.

Among the most famous **literary works** of this century so far are *Atonement* by Ian McEwan, *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Díaz, and *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel. Indian writing in English has become a force to reckon with, not only in India, but all over the world. Two Indian authors won the Booker Prize: Kiran Desai for *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006, and Aravind Adiga for *The White Tiger* in 2008.

This century has also witnessed what many have referred to as a 'golden age' of **television**. British television shows such as *Downton Abbey* and *Sherlock* are immensely popular around the world. The cult show *Doctor Who*, originally broadcast from the 1960s to the 80s, was revived in this decade, and has become a cultural phenomenon in the Anglophone world. The British reality television music competition *Pop Idol* spawned an international franchise and several spin-offs (such as *Indian Idol*), while the British soap opera *Coronation Street* became the world's longest-running television series, having been on air since 1960. The British- American *Harry Potter* film series is among the most successful film franchises in cinema history. British actors have achieved great success and worldwide fame for

their work in popular American films and television programmes.



## **Appendix I**

### **The Rulers of England**

#### **HOUSE OF NORMANDY**

William I	1066–1087
William II	1087–1100
Henry I	1100–1135
Stephen	1135–1154

#### **HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET**

Henry II	1154–1189
Richard I	1189–1199
John	1199–1216
Henry III	1216–1272
Edward I	1272–1307
Edward II	1307–1327
Edward III	1327–1377
Richard II	1377–1399

## **HOUSE OF LANCASTER**

Henry IV 1399–1413

Henry V 1413–1422

Henry VI 1422–1461

## **HOUSE OF YORK**

Edward IV 1461–1470

## **HOUSE OF LANCASTER**

Henry VI 1470–1471

## **HOUSE OF YORK**

Edward IV 1471–1483

Edward V 1483

Richard III 1483–1485

## **HOUSE OF TUDOR**

Henry VII 1485–1509

Henry VIII 1509–1547

Edward VI 1547–1553

Mary I 1553–1558

Elizabeth I 1558–1603

## HOUSE OF STUART

James I 1603–1625

Charles I 1625–1649

## RUMP PARLIAMENT 1649–1653

## PROTECTORATE

Oliver Cromwell 1653–1658

Richard Cromwell 1658–1659

## HOUSE OF STUART

Charles II 1660–  
1685

James II 1685–  
1688

William III and Mary  
II 1689–  
1702

Anne 1702–  
1714

## HOUSE OF HANOVER

George I 1714–1727

George II 1727–1760

George III 1760–1820

George IV 1820–1830

William IV 1830–1837

Victoria 1837–1901

## **HOUSE OF SAXE-COBURG AND GOTHA**

Edward VII 1901–1910

George V 1910–1917

## **HOUSE OF WINDSOR**

George V 1917–1936

Edward VIII 1936

George VI 1936–1952

Elizabeth II 1952–present

## Appendix II

### The Prime Ministers of England

Sir Robert Walpole	Whig	1721–1742
Spencer Compton	Whig	1742–1743
Henry Pelham	Whig	1743–1754
Thomas Pelham-Holles	Whig	1754–1756
William Cavendish	Whig	1756–1757
Thomas Pelham-Holles	Whig	1757–1762
John Stuart	Tory	1762–1763
George Grenville	Whig	1763–1765
Charles Watson-Wentworth	Whig	1765–1766
William Pitt the Elder	Whig	1766–1768
Augustus FitzRoy	Whig	1768–1770
Frederick North	Tory	1770–1782
Charles Watson-Wentworth	Whig	1782
William Petty-FitzMaurice	Whig	1782–1783
William Cavendish-Bentinck	Whig	1783
William Pitt the Younger	Tory	1783–1801

Henry Addington	Tory	1801–1804
William Pitt the Younger	Tory	1804–1806
William Wyndham Grenville	Whig	1806–1807
William Cavendish-Bentinck	Tory	1807–1809
Spencer Perceval	Tory	1809–1812
Robert Banks Jenkinson	Tory	1812–1827
George Canning	Tory	1827
Frederick John Robinson	Tory	1827–1828
Arthur Wellesley	Tory	1828–1830
Charles Grey	Whig	1830–1834
William Lamb	Whig	1834
Arthur Wellesley	Tory	1834
Sir Robert Peel	Conservative	1834–1835
William Lamb	Whig	1835–1841
Sir Robert Peel	Conservative	1841–1846
Lord John Russell	Whig	1846–1852
Edward Smith-Stanley	Conservative	1852
George Hamilton-Gordon	Peelite	1852–1855
Henry John Temple	Liberal	1855–1858
Edward Smith-Stanley	Conservative	1858–1859

