

Unit III – Lesson 1 MAYAN CIVILIZATION

The Maya Empire, centered in the tropical lowlands of what is now Guatemala, reached the peak of its power and influence around the sixth century A.D. The Maya excelled at agriculture, pottery, hieroglyph writing, calendar-making and mathematics. The Maya civilization was one of the most dominant indigenous societies of Mesoamerica. The earliest Maya settlements date to around 1800 B.C., or the beginning of what is called the Preclassic or Formative Period.

The earliest Maya were agricultural, growing crops such as corn (maize), beans, squash and cassava (manioc). During the Middle Preclassic Period, which lasted until about 300 B.C., Maya farmers began to expand their presence both in the highland and lowland regions. The Middle Preclassic Period also saw the rise of the first major Mesoamerican civilization, the Olmecs. Like other Mesamerican peoples, the Maya derived a number of religious and cultural traits.

The Maya were deeply religious, and worshiped various gods related to nature, including the gods of the sun, the moon, rain and corn. At the top of Maya society were the kings, or (holy lords), who claimed to be related to gods and followed a hereditary succession. They were thought to serve as mediators between the gods and people on earth, and performed the elaborate religious ceremonies and rituals so important to the Maya culture.

Maya Arts and Culture :-

The Classic Maya built many of their temples and palaces in a stepped pyramid shape, decorating them with elaborate reliefs and inscriptions. These structures have earned the Maya their reputation as the great artists of

Mesoamerica. The Maya also made paper from tree bark and wrote in books made from this paper, known as codices; four of these codices are known to have survived. They are also credited with some of the earliest uses of chocolate and of rubber.

From the late eighth through the end of the ninth century, something unknown happened to shake the Maya civilization to its foundations. One by one, the Classic cities in the southern lowlands were abandoned, and by A.D. 900, Maya civilization in that region had collapsed.

Unit-II –Lesson 1

AZTEC EMPIRE

The Aztec Empire is among the most famous Mesoamerican cultures that existed before the arrival of Europeans in the early 16th century..The word 'Aztec' would not have been used by the people themselves. 'Aztec' refers to the 'people of Aztlán' – the ancestral home of the Aztecs.The Aztecs didn't directly rule their subjects in the same way a European empire like the Romans did. Rather than direct control, the Aztecs subjugated nearby city states. While the Aztec did fight pitched battles, from the mid-1450s fighting became something rather more like a blood sport, with ornately dressed nobles attempting to make their enemies submit so they could be captured and then sacrificed.

The polytheistic pantheon that the Aztec religion was based upon had existed for thousands of years prior to their own civilisation. Aztec gods were divided into groups, such as for the weather, agriculture and warfare. The patron god was called Huitzilopochtli, who was associated with war and sacrifice. Tlaloc, the god of rain, and Quetzalcoatl, the god of knowledge and wisdom are other

prominent gods common in art and stonework. Captives would be sacrificed to please the gods, which was common throughout Mesoamerican religion. While the Aztecs certainly increased the amount of sacrifice that occurred in the region, the true extent of how much it occurred is unclear. Spanish sources are almost certainly exaggerated.

Most Aztec weaponry was based on a volcanic glass called obsidian, which was sharp and strong enough to fashion primitive weapons. Militarily they were only as advanced as European peoples in the Neolithic (Stone Age) period. There were no horses, cows or sheep native to the region. This meant armies could not be easily supported and all of the structures in the region were built purely by man power. Communications in central Mexico could only run as fast as a man.

The Aztecs constructed many great religious buildings – notably the large Templo de Mayor complex at the heart of Tenochtitlan. Aztec society placed great emphasis on

skilled masonry, and intricate stonework is a regular feature on many of their buildings. The remarkable 24 ton Aztec Sun Stone consists of detailed motifs and the heart of Aztec cosmogony.

For centuries prior to the Aztec arrival the Valley of Mexico had complex irrigation systems called chinampas. The Aztecs developed these for large scale cultivation. The rich soil combined with a constant water supply and a favourable climate meant there were three harvests every year, leading to a very high population density.

Many subdued tribes under Aztec rule were very discontent. Having to pay regular tribute and provide sacrificial victims built up resentment. Cortes was able to exploit the poor communications and turn city states against the Aztecs. The empire was crushed by the Spanish conquistadors and their allies in 1521

Unit II – Lesson 2

Incas civilization

The Incan civilization created its own roadways and routes that stretched more than 5,230 km (3,250 miles) from Chile to Columbia.

