

HISTORY OF WORLD
CIVILIZATIONS
(EXCLUDING INDIA) – ANCIENT PERIOD

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1. Introduction

Origin of the World

(The world of today is quite different from what it was when a beginning was made. It is today universally believed that in the beginning earth was made of unorganised matter. Egyptian legends make us believe that at the beginning of the world there was waste water alone called 'Nu' and then subsequently the world came into being. Similarly Babylonian legends also make us believe that world came into being only after the slaying of female dragon Tiamat (The Sea) by Bel Merodach. According to Rigvedic legends gods created world by sacrificing Purusha. Judaism, Islam and Christianity make us believe that the world was created by the will of God.

Modern View about creation of world. All these legends about the creation of universe are not acceptable to our modern thinkers. They believe that these legends are only guess works and have nothing to do with reality. According to them these also do not sound to reason and have not stood to the taste of scientific investigations. Buffon while discussing the origin of earth makes us believe that our planetary system was nothing but a collision between the sun and stars. German philosopher Kant, however, believes that sun produces the whole planetary system by itself. Similarly many other theories have been put forth. But **Prof. M. Mujeeb** has rightly said that, "*We cannot say which of the theories given above*

explains the accident of world's origin most satisfactorily from the point of view of mathematics, Physics and Scientific-commonsense, and to which speculations further researches in the Physical sciences will lead us".¹ In this regard it is more or less certain that when earth took the shape of a planet, it was a hot sphere of gas and that since then it has been changing its shape. Its surface has been influenced by the heavy rains and many other pressures and so on. We are however, as yet not quite sure about the origin of the world and speculations continue.

Origin of Life. An equally important study is that as to how life originated in the world. How could life become possible. On the earth which was a hot gas and had no shelter to save the life from rains and heat is no less puzzling. Like the origin of the earth there are many religious beliefs about the origin of the life on the earth as well. But all such dogmas have been disputed by our scientists who make us believe that life is a self-generating process. But it is clear that life came into being on the earth only gradually. The first stage was Azoic, in which no life would have been possible. Then came Proterozoic stage in which micro-organisms would have been found. Next stage then was Palaeozoic period in which fishes and sea scorpions came into being. Reptiles, stegosaurus came into existence at Mesozoic stage. Animals came into being in the Cainozoic period and as we know today man is the most highly developed type of mammals.

Conclusion. We thus find that there is nothing sure or certain about the origin of life and earth itself. What we believe about the origin of the world is mere speculation and guess work. But the only thing certain is that the earth and life on it did not come all of a sudden. It is simply an evolution and in the whole process man had to pass through different stages before he became what he is today. H. G. Wells has very beautifully said that "And so with a tremendous slowness through the vastness of time, the earth would grow more and more like the earth on which we live, until at last an age would come when, in the cooling air, the steam would begin to condense into clouds and the first rain would fall hissing upon the first rocks below.....The earth aged, and the day lengthened, the sun grew more distant and milder, the moon's pace in the sky slackened the intensity of rain and storm diminished and the water in the first seas increased and ran together into the ocean garment our planets henceforth wore."²

The Old Stone Age

No one can say with confidence as to how old the earth is. It is all a matter of guess. It is however, certain that the earth is many million years old. It was very hot matter to begin with and that only a million years ago that the earth became tolerable and bearable in temperature. Many changes came on the surface of the earth during this period. One of the effects of these changes was that inhabitation became possible on the earth. It also appears that before the earth cooled down there were ice ages and inter-glacial periods. It is also believed that our earth is just a cooled down fragment of a vast revolving planet. The rains helped in the cooling down process. Some of its parts washed away while in other parts where there were depressions, water got collected and ultimately these took the shape of high seas.

Changes in Earth Surface. Once the great fragment broke out and cooled down and the earth came into being, but that was not the end of it. With the passage of time many changes came in it. As already said some parts of earth, where there were depressions became high seas. In many parts there were earthquakes which became responsible for the creation of high mountains and hillocks. In some parts there was erosion. The winds and glaciers also played their part in changing the surface of the earth. Thus due to many factors many changes came on the surface of the earth. One finds that these changes on the surface of earth, to begin with were very quick. Gradually, however, these became very slow, but these continued to occur and even today these are occurring.

Life on the Earth. Like the origin of the earth, as already said, the problem of finding out the origin of life on earth, is very complex and complicated. From available accounts one can however, confer that the earliest form of life on the earth was simple one celled organism, which existed on the shores of the ocean. It was soft jelly like substance and was without any shells or bones. Next then came shell fish and worms. Gradually this simple life became complex and changes came both in form and shape. Then there also started struggle for existence etc. As the time passed some creatures began to live on the surface of the earth. While life was becoming complex, heavy rains brought plants, trees and forests into existence. Snakes, crocodiles and lizards were the first to come into life and then came huge reptiles etc. They ate fish and also plant eating animals. Their brain was little and intelligence very low. They were eaten away by meat eating fierce dinosaurs. These reptiles were in different shapes and of different kinds. But usually the reptiles were found near sea shores on the marshy lands. As the time passed warm blooded birds also came into existence which were covered with fur. Their heads and brains were very large. Some animals were fish eaters and lived upon other animals. Some of these animals began to live on earth, others on the sea and still some others on the trees. They had bigger brains and also capacity to adjust themselves according to their circumstances. As the changes came in the surface of earth and the number of these animals increased, they began to live in the surroundings which suited their convenience. Some of them began to live on the earth while others in the forests, still others on the mountains and quite a good number of them near the lakes deep in the seas. In this way slowly and gradually life appeared on the earth.

The Earliest Man. Like appearance of animals, the appearance of man and his growth and development is all a matter of guess and supposition. It appears that ancestor of man was ape. Thus the earliest man was not like the man of today. Probably he was slope headed and space for thinking part of the brain was very small. He walked upward. Probably he had some sort of sloth in his carriage. His body was covered with hair and he could also growl. His brain was larger as compared with other animals and thus he could think more. Then another advantage with him all

along has been, that he could use stone, which he could throw to defend himself from wild animals.

Origin of Paleolithic. The word 'Palaeolithic' finds its origin from the Greek words 'Palaios' and 'Lithos'. The former means 'old' whereas the later stands for 'stone'. Thus Paleolithic means old stone age.

Paleolithic Period. What is the span of this period is a matter of opinion. It is however, believed that this was the largest period in the known history of mankind. According to some thinkers, this period covered about 90% of the total span of time. According to Prof. M. Mujeeb, "*The Pleitocene began about 55000 years ago. It includes the four Glacial and Inter-Glacial ages, and the age which the archaeologist calls paleolithic.*"¹ It is also believed that in between each such glacial period there was a time span of thousands of years.

Slow progress of Paleolithic Period. In spite of the fact that this period covered a long span of time, yet the progress made in different walks of life, during this period, was very slow. For this many causes were responsible. Some such causes may briefly be discussed as under :

1. It was a period of Glacial ages during which large and heavy glaciers rolled on the earth and wiped out whatsoever progress was made by the then primitive man. Since four such glacial periods intervened between old and new stone age, therefore, efforts of the man were nullified four times which was a great set-back to human progress.

