

History of English Language and Literature
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Lecture No 7
The Jacobean Age

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Hello everyone. Welcome to today's session of the course History of English Language and Literature. In today's lecture we begin looking at a new era in literature, The Jacobean Age and this also marks the end of the Elizabethan period.

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+ Evaluating the Elizabethan Age

- Golden Age – a hyperbole?
- Not so Golden an Age for:
 - The Black community
 - The Irish
 - The Catholics

“England ceases to be the anvil; became the hammer” - Trevelyan

Let us begin this lecture by taking stock of the Elizabethan Age and taking a look at how things were looking like in England towards the end of Elizabethan period.

Many historians at later point have wondered whether epithet The Golden Age was more like a hyperbole and less of a reality. Though we have seen it in terms of literature it was indeed a golden period. The Elizabethan Age did see the flourishing of many genres and also saw the emergence of particular kinds of writing and writers such as Shakespeare and many other stalwarts, but at the same time for certain other communities and certain other groups

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of people this was not so golden an age. Uh in fact many historians have noted that England did not have many golden practices in place when it came to dealing with specially the black community who had begun to arrive in Elizabethan England from the sixteenth century onwards and also the treatment of the Irish were not so commendable.

The political tussle with Ireland and the treatment of the Irish is something that we will time and again come back to when we later look at the Celtic Revival as well. And also England being a Protestant nation it did not treat the Catholics very kindly either. Later we will see how the Puritans were; they continued to remain as a discontented lot under the reign of Elizabethan and even in the succeeding period. Nevertheless this period is of supreme importance and many historians including Trevelyan have noted that, in spite of the difficulties and in spite of the challenges that the Elizabethan period posed, it did, uh show England a new way in which it could go ahead. And that sense compared to the other neighboring states and compared to the other major economies and other major political forces in the rest of Europe, England had ceased to be the anvil

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and it had become the hammer.

So this is how we look at the Elizabethan Age from a hindsight. So it is very difficult to ignore the (()) in spite of the many challenges and the many

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limitations that the period and the epithet the Golden Age posed. There is another pressing question that comes to our mind when we talk about the Elizabethan period and also the Renaissance in general. Where were the women during

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+ What about the women?

- Did women have a **Renaissance**?
 - Lost economic power, briefly gained status and opportunities for education – largely sheltered from the ‘male worlds’ of writing, commerce and government
 - Death of Elizabeth – further hampered women’s intellectual aspirations
 - James I – about an erudite woman – “But can she spin?”

this period? We hardly hear about any noted women writers or any noted women artists of this period. We also know that women were not permitted on stage even when the theater was the most important form dramatic entertain, even when theater was a most important form of entertainment during the Elizabethan period. So this is the question that has been troubling the historians and many other critics for a very long time. And some recent research

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has already been done on the women writers during the Renaissance period. We shall be coming back to this at some later point when we are done looking at the English Renaissance in general. But taking a look at what, whether the women actually had a renaissance or not during that period. It is important to note

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that during the Renaissance period they lose even the little economic power that women had during the medieval ages. And though they are, they briefly gain some status and also gain a lot of opportunities for education. We do not find them coming into the public sphere. They were largely sheltered within their own families and they were kept away from these predominantly male worlds of writing, commerce and government.

So there is hardly any documented presence which the historians talk about. And also though England was ruled by a female monarch during this time, we do not see the status of women changing

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drastically. In fact with the death of Queen Elizabeth we find that this status is even, the status comes down even further and women's general status gets hampered and their intellectual aspirations are no longer credible.

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And James the First who is considered to be notorious misogynist, things do not get any better at all, and in fact it is anecdote about James the First that he remarked about this particular erudite woman who remains unknown that, after hearing about her scholarship and her brilliant wit, James the First is said to have remarked "But can she spin?"

So this is a kind of status and a kind of attitude that people generally had towards women. In spite of the spirit of the Renaissance and the spirit of Reformation which provided and promised a freer and secular kind of ambience

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+ The End of Elizabethan Era

- The last years – political uncertainties
- Elizabeth I dies – 24 March 1603
- No explicit provision for a successor
- James VI of Scotland – nearest royal relative
- Fraught with challenges

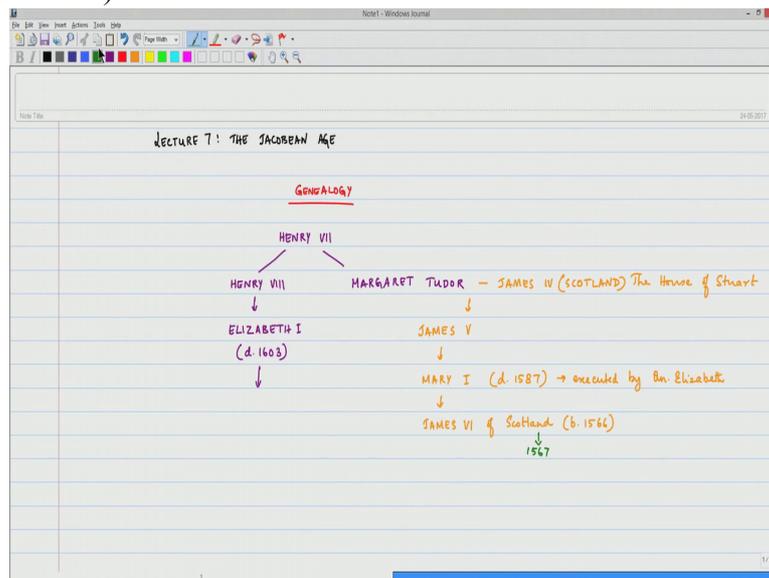
all around. So when we look at the end of the Elizabethan era, when we look at the end of the Elizabethan era, we begin to note that Queen Elizabeth final years were not so comfortable. It was shrouded in a lot of political uncertainty and many of her counselors were also very unhappy that she had not yet named the successor and England, they feared, was about to fall into some kind of a Civil War due to this uncertainty. And Elizabeth I eventually dies on twenty fourth March 1603, and she had not made any exclusive provision for her successor. But nevertheless all the, everyone had assumed that James the Sixth of Scotland who was the nearest living royal relative of Elizabeth could be a possible successor to the English throne. But this possibility was also fraught with a lot of challenges. And before we move on to look at what kind

