

UNIT

5

The Classical World



Learning Objectives

- To gain knowledge of the classical civilisation of Greece
- To know Athenian democracy and the age of Pericles
- To understand how a small town (Rome) emerged as a republic and later became an empire
- To learn the contribution of Rome to world civilization
- To acquire knowledge of classical China and its achievements
- To trace the origin of Christianity and its spread in Eastern Roman Empire



Introduction

When America, Australia and Africa remained outside the mainstream of world history, civilisation blossomed in scattered areas of the land mass of Europe and Asia, known as Eurasia. Some of them soon reached the classical stage. When the classical era was at its height, a chain of empires from Rome to Persia to Peshawar, began to emerge. The expansion of major civilisation eliminated the geographical gap and paved the way for inter-regional trade contacts and cultural exchange. This led to the transmission of ideas, technology and art. The diffusion of the great religions of the world, beginning with Buddhism and later continuing with Christianity and Islam, can be understood in this context.

Classical World comprises ancient Greece and Rome. Classical Age refers to the inter-locking civilisation of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, known as Graeco-Roman World.

5.1 Greece: The Hellenic World

Until 8th century BC (BCE) Greece was not different from the rest of the world. People were illiterate, craft specialization was primitive, and life was difficult. With the exception of Sparta, agriculture was limited by the mountainous terrain. However, the Greeks succeeded in founding colonies along the coast that helped them earn revenue

through trade. As a result by the 6th century BC (BCE), Greece turned into a network of City-States. **Acropolis**, a fortified city of ancient Greeks on a hill in Athens, is an illustrative example of their advancement. Though the City-States fought each other they were bound together by trade, by a common alphabet, similar religious practices, and festivals. The illustrious example for the last one was the Olympic festival of sports and games.



Acropolis

The ruling class in Greece controlled the land. Slaves cultivated the land. Greek writers and philosophers saw the ownership of slaves as essential to a civilized life. Aristotle compared the master and slave relationship to that of husband and wife, and father and children.

Greeks' Victory over Persians

King Darius (BC (BCE) 550–486), who was heading a great empire in Persia, decided to conquer the Greek City-States. The first Persian attack on Greece failed. This was due to the fact that Persian army suffered from disease and lack of food during its march. Therefore, in planning the second attack, the Persians avoided the land route and came by sea. The Greeks or Hellenes, fought patriotically and defeated the Persian army at Marathon in 490 BC (BCE). Xerxes,

King Darius' successor conducted another expedition. Joined by Spartans this time, the Athenians persisted in their resistance and in the final battle fought in Salamis, Persian ships were destroyed. Disheartened Xerxes returned to Persia without achieving his end.

"Democracy" in Hellenic Greece

When the Greek City-States first emerged, they still carried the legacy of the past. The rulers came from lines of traditional chieftains. Those who grew rich from the expansion of trade resented the privileges enjoyed by the old ruling families. Yet the Age of Tyrants 6th century to 4th century BC (BCE) proved to be a period of urban development, with new buildings and enormous temples such as **Olympian Zeus** at Athens.

Athenian Democracy

In Athens, the pressure from below resulted in the replacement of both oligarchy and tyranny by "democracy." The law-making power in Athens was vested in an assembly open to all freemen. Judges and lower officials were chosen by lots. This arrangement was resented by the upper classes who considered democracy to be the rule of the mob.

The Persian danger had united the Greeks. When this danger was removed, they started quarrelling again. The history of many Greek city-states was one of continual struggles by the rich landowners against "democracy". The only exception was Athens, where "democracy" survived for about 200 years.

The word '**democracy**', literally means "rule of the people". In reality it excluded slaves, women, and non-residents known as metics (traders and craftsmen).

