

the earliest civilizations is the civilization of Egypt.

(i) **EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION**

Egypt has been aptly described as the daughter of the Nile. The Valley of the Nile, the home of Egyptian culture is five hundred and fifty miles in length from the Delta to the

First Cataract. But the strip above the Delta is extremely narrow averaging about twelve miles in width. The Nile is an extraordinary river. It overflows into the flat narrow valley annually. These floods not only supply water for growing crops in the valley, but they also replenish the soil liberally each year. Thus there is deep alluvial soil with many marshes. Since these silt-deposits are dark or black in colour the ancient Egyptians called their country the 'Black Land' (Kem). Egypt cannot boast of heavy rainfall. Nile is the sole source of water, and if it were not for the Nile there could be no cultivation. Thus this fertile strip has been the gift of the Nile for man.

All the rest of the country, except this narrow strip of fertile land, is desert. The main valley is itself bordered by limestone hills and ridges. They protected the country from external invasions on the one hand and enabled the Egyptians to live an isolated life. Living in such splendid isolation from remote times they developed an advanced culture and civilization of their own, which is happily preserved for us in the records written on *papyri* and the inscriptions on tombs, temples and pyramids. But it may, however, be noted here that not all her monuments and towns which have been buried by the annual deposits of new soil have been unearthed.

**History:** The race to which the authors of this marvellous civilization belonged cannot be determined with any amount of certainty. It can safely be maintained, that it was the result of fusion of different races as was the case with Harappa civilization.

For thousands of years men lived as food gatherers. They wandered from place to place without any permanent habitation in search of food. They began to produce food in the neolithic age. With the beginning of agriculture they began to raise crops and animals. They learnt the technique of lifting water out of the river to water their fields. The sort of water lift or *shadoof* which was used by the neolithic men is in use even at present. They took advantage of the sluggish stream to trade with the neighbouring countries. Their implements consisted of hoe and sickle, the polished stone axe and knives. They used earthen pots to store food and developed the art of spinning and weaving. They decorated

their person with shells and beads which suggest their aesthetic taste. They built wooden or sod houses and temples. Their weapons consisted of bows and arrows.

Before the dawn of recorded history there were a number of independent states headed by local lords. In course of time these small states were merged into two rival kingdoms, namely, Upper Egypt (southern kingdom) and Lower Egypt (northern kingdom) or the region of the Nile Delta. According to a later tradition, about 3400 B.C. Menes or King Narmer, the first Pharaoh of all Egypt united Upper and Lower Egypt into a single Kingdom. This dynasty has come to be known in Egyptian history as the 'Old Kingdom'.

From 3500 B.C. or according to some 3400 B.C. begins the rule of the dynasties. Their rule lasted till 332 B.C. During this period thirty dynasties ruled over Egypt. The history of these dynasties falls into three periods: the Old Kingdom (the Pyramid Age), the Middle Kingdom (the Feudal Age) and the New Kingdom (the New Empire).

**The Old Kingdom (3400-2500 B.C.):** As J.H. Breasted rightly remarks: "We shall probably never be able to offer more than a sketch of the civilization of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, with a hazy outline of the general drift of events". The Old Kingdom comprising the first six dynasties lasted nine centuries. Memphis was the capital. The kings enjoyed great power and lived in pomp and luxury. The palace of the king was called *Pero* (the Great House) and from this the title Pharaoh, borne by the ancient Egyptian Kings is derived. They succeeded in establishing law and order which continued for a long period. This enabled the people to devote their attention to economic and cultural ends. Furthermore, the centralised authority of the Pharaohs led to an organized endeavour resulting in all round economic prosperity. The most amazing manifestation of economic affluence and power of the Pharaohs was in the Pyramids. For this reason the period itself is called the Age of Pyramids.

The Pharaohs played a great role in the economic life of their country. 'Under conditions of unification and internal peace, of wealth in the hands of Lords and Kings, of increased investments in industry and commerce and of a growth in the division of labour, Egypt enjoyed a period of

relatively great economic well being'. The Egyptian Civilization attained its highest peaks. But about 2400 B.C. the authority of the Pharaohs began to wane. There ensued in Egyptian history a period of political, economic and cultural dark age. This period is known as the Feudal Age or the Middle Age.

**The Middle Age (2400 to 1800 B.C.):** During this period the *nomes*, or small political units based on villages became autonomous. Rivalry among the noblemen led to constant local warfare. Finally, Egypt was brought under one sceptre by the Counts of Thebes. This inaugurated a period of prosperity which lasted for about two centuries. The semitic tribes were expelled and Nubians were punished. But soon the dynasty fell on evil days. The assertion of independence by the Lords led to political and economic disintegration. The foreigners began to fish in the troubled waters. The *Hyksos* or *Shepherd Kings*, the nomads of inferior civilization, overran the Nile Valley easily. But they failed to consolidate their conquest. The conquerors introduced into Egypt the horse and the chariot as also a military system. The *Hyksos* did not rule for long. By about 1500 B.C. the court of Thebes after ousting the foreign overlords once again established unity in Egypt.

**The New Kingdom:** The New Kingdom begins with the Eighteenth Dynasty. The Pharaohs were not satisfied with the establishment of political unity, but launched on a career of conquest and glory. They subjugated Palestine, Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, the territory of the Euphrates and **Nubia**. Queen Hatshepsut (1501-1479 B.C.) was the first great woman ruler in historic times. The greatest of the Pharaohs was Thutmose III (1479-1447) who is sometimes called "The Napoleon of Egypt." Gradually the Empire began to show signs of decline. Egypt was unable to arrest the inroads of the Hittites and Assyrians. Then it was overrun by Nubians and thereafter it became a province of Assyria. The Twenty-Sixth Dynasty regained independence and did its best to secure its original boundaries. Egypt, however, could not regain its past glory. In 525 B.C. it came under the domination of the Persians. Later in 332 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered Egypt. Finally it came under the domination of Rome in 30 B.C.

stratums, the rich and the poor. The royalty, the landed nobles and the priests occupied the upper stratum of the society. The middle class was composed of free landholders, scribes, merchants and artisans. The serfs and slaves stood at the bottom of the ladder.

