

# **Renaissance in Early Modern Europe: Dignity of Man and the Discipline of History**

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## **Abstract**

The Renaissance of early modern Europe can be seen as a continuation of the Renaissance of the 12th and 13th century high middle-ages, with significant advances in intellectual and artistic realms. The works of Petrarch, regarded as the father of humanism, and Boccaccio coincide with the feudal crisis of Europe. Important intellectual techniques like search for original manuscripts, emphasis on learning original Greek and Latin and their grammar, philology and textual criticism laid the foundations of modern historical research. Periodization of history as ancient, medieval and modern can be associated with humanist perception of antiquity and the middle-ages as distinct phases. History as a discipline was a part of *studia humanitatis*. Guicciardini and Machiavelli wrote on histories of Italy and Florence, with discourses on ancient historians. Revival of classical antiquity can be seen as revival of history of antiquity. Renaissance humanism was strongly associated with the idea of dignity of man. Dignity of man stood for firm belief in the rationality and creativity of humans. Exercise of free will entailed use of human rationality and effort. The achievements of antiquity were recognized as creations of humans and not a gift of providence or divine intervention. Revival of antiquity was in fact celebration of the accomplishments of the men and women of antiquity. Renaissance humanism stood for belief in the potentiality of humans to revive the glorious past of antiquity and shape their destiny.

**Key words** – Renaissance, humanism, revival, history, dignity of man

The Renaissance of early modern Europe, which originated in Italy can be seen as a period in history or as a cultural and intellectual movement for revival of classical antiquity. It was a conscious movement of revival where the participants leapt across several centuries, the entire medieval period, to revive what they regarded were the true foundations of European culture and civilization. In this process the revivalists attempted

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