2. Then another reason was that during this period man had neither shelter nor protection. He was at the mercy of powerful wild animals who were physically much stronger than him, though intellectually they were weaker than him. The result of all this was that during this period man was interested in protecting his life, rather than doing anything else.

3. Then another reason was that this period was a period of rapid changes which were coming on the surface of the earth. Rains, earthquakes etc., were causing depressions and erosions on the surface of the earth. Once a fertile land, used to become suddenly either a hillock, a mountain or a sea. In this way what man achieved was soon lost by him.

2. The Paleolithic Period

Old Stone Age was the longest period in the history of mankind. It is however, quite evident that the progress made in this period was very slow. As compared with the time span, the contribution of the period to human civilisation is not much.

Contribution of Palaeolithic Period. Undoubtedly the progress was slow but it does not mean in any way that the progress made in this period was insignificant. It was during this period that stone tools began to be prepared and the man thought of fighting against physically powerful animals with the help of these tools. This was a great step towards the advancement of civilisation.

Then another significant contribution of the period has been the discovery of fire. Man got the idea of fire from the lightning from the sky but subsequently discovered fire from stones. He used fire for keeping himself warm. Fire was also used for keeping wild animals away and also for roasting his meat.

The use of bones as needles and skin of animals as a cloth was another significant contribution of this age to human civilisation. One finds that by now these people had become quite conscious about the need and necessity of putting on something on their body. They now did not wish to remain nude and naked.

It was again the man of this age who thought of giving up the idea of living naked. He now thought of putting something on his body. He used the bark of the trees and skin of the animals on his body to cover himself.

Then another contribution of the man of this age is that the people now thought of the need and necessity of language. Though to begin with, their vocabulary was very limited yet, the idea of a language was given by these people, which, no body can deny, was very important.

Conclusion. In fact one can say that much of what we think and know today developed in this age. The basis was laid down, beginnings were made and action was initiated. It was gradually that these actions and steps were modified and developed. Man, as we know, is never satisfied with what he has. He has always a desire to know more. It is this desire for knowing more that in every age the people struggled to have more wisdom, knowledge and made discoveries.

3.The Neolithic Period

Neolithic or the New Stone Age has a very significant place and position in so far as history of world civilisation is concerned. The word 'neolithic' derives its origin from the Greek words 'neos' meaning 'new' and 'lithos' meaning 'stone'. In this age the equipments were polished and well finished as compared with the rough equipments of the earlier period. This period spreads from 10000 B.C. to 5000 B.C.

Origin of New Stone Age. New Stone age spreads from 10000 B.C. to 5000 B.C. During this age domestication of animal and the system of cultivation started. But we are not quite sure how and when and by what means did the people take to cultivation. But it is quite clear that from the very beginning, in this age, man began to control his environments and he refused to blindly submit to the pressures of nature. He was now not merely a hunter but also a herds man. He also developed acute power of observation. He began to live and settle down permanently in the houses. It appears that changes started at the end of 4th glacial period when vast climatic changes came in the mediterranean lands. With the melting of ice, valleys of North Africa and Mediterranean turned into barren areas and compelled the mediterranean people to migrate to warmer lands. They then settled down in Western Africa and North Africa.

Some of them crossed to Europe where they defeated Cro-Magnons and penetrated into France, Spain, Italy, Germany and British Isles. It was also during this period that some parts of Central Asia also became barren and those who migrated from these regions in 10000 B.C. settled down in Central and Eastern Europe. Some of them settled down in Mesopotamia, Syria and Asia Minor. It also appears that the people of the new age also settled down in north eastern Iraq and North Western Iran. We can also guess that in about 5000 B.C. they also built villages. From the discoveries made at Jordan Valley it can be concluded that by 7000 B.C. they passed through agricultural stage. The farmers of Jamro were good cultivators and bred cows, sheep and goats.

Europe and New Stone Age. The inhabitants of New Stone Age found their origin in Europe in 4000 B.C. Culturally they borrowed from the inhabitants of Near East and Mesopotamia and somewhat from Egypt also. From the discovery of lake in Switzerland which belongs to 2500 B.C., it also appears that the people belonging to different races had come to intermingle here. It also appears that by 2500 B.C. this culture had spread all over Europe.

villages developed, priests began to help the people in the worship of local gods and language became more exact.

Main Features of Neolithic Period. As already said the man of new stone age was much more advanced as compared with the man of the old stone age. Some of the main features of the New Age were as under :—

Agriculture. To begin with in the new stone age wooden hoes and ploughs were used but he now began to settle down on agricultural land. With the passage of time he also began to build houses near the land which he cultivated. It appears that he took to agriculture only by chance. It was also by chance that he could come to know that by sowing at a fertile land he could get his food for the whole year. Thus he began to settle himself at places where soil was fertile, rainfall plentiful and climate warm with agriculture as a means and a house to dwell, life of the people became somewhat settled, society became orderly and this became starting point of human civilisation and culture. By now he also started inventing new tools for his agriculture. Burnt clay was used for pottery and also for collection of water.

Domestication of Animals. In order to run his agricultural work smoothly the people of this age began to domesticate their animals. The animals domesticated by them were dog, ass, goat, sheep, and horse. The people also began to keep herds. In order to find food for their animals some of the people began to lead a nomadic life. The dog was very useful for them as that helped them in hunting and protecting their cattle.

Art and Craft. It appears that the people of new stone age loved the art of pottery and different form of earthenwares quickly developed. It also appears that beautiful colours were used on pottery. Textile weaving and basketry were the new crafts of the age. It also appears that for fishing purposes rope nets were used. There is nothing certain about the use of Potter's wheel during this age. By now man had also learnt the art of weaving and in the beginning vegetable fibres were used for the purpose. Perhaps the most important invention of this period was that of wheel. This invention accelerated the pace of progress and made inter-course between different settled communities quick and possible.

Social Institutions. Social life now began to be organised at a higher level. He now began to produce rich crops. With the help of his crops he could now feed many people. Population now began to increase. The head of the family now enjoyed great respect. He was friend, guide and philosopher of his family. The clans now came into being and the members were always loyal to their clan. There were some less developed nomadic clans which some time invaded well settled clans. It was considered the responsibility of the head of the clan to protect his people. Usually a powerful

person was accepted as leader who got tributes from other members. These tribal chiefs were very popular and powerful people and thus a new political organisation came into being.

Community Life. With settled life also began community life. Small huts, with the help of the branches of trees, began to be built. Skins of animals were also used as shelter. For his protection he built his hut in the middle of a lake. Such types of huts and cottages were connected with the shore with a removeable bridge. He also made boats by burning the inner parts of the long logs. Such types of boats were used for going from one place to the other by river. He now began to have group and family life but now force was also used for maintaining cooperation in the family and clan.

Religion. He now believed in the existence of supernatural powers. According to him all natural objects had a soul. He also began to believe in a sort of crude magic. Mother Earth was worshipped. A Sun Temple has been discovered which makes it clear that the people worshipped sun. In order to please gods human sacrifice was also given. They worshipped ancestral spirits and some ceremonies were performed at the time of death. They even worshipped animals, stones and wood. Amulets, beads, sacred threads and similar other things were used for keeping evil spirits away.