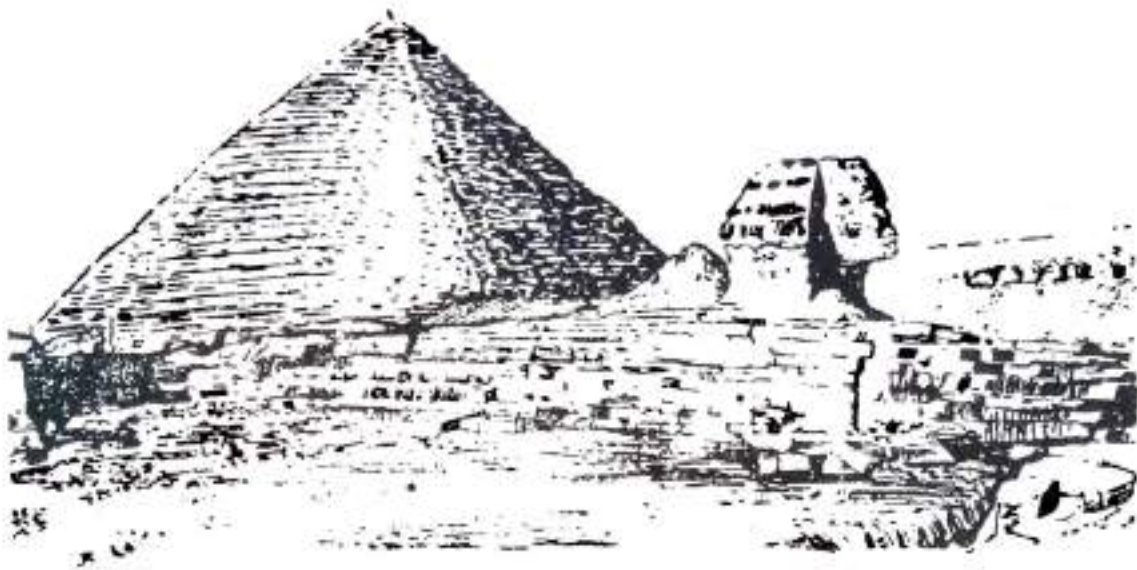
Women held a position of honour in the society. They could become rulers and own and inherit property. We have the instance of Queen Hatshepsut ruling over Egypt in historic times. She took keen interest in building temples and developing commerce. She beautified the city of Karnak.

Monogamy was the normal rule. But men were permitted to have concubines. A feature of their society that sounds peculiar is the marriage between brother and sister. This was intended to maintain the purity of blood.

**Economic Conditions:** Agriculture was the basis of Egyptian economy. They knew the importance of irrigation to agriculture and constructed Irrigation projects. They grew such crops as wheat, barley, millet, onions, beans, lentils and peas. They had the knowledge of spinning the fibres of flax plant into thread and to weave the threads into cloth. They discovered copper and manufactured copper tools which in turn were used for building houses and temples of wood and stone, vessels and weapons, furniture, clothing and jewellery. They also produced glass and earthenware, both plain and painted.

The growth of industry gave impetus to foreign commerce. The Nile served as the highway for commerce. Egypt imported lumber from Byblos, in Syria, gold from Nubia, perfumes and spices from Arabia and India, lapis lazuli and other gems from Arabia, gold, ivory and Negro slaves from Sudan. The articles of export included glass, papyrus, linen and jewellery. Trade was conducted by means of barter and money economy came into operation at a much later period.

**Religion:** The religious ideas of the Egyptians are supposed to be a form of nature worship. They were baffled by the mysteries of nature and worshipped them as gods. There were thousands of gods and hence the religion of Egyptians was polytheism. They worshipped the sun God Ra as the most powerful one. Next to him came his son Osiris and Isis the sister and wife of Osiris. Each locality and each clan had



Sphinx and the Great Pyramid of Giza

that when a person dies, his soul goes to another world where it is either rewarded or punished for the good or evil done by him. Thereafter, the soul may come back to the same body. This belief led to the practice of embalming or mummifying the body and building of tombs called the pyramids.

**Art and Architecture:** The surplus economy helped art and architecture to attain a high standard of excellence. In art, the concepts of what to render in inanimate form, methods of work and styles became differentiated and established. The art styles of the third, fourth and fifth Dynasties had come to be established so firmly that they persisted without much change to Greek times. Extravagant tombs and temples were constructed. These edifices represent one of the highest if not the highest, attainment in Egyptian art.

The pyramids are the tombs of early Pharaohs. They are built on the left bank of the Nile from Giza southward for many miles. Over sixty such structures have come to light. The largest and the greatest of the pyramids, that of Cheipakhufu, constructed between 2420 and 2270 B.C. is situated at Giza. It covers thirteen acres and has a square base, each side being seven hundred and fifty feet in height. The Pyramid itself is about four hundred and fifty feet in height. It contains 23,00,000 limestone blocks weighing  $2\frac{1}{2}$

Egyptian artists attained in architecture and sculpture is found in paintings also. Though the paintings show signs of Eastern influences and tend to become over-ornate and gaudy, they retain their individuality and refinement. As in sculpture, so in paintings the artists followed certain conventions. They seem to have paid greater attention to the subject matter than to aesthetic appeal. Paintings in tombs which represent the life of the deceased's estate are fine in line. They show a search for a solution of perspective and are bright if monotonous in colour.