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of challenges and how the succession came into place, it is important to see who exactly James the Sixth

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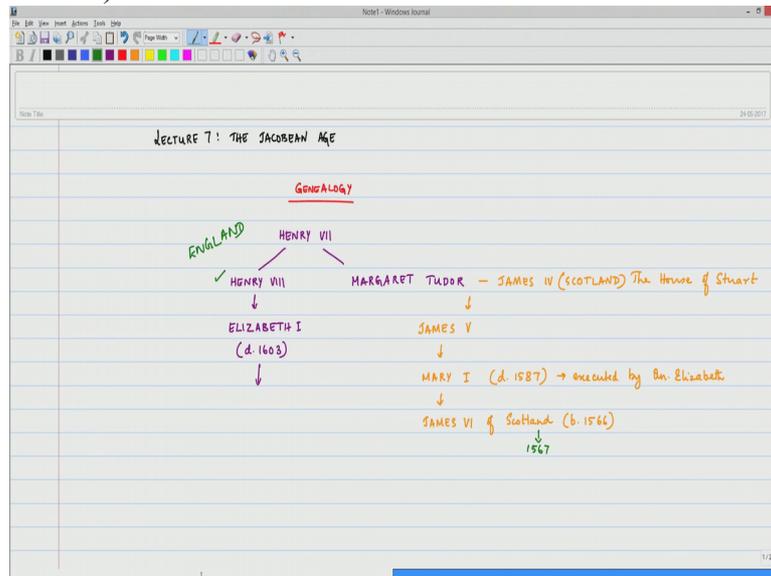
was in terms of the royal genealogy.

So here we begin locating the genealogy of James the Sixth of Scotland, James the First of England. And if you look, go back a little bit in history there is this King Henry the Seventh whose son was Henry the Eighth who assumes power and who was quite spectacularly important in the history of England. He is the one who breaks away from the Roman church and forms the Church of England and it is from Henry the Eighth that Elizabeth First

descends and takes over as the Queen of England. And this is what happens on the English side.