Food and Occupation. It appears that during this period use of fruit, vegetables, flesh of animals etc. was common food. Body was covered with the skin of animals. Ghee, butter and curd were also in common use. With the passage of time cloth began to be used. Both the men and women probably used two clothes to cover their body. Fishing, taming of animals and agriculture were the main occupation of the people. Pottery, masoning and crafts were some other occupations of the people.

Difference between Old and New Stone Ages. One, therefore, finds a clear difference between the old and new stone ages. The people in the old stone age used only rough and unpolished equipments whereas those of the new age used beautiful and sharp equipments. Then another difference is that whereas those of the old age did not use any metal, the new one used metal in equipment.

One also finds that the people of the old age did not live a settled life. They had not started living in the huts or in villages. But the people of new age had now started living a settled life. They were living in their houses and were permanently settled. Usually they did not feel like roaming about.

Then another difference is that agriculture was the main occupation of the people of new stone age. These people ploughed their field throughout the year. But on the other hand the one finds that the people of old Stone age were not very much aware of the agriculture.

The people of old Stone age did not very much love art. But the people of New Stone Age loved art. They loved colour which they used in pottery. They also used colours while making flowers and animal faces.

In so far as new stone age people are concerned one finds that the people had started weaving cloth and they were using clothes. The clothes were used both by men and women. But the people of old stone age were using barks of trees and skins of animals for covering their body.

In the field of discovery the major discovery of the people of the old stone age was fire whereas that of the new stone age was wheel.

The people of the new stone age were living more well developed social system and cultured life. They had started living in the family. They were obeying the commands of their head of family. They too had developed the concept of tribal chief. But the people of old stone age were still living an unsettled and less socialised life.

Conclusion. In this way one can observe that there was a lot of difference between the life and achievements of two types of people. One also again finds that with the passage of time the people were becoming more and more civilised. They were realising the need and necessity of living a settled life, where they could maintain their families. Then one also finds that they wanted to have basic comforts of life and were opposed to the idea of being frequently disturbed.

Significance of Neolithic Age

Neolithic period was one of the most important periods in the development of human history. It was primarily because in this period many important changes took place and secondly because it spread almost in all parts of the world. This period therefore has a considerable significance of its own.

Adequate Food Supply. It was during Neolithic age that man began to get adequate food supplies from the Mother earth. He now did not depend on hunting or fishing. He also now did not depend for food by digging up earth for roots. Thus the system of cultivation which he started, is of great significance for human history.

Surplus Food. Then another important significant contribution was that man could produce more than what he needed. He cultivated and whatsoever he got, he not only could feed himself but also his family and dependants. He could also store for the future. He was also in a position to keep something for those who were engaged in creative work like painting etc.

Settled Life. Still another significant contribution of this period is that they paved way for settled life. They began to live in the villages near the lakes. They had family and animals. They loved both and did not wish to move from one place to the other as nomads.

Social Set Up Began. It was during this age that social set up began. The family became the basis of this set up. Each family had its own head who was friend, guide and philosopher and whose words were always obeyed. The family members lived in close cooperation with each other and helped each other for maintenance.

Political Set Up Began. Then another great significance of this period was that it was during this period that political set up emerged. The families combined into clans and tribes. Each clan had a head who looked after the needs of all. He also forced the people to obey his commands. He also wanted them to live within certain limits. It was his responsibility to check foreign aggressions and to see that the clan remained safe. This subsequently became the basis for political set up and the rise of the feudal lords and the kings.

Love For Art. Significance for this period also lies in the fact that the people began to live and appreciate art. Beautiful flowers and animal pictures were painted on the pottery. Nature began to be worshipped and in this way appreciation for art started.

Sense of Possession. Then there was sense of possession which developed among the people of this age. They began to domesticate the animals which they considered were theirs. Similarly they now began to live in the family, which they wanted to have with themselves and considered that it was 'Theirs'. Then were agricultural equipments which they needed for cultivation and which for them were very essential. They did not wish to part with them and desired to possess. In this way sense of possession started and the idea of private property developed.

Conclusion. Due to these far reaching changes some scholars have characterised this period as the period of Neolithic Revolution. According to them this revolution was so significant that it can be compared only with Industrial Revolution, which also changed social, economic and political life of many nations. There is, of course, no doubt about it that this period has great significance in so far as development of human society is concerned.

Copper Age

Old and New Stone Ages very much helped in the advancement of human society. These took the people on the path of progress and civilisation. These also helped in the advancement of human society. These took the people on the path of progress

and civilisation. These also helped in the establishment of social and political institution. But a man is never satisfied with what he has got. He is always interested in knowing much more. It is this desire for knowing more which enables a person to dig out metals from the earth. Discovery of metals brought a real revolution and a leap forward in so far as progress of human civilisation was concerned.

Copper Age. Copper age started immediately after the new stone age and thus this period begins approximately in about 5000 B.C. It stretched for about 2000 years. But like the new stone age, it did not engulf the whole world. It spread only in some parts of the world. In fact this age was so uneven that whereas some people were living in the new stone age, the others were in the copper age.

Use of the Metal. With the discovery of copper, the situation changed. The people now began to use copper and few other metals for their equipments and found that with some metals it was difficult to keep edges due to their softness. Subsequently they worked hard to find the solution and they found that by mixing two metals they could get hard metals which could be used in axes, daggers, knives and hammers. Their use considerably increased and with that cultivation and digging became very easy.

With the copper age came bronze age. This age too did not spread rapidly and in all parts of the world too. This age started in Egypt and gradually spread in some parts of the world as well.

Contribution of Copper Age. Copper Age or Metal Age has its own contribution to make to human civilisation. Its greatest contribution is that it gave to the world the art of writing. Before this age, there was no system of writing. The people knew the art of making pictures. Once they wanted to say something, they prepared its pictures. But this system had great difficulties. It took a long time, the people had no capacity to prepare pictures of all the things and it was more or less impossible to express feelings and emotions through pictures. The next stage then came when instead of making pictures now they started expressing their views through certain symbols. These symbols made the process of expressing ideas comparatively easy. It was in this metal age that some sort of art of writing developed.

Conclusion. We can thus find that the people of this age took a leap forward in the direction of spread of human culture and civilisation. Discovery of fire by the people of old stone age, that of agriculture by new stone age and the art of writing by the metal age people took a real step forward in advancement.

4. River Valley Civilisations

In ancient times almost all the civilisations rose, developed and prospered on the banks of the rivers. It might appear a strange coincidence but a question that arises is as to why the people of the ancient times decided to choose rivers as the places of their settlement. Some of the important causes for this were as follows :

1. Agricultural Occupation of the People. The people of ancient times had agriculture as their main occupation. They therefore, wanted to have a place where water was available in

abundance and land was fertile. Both these factors induced them to settle themselves on the banks of the rivers so that with less labour they could obtain sufficient produce for themselves and for their families.

2. Fishing and Trade. After agriculture, the main occupations of the people were fishing and trading. They had houses in the middle of lakes which were connected with the main coast by removable bridges. For fishing, trading and such types of houses, for them the ideal places were the rivers.

3. Food Habits of the People. Then one finds that in ancient times the people usually depended on fruit and vegetables. They used fish and meat but preferred milk, curd, milk products, fruit and vegetables over them. Fruit and vegetables grew conveniently and easily on the river banks and in the adjoining areas rather in the deserts and mountain regions.