That's roughly the distance between New York and San Francisco. What is even more impressive is that they did not use any wheeled transportation, but rather traversed these roadways by foot or riding llamas.

This system helped the Incas to collect data and keep records regarding tax obligations, properly collected census records, calendrical information, and military organization.

Their keen observation of the cosmos resulted in the development of a solar year compound of 12 months consisting of 30 days, divided into

three weeks of 10 days each. The last day was considered to be a fair or market day where bartering took place.

The Inca were very skilled in masonry and construction.

Limestone and granite were used to build their cities. They would use bronze, stone, and copper tools to cut the hard rocks along their natural fracture lines. The Incas believed in deities such as the sun god, earth goddess, corn god, and so on. Religion was the common element between the upper and lower classes and was often the main reason for interaction between the classes. The people celebrated many ceremonies that could last from sunrise to sunset.

Skull deformation was a common practice whereby a cloth was tightly wrapped around the heads of children so their skulls would elongate.

The high priests practiced asceticism and lived an ascetic life. This means that they would fast, partake in chastity, and would only eat simple foods. This simple type of lifestyle left much time for the spiritual leaders to pray and reflect on important religious matters.

Children were chosen to be sacrificed during or after important events, such as the death of the Emperor, or during a drought or famine. The children were celebrated ahead of time for their impending sacrifice and dressed in fine clothing and jewellery. The high priest then took the

child or children to high mountaintops. The Incas were the first to cultivate the potato, approximately 7,000 years ago. Potatoes were revered by the Incas, and they often buried them with their dead. In 1534, Spanish conquistadors discovered the potatoes while looting in search of gold and treasures. They subsequently used them on their ships to prevent scurvy, and thus brought them to other parts of the world.

Unit III- Lesson 3

Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire was known to its inhabitants as:

☐ the "Roman Empire" or the "Empire of the Romans" ☐ Romania ☐ the "Roman Republic" In 324, the Roman Emperor Constantine I moved the capital of the Roman Empire to the city of Byzantium, and he renamed the city Constantinople. 150 years later, after the city of Rome was slowly taken over by Germanic people during the Migration period, Constantinople was the only remaining capital of the Empire. This Eastern empire had a smaller territory than the original Roman Empire. The Byzantine Empire tried to take back Rome and Italy from the Germans. Between 530–555 AD, the Byzantines won many battles and took back Rome. The Byzantines were economically damaged by the battles with the Persians. They could not withstand the Arabs. Palestine, Syria and Egypt were lost between 635 and 645. However, the Byzantines defended Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and the Arab advance stopped. In 718 AD, the Arabs were defeated outside Constantinople, ending the Arab threat in the east, but leaving the Byzantine Empire severely weakened. In the west, the Byzantines launched a number of attacks against the Bulgarians. Some of these were successful, others were not and led to the deaths of many emperors. Over time, the Byzantine Empire would become weaker as it lost land to outside invaders.

Byzantine Emperor Basil II attacked Bulgaria many times and eventually won a great victory. Later, he fully recaptured Greece, adding it back to the Byzantine Empire. He then went on to conquer Bulgaria, which was completed in 1018. The Arabs were no longer a threat to the Byzantine Empire.

After the Byzantine Emperor Basil II died, many unskilled Emperors came to the throne. They wasted the money of the Empire and reduced its army. This meant that it could not defend itself well against enemies if they would attack. Later, the Byzantines relied on mercenaries, soldiers who fought for money and not for their country, so they were less loyal and reliable and more expensive. Because they had mercenaries, military generals were able to rise to power and grab it from the elaborate bureaucracy, a system of administration where tasks are divided by departments. A large number of people known as the Turks rode on horseback from central Asia and attacked the Byzantine Empire. The Seljuk Empire took all of Turkey from the Byzantines by 1091. However, the Byzantines received help from people in Europe. This help is known as the First Crusade. Many knights and soldiers left to help the Byzantines but also to secure Jerusalem for Christians, which at the time was in Muslim hands. The Byzantine Empire survived and with the help of the Europeans took back half of Turkey from the Turks, with the other half remaining under the Turks. The Byzantines survived because three good Emperors ruled one after the other, allowing the Byzantines to grow strong again.