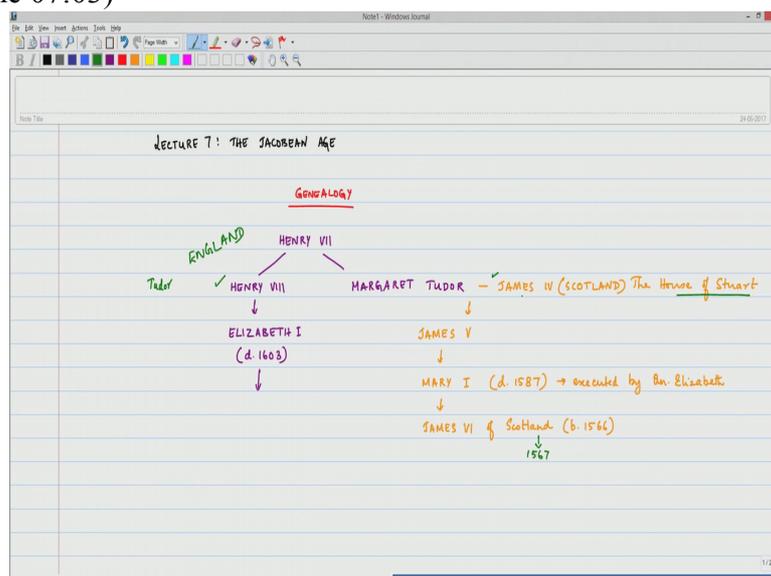
And on the other hand

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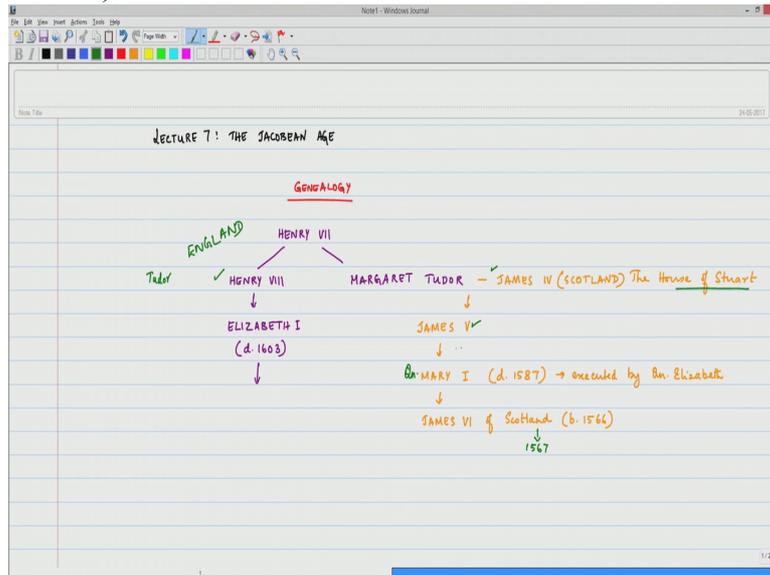
there was this other daughter that Henry the Seventh had, Margaret Tudor who gets married to James the Fourth of Scotland and this is how Scotland comes into the picture. And James the Fourth belongs to the House of Stuart and if you remember Henry the Eighth belonged to the House of Tudors and James the Fifth succeeds

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James the Fourth and he becomes the king of Scotland and Mary the First happens to be the wife of James the Fifth and who takes over as the Queen of Scotland after the death of

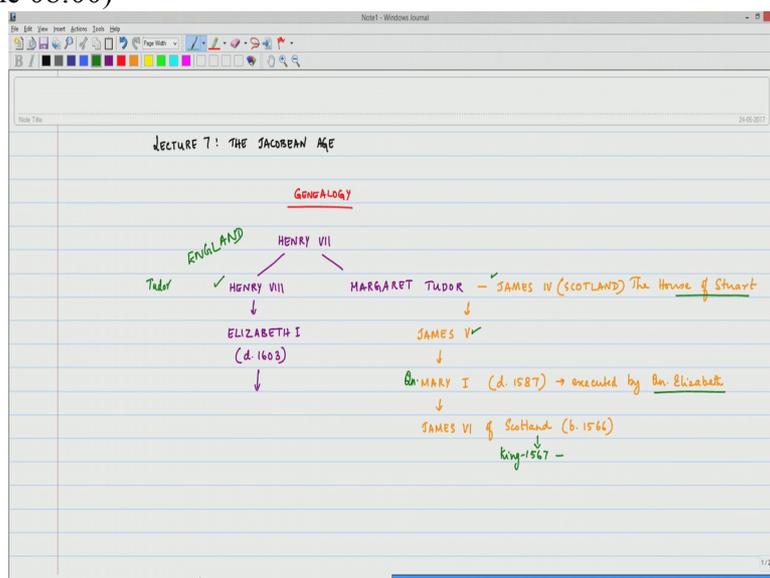
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James the Fifth. But this time also proves to be quite turbulent and she eventually dies in 1587. She is in fact executed by Queen Elizabeth and some of the details of which we have already noted in the previous sessions.

But what is important for us is the understanding that James the Sixth of Scotland, the son of Mary the First who was executed by Queen Elizabeth, he was born on 1566 but he assumes the status of king in 1567 in less than a year after he was born. And he continues to be the king of Scotland till the end of his life and also we find that he being the only relative, royal relative of Elizabeth the First, he gets to rule over England as the next

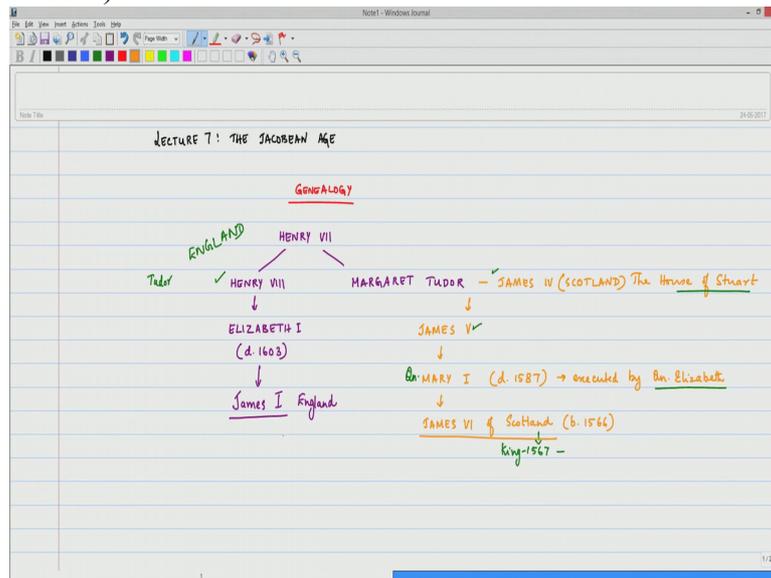
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successor of Elizabeth the First. So here we find it, after Elizabeth First we have James the Sixth of Scotland assuming the crown of England as James the First.