**Writing:** The Egyptians from the time of Menes invented the first writing called *hieroglyphics*. This was probably the most important event in ancient Egyptian History. *Hieroglyphics* means 'sacred engraved writing.' The earliest form of writing consisted of symbols which had an agreed meaning. It is known as pictographic writing. This led the Egyptians in the direction of development of alphabets, but they failed to evolve true alphabet.

**Literature:** The Egyptians wrote on the leaves of a plant called papyrus. Literature was used as an aid to religion and morals. Their famous works include '*The Book of the Dead*' and the '*Coffin Texts*'. '*The Book of the Dead*' contains prayers, hymns and maxims.

The Egyptians developed a solar calendar. At first the year was divided into 365 days. Later they realised that the seasonal year is approximately  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days. The year was divided into twelve months of thirty days. There were five feast days at the end of the year. To regulate the activities of life they used sundials, movements of the stars or water clocks. They worked on the principle of the hourglass.

The Egyptians possessed considerable knowledge of medicine. The practice of mummification which involved the removal of the viscera helped them to know something of human anatomy. Their belief in the healing powers of chants and incantations was certainly not helpful to the study of medicine. In spite of this, they made great strides in surgery and could set broken bones, bandage wounds and perform certain operations.

As Hayes and Moon point out, 'in Egyptian hands arithmetic and geometry were practical rather than abstract

They discovered pot instruments through which the wisdom has been transmitted to us. The Egyptian pottery, which appears to all intents and purposes the first to be made by man, became the forerunner to the potters in other lands. The Hebrews, the Phoenicians and the Greeks borrowed liberally from Egyptian culture. In short, the Egyptians have left priceless heritage to their successors.

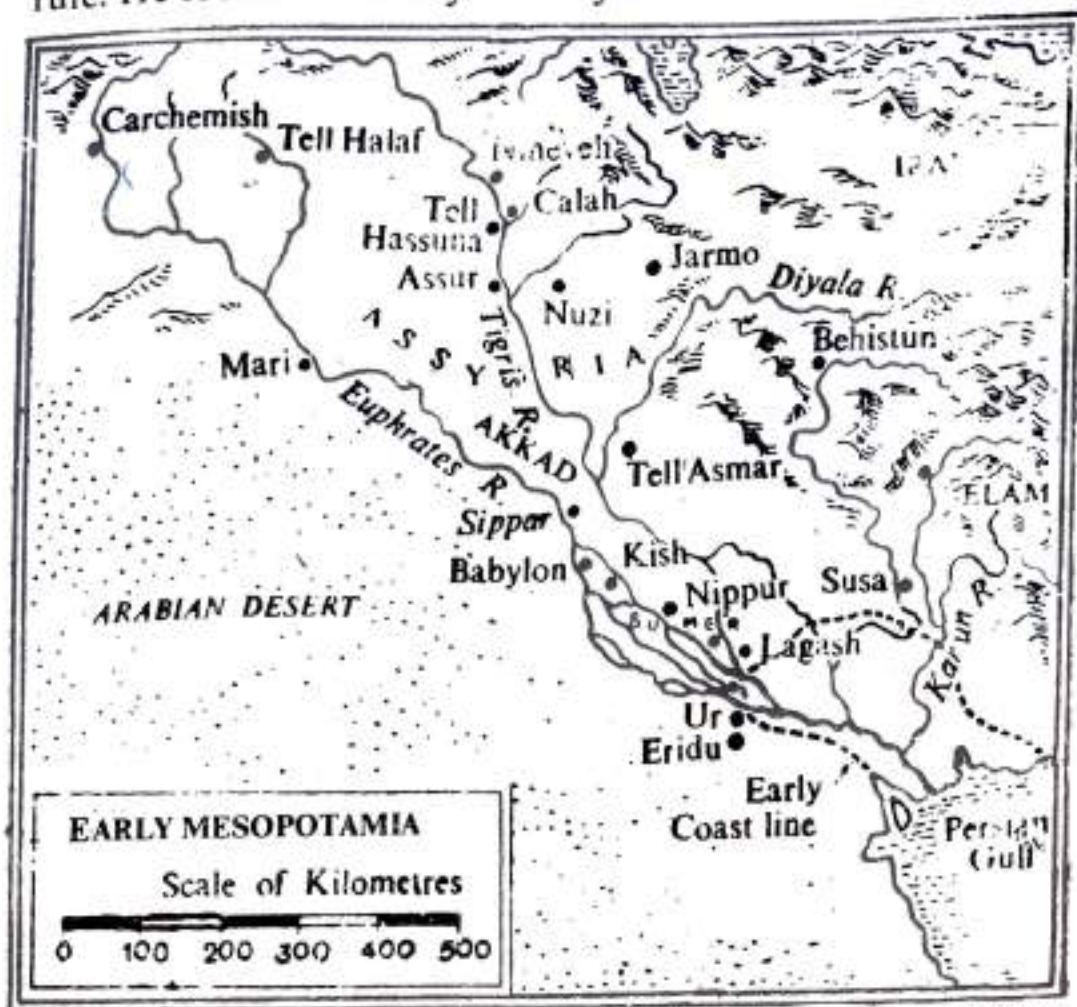
### (ii) BABYLONIAN CIVILIZATION

Next to the Nile Valley civilization is the civilization of Babylonia. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers now known as Iraq, was known as Mesopotamia in ancient time. The upper part of Mesopotamia was known as Assyria and the lower part as Babylon. This was further divided into Sumer and Akkad. The Valley of Tigris and Euphrates had been built up by alluvial deposits. The country was, however, exposed to attacks from all sides.