After the Byzantines took back Constantinople, they were too busy fighting the Europeans. The Byzantines lost so much land, money and soldiers that they became very weak and begged for help from the Europeans. Some soldiers and ships came from Italy and the Pope to assist the Byzantines when the Turks attacked Constantinople in April 1453. They were very outnumbered though, and the walls of Constantinople were badly damaged by cannons used by the Turks. Constantinople became Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, which it would be until the 1900s, when the capital was moved to Ankara, a city in the Asian part of Turkey. The Byzantine Empire had many achievements:

☐ They protected Europe from eastern invasions. ☐ They preserved Greek language and Hellenistic culture. ☐ They preserved many Roman political traditions that had been lost by Western Europe. ☐ They kept a lot of knowledge for us to read about today. ☐ They produced much fine art with a

distinctive style. ☒ They were the protectors and sponsors of the Eastern Church, which later becomes the Orthodox Church. ☒ They used good architecture that is still used. ☒ Their cities had plumbing which is still in use. ☒ A lot of beautiful churches and mosques in Turkey and Greece today are either made from Byzantine buildings or inspired by them. ☒ They made several inventions, such as flamethrower and "Greek fire," a kind of napalm.

☒ They made advances in many studies, like political studies, diplomacy and military sciences.

(iv) **CHRISTIANITY**

Christianity, which has a following of one-third of the world population, is one of the great religions of the world. It concerned itself less with public affairs, and much more with the private life of man and his fate after death. It is fiercely monotheistic. Its emphasis on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, its doctrine of the Kingdom of heaven and the sanctity of human personality revolutionised the ways and outlook of mankind.

The Early Career of Jesus of Nazareth: Jesus was a Jew. He was born at a small village outside Jerusalem called Bethlehem (literally bake-house) in Judea, Palestine. His father was Joseph and his mother, Mary. Although they were poor, Joseph is said to have been descended from David, King of the Jews. Joseph is described as a *tekton*, which has been rendered 'carpenter and builder', not simply 'joiner'. Jesus was a bright and brilliant lad and at the age of twelve he could interpret the Jewish text. His was a lovable personality. The unsettled conditions, hardships and sufferings of his fellowmen left a deep impression on his mind. He was sympathetic to the poor and the forlorn. His very presence brought healing influence to the sick and the suffering. He worked as a carpenter till he reached thirty years of age and thereupon entered on his career as a preacher.

Jesus was profoundly influenced by John the Baptist, a highly respected preacher of the time. He laid stress on the need for repentance and spiritual cleanliness. He told the people that a *Messiah* (one who is destined to do great work) would arrive to inspire the world. He baptised those who repented for the sins committed by them and Jesus was one among them. Through his simple teachings he was able to draw people towards him and his ranks began to swell. The increasing popularity of John alarmed the authorities. He was arrested and executed at the command of King Herod.

The execution of John the Baptist served as a great inspiration to Jesus to continue his work. He soon gathered around him a band of followers drawn from the lower middle class. He spent some time travelling in the hill country with his twelve followers and preached to the people of Judea and Galilee. By sheer eloquence, logic and simplicity of teaching he won the hearts of many people. One of his disciples, Peter, declared that Jesus was the *Messiah*. This was the turning point in the ministry. Jesus accepted the statement and reached Jerusalem at the Passover. He continued to attract large crowds. His teaching was popular among the poorer people because they hoped that he would help to improve their condition. The orthodox Jews refused to recognise him as the *Messiah*. They found his teachings to be hostile to their religion and became furious when Jesus directly opposed the commands of the Jewish Law. At this

junction, one of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot, betrayed him to them. The Jewish priests complained to the Roman Governor (Procurator) Pilate that Jesus was inciting the people against the Roman government and was trying to make himself King. Unfortunately for the priests, Pilate found no substantial evidence to condemn him. But the Jews were determined to destroy Jesus and ultimately Pilate being anxious to please them sentenced him to be crucified. Jesus was nailed on to a wooden cross and left to bleed to death on a hill near Jerusalem probably on Friday, 7 April in A.D. 30 when he was in his thirty-sixth year. It is said that Jesus saw that the Kingdom of God cannot be realised unless he embodied in his own person the ideal of the Suffering Servant and gave his life to secure deliverance for many. We learn from the Gospels that three days after his death Jesus Resurrected i.e., rose up again or came back to life. This event undoubtedly occupies a place of great importance in the history of the Christian religion.

Progress of Christianity: The crucifixion of Jesus was a dreadful blow to his disciples. Fired by missionary zeal, the handful of Jesus's followers began to spread his message throughout Judea, Asia Minor and Egypt. To escape the savage persecution some fled to Damascus, Caesarea, and Antioch. At Antioch, some ten years after the death of Jesus, his followers came to be called '*Christians*' and Jesus himself as *Christ*. The word Christ is derived from the Greek word *Christos* meaning 'the anointed one'. This development is due largely to the work of Paul.