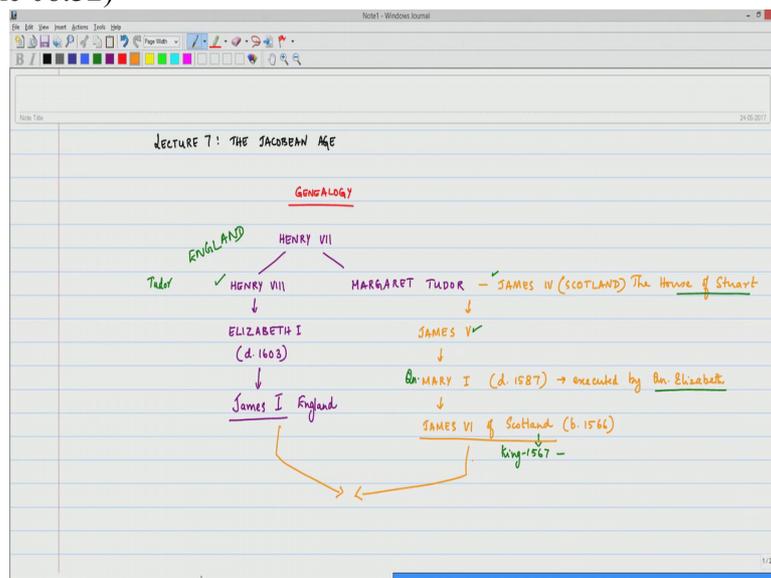
So he holds two titles during his lifetime, James the First of England and James the Sixth of Scotland. And also we find

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it around this time the unification of both these crowns takes place because it is the same person who is ruling over

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England and Scotland. So this is the genealogy of James the First

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which also (()) the understanding that even though Elizabeth had not mentioned or specified particular heir he was the most legitimate and the immediate relative who was, who had all the kinds of rights to succeed her as the next king.

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+ The End of Elizabethan Era

- The last years – political uncertainties
- Elizabeth I dies – 24 March 1603
- No explicit provision for a successor
- James VI of Scotland – nearest royal relative
- Fraught with challenges

So coming back to our main topic. What were the major challenges that James the Sixth of Scotland faced before he was crowned

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+ Challenges – Legal

- **1351** – foreigners forbidden to inherit English lands
- **1544** – Parliamentary succession statute
 - Queen Elizabeth failed to mention any heir
- **1547** – Henry VIII's will – debarred his Scottish relatives from the throne
- **1585** – If any claimants should conspire against Queen Elizabeth, their legal rights were to be forfeited

as James the First of England? The challenges were mostly legal in nature. And there were lot of these statutes and edicts that the English Parliament had brought about in order to bring about political stability in England. And in 1351 there was this particular edict which forbid all foreigners to inherit English lands and technically though James the Sixth of Scotland was a relative of Elizabeth First, he was a foreigner. He was a Scottish because his father was Scottish.

So this technically forbid him to inherit the crown of England and in 1544, the Parliament had come up with another statute. It was called the Parliamentary Succession Statute and this in fact had ordered that every living monarch should name a successor in order to ensure a smooth kind of succession. And in the event that any queen or king failed to name a successor it was considered quite a critical stage. And in fact England was facing such a period after the death of Queen Elizabeth because she had failed to mention any successor and

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therefore it was a little difficult to hand over the crown legitimately to, to James the Sixth of Scotland because there were

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these legal issues.

And in 1547, Henry Eighth had come up with his will which stated that the Scottish relatives, his Scottish relatives could not inherit the throne at any point, and this was done deliberately as political strategy because he knew that Margaret Tudor and her successors could eventually pose a threat to his own, his own throne and he had made up this will in order to completely outdo all the possibility of any of Margaret Tudor's successors

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coming to power in England.

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And in 1585 there was another statute that the Parliament had put forward which argued that if any claimant should conspire against Queen Elizabeth, their legal rights would be forfeited. This was the, this was in light of the major political challenges and even the many, the many death threats that Queen Elizabeth faced during her lifetime and the Parliament had,

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was forced to come up with this thing in order to completely eliminate the claims of all the other royal relatives who were conspiring against her and also the kind of support, also to counter the kind of support that Catholic Church was offering to any other legal possible heir that Queen Elizabeth had.

So James the Sixth of Scotland had to overcome all of these difficulties if he had to become James the First of England. And how did he overcome and how did he ensure the smooth succession? It is in this context that we note the role

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+ The role of Robert Cecil



- Robert Cecil
 - Secretary of State, administrator and politician, Privy councillor
- Engineered James I's succession and managed a major crisis
 - Had organized the publication of King James' 'Basilicon Doron' – advice on kingship
 - Made king 'by prior arrangement'
- Declared king "by law, by linear succession, and undoubted right"

of Robert Cecil. Robert Cecil was Secretary of State and he was very well-known administrator, a renowned politician. He was also a privy counselor in Elizabeth's, Queen

Elizabeth's court. And he is the one who is said to have engineered James the First succession and managed the major succession crisis in England in the early seventeenth century.

Even before James of, even before James the Sixth of Scotland had assumed the crown of England Robert Cecil had identified a potential king in him and he had begun to manage the affairs in England accordingly. He had even before, James the First became the king, he had organized the publication of his Basilikon Doron which was an advice on kingship that James the First had written addressing his son. And it is generally said in history that James the First was made king by prior arrangement. And because Robert Cecil had played a major role

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in politically and strategically placing King James the First succession as a very legitimate and legal thing to do. And he was declared king by

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Robert Cecil in the Parliament also.

