

**SPECIAL LECTURE**  
**"Transformation of Europe"**  
**27/04/2022**



**Dr. Arunima Roychoudhuri**, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Sundarban Mahavidyalaya delivered a special lecture on "**Transformation of Europe from Feudalism to Capitalism**" on 27/04/2022 at Vidyasagar Metropolitan College.

32 students participated in the interactive seminar.

**Synopsis of The Lecture**

Period between the 15th and 18th century witnessed rapid changes in the European socio-politico-economic scenario. Population of Europe was increasing after two centuries of decline or stagnation. The bonds of commerce within Europe tightened, and an international trade network flourished. The great geographic discoveries then in process were integrating Europe into a world economic system. New commodities, many of them imported from recently discovered lands, enriched material life. Not only trade but also the production of goods increased as a result of new ways of organizing production. Merchants, entrepreneurs,

and bankers accumulated and manipulated capital in unprecedented volume. Most historians locate in the 16th century the beginning, or at least the maturing, of Western capitalism. Capital assumed a major role not only in economic organization but also in political life and international relations. Culturally, new values—many of them associated with the Renaissance and Reformation—diffused through Europe and changed the ways in which people acted and the perspectives by which they viewed themselves and the world.

This world of early capitalism, however, can hardly be regarded as stable or uniformly prosperous. Financial crashes were common; the Spanish crown, the heaviest borrower in Europe, suffered repeated bankruptcies in 1557, 1575–77, 1596, 1607, 1627, and 1647. Even as capitalism advanced in the West, the once-free peasants of central and eastern Europe slipped into serfdom. The apparent prosperity of the 16th century gave way in the middle and late periods of the 17th century to a “general crisis” in many European regions. Politically, the new centralized states insisted on new levels of cultural conformity on the part of their subjects. Several states expelled Jews, and almost all of them refused to tolerate religious dissenters. Culturally, in spite of the revival of ancient learning and the reform of the churches, a hysterical fear of witches grasped large segments of the population, including the learned. Understandably, historians have had difficulty defining the exact place of this complex period in the course of European development.