4. Love for Nature. The people of the ancient times loved nature and the beauty of nature's products. The beautiful scene of sun set on the river and those of the sun rise satisfied their desire for loving nature. The flow of the river and ripples on its bed too added an attraction to this beauty.

5. Easy for Navigation. In the past the means of transportation and communication were difficult. It is difficult to establish whether there were roads for transporting goods from one country to the other. But from the excavations it appears that the people of river valley civilisations had trade relations with each other. Thus the rivers were used for navigation purposes. Since the commodities from one country to the other were to be sent through rivers, therefore it was most convenient to settle down near the rivers.

6. Favourable Climate. The climate of the deserts was very hot whereas that of the extreme cold regions was unbearable. Since the people at that time lacked proper food, clothing and shelter, therefore, they wanted to live at places where climate was moderate and bearable. This they found near the rivers. This moderate and bearable climate very much attracted them.

Conclusion. Thus it was not sheer coincidence that the ancient civilisations developed near rivers but these were some of the specific causes which became responsible for their settlement on the banks of the rivers. From the excavations it becomes clear that these people could maintain contacts with each other conveniently through these rivers alone.

5. Egyptian Civilisation

Egyptian civilisation at the time of height of its glory was one of the most advanced civilisations of the world. It also fell victim to foreign invaders which not only retarded the progress of its civilisation but also completely destroyed it. But throughout its splendour the people were religious minded. They loved art and architecture and had considerably advanced in many walks of life. Their life, ideas and beliefs may briefly be discussed as under :

Political Life. As already pointed out in the political life, there was centralised government and authority. The king was the most powerful personality in the kingdom. The people not only respected but also loved him. He was considered as the representative of God on earth. The people considered it not only their duty but also their responsibility to work for him. They happily built their palaces and decorated them with devotion. They obeyed his commands without any grudge and grumble. The Pharaoh (King) was absolute in authority. He was leader of the nation both in peace as well as in war. He was autocrat and all national resources were at his disposal. He could use them in the way he liked. He had authority to collect taxes from his people. Taxes were paid to him in kind. The king used to maintain powerful army. The whole empire was divided into districts. For administrative convenience work was divided into certain departments and each department was supervised by the king himself.

The King also looked after the welfare of his people and that

was in fact his paramount concern. He ensured that the people lived a moral and religious life. They specially took care of the foreigners, whose comforts were especially ensured. Since agriculture was the main occupation of the people, therefore, special care was taken to provide irrigation facilities to the people.

In the political field, the nobles also played their part. They tried to challenge the authority of the King whensoever opportunity arose. They then wanted to capture political power and authority. Some time they also succeeded in their ambitions and were in a position to exercise political power, position and authority.

Religious Life. On the whole the Egyptians were religious minded. They built beautiful temples to worship their gods. In fact, the temples of those days are specimens of beautiful and attractive art and architecture. But these people had many gods and each god had its own temple. Probably each and every village had a god temple. Usually a god had a human body with an animal head. Amenhotep IV made a bold attempt by locking out the temples of many gods and ordering the people to worship only one Sun God, but he was discredited by his successors. Not only that his orders were withdrawn but also his body was disgraced.

In the religious field they had deep faith in the transmigration of the soul. They believed that the soul was immortal. They also believed that each body will, at one stage, get back its soul. This philosophy was known as that of resurrection. It was due to their faith in resurrection that they preserved their dead bodies as mummies. Some such mummies are even now available in world museums.

Because the people were religious minded, therefore the priests enjoyed a position of honour and respect. The Pharaoh (King) himself was head of all religious activities. He was to head all religious functions in the country. In the performance of his religious duties he was assisted by many priests. Each temple had a priest to look after its work. He controlled the property of the temple and thus lived not only luxurious life but also a life of honour, respect and position.

Sun God was quite commonly worshipped. Their king was considered to be a god and also worshipped by his people. Their other important deities were Osiris, Isis, Horus and Troth. Sun God 'Ra' was considered as great creator and destroyer. God of Nile was Osiris which was also highly respected. God 'Set' was known as the god of destruction. According to Egyptian legends gods 'Set' and 'Osiris' had mutual enmity with each other.

Social Life. With the passage of time many social divisions came to stay in the society. At the top were the Pharaohs who were socially the most respectable people. They lived a very comfortable and luxurious life. All the comforts of life of those days were available to them. Then came the priests who had formed a separate

class in themselves. They were attached to temples, whose property they controlled. They also lived a very prestigious life. The nobles of the king and his army officers also formed a separate class. Usually these nobles owned land. They got the land cultivated but controlled the landed property which they owned. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people but the land was cultivated by the serfs and the slaves who did not enjoy any social respect or position. Merchants, artisans, small land owners formed middle class of the Society. Thus whereas at the top were the kings, priests and nobles, in middle of the society came the merchants, artisans and traders. At the lowest end were the slaves and serfs.

The beauty of the social organisation was that the women enjoyed considerable social respect and position. They even ruled over the people. They could own property of their own.

Contribution of Egyptian Civilisation to the World

Egyptian civilisation, at the height of its glory and honour, was one of the most advanced civilisations of the then known world. This civilisation however, saw a quick decay and disintegration. Some of the important contributions to the world civilisation are as under :

Contributions to World Civilisation. Egyptian civilisation had contributed to the world civilisation in many ways. The people of this civilisation were pioneers in many respects, whereas in many other respects they provided guidelines to the world community. These contributions may broadly be divided as (a) Political, (b) Social, (c) Cultural and (d) Economic.

Political Life. In the political life, the Egyptians gave the idea that unless there was centralised authority and agency to rule over the country, no nation could progress. They gave the idea that position of the king should always be supreme and the authority of the king was undisputable. They also gave the world an idea that centralised authority should divide its work into different departments which should have supervisors to watch over their activities. Thus their contribution in the political life was really significant.

Social Life. In the social life their greatest contribution was that they did not under-estimate the importance and significance of the women. They gave them equal share with men and even permitted them to own their landed property. The Queens ruled over the people, who accepted their commands very happily. The idea of giving rights to the women is accepted even today.

Literature. In the field of literature they were the first to give decimal system in mathematics which is even today accepted. Similarly they were the pioneers in the art of picture writing which was subsequently developed into alphabetical writing. They were the first to invent paper which was used for writing. The system of state controlled education at a higher stage was also introduced by them. Their art of writing and literature was taken to other countries of the world as well.

Art and Architecture. The Egyptian contributed to world art, architecture and sculpture as well. They were the first to use arches and vaults in the construction work. Similarly they used heavy stones and constructed massive buildings, pyramids and

temple halls with remarkable perfection. As already pointed out, the Sphinx and pyramids of these times are a permanent contribution to world architecture and sculpture. These still astonish and amaze the world as a whole.

Economic Life. In the economic life they suggested that it was foremost duty and responsibility of the king that he should look after economic interests of the people. He should see that canals were constructed and dams built so that the people got all irrigation facilities. Similarly it was one of the responsibilities of the rulers to see that commercial life was brisk and that import and export was encouraged so that the people were economically sound.