This is the phrase in the assembly that he had used. He was declared king by law by linear succession and undoubted right. So this in fact brings into light the various ways in which kings and queens succeeded in heir to the English

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throne and it was not always possible just through ensuring legitimate right through kingship but it was also important to have a political ally in place in order to ensure a smooth succession and even to remain on power, even to remain in power throughout.

And what were the advantages of King

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+ The Advantages of King James I

- A proven monarch – “an old and experienced king”
- Became the King of Scotland in 1567 (b.1566)
- Enjoyed a rising reputation in Europe – ended England’s war with Spain, established peace
- A male monarch after 40 years of the Virgin Queen’s rule
- King James I – married with kids – ensured long term political stability

A portrait of King James I, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, ornate ruff collar and a dark cap. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right.

James First when he assumed the throne of England? He was a proven monarch. As we noted earlier he becomes King of Scotland at a very young age as early as a few months old. He was barely a year old when he became the King of Scotland. He began ruling more or less on his own right from the time he was, from the time he reached the age of twelve. He was ably assisted by many of the other courtiers and many other counsel members but nevertheless he knew the ways of the world and he knew how to rule a kingdom right from a very young age. And he himself introduced, he introduced himself in the English Parliament as an old and experienced king.

And this was also; there was also thing about his rising reputation in Europe. He was a good political strategist and he had very good relationships with many of the monarchs in Europe and in fact as soon as he assumes the throne of England we find him quite tactfully ending the war with Spain and establishing peace over there. And due to these many things he had enjoyed a very good reputation among the neighboring city states.

And also the English people were quite relieved that they got a male monarch after forty years reign of the Virgin Queen. They were also looking forward to some kind of a change, and more than that they were

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happy that there was some political stability which was about to come. Because James the First was married. He had kids and the English people assumed that this could perhaps promise a long term political stability and will also not lead to any kind of overthrow of power in between or lead to any kind of challenges for succession.

But however the reign was not a very smooth one as we begin to note in history later on. English Parliament was comparatively freer and more secular kind of space. But James the First was an advocate of Royal Absolutism and this was not taken very kindly by the parliamentarians in England during that time. And because of this he increasingly, he got into trouble with the Parliament

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+ Meanwhile,

- A strong advocate of royal absolutism
- Conflicts with an increasingly self-assertive Parliament
 - Dissolved the Parliament in 1611
 - Set the stage for rebellion against Charles 1, his successor
- Styled himself "King of Great Britain"
- Learned, scholarly – 'aroused in him literary ambitions rarely found in princes but which also tended to make him a pedant'

and he was, the Parliament itself was quite self-assertive during that times and because of that there were continuous problems between the king and the Parliament.

It was an ongoing thing throughout King James the First rule and we also find that there were a couple of very serious threats to his life, the prominent one being the Gunpowder Plot, which was exposed and the convicts were caught and executed as well. But

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nevertheless there was always this, there was always this threat to the stability, threat to the kind of powers that James the First enjoyed because of the many interventions of the Parliament. And he even resorted to many drastic things like dissolving the Parliament in 1611. Many of these details which we will come back to again because it becomes important to situate the emergence of civil war in England at a later point of time.

And we also see that it was many of these unpopular parliamentary

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practices of the king that eventually led England to erupt in a state of rebellion against Charles the First, his successor. So we begin to note that the seeds of this unrest and the seeds of this, the ongoing tussle between the monarchy and between the parliament, it had, it was beginning to

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brew right from the time of James the First. And he also, he styled himself as the King of Great Britain because he was ruling over three provinces at this point of time. There was England, there was Ireland and also Scotland. So there was, he styled himself as the King of Great Britain which, some of the parliamentarians did not take very kindly either.

One thing

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+ Meanwhile,

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which proved to be quite profitable and also proved to be quite disadvantageous to King James First was his learned and scholarly nature. He was quite fortunate to have received a very good education. When he was in Scotland, he was quite learned in Greek, Latin and French, and he also had lot of scholarly ambitions in his mind. He was renowned writer as well but at the same time, as some historians would put it, the kind of background that he had, the kind of education, the kind of scholarly background that he had, it aroused in him literary ambitions rarely found in princes but which also tended to make him a pedant.

So this had led to a lot of controversies about his, his powers and

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his merit as a writer and even as historian but at the same time it is important to note that he had registered, he had left his mark in England as far many of the contributions that he made,

though indirectly towards the progress of literature. And though it was not a continuation of the Elizabethan age, though there was a certain kind of decline during the Jacobean times in terms of literary arts and other kinds of artistic trends, we do find that King James leaves, left an indelible mark in English History.

So how do we begin to talk

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+ The Jacobean Age

- Reign of James I (James VI of Scotland) – 1566 to 1625
- Only subtle differences from the preceding Elizabethan Age – no major visible dramatic change of moods
- Continuation of the English Renaissance
- Union of the Crowns – England and Scotland
- The return of Black Death – the Great Plague

about Jacobean age? How do we classify it? This was the reign of James the First and who was also James the Sixth of Scotland. He reigned, he lived from 1566 to 1625 and we know that he rose to power in Scotland in 1567 and he becomes the King of England in 1603. When we talk about Jacobean age and its characteristics, it is very interesting to note that there were only subtle differences from the proceeding Elizabethan age. We do not find any major dramatic change of moods in terms of literature or in terms of arts. In certain ways it is even a continuation from the Elizabethan period, and it is also, Jacobean age also falls under the period of English Renaissance.

