

② The Age of John Dryden
Characteristics of the Restoration age. 15
(1660-1700)

The Restoration age marks the change in life, society, religion and political power when England welcomed their new King Charles the II at Dover.

It is usual that certain changes do take place with the change in power. Queen Elizabeth brought an era of peace and prosperity from the rule of terror by Queen Mary of Scots.

The Puritans had closed the theatres in 1642 and established moral order, duty and discipline.

When with Charles II came, the vices of the French court. People began to love a life of libertine nature and vice became more pleasurable.

However the Puritan influence was still there as Milton's love of freedom and liberty had greater force.

Some of the chief characteristics of Restoration can be said to be:

Politically - the young politicians joined with the king and tried to take control over the state and the church. This can be called 'Despotism'. Even the law courts were forced to be corrupt.

Religiously - the king and his men tried to create enmity between the Catholic and the church of England.

Socially - the society was led away to all types of excesses and the theatre was ready to show bed room scenes with open vulgarity.

The Parliament was a scene of unhealthy charges as the Whigs (public men) and the Tories (King's men) fought like anything.

Finally, there was a Revolution of 1688 in which there was no blood-shed.

Were seen.

Finally, Charles II after four years of misrule was deposed and William of Orange was called to the throne.

There were great changes in the literature of this age.

The greatest poet and critic Dryden wrote his great satires, *Mac Flecknoe*, *The Astruc Redux*, *Absalom* and *Achitophel*.

Dryden can be called the representative writer of this age as he wrote poetry, prose, satires, letters, epistles and dramas.

He reintroduced the classical meter by his heroic couplets. Dryden is called the Father of English criticism because he wrote his excellent criticism by his prefaces.

He wrote on prosody and diction as he perfected English prose style.

We may sum up the characteristics of the Restoration age:

- (1) It was a transition from Puritanism to absolute power of the King Charles II.
- (2) There were political rivalries which gave birth to Whig and Tory parties.
- (3) Socially people became libertine and loved licentious life of immorality and vice.
- (4) There was a bloodless revolution of 1688 which united the opposite political and religious parties.
- (5) Heroic couplet became the mode and fashion in poetry.
- (6) Satire became the hand-maid of all writers.
- (7) Dryden was called the father of English criticism and the representative poet of this age.