Causes of Decay. Egyptian civilisation contributed significantly to world civilisation. It is, however, quite strange that this very civilisation which had achieved such a high perfection, very soon also saw decay and disintegration. Some of the important causes for the decay of the civilisation were as under :

(1) **Weak Rulers.** As long as Egypt remained under the control of strong and powerful rulers there was no problem and the country progressed. But in about 2700 B.C. weak rulers came to the throne. They could not maintain authority and position with the result that feudals came to power. They did not contribute in the advancement of civilisation. Ultimately when in about 1000 B.C. Egypt could not produce any powerful ruler, the result was that the empire began to decay and disintegrate.

(2) **Foreign invasion.** It appears that the foreign invaders were always in a look out to invade the country. As already mentioned times and again Africa and Assyria invaded the country. The country was also invaded by less civilised invaders who got an opportunity to conquer a part of the country under the weak rulers with the result that they even destroyed their temples which were specimen of their civilisation and advancement. Their civilisation went in the background when in 30 B.C. Egypt was captured by the Romans and the Muslims could capture that in about 640 A.D.

(3) **Quarrels in the dynasties.** Egyptian civilisation also saw a decline because there were mutual quarrels among the rulers on the one hand and religious and temporal authorities on the other. These quarrels also resulted in the fall of the empire and decay of civilisation.

Conclusion. We may thus say that the decay of Egyptian civilisation was nothing unusual. It is law of nature and a phenomenon of history that each civilisation which sees a rise must also see a fall. But the beauty of this civilisation was that before it decayed, it made significant contributions to world civilisation.

6. Mesopotamian Civilisation

Mesopotamian civilisation is the product of Euphrates and Tigris rivers and in geographical position it has close resemblance with Egypt. The people of this civilisation have been invaded by many and due to this the progress of this civilisation was considerably slow.

Early Geography. It is believed that Mesopotamian civilisation developed in about 3000 B.C. It flourished in the valley of rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Geographically on the one hand the valley was situated in between Syrian and Arabian deserts, on the other by Armenian high land and Zagros mountains. The land was alluvial. It was a productive soil and many canals had made the valley quite productive and fertile. Due to its fertility and productivity in the past it was known as "The Garden of Eden". It is also called "The Fertile Crescent". But this fertility some times attracted invaders who felt tempted to invade the valley. Since the valley could not be protected by the natives, therefore the invaders were in a position to settle in the valley and enjoy the benefits of this advanced civilisation.

At this stage it must, however, be remembered that what is today known as Mesopotamian civilisation consists of actually three civilisations namely the Sumerian Civilisation, the Babylonian Civilisation and Assyrian Civilisation. About the Mesopotamian

civilisation on the whole Will Durant says, "*The early history of Mesopotamia is in one aspect of the struggle of the non-semitic people of Sumeria to preserve their independence against the expansion and inroads of the Semites from Kish and Agade and other centres in the north.*"

Rise of the Sumerians. From all the accounts it appears that the Sumers were the settlers of the lowest parts of valleys of Tigris and Euphrates. It also appears that in this valley there was no settlement upto 4000 B.C. It was gradually that the Sumerians settled over there. In fact it is very difficult to say as to how and when these settlements started. The credit of excavating the ruins of this civilisation and bringing many more facts about it goes to Paul Emele Botta, Groulefeud and Major Henry Rawbinson. Sumerian civilisation was also uncovered by Sir Leonard Woolley, who based his whole study on the clay tablets of the period.

Home of the Sumerians. Though there are different theories about the home of the Sumerians, yet so far nothing can be said with confidence and authenticity. **Sir Arthur Keith** makes us believe that *"One can still trace the ancient Sumerians eastwards, among the inhabitants of Afghanistan and Baluchistan until the valley of Indus is traced, some 1500 miles distant from Mesopotamia."* But as already said we are still divided on the authenticity of original home of the Sumerians.

Political History. From the available material we can say that in this civilisation many small states developed and flourished. These included the states of Ur, Uruk, Nippur, Lagash and Babylon. It also appears that in about 2,500 B.C. the city state of 'Ur' had a well established government. King Urkaina was its very important ruler who had issued instructions that under no circumstances should the poor be exploited, they should also not be ruined. Under him the people enjoyed considerable freedom of thought. A code of law based on justice was also given by him to his people. It is said that it was the first of its kind. He also built tombs. He and his successors were in a position to bring Kish and Nippur, two important Babylonian cities, under their control.

But his dynasty was brought to an end when the ruler of Uruk, Luggul Laggisi invaded 'Ur'. The invader destroyed many beautiful temples and razed them to the ground. He also conquered considerably large part of Babylonia and felt proud over that.

But city-state of 'Ur' regained its lost position under King Ur-Engur who also extended his authority over Western Asia. He also gave his people a separate code of law. But under his successors the State again saw decline and was conquered by many invaders. This period of decay continued for about 200 years when civilisation was again revived by Hammurabi.

Conclusion. Such was the history of struggle and survival with almost each city-state. The people of this civilisation had to face many invaders, who also destroyed their beautiful temples and also the specimen of their culture and civilisation. These destructions have added to our difficulties about the proper study of this civilisation.

7. Sumerian Civilisation

Sumerian civilisation was one of the important and advanced civilisations of ancient world. Like Egyptians, Sumerians too contributed to the world civilisation in many ways. In fact in many respects it is doubtful, whether the credit should be given to the Sumerians or to the Egyptians. Some of their important contributions may be mentioned below :—

Economic Life. In the economic life they were the first to give the idea of State-controlled system of industry. Their weaving industry, it is believed, was under the control of the State. This State-controlled system of industry is being considered and given serious thought by many states.

Political Life. In the political field they gave the idea that the king should be under constant watch of the people to whom he is required to serve. Thus the priest king was appointed for one year only. He was again offered this position at the annual function of festival of god.

Literature. In the field of literature they introduced the system of weights and measures and credit goes to them for inventing fractions and decimals. They also used bars of silver in place of coins. Due to these inventions trade and commerce became very easy. In the field of arithmetic credit goes to them for laying stress on sixties. It was with the help of sixties that hour could be divided into minutes and minutes into seconds. In the field of literature it goes to their credit that they developed the use of square root, multiplication and division. They were also pioneers in developing the cuneiform of writing.

Code of Laws. Sumerians were the first to develop a reasonably good and sound code of laws. It was this code of laws which became the basis of subsequent codes. This code effected all walks of life. It was not based on brutality but on reasonability. It protected the poor from exploitation. Even today it is realised that state needs a scientific and reasonable code of laws which should be based on reasonability and help the poor in ending their exploitation from which our societies are badly suffering.

Architecture. In the field of architecture too the Sumerians contributed. They were the first to devise the use of an arch to

cover door openings. They also devised the use of wooden beams for constructing house roofs. They gave the idea of using mats, rugs, chairs, pottery etc. for furnishing the houses.

Conclusion. It will thus be observed that the Sumerians significantly contributed to world civilisation in many ways. We may conclude with **Will Durant** when he says, "*The Sumerians had the first States and empires, the first irrigation, the first use of gold and silver as standards of value, the first business contract, the first credit system, the first code of law, the first extensive development of writing...the first arch, column, vault and dome.*"

8. Babylonian Civilisation

The great Mesopotamian civilisation comprises of actually the three civilisations namely the Sumerian civilisation, about which we have already discussed. The other two civilisations were the Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations. The Babylonian civilisation came into prominence on the fall of the Sumerian civilisation.