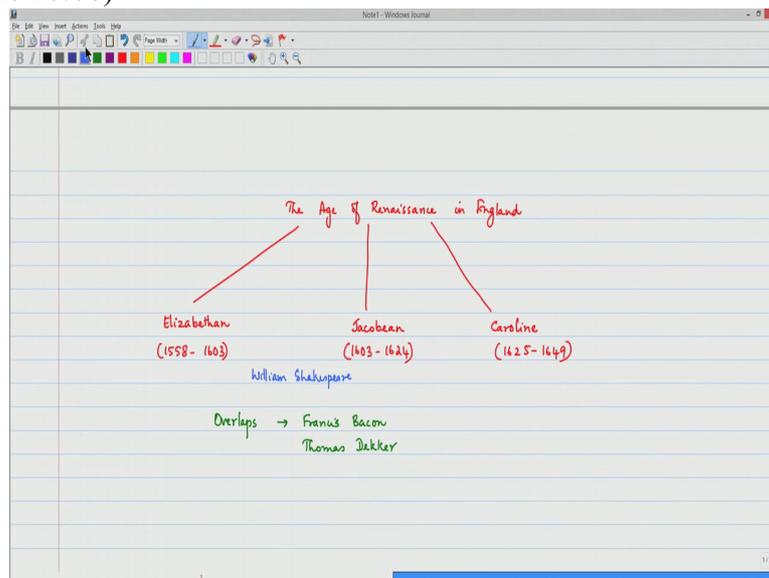
In that sense it's another form of Renaissance that we begin to see in the Jacobean period and some even say it's a late Renaissance, it is a Renaissance which begins to see

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the decline.

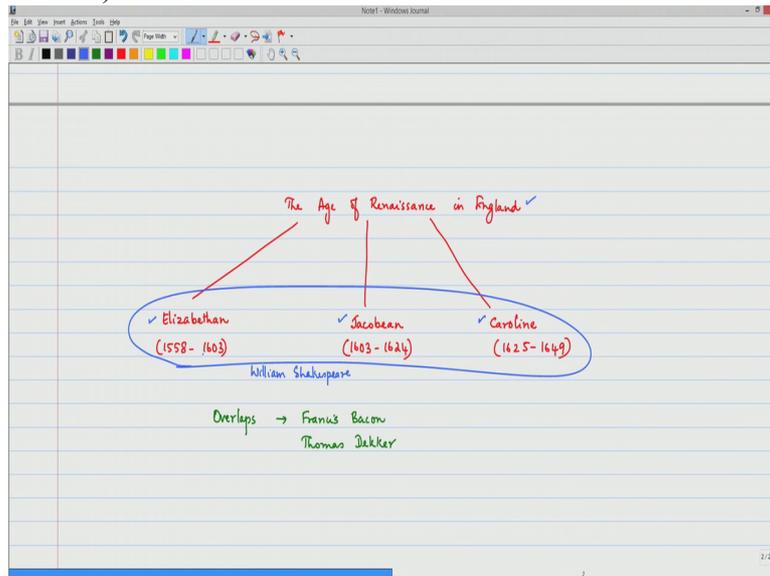
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It is important to see how this gets framed in history. If we talk about the age of Renaissance in England, politically it falls into three different ages and literary as well. There is this Elizabethan age from 1558 to 1603; the second phase is the Jacobean age under King James the First from 1603 to 1604/1624. The third phase is the Caroline age under Charles the First from 1625 to 1649.

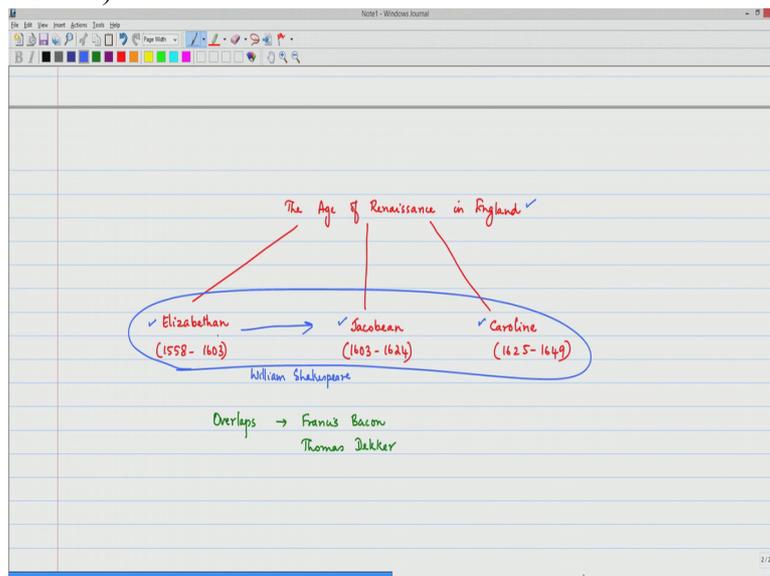
So the age of Renaissance in fact spans all three