The Sumerians built the earliest culture in Mesopotamia. They diffused the ideologies, knowledge, styles of Art to Akkad. Gradually these grew up into independent cities within the areas of Sumer. These cities were combined to form two kingdoms. About 2500 B.C., an Akkadian king called Sargon I launched upon a career of conquest and expansion. He possessed a superior military organization and equipment, which included the phalanx, the donkey, the chariot and perhaps the horse. With this superior military



power he brought Sumer, Assyria, Elan and Syria under his rule. He founded the city of Babylon.



The Babylonians followed the Semitic culture. They established their mastery over Mesopotamia following the supremacy of the Akkadians. The Babylonians were successful in weaving into a single cultural tradition the Sumerian and Semitic accomplishments. The new kingdom derived its name from the city of Babylon. Therefore, 'Semites, Sumerians, and many other divergent elements were to be included under one term, Babylonian'.

**Hammurabi (2123-2082 B.C.):** Hammurabi was the most famous and the greatest of the king to rule over Babylon. He conquered all Akkad and Sumer and drove out the Elamites. By these conquests he extended his dynasty from Babylon upto Persian Gulf. Assyria was also included in his empire.

Hammurabi was more famous as ruler and statesman than as conqueror. He established a centralised government complete with bureaucracy and military force. He expended the wealth of the state to expand commerce, to improve land

and to build splendid temples. In short, his reign was a high watermark in the economic life of Babylonia.

**The Code of Hammurabi:** Hammurabi is best remembered by his code of laws, which constitute a definite advance in establishment of control over human behaviour. A black stone about eight feet high was first discovered at Susa in 1902. This contains the figure of King Hammurabi standing in front of the sun-god. Below this are written the laws which were supposed to have been received by the King from the sun-god. It was intended to impress upon the governed that the laws were divine and God had made them for the good government of the people. It consists of 285 laws. Hammurabi did not originate the laws but he codified and enforced them. The Code marks him out as "the world's first great legal genius".

The Code prescribes harsh punishments which is characterised as 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. It contains a schedule of punishments for offences. There are detailed laws in respect of business affairs and marriage. The wages payable for different types of services are actually fixed.

Women enjoyed legal rights and they were protected in the Code. If a woman was ill treated she could divorce her cruel husband and demand back her dowry. Women could own property, engage in business and become professional scribes. The code details laws regarding business contacts, loans, debts and the status of private property. We have here an elaborate description of the judiciary.

**Social and Economic Conditions :** The code provides peeps into the social and economic conditions of Babylonia. There existed three social groups viz., the wealthy or the nobles, the middle class which consisted generally of merchants and workers and the slaves who were treated as personal property. They could be bought, sold and mortgaged. The class of workers included carpenters, tailors, brickmakers, masons, weavers, dyers, jewellers, labourers, sculptors, potters, metal workers and brewers.

Agriculture was the mainstay of both the government and the people. Importance of irrigation to agriculture was

known and there were laws about the proper care of the canals. Trade was regulated by the state. That business flourished is indicated by the thousands of Babylonian tablets. The articles of export included grain, oil, dates, leather and pottery jars. They imported among other articles, gold, silver, copper, stone, wood, salt and slaves.

**Religion :** The Babylonians had considered Marduk as the supreme god. Ishtar, the mother of the gods, and her brother and husband Tammuz were other important gods. The Babylonians believed in magic and divination and were highly superstitious. They did not attach much importance to after life and cared more for improving the life here than hereafter.

**Scientific Progress:** The greatest strides that Babylonia made in economic spheres gave impetus to the progress in science and arts. The Babylonians were scientific-minded. They continued the astronomical observations of their predecessors. They were skilled in mathematics and laid the foundations for the genuine science of mathematics. It is worthy of mention here that it was on this foundation that Hellenic and Arabic scholars later built modern mathematics. Babylonians were probably the first to develop algebra and geometry. The unit for counting was sixty and dominance of this number even in our day is seen from the division of the hour into sixty minutes and of the minute into sixty seconds. They developed place value, that is, giving value to numbers in accordance with their position, like 1 over 3 and second decimal place. They multiplied and divided numbers, and worked out tables for the halves, quarters, thirds, squares, and cubes of the most important numbers. By 1800 B.C. they had established certain geographic relations like Pythagoras theorem. They observed the movement of the sun and moon and invented calendar of twelve lunar months and a seven-day week.

**Art and Architecture :** The Babylonians are indebted to the Sumerians in the spheres of art and architecture. But their important contributions are seen in the decoration of the blank walls with sculpture, tiles and carpets. Unfortunately their architecture has disappeared and we know of them only

through their literature. Their temples are called Ziggurats. They took the form of small artificial mountains and were built in stages. One such ziggurat was six hundred and fifty feet high, and was built in seven stages. The ziggurat was massive and complicated structure, but devoid of any aesthetic quality. The shrine for the house of the god was situated at the top of the structure. At this principal hall assembled devotees to pay homage to the god. In addition there were several other rooms meant for specific purposes.

The Babylonian sculptures are none too numerous. The available examples of their sculptures show that the artists glorified the living and represented god in mixed profile, that is, in the form of man or mythical animals. These forms as are found in heraldry and mythology include the gryphon, the dragon, the lion and the bull. A large number of Babylonian seals have come down to us. The seals reveal their greatest artistic achievements.

**Literature and Learning:** The Babylonians attached great value to learning and made some progress in the field of education. There were schools which imparted the three R's—reading, writing and arithmetic to the students. A school house of fifty five square feet was discovered in 1844. The students were required to memorise about 350 signs. A proverb of the period, engraved on the wall of an old school house reads, "ye who shall excel in tablet writing shall shine like the sun". They adopted the Sumerian cuneiform writing with some alterations, but failed to develop alphabets. They wrote on clay tablets.