Rise of the Babylonian Civilisation. We have already said that the Sumerians lived in the city-states. The greatest weakness of the city-states was that these could not defend themselves and were usually exposed to foreign aggression. It was in about 2900 B.C. that the nomadic Semitic people from Akkad invaded Sumerians. They were physically strong and less civilised but more hard working and laborious. They were in a position to conquer the Sumers. They ruled over them for centuries. Their important ruler was Sargon I. These people however, accepted Supremacy of Babylonian civilisation and accepted many important principles of Babylonian culture. About 2300 B.C. their authority too decayed and the Sumers got an opportunity to become independent again. After about 100 years however, another Semitic people, the Amorites from Syria again invaded the Sumers and under their able ruler Hammurabi they again conquered both the Sumers and Akkadians. They made Babylon as their capital and the civilisation which they gave the world is known as Babylonian civilisation.

Hammurabi Code of Law. Hammurabi conquered the Sumer and ruled from 1943—1905 B.C. He was both a great conqueror and also an able administrator. He conquered whole of Mesopotamia and ruled over that as an able enlightened despot. It is believed that he sent very detailed instructions to his officers about their conduct and behaviour towards the people. These instructions are available in the form of 55 letters written on clay tablets. He had divided his empire into districts. He personally supervised the

working of departments of administration. By his ability and wisdom he could unite Sumer, Akkad and other city-states of lower Mesopotamia. But Hammurabi is known for his code of law which he gave to the world for the first time. It is said that he collected all the laws which were then being followed in different parts of his empire and reduced them in the shape of a code. It is believed that it is the oldest code of law known to the human society and thus of great historical importance and significance. In his code of law he has covered all the classes of people.

Characteristics of Hammurabi Code. As already said one of the characteristics of Hammurabi Code of Law is that it covered all the classes of the society including the highest and the lowest. The approach is purely juristic and punishment is based on the nature of the guilt. In his code he has also tried to clearly define every guilt. Then one also finds that in his introduction to the code the king has made it amply clear that he was giving this code to the people in fulfilment of his responsibility towards his subjects.

Through this code an attempt has been made to reduce the influence of theocracy on the pattern of justice. The responsibility of giving justice now does not exclusively lay with the priests but now the officers of the state were also made responsible for giving justice. King himself became the final court of appeal in all cases.

The laws have been described in a logical manner.

Then one of the salient features of the code of law was that basically it was believed that it was the responsibility of the state to give justice. The individuals could demand justice and not avenge. It was upto the state to take avenge in the manner it liked.

The whole code of conduct aimed at deterring the people from committing crimes. Accordingly punishments awarded were very harsh.

The code was arranged under laws dealing with (a) Personal Property ; (b) Real Estate ; (c) Trade and Business ; (d) Injuries ; and (e) Labour. As regards criminal law it was provided that the system of 'eye for eye' should be followed. The people who were well placed and prosperous were given harsher and severer punishments as compared with the low placed people. It was made clear to all that no body could take laws into his own hands. For the first time the slaves were given a legal right to amass wealth and buy their own property. The women were given to legal right to own their property and to receive the same wages for the same work. In order to make business documents valid it was essential that these should be witnessed by some body. The rights of the people were legally protected. In this way Hammurabi code gave an excellent code of laws to the subjects, which is being followed by many states, as a source for formulation of legal codes.

Babylonians After Hammurabi. Hammurabi was a very enlightened ruler. He looked after the welfare of his subjects. He built many canals to provide irrigation facilities to his subjects. One such canal was from Kish to Persian Gulf. His period was rightly a glorious period in Babylonian history. The people had very easy life and with that they also became lazy. After Hammurabi's death, Kassites could conquer Babylonia and they destroyed everything. For about 100 years there was all anarchy and the chaos prevailed everywhere. Civilisation and culture received a serious set-back. But Kassites were driven out by Nabopolassar. His able son Nebuchadnezzar II was very capable ruler. He was also a great warrior and defeated combined forces of Egypt and Assyria. It was under him that Babylonia regained his lost glory and honour. He made his city very beautiful, prosperous and magnificent. It was during his reign that beautiful tower of Babel was constructed with 288 ft. wide base. He also constructed a beautiful palace in the vicinity of this great tower.

Life in Babylonian Civilisation. Babylonian civilisation was quite well developed but due to frequent invasions from outside it received serious set-back. Life may briefly be discussed as under :

Political Life. In the political life power was vested in the hands of the King. But he ruled in the name of the God-in-Chief called Marduk. The King was supposed to hold office for a period of one year but his term was renewed at the festival of God. The King collected taxes but he offered them to god. The King enjoyed considerable respect. He was duty bound to look after the interests of the people.

Religion. Babylonians were religious minded people. Their chief god was Marduk. But in addition to this there were thousand gods which were worshipped. Shanush and Ishtar were their important gods. All taxes which were paid to the king were only payments to the gods. Each temple had a priest. These priests got heavy amounts in offerings. They rolled in wealth and were the most influential money-lenders. They also loaned money for running industry or for trade or commerce. Being rich people they also had considerable influence over the government. Sometimes they were even more powerful than the king.

Art. Babylonian art was not that much advanced as that of the Egyptians. They used coloured tiles on their walls. They had attained considerable efficiency in delicate embroidery and in making gold and silver ornaments. Since there was shortage of stone therefore, Babylonian architecture did not make much progress. Their architecture mainly concentrated on temples and royal palaces. The palaces were solid and spacious but without much of ornamentation. They were also good in wood work and also in manufacturing musical instruments.

Social Life. The society was still divided into three classes, namely the rich, the lower class and the slaves. In the first category came the rich, the priests and the high officials, whereas in the second category the artisans, farmers and shopkeepers were covered. In the third category were the slaves. One of the significant features of the social systems was that slavery was now becoming a well established institution. But it also appears that the slaves were well treated and had been extended the right of holding private property.

The women too enjoyed considerable freedom and could also take to any profession they liked. They could also hold private property and had a right to seek divorce under certain special circumstances.

Economic life. The canals and dams built by Babylonian rulers had made them economically rich. The government took every care to ensure that roads were good and that trade and commerce flourished. The people carried trade with Indus and Nile valley people. In order to make the trade progressive, law and order was maintained. The Babylonians used weaver's loom and wheel of the potter. The people made tools and implements out of bronze. Whereas the rich lived in the palaces, the poor lived in adobe. The priests, who were rich, acted as money-lenders. The rate of interest charged was quite high. The laws had been enacted in such a fashion that the debtor was not much exploited. Corn, grains, silver and gold served as standard of values.

Literature. In so far as literature was concerned it was of mediocre quality and not of that quality as was that of the Egyptians. They wrote in cuneiform on damp clay tablets and preserved them in the libraries. Mathematics, algebra and geometry were first developed by them. The Babylonians had opened schools where the students were taught arithmetic, business techniques and religion. They had also made considerable progress in astronomy, medicine and in the movement of sun, moon, stars and planets. In the literary field 'Story of Deluge' and 'Epic of Gilgamesh' occupy a significant position. They had invented sun dial and time was measured by water clock. In Mathematics different signs had been invented which were used for commercial purposes.

Conclusion. In spite of the fact that the Babylonian civilisation did not progress smoothly and the invaders continued to retard its progress, the progress made in many walks of life was in no means less significant. It was impressive in many respects.