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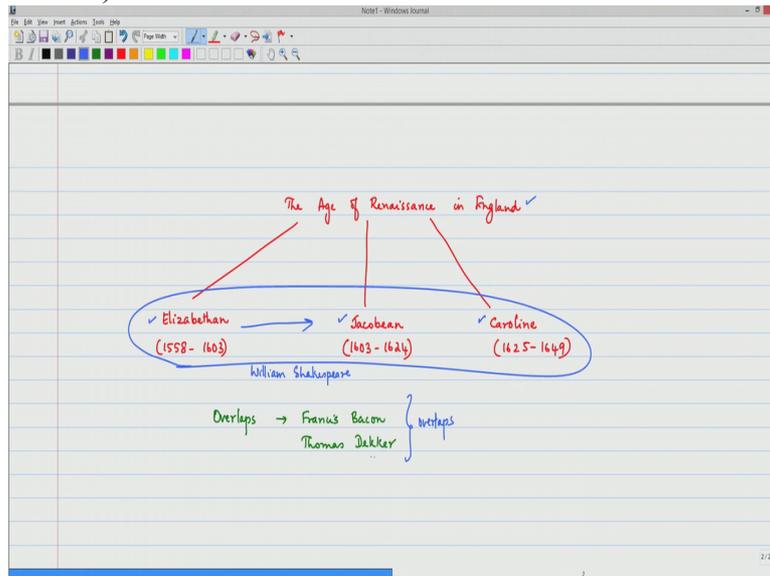
different literary and political periods. And we also find that there are lot of overlaps between these two ages,

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Elizabethan and Jacobean in the sense that we find that William Shakespeare continues to write even during the Jacobean period and there are also significant overlaps that we find particularly in the case of certain writers such as Francis Bacon and Thomas Dekker.

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It is very difficult to situate them either in the Elizabethan period or in the Jacobean period but for convenience we will be discussing about the works and life of Bacon and Dekker during the Jacobean period.

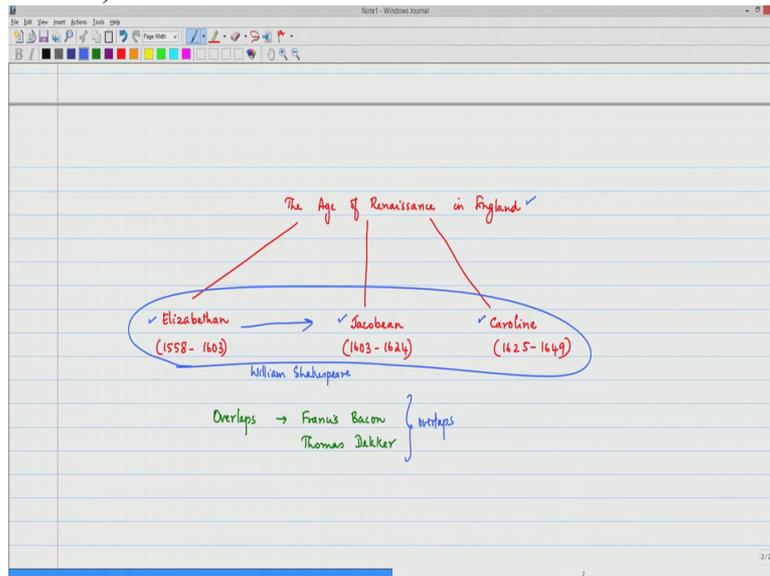
And also we will begin to notice that there were lot of similar

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overlaps and similar untidy divisions because of the strange way in which history and political history and literary history has been

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placed simultaneously. Having noted that Jacobean period was only a continuation of the English Renaissance and it is important to highlight that

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+ The Jacobean Age

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- Only subtle differences from the preceding Elizabethan Age – no major visible dramatic change of moods
- Continuation of the English Renaissance
- Union of the Crowns – England and Scotland
- The return of Black Death – the Great Plague

politically it had signified certain differences, certain drastic changes also as we noted earlier in terms of the shifting trends within the parliament and also the union of the crowns happen, union of the crowns of England and Scotland. And there were these difficult times as well with the death of the, with the return of the Black Death or the Great Plague at later point.

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+ General mood in literature

- Dark, questioning the stability of the social order, preoccupied with the problem of evil
- Drama – Revenge tragedy, comedy, poetry, prose
- Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, John Donne, Francis Bacon, Robert Burton
- “The graceful verse of Jonson and the Cavalier poets but also the intellectual complexity of the Mataphysical poetry of John Donne”
- Monumental achievement – King James Version of the Bible

Now we will look at the general mood in literature during the Jacobean period. Jacobean period, though it was generally seen as the continuation of the Elizabethan period, it was

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not, it was very different from the Elizabethan period. It was not a Golden age in literature. We witness more like a steady decline in literary arts and performances and also in the genius of the times, it is quite questionable as well. Then if we look at the general mood

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we find that it was mostly a, dominated was a dark and questioning mood and also the stability of social order, it was not taken for granted any longer. They, the people were continuously questioning it and we also find it getting reflected in the writings of those times. And there were also preoccupied with the problem of evil. We also find it getting it reflected in the

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political trends of the time. Political stability was no longer a very common thing. People actually longed for it and they also found that there were lot of threats leading to lot of discord and evil thoughts even among the commoners. And in terms of the literary art forms, we find drama

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continuing to dominate the scene. But it was mostly revenge tragedy that dominates Jacobean England. There is also a bit of comedy, poetry and prose and we find these major figures dominating the literary scene in Jacobean age, Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, John Donne, Francis Bacon and Robert Burton.