In the field of literature, writers concentrated upon mythological and historical epics. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* was the most impressive work. It describes the triumphs of man over nature. Among other epics may be mentioned *the Creation, the Fall and the Flood*. Indeed the Babylonians charted previously unknown routes on the sea of learning. Their intellectual signposts guided many a scholar in centuries that followed. In fine, "the Babylonians developed those traditions of intellectual and artistic endeavour which had early become differentiated and fixed in the Sumerian culture."

**Its decline:** The Babylonian civilization might

They grew paddy, wheat, barley, vegetables and pulses. Cotton and silk were cultivated for cloth. The wearing of garments of silk, cotton and wool was known and the loom is mentioned in the *Rigveda*. Silver, gold and copper were used, but iron, called dark metal was known. The horse, the bull and the donkey were used for the transportation of goods. There are references to coins of gold, silver and copper. Loans and rates of interest were also well known. They condemned high rates of interest.

### (vi) GREEK CIVILIZATION

The location of the cultures was shifted from Hither Asia and Egypt to the European continent, first to Greece and then to Rome some ten centuries before the birth of Christ. These cultures, though indebted to earlier cultures, surpassed them. Greek culture in particular was very brilliant, and it became the mother of modern European civilization. It supplied to the whole of Europe 'its concepts, art styles, bodies of knowledge, and ideologies'. This may be regarded as one of the most important facts of history. Hence the statement of Arnold Toynbee: "European civilization developed in the body of Greek society like a child in the womb".

**Land and people:** The early Greeks called their country *Hellas* and themselves Hellenes. Greece is a peninsula situated to the south of Europe on the Mediterranean sea. The Aegean Sea separates Greece from Asia Minor. A number of islands dot the Aegean Sea. The mountains also have divided Greece into different regions. In ancient times each of these regions maintained its identity and developed in a way which was most suited to it.

Like the people who had invaded Persia and India the Greeks were Indo-Europeans. By the eighth century B.C. they were divided into three groups, the Dorians, the Aeolians, and the Ionians. Among the flourishing cities and centres of Greek culture mention may be made of Sparta, Corinth, Aegos, Athens, Thebes, Ephesus and Miletus.

It is truism to say that geography influences the character and lives of the people which in turn dominates the history of a country. Situated as it is most of the land of Greece was unsuitable for agriculture. This was compensat-

ed by the natural facilities for navigation. There were tiny islands in the Aegean Sea and these islanders were induced to become good sailors and men of independent spirit. The natural harbours in the sea coast encouraged maritime trade and the latter contributed to the economic prosperity of the people. The indentations of the land by the sea and the mountain ridges divided the land and the people into small units. These people lived almost in isolation from one another. This background was most congenial for the origin of the *polis* or city-state, a typical form of government for which ancient Greece had become famous. The land of the Greeks supplied the people marble. The sea and the marble permitted the establishment of a high level of civilization by the Greeks.

**History:** Prior to the arrival of Aryans there flourished a civilization on the islands of Greece called the Aegean civilization. Since it first developed in Crete and the Crete was called Minos after the legendary king of that name, the civilization is known as Minoan civilization. In its last stage the Cretan culture spread into the mainland of Greece and came to be called the Mycenaean civilization. This civilization 'is best illustrated by splendid objects such as swords, daggers, jewels, carved ivories, and vases found in tombs'.

About 1100 B.C. the Greek peoples came from the north and overwhelmed the earlier civilization and destroyed Tiryns and Mycenae. By adopting the essential features of the Aegean civilization they developed a civilization which came to be known as Greek civilization. The destruction of the city of Troy formed the subject-matter of the two great epics of the Greek race, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Homer.

The Aryans in Greece now led a settled life and adopted agriculture. Among their deities gods Zeus and Apollo and goddess Athena were famous. They became great mariners and spread across the Aegean to Asia Minor by about 1000 A.D. Between 750 and 550 B.C. they founded Greek cities on the more distant shores of the Black sea as also the southern and western Mediterranean.

**City-States:** The ideal of the ancient Greeks was a state in which all citizens met together and participated in civic and religious matters. This ideal was realised by the development

of city-states. As has been pointed out earlier the physical features of Greece divided the country into different isolated units. This gave rise to the idea of city-states or polis. It was literally a city-state because the state contained only one city surrounded by two or three hundred square miles of farm lands. By about seventh century B.C. such city-states as Sparta, Athens, Corinth, Thebes, Miletus, Samos sprang up.

The rise of the city states was not conducive to the development of one homogeneous state. The people of each state moved in their own orbit, owed allegiance to that city only and not to the country as a whole. Each city-state developed a distinct socio-religious life. At first monarchical form of government prevailed in the city-states. This yielded place to aristocracy or the rule of the nobles. Rivalry developed among the nobles and merchants which ended in the victory of the latter.

**Tyrants:** The constant struggle for supremacy gave an opportunity for an adventurous leader to organise a revolt and seize the reins of power. The Greeks called such a leader who came into power as 'Tyrant'. The 'Tyrant' in the Greek sense meant that he was unconstitutional, or usurper, not a cruel and oppressive ruler. In other words, the term did not indicate the nature of his rule. In fact some of the tyrants were efficient rulers and strove for the welfare of their subjects. Two such tyrants stand out prominently. Periander of Corinth (625-585 B.C.) was one of the most famous tyrants. He was not only a great conqueror, but also a patron of art. He caused the construction of splendid public buildings and public baths which provided employment to many workers. He patronised artists and poets. Pisistratus of Athens, another popular tyrant, adorned the city with beautiful monuments. On the whole the rule of the tyrants benefited the merchant and the artisan class. Tyranny was only an ephemeral phenomenon and was not destined to live long. By about 500 B.C. it was overthrown everywhere in Greece and the way was cleared for the establishment of democracy.