Henry John Temple	Liberal	1859–1865
Lord John Russell	Liberal	1865–1866
Edward Smith-Stanley	Conservative	1866–1868
Benjamin Disraeli	Conservative	1868
William Ewart Gladstone	Liberal	1868–1874
Benjamin Disraeli	Conservative	1874–1880
William Ewart Gladstone	Liberal	1880–1885
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil	Conservative	1885–1886
William Ewart Gladstone	Liberal	1886
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil	Conservative	1886–1892
William Ewart Gladstone	Liberal	1892–1894
Archibald Primrose	Liberal	1894–1895
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil	Conservative	1895–1902
Arthur J. Balfour	Conservative	1902–1905
Sir Henry Campell-Bannerman	Liberal	1905–1908
Herbert H. Asquith	Liberal	1908–1916
David Lloyd George	Liberal	1916–1922
Andrew Bonar Law	Conservative	1922–1923
Stanley Baldwin	Conservative	1923–1924
James Ramsay Macdonald	Labour	1924

Stanley Baldwin	Conservative	1924–1929
James Ramsay Macdonald	Labour	1929–1935
Stanley Baldwin	Conservative	1935–1937
Neville Chamberlain	Conservative	1937–1940
Winston Churchill	Conservative	1940–1945
Clement R. Atlee	Labour	1945–1951
Winston Churchill	Conservative	1951–1955
Anthony Eden	Conservative	1955–1957
Harold Macmillan	Conservative	1957–1963
Alexander Douglas Home	Conservative	1963–1964
Harold Wilson	Labour	1964–1970
Edward Heath	Conservative	1970–1974
Harold Wilson	Labour	1974–1976
James Callaghan	Labour	1976–1979
Margaret Thatcher	Conservative	1979–1990
John Major	Conservative	1990–1997
Tony Blair	Labour	1997–2007
Gordon Brown	Labour	2007–2010
David Cameron	Conservative	2010–2016
Theresa May	Conservative	2016–present

## Appendix III

### Glossary

**Bear-baiting** was a cruel sport in which a bear would be tied to a stake with a chain around its neck or hind leg, and hunting dogs would be set on it. It was popular in England until the nineteenth century and was held in places called ‘bear-gardens’.

The **Berlin Wall** was a barrier constructed by the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), starting in 1961, that separated the Soviet-controlled eastern half of Berlin from western Berlin. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 paved the way for German reunification the following year.

**Brexit** (a portmanteau of ‘British’ and ‘exit’) refers to the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union.

**Calvinism** is the branch of Christianity that follows the teachings of the French Protestant, John Calvin (1509–64).

**Cavaliers** were the supporters of the king during the English Civil War (1642–49).

The **Commonwealth** (or the Commonwealth of Nations) is an organisation consisting of the United Kingdom and most of the countries that used to be part of the British Empire. (The phrase ‘Commonwealth of England’ refers to the republican government that ruled England from 1649 to 1660.)

**Corn Laws** were import tariffs imposed between 1815 and 1846, designed to protect corn prices in the United Kingdom against competition from less expensive foreign imports.

**County** is an area in the United Kingdom or in Ireland that has its own government.

**Debtors’ prison** was a prison for those who were unable to repay a debt. Before the mid-nineteenth century, debtors’ prisons were a common way to

deal with unpaid debts. The inmates were forced to pay for their keep.

**Dissenter** refers to a member of a religious body who has, for one reason or another, separated from the established (Anglican) church.

The **East India Company** was the oldest among several similarly formed European companies that were created to carry on overseas trade with Asian countries. It greatly stimulated the growth of British imperialism.

**Eastern Bloc** refers to the former communist states of eastern and central Europe, especially the Soviet Union and its satellite states bound by the Warsaw Pact.

**Feudalism** was the social system that existed during the Middle Ages in Europe in which people were given land and protection by the nobleman owning the land. In return, the people had to work and fight for him.