And some of them had begun to write even during the time of Elizabethan period but as we noted we will be

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talking about them in detail

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+ General mood in literature

- Dark, questioning the stability of the social order, preoccupied with the problem of evil
- Drama – Revenge tragedy, comedy, poetry, prose
- Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, John Donne, Francis Bacon, Robert Burton
- “The graceful verse of Jonson and the Cavalier poets but also the intellectual complexity of the Metaphysical poetry of John Donne”
- Monumental achievement – King James Version of the Bible

only as part of the Jacobean period. And this what one of the historians Hudson notes about this Jacobean period. He finds that Jacobean period had very fine mix of many of the otherwise diverse things put together. In that sense, it not only had the graceful verse of Jonson and the Cavalier poets but also the intellectual complexity of the Metaphysical poetry of John Donne.

Metaphysical poetry is a school of thought that we shall be coming back to take a detail look at, at later point. And also this period we note that, though there was no towering figure like that of

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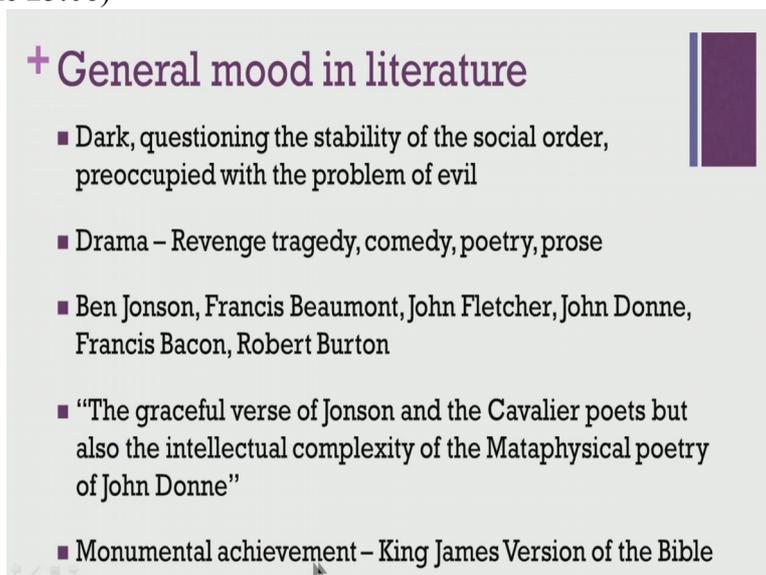


Shakespeare and there was no towering form of genius like that of Elizabethan drama we do find that there was a sporadic kind of literary activity and dramatic activity happening in Jacobean age but in comparison to the previous age of the Elizabethan age, that of Elizabethan age, it completely fades away. And we do not find the historians attributing lot of importance to Jacobean period.

In fact the prominent historian Hudson, he does not even devote a separate chapter for discussing Jacobean age. He just seamlessly transitions from the Elizabethan period towards the age of Milton. So this is the kind of differing ways in which Jacobean period gets situated in literary histories. But nevertheless it is important to look at in order to see the continuity which was built into these various phases of Renaissance.

And having said that, it is also important to highlight that the most

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monumental achievement of the Jacobean period continues to be the King James version of the Bible commissioned by King James the First and this continues to be the most important literary work of the period and also perhaps the best contribution in terms of

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the most authentic translation of Bible made ever. These were the other major literary forms that dominated the

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+ Literary forms

- Theatre – imitators of Shakespeare
- Comedies and masques
- Theatres closed down during the Puritan Revolution
- Sonnet – goes out of fashion
- Used for religious (John Donne) and political (John Milton) purposes
- New forms – heroic couplets, verse satires, essays, biographies

scene then.

In theater we had mostly imitators of Shakespeare, because of that they failed to make a mark as a huge as it was during the Elizabethan times. And there is also dominance of comedies and masques and another significant thing is that at later point we find the theaters closing down after the Puritan Revolution, so a steady decline is beginning to be noted from this period onwards. The reason for the closure of the theater and the steady decline of drama,

these are things that we will come back to take a look at when we talk about Caroline age after the Jacobean age.

And during this period, sonnet also goes out of fashion

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and this is after the thriving cultural importance that it had during the Elizabethan period. But however sonnet continues to be used only for religious purposes. Especially

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+ Literary forms

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we find in John Donne's poetry and also sonnet is used for political purposes, for instance John Milton made a lot of use of sonnets in this regard.

And there are also these newer forms of literature, newer genres that begin to be, that begin to forge themselves in Jacobean England such as heroic couplets, verse satires, essays and biographies. And we also find that there is a way in which literature begins to transition towards more prose form rather than more poetic form and the reasons for that and the ways in which this transition takes place, it is some of the things we shall take a detailed look in the following sessions.

With this we come to an end

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to the introduction to the Jacobean age and in next session we shall be taking a look at how drama was getting shaped during this time after Shakespeare. And we shall also take a look at how certain political changes were coming into effect which eventually led to the Civil War in England and also we will also see how many forms of art and many forms of writing were undergoing a drastic change during this period. So this is all we have for today's lecture, look forward to see you in the next session, thank you for listening.