**Sparta and Athens:** Among the city-states the most prominent were Sparta and Athens. The two states differed greatly

in character. The rulers in Sparta were a small minority compared to the ruled. Consequently their state was organised like a militaristic state. While they emphasised on physical development the approach of the Athenians was mental. Sparta glorified war while Athens gave impetus to the development of finer aspects of life. Thus the 'ideals of the Spartans were based upon militarism, and they lacked the imagination and initiative of the Athenians.'

As the Spartan state was militaristic, the state subjected its citizens from the age of seven to a rigorous training. This rigorous training lasted for a period of twelve years and after this they served in the army compulsorily upto the age of sixty. It was designed to develop the qualities of endurance, bravery, strict discipline and military efficiency. Women also had to undergo physical training. This sort of military communism enabled the Spartans to become best soldiers in Greece at the cost of the finer qualities of mind and spirit. Hence Sparta had nothing to contribute to Greek art or Greek civilization.

The Spartan government was Kingdom in form, though in fact an oligarchy. There were two kings ruling over Sparta, each checking the other to some extent. The *Gerusia* or Council of Elders consisting of twenty-eight members discussed all legislative proposals. Then it was referred to the *Apella* or Assembly of the people consisting of the members of the upper class who had full citizenship. The chief power was vested in the *Ephorate* or a Board of Supervisors. Five *ephors* or magistrates were elected annually by the citizens to superintend the administration of the government there by acting as a check on the exercise of powers by the King. The credit for this transformation in Sparta goes to legendary hero, Lycurgus.

"Of all the ancient Greek city-states the one that contributed most to the enrichment of human life was Athens". In the beginning the Athenian government consisted of Kingship and this yielded place to aristocracy or a government by nobles or *Archons*. There were nine *Archons* elected by the nobles for a period of one year. During their rule discontent prevailed among the poor class of peasants and they demanded reforms.

In 624 B.C. Draco was entrusted with the task of



very real way. Athens was the 'School of Hellas' as Pericles called it.

**Social Organisation:** The Greek society was tribal in character. As much of the land was not fertile, they took to trade and commerce. Though the society was patriarchal women were highly respected. Women played no part in public life and were mostly confined to the house. Slavery flourished in the society, and the Greeks did not feel that there was anything reprehensible about it.

**Economic Condition:** Agriculture, though pursued on a small scale, was the occupation of an average Greek. They grew wheat, barley, peas, lentils, olives, grapes and figs. Olive played an important role in their economy becomes evident from the fact when in the Peloponnesian war olive orchards were destroyed Athens' decline became inevitable.

Greece was noted for its natural resources like marble, iron, zinc, silver and the like which were exploited to the full. Slaves were made to work in these mines.

The production of wine, olive oil, and industrial goods in surplus necessitated the Greeks of Anatolia to look for markets to sell their finished goods and seek for things which they desired. They obtained fish and grain from Italy and Sicily, the Balkan peninsula, the Straits and the Black Sea. Their demand for silver, gold, copper and iron was met from other places. They imported from their neighbours in the interior of Asia Minor large quantities of leather and wool. They also took to piracy. But the Athenian fleet watched the sea and Pompey took special measures. By developing commercial fleets and regularising trade they established control over foreign trade and commerce. The Greeks also performed certain services like shipping and banking. Coins first appeared in Lydia about 700 B.C. and were issued by Greek city-states. The increased use of money led to the development of banking. For purposes of transferring money, Greek bankers developed a letter of credit, the bills of exchange, and the book keeping clearing accounts among the individuals. Bankers also made bottomry loans, whereby a shipper would borrow on his cargo but would be relieved of his responsibility to pay his debt if the cargo did not arrive at its destination. This was one of the first attempts at a

dispensation of risks for a premium—an elementary form of insurance'. With these developments, the economic position of Greece resembled in many respects to that of Great Britain in the nineteenth century.

**Religion and Philosophy:** The Greek religion was not only varied but also complex. In fact, they did not follow the arbitrary absolutes that dominate the Eastern creeds. The Greeks did not believe in god and on the other hand they tended to glorify man. The three prominent deities of the Greeks were Zeus, Apollo and Athena. In connection with their religion the Greeks organised a great festival at Olympia as early as 776 B.C. During this festival a series of contests were held in honour of the gods in which athletes from all over Greece took part. Similarly all people went to Delphi to consult the oracle. The priests at Delphi were supposed to give the god's answers to questions.

The inquisitiveness of mind found expression in the speculation regarding the origin of the universe, the facts and laws of nature and the principles of human conduct. The most noteworthy group of early philosophers consisted of a class of teachers called the Sophists or men of wisdom. They taught men the techniques of effective speaking, writing, oratory, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. They were clever and subtle reasoners and preached that knowledge is not absolute but is relative to man. Good and evil, for example, are not absolutes but depend upon man's views. In the development of higher philosophy the contributions of Greeks can hardly be exaggerated.

**Socrates (469-399 B.C.):** The outstanding philosophers of Athens, Socrates, his disciple Plato and his pupil Aristotle, were primarily teachers. Socrates, an Athenian stonemason, was one of the intimate friends of Pericles. He was a seeker after truth. He used to go about drawing people in the Athenian market place and questioning them so that they could think for themselves. He taught the rich and the poor alike.

