

**P.R. GOVERNMENT COLLEGE (A), KAKINADA**  
**NAAC Accredited “A” Grade Institution (CGPA –**  
**3.17)**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**Study Material for students**



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**TOPIC: Geographical Discoveries**

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERIES

Some historians consider the modern age was herald more by voyages of discovery than by intellectual or artistic activity.

Geographical explorations transform the course of human history by occasioning far-reaching consequences. There were certain political and social factors which encouraged the daring navigators of Europe to accomplish geographical discoveries.

**1. Fall of Constantinople:** The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the progress of the Turkish conquest closed the land route between the East and West. All European Nations were constrained to discover a water route to India. Portugal and Spain stood first in this quest.

**2. Marco Polo's travel accounts:** long before the fall of Constantinople Marco Polo extensively travelled in Asiatic countries. His travel accounts inspired the European navigators and provided them with a rough idea of eastern regions.

**3. Mariner's compass:** certain innovations in the art of navigation such as the magnetic compass, the astrologer and map making emboldened the adventurous navigators.

**4. Growth of geographical knowledge:** equipped with the geographical knowledge acquired from books such as 'a merchant's handbook', secrets of the faithful crusaders, and some other travelogues.

**5. Crazy for eastern commodities:** there was an extraordinary demand for such eastern commodities as spices, silk and tea in European markets. Fabulous stories about eastern gold allured European adventures to explore water routes to the East.

**6. Spirit of adventure:** the spirit of adventure was the direct outcome of the Renaissance. Hunger for high adventure and wealth drew many young navigators to explore Newlands.

**7. Desire to spread Christianity:** the missionary zeal of Christian Nations also was responsible for geographical explorations. Discoveries considered themselves a moral duty on the part of those who propagated the Christian faith in Newlands.

### \*\*Important geographical discoveries\*\*

#### **Portuguese explorations:**

In the direction of exploring a new sea route to the east the lead was taken by Portuguese navigators since Portugal was in a favourable geographical position.

**a) Henry, the navigator:** he was a member of the Portuguese royal family. Even though Prince Henry was not actually a navigator or explorer he patronised exploring expeditions to the Western coast of Africa. The discovery of the Canary Islands including the Atlantic Ocean were made possible due to his efforts. He established a School of Navigations.

**b) Bartholomew Diaz:** under the patronage of Portuguese King a great sailor called Bartholomew Diaz embarked upon exploring a sea route to the east in 1488. He sailed along the African coast and reached the Southern tip of the continent as he was caught in a storm there he named it the cape of storms'. And later it was called as Cape of Good Hope.

C) **Vasco da Gama:** he was an adventurous sailor who under the patronage of Portuguese King Immanuel. He crossed the Cape of Good Hope to discover a sea route to India. After many years and prolonged voyage he, at last reached India and Anchor at Calicut on May 17 1498. Vasco da Gama visited India first and established Portuguese factories there from that point the Portuguese Maritime empire spread to other Asiatic countries like Malaya China etc.

### **Spanish explorations:**

Simultaneous with the Portuguese the Spanish plunged into the race of explorations.

**a) Columbus.** He was a native of Geneva in Italy being a skilled and resourceful navigator he believed that he could reach India by sailing West across the Atlantic Ocean. He was commissioned by Queen Isabella of Spain to set out on his journey. He sailed with three ships named as the Santa Maria the Pinta and the Niña. After having undergone suffering and nearly 2 months of hazardous voyage through the Atlantic he landed near the coast of Cuba on August 24 1492 the Christopher Columbus discovered the Atlantic route to the continent of America but he believed that he reached some Islands of the Asiatic coast and named the native Indians. Until the last moment of his life he was quite ignorant of the real nature of his discovery.

**America Vespucci:** he also was an Italian navigator inspired by Columbus discovery, he led exploring expeditions to America and proved that new continent was quite different from Asia strangely America came to be called in the name of Amerigo.

**Others:** not only above sailors there were many other sailors who found many new islands they are like Balboa, Magellan and many others who found many new places in the world.

### **\*\*\*Effects of geographical discoveries\*\*\***

There were many effects which came from geographical discovery were noteworthy.

1. Impetus to world trade.
2. Establishment of colonies.
3. Commercial and colonial wars.
4. Rise of West.
5. Importance of sea overland.
6. Growth of civilization.
7. Spread of Christianity.

These are the various effects which are come by the geographical discoveries.