**Flower power** was a slogan used by the American counterculture movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s as a symbol of passive resistance and nonviolence. Hippies were often referred to as 'flower children'. The term later became generalised as a modern reference to the hippie movement and a culture of drugs, psychedelic art and music, and social permissiveness.

**Germanic** (or Teutonic) is a term pertaining to the former peoples of northern Europe. The descendants of these peoples became, and in many areas contributed to, ethnic groups in northwestern Europe: Scandinavians (Danes, Swedes, Norwegians and Icelanders) and Germans, including Austrians, German-speaking Swiss, and the Dutch.

**Hippie** culture began as a youth movement that arose in the United States during the mid-1960s and spread quickly around the world. Hippies reject established culture and advocate extreme liberalism in politics and lifestyle.

The **Holy Land** refers to the region of western Palestine (on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea) which is sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

The **Irish Republican Army** (IRA) was a militant organisation of Irish nationalists who used terrorism and guerrilla warfare in an effort to drive British forces from Northern Ireland and achieve a united independent Ireland.

**Iron Age** is the period in pre-history in which people first began to use iron for making tools and weapons. The Iron Age in Britain lasted roughly from 600 BCE to 50 CE.

**London season** refers to the annual period when the upper class would leave their manors and country estates and take up residence in London in order to participate in social events, such as balls, sporting events and charities.

The **Long Parliament**, formed in 1640, was called so because, through an act of Parliament, it could only be dissolved with the agreement of its members. This formal dissolution occurred only in 1660.

**Lutheranism** is the branch of Christianity that follows the teachings of Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century German Protestant leader.

**Maypole** is a decorated pole that people dance around in ceremonies on May Day. **Middle English** is an old form of English that was used between 1150 and 1450.

**New Learning** refers to the studies and ideas that were introduced into England during the sixteenth century.

**Old English** (or Anglo-Saxon) refers to the English language that was spoken before 1150. It was very different from modern English.

**Presbyterianism** is a branch of Christianity that adheres to Calvinist doctrines. The national Church of Scotland is Presbyterian.

**Protestantism** refers to the theological beliefs of the churches of western Christianity that separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century.

**Puritanism** refers to the beliefs and practices of a group of English Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Puritans wanted to worship God in a simple way and had a very strict moral attitude.

The **rack** was an instrument of torture. The arms and legs of the victim were tied to a wooden frame which was pulled in opposite directions till the person's bones and ligaments snapped.

**Roman Catholicism** refers to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church based in Rome with the pope as its leader.

**Roundheads** were those who supported the Parliament against the king during the English Civil War (1642–49).

The **Royal Society** is a learned society (founded in 1660 and granted a royal charter by Charles II in 1662) through which the British government has supported the advancement of science.

**Sabbath** is the day of the week that is meant for resting and worshipping God. For Jews, this day is Saturday; for most Christians, it is Sunday.

**Scotland Yard** refers to the Metropolitan Police Service of London. The original headquarters of the Metropolitan Police had an entrance on a street called Great Scotland Yard. Over time, the name became synonymous with the force itself. When their address changed, the Metropolitan Police adopted the name *New Scotland Yard* for their new headquarters.

The **social hierarchy** of the United Kingdom consists of five ranks of peerage. In descending order, these are: duke, marquess, earl, viscount and baron (use the mnemonic: ‘**D**o **M**en **E**ver **V**isit **B**oston?’). Baronet is a lower rank than baron but higher than knight. Unlike knighthood, a baronetcy is hereditary. The style of address for barons and viscounts is ‘Lord (X)’. Marquesses and earls can be called either ‘the Marquess/Earl of (X)’ or ‘Lord (X)’. Dukes use the style ‘Duke of (X)’, but are formally addressed as ‘Your Grace’, rather than ‘My Lord’. Duke is the highest rank below the king, queen and princes. A duke controls a duchy.

The **Vietnam War** was fought during the Cold War era between North Vietnam, supported by its communist allies, and the government of South Vietnam, supported by the USA and other anti-communist nations.

The **Western Bloc** (or Capitalist Bloc) refers to the powers allied with the USA and NATO against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact (the Eastern Bloc) during the Cold War.