Socrates was familiar with different ideas regarding natural sciences but he was not happy with them 'because they informed him only *how* and not *why* things happened'. Therefore he taught the people that they must use the power

of reason to distinguish between right and wrong. He reacted strongly against the principle of Sophists, viz., knowledge is not absolute but is relative to man and argued that final knowledge was attainable by reason. As a philosopher he believed in the reality of truth and goodness and in the immortality of the soul. He faithfully served in the council, the assembly and the army. He did not give lectures or write books and spread his ideas through discussions. 'His searching questions must have made many indignant, particularly when he touched on the subject of religion.' He was condemned to death on the charge of corrupting the youth by his endless questionings. He was made to die by drinking a dose of hemlock.

**Plato (427-347 B.C.):** A disciple of Socrates, Plato founded an academy to teach philosophy. He argued that 'there are absolutes and super concepts'. He reduced to writing the political thoughts of Socrates. The pattern of his (Plato's) ideal state is best described to us in his *'Republic'* and the *'Laws'*. He favoured that the state must be governed by 'guardians' who were trained for their high vocation by an elaborate process of education.

**Aristotle:** Plato's most famous pupil was Aristotle, who served as a tutor to Alexander the great. Rightly called a 'Walking University', Aristotle made the entire field of human knowledge his domain. He favoured a constitutional government. It was his view that laws made by the people should be the basis of the government. 'He believed that men were social beings, that they naturally formed states, that the state existed for the well-being of all, and the moral evolution of man was certain'. He wrote books on an amazing variety of subjects—Logic, Biology, Zoology, Botany, Politics, Rhetoric, Ethics and Poetics. "Aristotle coming as he did, at the extreme end of the middle period, provided a glorious finale to Greece's most brilliant epoch."

In addition to Philosophers Greece also produced scientists, historians and thinkers in various other fields. Thales of Miletus predicted the eclipses correctly and introduced geometry from Egypt. Pythagoras (582-502 B.C.) was a mathematician. He advanced the system of theorems

Oath which is administered to medical practitioners to this day. The oath sets the ethical standards for medical practitioners. Empedocles of Etna regarded all things as fortuitous combinations of invisible atoms in perpetual motion. Herodotus, the 'Father of History', Thucydides, Polybius and Xenophon hailed from Greece. Credit must go to the Greeks for raising the dignity of history to the level of an independent discipline. Although Greece had become weak politically it did create a climate conducive to the blossoming of culture.

**Literature:** "Perhaps the greatest genius of the Greeks", writes S.B. Clough, "was, however, in the realm of the intellect and in aesthetics. Indeed some of the most remarkable achievements of all time in these two areas are of Greek origin." The earliest of the known poets of Greece was Homer. This blind poet who composed the two great epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, is said to have lived in the ninth century B.C. Called 'the school master of Greece', the works of Homer 'show pride in workmanship and a search for technical projection; they establish as virtues honour, courage, and discipline and patriotism; and they glorify man and his power in winning the favour of the gods'.

The epic form of literature gave way to lyric poetry and the creation of the tragedy and the comedy. Historical prose also made its appearance. Lyric poetry contains love songs, lamentations and epigrams. Pindar, considered by his contemporaries as the 'god of song' was the greatest lyric poet of this period. The first great poetess in history, Sappho (sixth century B.C.) was admired almost as much as Homer. Plato called her 'the tenth muse'.

The tragedy was one of the most distinctive and most brilliant achievements of the Greeks'. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were three noteworthy tragic poets. Aeschylus wrote *Prometheus Bound* and *Agamemnon*. Sophocles who represents the peak of Greek dramas was the author of *Antigone* and *Electra*. The best known work of Euripides was *The Trojan Women*. Aristophanes was famous as the comic poet.

**Art and Architecture:** The Greek art prior to its attaining an independent status from the sixth century onwards was influenced by the art styles of Egypt and Syria. The Greek art revolves round three main styles, viz., Doric, Ionic and Corinthian. In all these styles temples were built in Greece. The Doric style was somewhat simpler while the Ionic and Corinthian styles were ornate.

The Greek conception of a temple was different from oriental conception. For them the temple did not mean a mansion for God but an object of reverence for something divine and wonderful. Among the early temples the most famous is the Partheon, the temple of Athens, built in the Doric style. Built in Acropolis during the time of Pericles the temple, even in its ruin, is a masterpiece of Greek architecture. The Erechtheum built near the one just described is in Ionic style. To the Corinthian style belongs 'the choric monument of Lysicrates at Athens'. The Hellenic architecture contains mostly secular buildings.

The Greeks were concerned with man and man's beauty and therefore the artists made every effort to render human form in a natural way. They were fully acquainted with human anatomy and possessed technical expertise to portray in a natural and life-like form. This explains their high aesthetic accomplishments in sculptural representations. The Hellenic sculptures are noted for their great excellence. The statue of the "Dying Gaul" at Pergamum "Laocoon" and the "Victory of Samothrace" at Rhodes, and "Venus of Milo" of the Alexandrian school are well-known masterpieces. "Laocoon", in particular, was admired by Michelangelo, who declared it a marvel of art.

We find early Greek paintings mostly on vases. It is important to note here that though 'important advances were

feudalism and to lift the people out of darkness and savagery."

### (ii) FEUDALISM

Feudalism was regarded as one of the most complicated developments of the middle ages. This system passed through various stages prior to its downfall. The period between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries was known in European history as the Feudal Age.

There is no unanimous opinion regarding the origin of feudalism, it originated in the dark age. According to one opinion it was the 'rude offspring of anarchy.' It is argued that the attack of the Barbarians on the more settled part of Europe necessitated the organisation of an effective defence by the people of each locality as there was no strong central power that could push back the invaders. The result of such improvisation was the political, economic and the social system called by the name of feudalism. To put it differently, the continual shocks of war led to the development of Feudalism. It was mainly a military system to render easy defence and collection of armies.