After the crucifixion of Jesus the few followers of his who remained in Jerusalem were organised into a group by Peter. They prepared themselves for the 'Second Coming' and conducted baptism for the group. Some among them made their evening meal a ceremonial repast with the object of providing communion with their saviour. They lived a communal life in that each brought whatever he possessed and they owned things in common. Peter established the first Church at Rome. He was also martyred in Rome. In the fourth century Emperor Constantine erected St. Peter's Church and the spot where his tomb stood. Even to this day this church continues to be the very centre of their faith.

The credit of spreading the teachings of Jesus must go to Saul or Paul, a Jew from the city of Tarsus in Asia Minor. A scholar and one who had studied Jewish Law, Paul supported the persecution of Christians in his early life. Sometime in A.D. 31, he embraced Christianity after he had a vision. He spread the religion in Damascus, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. He is said to have visited Spain also. He admitted Gentiles (Non-Jews) into Christian ranks, established churches in important cities like Antioch, Ephesus, Athens and Philippi. It is worthy of notice here that Paul preached the universality of Christianity. Though Jesus had said more than once that his teachings were meant for all people irrespective of race and kind, there was every danger of it becoming a mere sect of the Jewish religion. Paul prevented such an happening. Paul 'explained the teachings of Jesus in a way which has made Christianity develop into a religion much less simple than the teachings of Jesus recorded in the three Gospels'. For the services rendered to the Christianity, Paul, the greatest of the early missionaries, is justly called 'the second founder of Christianity.' But the Jews never forgave him. He was arrested and put to death in Rome in A.D. 67.

The persecutions failed to arrest the progress of Christianity. The emperor Galerius issued an edict granting toleration of the Christians in A.D. 311. Emperor Constantine who became the Christian in A.D. 337 by the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) granted to Christians freedom of worship, removal of legal disabilities and the restitution of property. Now Christianity became the religion of the rich and powerful. It was during this time the foundations of The Holy Roman Empire were laid. During the rule of Emperor Theodosius I (379-395) Christianity became the only recognised religion of the state. Thus the wheel had turned full circle.

Teachings of Jesus: Jesus, like the Buddha, attracted the people towards him by appealing to them directly and by explaining the tenets of his religion through parables or stories. He used the parables as a convenient medium through which he could bring home his point of view to the uneducated people.

Jesus advocated brotherly love. He said, 'God is the loving father of all that lives, and that all men are therefore brothers.' It is possible to carry out the will of God if we act as brothers. He compared God to the King but said that the Kingdom of God is different from worldly Kingdom. In the Kingdom of God everyone acts according to the will of God. This is summed up in the 'golden rule' thus: "do to others as you would like them to do to you." Continuing he said: "ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Jesus preached a religion that was devoid of ceremonies. He condemned the observance of rules laid down in the holy books.

Jesus lived with the poor. He loved the poor and the humble and his teaching was popular among the poorer people. He is reported to have expressed in his *Sermon on the Mount* thus: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours! Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will laugh!"

Jesus had a simple programme. He was for bringing about a humanising influence to bear on society. This was thought to raise the standard of behaviour all round. He did not prescribe any elaborate ritual. He advocated that men should serve one another, for in doing so they would serve God.

Like most religions, after the death of their founders Christianity came to acquire new features. The religion came to be spread among wealthy people. Christianity came to be regarded as a religion of redemption. Some regarded Jesus as the Saviour and the Redeemer and others as God. Even the Athanasian Creed says that Jesus had a human soul as well as a body, so that the word of God acted through Him. As Temple points out in his book, *Christus Veritas*, "Take away the action of the word of God, and what we have left is not the body but the body-soul complex, the personality of Jesus of Nazareth the prophet." The emphasis of Christianity on

works of charity, care for the poor and orphans bring out its humanising influence.

Literature: Jesus himself did not leave anything in writing. After his death religious literature came to be produced with the object of explaining his personality and teaching. The most noteworthy in this class of literature is the *Bible*. *Bible* is a collection of the sacred books of both the Jews and the Christians. It has two parts: *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*.

The *New Testament* is important for the Christians. It consists of four parts, the *Gospels*, the *Book of Acts*, the *Epistles* and the *Book of Revelation*. The four Gospels, those of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John of the *New Testament* and *Epistles* of Saint Paul provide us welcome peeps into the life and teachings of Jesus. *Bible* has been translated into many languages of the world.