9. Assyrians Civilisation

Mesopotomanian civilisation, as already said, actually consists of three civilisations namely : the Sumerian civilisation, Babylonian civilisation and Assyrian civilisation. In the preceding questions we have already discussed about Sumerian and Babylonian civilisations. The study of Assyrian civilisation will complete our study of Mesopotamian civilisation.

The Rise of the Assyrians. The Assyrians were a great and powerful people. Their military organisation was superior than any other organisation of that time. Much about Assyrians has come to our knowledge from excavations at Nineveh and Nimrud, where many clay tablets and statues have been found. A beautiful palace has also been excavated on the banks of the river Tigris opposite Mosuls. From all accounts which have been made available to us it appears that they came into fame in about 12th century B.C. under their ruler Tiglath Pilaser I. Their ruler Tiglath Pilaser III conquered Syria, Babylonia, Damascus, Sumeria and even Egypt. Their ruler Sennacherib invaded Babylonia and not only looted it but also razed that to the ground. It is believed that he cut every inhabitant to pieces and thus completely destroyed both the people as well as the city. But he was also a great builder. From the wealth he plundered and looted he built beautiful buildings at Nineveh. He also built a very beautiful royal palace for himself. His brother Essarhaddon, who succeeded him, rebuilt whole Babylonia and provided food to the people who were then in the jaws of famine. In 669 B.C. Assurbanipal came to power and under him Ethiopia, Armenia and Syria were conquered. He claimed that he was a great peace giver. He was also a great builder and patronised arts and letters. About 22,000 clay tablets discovered now throw much light on the rule of Assurbanipal. After his death Chaldeans and Medes reduced Nineveh to nothingness.

Their Capital. Assur was their capital and next city was Nineveh which was a grand and beautiful city. Bricks were used in the construction of the buildings which were also decorated. The capital city was surrounded by thick walls. The water was brought to the city from far off places but water supply system was very good. In the city of Nineveh there was a magnificent library of 22000 clay tablets which have been now discovered.

Military Organisation. The greatest contribution of Assyrians to the world civilisation is in the field of military organisation. The army was now equipped with iron weapons, war chariots and battering rams. The whole army organisation was now divided into three parts namely the infantry, the charioteers and the engineers. It was quite well disciplined and had great influence over the government. The soldiers were supplied with good iron swords.

Political Organisation. In the political field one finds that the administration was very highly centralised. The kingdom was divided into provinces and each province was headed by a Governor, who was appointed by the King himself. He also very closely supervised their activities through a well knit messenger system. Usually a king was a despot but he could not altogether ignore the feudal lords, who were associated with the running of the administration. He exploited other nations which were conquered by them and used their wealth for the benefit and to the advantage of the Assyrians.

The Art and Architecture. Assyrian rulers were builders of beautiful palaces. The walls of their palace were very thick. While constructing buildings they used arches. They could beautifully portray animals. It appears that while portraying they had fancy for lions and horses. They could also make glass which they also used for different purposes. Carving of stones was also very common to them. Their art and architecture depicts brutality and strength. They also portrayed hunting scenes.

Education. Assyrians had schools where education was imparted. Cuneiform writing was practised by the students in the schools on clay tablets. In the schools stress was laid on out-door activities and on physical education. Other subjects taught were astrology, map making, reading and religion.

Fall of the Assyrians. The system built by the Assyrians was really the one which was based on booty and plunder of the conquered territories. It was the system under which war was an integral part. As is evident this system only could work as long as there were powerful rulers. When weak rulers came to the throne the fall was inevitable. The Assyrians fell under the weak rulers which resulted in their decay and downfall.

Contribution of the Assyrians. The greatest contribution of the Assyrians, as already said, is of course in the field of military organisation. It was for the first time that the army was equipped with good equipments and divided into different parts. Then their another contribution is that they gave practical shape to the idea of a centralised government. In it the king could govern the kingdom from one centre through his governors, to be instructed through a well organised messenger system. Then their another contribution

is that they organised school system of education run by the government. They also contributed to the world civilisation by way of making glass. But on the whole they have not left a great legacy for the world.

Mesopotamian and Egyptian Civilisations Compared.

Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilisations were two great civilisations of the world. These have already been discussed separately. It is really interesting to compare two civilisations. There are perhaps no two opinions on this that Egyptian civilisation was much advanced as compared with the Mesopotamian civilisation. The former made much contribution as compared with the latter, to the world civilisation. One finds that the Egyptians were much more advanced in the field of sculpture as compared with the Mesopotamians. But one also at the same time finds that in the field of military organisation the Mesopotamians were far advanced as compared with the Egyptians. The Egyptians did not use their advancement for destructive purposes, whereas the Mesopotamians did use that for destructive purposes. The Egyptians were much more artistic in taste as compared with the Mesopotamians. In the field of medicines and astronomy as well as sciences the Egyptians had excelled the Mesopotamians.

Conclusion. But Mesopotamian civilisation too was considerably advanced. The Mesopotamian civilisation had its own strength. In the words of Will Durant, "*Civilisations both in the East and in the west borrowed elements from Mesopotamian civilisation.*"

10. Chinese Civilisation

China made rapid cultural progress under Hans. Education became quite widespread. Progress was also made in the fields of science and philosophy. In political and intellectual fields the country made so much progress that some thinkers call this period as the golden age in China, particularly in the field of literature.

Culture under the Hans. From the available ruins it appears that there was rapid cultural development under the Hans. Education and literature both rapidly spread and received encouragement. Education was imparted on the lines given by Confucius. In main cities schools and colleges were opened and in Chungun University alone about 30,000 students got education. The emperors set up libraries for the spread of education. The old treatises were translated. Efforts were made to write authentic history and famous historians like Mao Chiang and Ode developed and worked in this period. It was during this period that Shuo Wen Dictionary was written. Appointments for all high posts were made on competitive basis. Only those who qualified in these examinations were given public posts. Paper was also invented and a new and convenient script was put into vogue by Lung of this period.

Science. Progress was made in the field of Science. Water and sun watches were invented during this period. Sun Chian prepared calendar of 365 days. Cheng Heng prepared an instrument for measuring the extent of earthquakes. Wang Chung established that floods etc. were not the punishment of nature but a natural phenomenon and could be anticipated. Theories about lunar and solar eclipses were also developed. Progress was made in the field of education and medicine. Many types of fevers and their treatments were discovered. The printing press was invented and began to be used for printing books.

Architecture. Architecture was also cared. Beautiful royal palaces were constructed. From the art which is available on ornament boxes, it appears that the people had attained considerable perfection and they were prosperous.

Trade The trade also received encouragement. The traders became prosperous and international trade received encouragement. Trade relations with Rome developed in this age.

Music and Entertainment. Music was encouraged. Violin belongs to this period. Folk dances and miracles were main source of entertainment of the people. Hen fight was also source of amusement.

Handicrafts. Leather, woollen, silken goods were famous handicrafts of China which were also exported.

Philosophy. During this period Taoism was very popular with the rulers whereas Confuciusism became popular with the masses. Some of the rulers, of course, adopted philosophy of Confucius. The exponents of the philosophy of Taoism were Hui Noatsu and Chang Tao Ling. The other important philosophers of this age were Wang Chung who was born in a poor family in Chakiang and Yang Siang who was under the influence of Confucius.