**Features of Feudalism:** Feudalism was founded on two fundamental ideals: 1. that every man must have a Lord or suzerain who protects him and whom in turn he serves, 2. that the holding of land is the basis of all political and social relationships. The poor peasants in the districts or region sought protection of the rich landlords and in this manner feudal ties were established. They formed a part of a contract between the noblemen and the peasants. The peasants agreed to perform personal services of the suzerain who in return guaranteed them protection. Feudalism had very great complicated political, economic and social features and they influenced the lives in all its aspects.

**Fief:** The land held by the vassal from a lord was called at first a "benefice" and when this became hereditary it was called a fief. There were many grades in the feudal hierarchy, beginning with the king who was the ultimate owner of all the land held by the community. He was the supreme lord, under God. These fiefs were subdivided among his companions and the heads of the great families i.e., the

barons or Knights. They were the vassals of great nobles and landlords styled variously as dukes or counts or earls, or margraves. The process of sub-infeudation might thus go on until one reached the stage of minute parcels of land or miniature fiefs.

A feudal contract between lord and vassal involved duties for both. In fact many were the links in the chain of feudal allegiance and at every stage vassal and overlord were bound to each other by mutual obligations and rights. For instance, the nobles who received land from the King were required in return for their land to pay him homage by kneeling before his lord with his hands between his lord's hands. This was a sign of loyalty and respect and the acknowledgement of service owed. They had to supply troops in war time and to do military service for a certain number of days in a year. The King was bound to consult them collectively in all matters of importance.

The sub-tenants who received land from the nobles were required to do homage to their lords and to pay him service by raising his own share of troops which their Lords had to supply to the King. The lowest class of vassals—the agricultural labourers and small tenant-farmers—in addition to performing specified personal services had to give a certain percentage of their crops to their lords.

The conquered people occupied the lowest strata of the feudal structure. In fact, they had no real place in the feudal system as they were landless. They were serfs or land slaves. The serfs spent their lives on one estate and served their master by unpaid labour on his lands. In return for these services they received a patch of land to cultivate for themselves.

**Inheritance:** There were no uniform rules regarding inheritance. It was, however, essential to the feudal system that the rank and position and land should descend from father to son. Women were also permitted to share in the inheritance though they were incapable of bearing arms. For example in France, and Germany the estates of a noble were divided among all his sons. They also held the rank of the noble. This led to sub-division and fragmentation of the estates and to anarchy of a very numerous

nobility. For quite sometime estates and fiefs were divided among brothers, but it was usual to grant the principal part of a large fief, including the chief town, to the eldest son. In England only the eldest son was regarded as noble and enjoyed the exclusive right to the whole estate. By inheriting the estates or fiefs together with the privileges and duties the feudal organisation of the society was maintained intact from generation to generation.

The feudal nobles were conscious of their own hereditary rights and position. They made every attempt to enhance their power and prestige with a view to prevent kingship becoming hereditary. The feudal nobles made attempts to make permanent and effective the principle of the nobles choosing and deposing the king.

The town-dwellers were outside the feudal system as they lived by trade. But towns were also drawn into the feudal system. Since feudalism demanded that the suzerain be found for every man, town-dwellers were originally treated as serfs under the lord on whose fief their towns were situated.

**Manor:** The feudal society was essentially agricultural as most people lived in the countryside. The people earned their livelihood by working on the farms of the feudal lords. Such farms were called manors and manor was the foundation of the socio-economic system. The manor was owned either by a noble or a bishop or an abbot. The cultivators were tenants. Manors varied in size. The lords lived in the Manor house or castle ordinarily built by wood and by twelfth and thirteenth centuries by stone. The castle was surrounded by a moat spanned by a draw bridge. The tenants lived in cottages not far from the manor house.

The land in the manor was classed under different categories. The lord's domain consisted of the land reserved for his exclusive use. Every householder had a garden of his own. The serfs cultivated the land belonging to the lord. In the manor they formed the majority of the population. They were attached to the soil and could not leave the manor without the consent of the lord. The independent tenants or freeholders who were in a minority were given a part of the arable lands of the village for their maintenance. They paid



fixed rents to the lord. They participated in the manorial court and were free to take their grievances to the court of the King. Beyond the arable lands were meadows on which the tenants could graze their cows and sheep. On the outskirts of the manor were woodlands and waste-lands. The tenants gathered wood for fuel from these lands.

Under the feudal regime the economic activities of the people revolved round the manor. The manor which was an economic unit was both self-supporting and self-sufficing.

**Merits and Demerits of Feudalism:** In the earlier Middle Ages feudalism was both needful and useful. Its great merit lies in its simplicity. It was primarily a vast mutual-insurance society. In a barbarous age it supplied a rough-and-ready method of administration, of defence and of justice and brought stability to an uncertain society. It taught the idea that a man has duties and services to perform, as well as rights to claim and that it is the duty of the strong to protect their weaker dependants. Further, mutual rights and obligations of the different classes of the feudal system strengthened indirectly in the long run the ideas of liberty and of limited government. Indeed this very spirit helped not only preventing the rise of slavery 'but also did much to get rid of the last relics of slavery in Europe', and 'to assert the dignity and worth of every human being within the orbit of its influence.'

The defects of feudalism outweighed the meagre merits. It succeeded in establishing arbitrary dominance of a close hereditary class of landlords who could defy the king or central authority and to become independent tyrants. This development came in the way of the growth of well integrated states. The rule of equal universal law was replaced by local usage which the lords administered according to their whims and fancies. Feudalism believed in social inequality and it created a yawning gulf between serfs and tenants and their lords. Feudalism glorified war and the concept of 'might is right'. As a consequence, a military career came to be regarded as the only respectable occupation. Industry and learning were despised. The authority of the central government was weakened as a result of the grant of estates and powers coupled with the constant revolts of the