

Social Roots of the Renaissance (1st Part)

Presented by

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1.The varied layer of Patronage:-

- The ideology and the manifestation of Renaissance popularized due to the patronage of the **Popes, Princes, Cardinals and Merchants.**
- With the help of this layered patronage cultural self consciousness, economic affluence, urban identity and pride became the key features of Renaissance.

2. Connection between academic excellence and business- industrial activities:-

During the 15th century Northern Italy, important educated groups were those who dealt with various business and industrial activities i.e. lawyers and notaries . They had to compulsorily excel in Roman Law and Latin and who were able to quote from the classical and the Christian authors. Apart from this, they had to expertise in the language, literature, institutions and customs of antiquity.

3. Importance of Religion:-

Religion still occupied an important factor and the **Pietas, Madonnas, Crucifixion** and the **innumerable saints** manifested in Renaissance art show that most of the renaissance artists still revered Christianity.

4. Relevance of Aristocracy:-

(a) Studies reflect that, the aristocratic structure of the contemporary society was not fully erased with the emergence of affluent as well as erudite merchant class.

Whereas, **contemporary merchant class , especially of Florence and Venice helped to promote civility in order to spread aristocratic atmosphere in the urban mentality.**

(b) What is important to be noticed that, the factors which were previously considered as the building blocks of aristocracy has been started to change since 16th century.

Moreover, the horizons of aristocratic life widened like never before. **Now, a soldier, a statesman, a priest or a merchant could also be known as a gentleman if he had enough knowledge about classical art- literature and music.**

5. Urban centers of the 'Italian Renaissance':-

To be precise, Italian cities like, **Vicenza, Rimini, Ferrara, Urbino, Mantua, Parma** were thriving centers of the **16th century 'Renaissance'**. But, it were **Florence, Venice, Milan and Rome-** who took the charge to pave the further path of this very intellectual newness. Florence first started the process of this artistic endeavor but Rome and Milan also gradually flourished with the help of their various patronized artists. Renaissance came late in Venice but stayed for a long time-span.

6. Basic reasons for Italian Renaissance:-

- Her **gorgeous and great past** reflected by the **ruins of temples, villas** especially in the city of Rome spawned an intense thirst in the minds of contemporary intelligentsia to **'revive' and 're-live'** it.
- From the 15th century, one of the important patrons of Renaissance, **'Renaissance Popes'** ordered for preservation and further excavation of remnants of **'classical Roman culture'**.

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- **Popes** as well as **Princes** started to assist Renaissance activists in a full flared manner in order to collect and preserve ancient items.
- Apart from this, as the connection with the **Byzantine empire** had been rekindled through **Venetian and Genoese traders, the interest in Greek thought and literature** of those who unraveled and collected manuscripts was also accelerated during this time period.

7. Warfare v/s Buildings, Arts, Pageants and Patronage:-

Although Military Revolution had paved the way to a completely new method of warfare throughout the Western Europe, 16th century Northern Italy envisaged a dichotomy between **Warfare** and **manifold Art form**. The princes and the republics of the Renaissance lived in a dangerous times but they were keen to seek a medium through which their deeds will be remembered forever. Thus, they opted for **Buildings, Arts, Pageants and Patronage** which they considered as more concrete than **Warfare**.

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Leonardo da Vinci got the patronage of **Cesare Borgia** as well as **Sforza**. Raphael began his career in the turbulent **Perugia**. Mantua got an eternal fame for cradling **Lodovico's** frescos, **Alberti's** Churches and **Vittorino's** influence on education.

8. Social circumstances for artisans and craftsmen:-

- As the multilayered art forms were being patronized by many **contemporary Princes** and **well off Merchants**, the socio- economic condition of the artisans and craftsmen had been elevated.

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- On the other hand, as a deeply knitted thought of the early Christian mentality , i.e. **“building is a part of Christian life”** still was relevant in 16th century Italy, in most of cases, artisans and craftsmen were appointed to **renovate/ Recreate** or **build monasteries, nunneries** and **cathedrals**. So, during the first phase of the **Italian Renaissance**, these religious institutions were the medium to exhibit the excellence of contemporary artisans.

9. 'Competitive patronage' and the transformation of 'Art form':-

As the new **Merchant Princes** and **Despots** were competing for attaining the service of the great **Architects, Sculptors, Painters** and **Scholars** the multi-layered arts became more costly. Maintenance and Proliferation of **Renaissance art** and **Thriving Economy** became reciprocal to each other. The reason for consistent growth of Renaissance art form in contemporary Venice, Florence, Milan and Rome lied in their profitable economy.

10. Constant Warfare and its influence on Niccolo Machiavelli:-

- It is said that, **Renaissance statecraft** can be personified by a single man- **Niccolo Machiavelli** who belonged to Florence and deeply influenced by the **constant warfare** of that time. Resisting the **Duke of Milan** and reinstate the **Republican character of Florence** as well as Italy was the primary objective of contemporary Florentines and needless to say, Machiavelli was the active participant of the said resistance.

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- The outcome of this prolonged crisis made **Florence as the center of humanism** i.e. a **new manifestation of Political Liberty** and a **new viewpoint to understand the importance of mankind in their society.**

These slowly changing socio- political ideal can be found distinctly in the writings of Machiavelli.