Religion. In the religious field one finds that there were local religions and also a state religion. Local religion was the religion of the people who worshipped nature. They also worshipped their dead fore-fathers. Many types of gods and goddesses were also worshipped. The State religion was the religion of the rulers and aimed at glorifying the kings. The people had unlimited faith in the superiority of king and considered him as the deputy of God on earth.

Buddhism also got roots in China during this age and due to this, relations between India and China considerably developed. But due to initial opposition during Han period, Buddhism did not develop as rapidly as it should have been.

Dark Age of China. After the Hans, in China there was a period of darkness for 400 years. Due to weakness of later Hans the power went into the hands of selfish and immoral people who began to rule for their selfish interests. The empire built by the rulers of this dynasty completely disintegrated. The barbarians who invaded China adversely influenced their culture and gave that a serious set-back.

Culture and Civilisation under the Tangs. Under the Tangs China made rapid progress both in political and intellectual fields. It is evident from the fact that some of the Chinese took pride in calling themselves as 'People of Tang'. It has been said by some historians that, 'The political history of Tang dynasty is less remarkable than its intellectual and artistic life.' In the cultural field this period is called as the golden age. During this period poetry, literature, philosophy and religion all made rapid progress. In the field of architecture, sculpture and metallic art the old traditions were maintained and developed. Many refined and attractive statues of gods and goddesses were made. The art of engraving also received encouragement. Many Pagodas were built which were either

hexagonal or square in shape. During this period Tomb sculpture also drew the attention of the people. In the metallic art the picture of Phoenix belonging to this age speaks for itself for its beauty and perfection. The ancient art of pottery also received attention and encouragement. Three coloured pots with beautiful polish were very famous in those days. On the pots were also the photos of gods and goddesses.

During this period significance of printing press was realised. It was with the help of printing press that the ideas of Confucius got spread throughout width and breadth of the country. The script was difficult to remember and picture of a bird of animal was symbol of a word. The art of calligraphy also received attention and encouragement.

In the field of literature also it is called golden age because during this period the poets and literary persons got royal patronage. **Li-Po** is compared with Keats. **Tu Phu** is known for his 'Eight Immortals' and many poems of **Po-Chu-Yi** were so popular that in many years these were recited by all the high and low in the country. His most famous book is 'Everlasting Wrong'. In addition to this there were many other poets as well. In prose 'Han Yu' is still remembered for his style and expression. In prose among other things spiritual and material life was discussed. It is said that during this period 2,300 poets wrote about 48,900 poems. It is also said that number of persons devoted to literature excelled every time.

In the field of painting, painted scrolls and painted boards got preference over mural paintings. It is said about 220 painters flourished during this period. Out of these the most important were **Wu Tao Tzu**, **El-Ssu-Tsum**, and **Wang Wei**.

The society of those days can broadly be divided into four categories. In the first category came the literary persons. Then came the agriculturists. In the third category came the artists and then were the traders. The soldiers formed a class in themselves. It must, however, be remembered that like India there was no hereditary system of castes. A person fell in a particular category according to his profession or the work which he was doing.

As regards educational system one finds that the child was admitted to village school. After successfully qualifying himself in the school he could join District School, thereafter he could seek admission to Provincial School, and so on. Thus whereas the students in their thousands joined village schools, only few could seek admission in provincial schools. Assistance to poor but brilliant students was given to enable them to further pursue their studies.

In the religious field **Bodh** religion received special attention and that is why this period is called 'Bodh period'. But other religions were equally respected and **Confuciusism** and **Taoism** were quite popular.

Economically agriculture was the main profession of the people. The conditions of the agriculturists were quite satisfactory. The canals were dug and a ban was put on the sale and purchase of cultivable land. Tax on agricultural production was one of the main sources of income of the State. Trade was carried out both by land and sea routes and traders were very well treated. During Tang period trade primarily developed because the administrative system was good, means of transportation and communication were well developed and relations with foreign countries were excellent. Due to brisk favourable balance of trade living standard of the people went up. A trader's class came into existence and new vocations as well began to be adopted by the society.

Conclusion. From the above one can easily come to the conclusion that in spite of many difficulties, culturally China advanced in the past. She made her progress in isolation and there were valid causes and reasons for the same. From the progress it also becomes clear that it was quite impressive and nation could feel proud of that.

Main tenets of Confuciusism

Confuciusism. Confucius was born in 551 B.C. in Lu State in a respectable family. His father was soldier and from his childhood Confucius was a thinker and peace lover. He was child when his father died and responsibility of looking after family affairs fell on him. At the age of 17 he began to be considered a great scholar. He remained married for about 3 years when he left his wife at the age of 22. Confucius then started giving moral education to the children and began to tour the country. He gave education to about 3000 students which was credit worthy in those days. At the age of 54 he was appointed as Minister but resigned as he could not reconcile himself to some characterless activities of his master. He died at the age of 72. Confucius was a man with many sided personalities.

Confucius as a Scholar. Confucius was a great scholar. Among his famous books come 'Record of Rights', 'Book of Changes', 'The Book of History', 'The Book of Poetry', 'Spring and Autumn', 'The Book of Mencius', 'Middle Path', 'The Great Learning' and the 'Meng Ju-Shu' which was written by his students.

Confucius on Humanism. Confucius was of the view that we should have human approach to every problem. We should feel our responsibility towards others, be just, wise and have faith in others. According to him our simple living can give more pleasure

to the family. A good man should not only look after his own welfare but should also care for the welfare of humanity as a whole.

Confucius as a Philosopher. Confucius had a very simple philosophy. According to him only those persons can improve who sincerely go for the search of knowledge. It is essential that every good person should have self assessment from time to time. A good person should think himself as friend of all and foe of none. Since man is lowest unit of human society, therefore, it is essential to reform him. Confucius did not believe in the philosophy of other world. He was of the view that none has time in this world, to think about the other world.

Confucius on Politics. Confucius laid stress on honouring and respecting established customs and it is really a quality to preserve them. The relations between father and son, king and minister, husband and wife, brothers themselves and among the friends must be valued. He believed in the doctrine of equality and suggested that it was the duty of the State to give equal protection and care for the welfare of all. The emperor comes on the throne with the blessings of God. He believed that the people hand every right to revolt against an evil and worthless king. He also believed that a Minister should be a highly qualified person because such a person alone could keep off the influence of the foreign powers. A victor should not use his power in an unlimited manner. The use of power was against the will of God.

Confucius as a Reformer. Confucius was not only a great thinker and a philosopher, but he was also a great reformer. He always loved his past, which according to him was glorious period of China's history. He wanted to bring that back. According to him for the advancement of state and society it was essential that both the government and the people should be well disciplined. He loved orderly life. According to him the rulers should be learned and men of character.

Confucius's Influence on Chinese Society. In his own times, Confucius had deep influence on Chinese society. It was under his influence that the values of moral life began to be more appreciated in the country. It was again under the influence of Confucius that the State and society became disciplined and an orderly society and state became the cherished ideals for the Government and the society. Confucius's stress on the past of China and his desire to bring that back, also had its influence on society. They began to take more pride in their past. It was this sense of pride, which stood in the way of their mixing with other countries of the world and resulted in China's isolation.