**Lecture01/James II and the end of the Stuart era.**

**Description : this lecture focuses on the most important developments that took place during the reign of James II and led to the end of the Stuart era.**

**James II**, Charles’s brother, who took the throne after his death, was a fanatical Romanist notorious for his dislike of Protestants whom he had persecuted as Charles’s governor of Scotland. As king of England he fulfilled the people’s worst fears on the score of religion. The Parliament’s reaction to his ascent was panic – the fear of Catholic revival virtually turned Parliament into a Whig assembly. Catholics were again persecuted while

Protestants and Puritans were plotting to remove James II from the throne. This sudden Protestant upheaval reminded the people of the hated Cromwellian republic, and once more the tables turned. After the dissolution of the Whig Parliament, the persecution of Puritans resumed with redoubled zeal. When the Whig plot against James II was discovered,

the fact sealed the doom of the Whig leaders. Many of them were executed and even innocent people perished under the weight of false accusations.

In **June 1685** the Whigs organized an uprising under **the Duke of Monmouth**, who was a Protestant. The rebellion was cruelly quelled by **George Jeffreys**.

He helped to uphold royal authority by harassing defendants and intimidating juries. He hanged and burned three hundred people and sent thousands more as slaves to America. James II’s endorsement for Jeffreys’s vicious actions and the king’s efforts to rule the country by sword (he did not disband the army raised against the rebels) disgusted even the Tories who were in favor of the king’s absolute power but not the king’s tyranny. They were also against James’s efforts to Romanize the country. In 1688 the majority of the nation were united in their wish that James would shortly die and his daughter **Mary**, married to William of Orange, would deliver the country from the dreadful situation. These hopes were shattered in June when James’s son, the legitimate heir to the throne, was born. There was no chance of a peaceful solution of the problem, therefore a new plot was organized.

An invitation signed by Whig and Tory Chiefs was sent to **William of Orange and his wife Mary** to invade Britain and take the Crown. William of Orange, who had alreadyproved himself to be a courageous commander and successful diplomat, and who victoriouslyresisted the French and the English army in the recent war in Holland, decided totake a chance in England. He used the army and navy of Holland to invade the islandand chase James II out to France. This **‘glorious revolution’ (1688–1689)** as it was laternamed, was bloodless and had the popular support of the common people. Still there wassomething sinister about the fact that foreign intervention was necessary to liberate the English from James II’s regime.

The glorious revolution was in fact nothing less than *coup d’etat* which put Parliament above the King. It laid down the principle that the Crown derived its authority not from divine hereditary right but from the consent of Parliament. By making William king by choice not inheritance, Parliament created a precedent that made it clear that the king’s authority was grounded in a contract with his subjects represented through the House of Commons. After the Revolution no monarch endeavored to govern contrary to the House of Commons and the long contest between the Crown and Parliament was ended.

In **1689 The Bill of Rights (Acts declaring the rights and liberties of subjects)** made Britain **a constitutional monarchy** in which the overall power over the state lies with Parliament,not with the monarch. Another act (1701) also prevented a Roman Catholic from becoming king or queen. It specified that after Mary’s death, the Crown would pass to her sister

**Anne** and if she also died childless it would go to a granddaughter of James I married into **the German House of Hanover**. These agreements were carried out, and they closed the period of civil wars and revolutions and opened an era of toleration and greater liberty for the individual. In 1695 censorship of the press was repealed. When the Clarendon Code was also abolished, a thousand years of religious wars finally came to an end.

But France continued to threaten England. Louis XIV wanted to put James I back on the English throne and therefore war was inevitable. For the English the war had one more aim – to limit French power and curb French expansion. This aim was realized by the strategic genius of **John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough** (the antecedent of Winston

Churchill) who won several important victories over the French. **The Treaty of Utrecht (1713)** ended the war and secured English maritime and commercial supremacy. By generalconsent, the year 1713 marks the beginning of English overseas expansion, of a longperiod of stability and prosperity for England which now was considered a leading Europeanpower.

When Queen Anne died in 1714 without an apparent heir, the crown of England passed to **George I** (great grandson of James I) from **the House of Hanover**.