Pericles (461–429 BC (BCE))

Athens had a great leader, Pericles, who held power for thirty years. During his rule, **Athens** and **Sparta** were continuously at war with each

other. This war is known as the Peloponnesian War. Athens, despite hostility and disturbance from Sparta, became a noble city with magnificent buildings. There were great artists and great thinkers. Historians therefore call this the **Age of Pericles**.



Pericles

The Athenian government, after Pericles, did not like Socrates' way of finding truth. In a trial, Socrates was accused of refusing to accept the gods recognized by the State and corrupting the youth. The jury found Socrates guilty and sentenced him to die by drinking hemlock (a poison).



Socrates

5. 2 Rome: The Hellenistic World

Beginnings of Hellenistic Civilisation

The Greek city-states did not have an elaborate bureaucracy. They were therefore able to show a greater dynamism. Under Alexander the Great, the Greeks were able to establish a kingdom in Macedonia. This kingdom succeeded in annexing two historic empires of Egypt and the Middle East. But the entire period of Alexander's reign was spent on wars.

Cultural development that took place rapidly after Alexander's death 323 BC (BCE) is called **Hellenistic civilisation**.

The Greek school of Science, Mathematics and Philosophy reached its peak in the Greek-Egyptian city of Alexandria. **Euclid** who formulated the basic theorems of geometry, **Eratosthenes** who accurately calculated the diameter of the earth, and **Hipparchus**, the founder of trigonometry were all products of

this age. **Ptolemy** built on Hipparchus's ideas and later developed a model of motion of the planets and stars.

Roman Republic

In the beginning Rome was a society of agriculturists, organized through lineages. Out of this developed a hereditary ruling class. Roman people were divided into two classes: Patricians, rich landlords, and Plebeians, a common citizens.

Rome was strategically located in the crisscrossing trade routes cutting north-south and east-west. Taxes on passing traders added to the revenue derived from agriculture. By the late 6th century BC (BCE), Rome developed into a prosperous town.

Class War between Patricians and Plebeians

Prisoners of war were enslaved in Rome. Thus Rome produced a new labour force for the rich to exploit. Big landholders bought slaves cheaply and used them to cultivate their estates. The slave population grew and by the 1st century BC (BCE) there were two million slaves, when the total strength of free population was 3.25 million. Slave labour led to the impoverishment of free labour. Many poor peasants had to abandon their children who also ended up in the slave markets. The conflict between Plebeians and Patricians became bloodier.

A major source of revenue to the Roman state was slave trade. The island of Delos became a great slave market.

Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Gracchus, though Patricians, voiced their opinion in favour of the poor peasants. As the peasants supported their programme, the Senators, shocked by this development, murdered both of them. The martyrdom of the Gracchus brothers played a decisive role in the transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire.

Transfer of Power from Consuls to Emperor

When Marius became Consul with the support of the *equites* (new rich or propertied class below the rank of Senatorial Class), he made an attempt to push through a land distribution bill in the Senate. This led to violence. The allies of Marius were killed. This resulted in a civil war between the followers of Marius and Sulla. After expelling Marius Sulla reigned for three years as a virtual dictator. He was killed and succeeded by Cinna and Catalina.



Marius and Cinna against Sulla, Pompey against Julius Caesar, after Caesar's death Brutus and Cassius against Mark Antony and Octavian (Caesar's nephew) and finally Octavian against Mark Antony. The rich, old and new alike, felt that allowing Octavian, now called Augustus, to establish a de facto monarchy was the only way to re-establish political stability. The period starting from Augustus (27 BC (BCE)) is known as Principate. Augustus called himself Imperator, equivalent to the English word Emperor.



Augustus

Slave Revolts

There were more slave revolts in Rome than in Greece. The revolt of Spartacus was the most famous. It began in 73 BC (BCE) involving about 70,000 slaves. The revolt threatened the power in Rome. Ultimately Spartacus was killed and the revolt crushed. 6,000 of the followers of Spartacus were executed.

Establishment of Principate

The civil wars over social issues ended only to be replaced by civil wars between Generals.



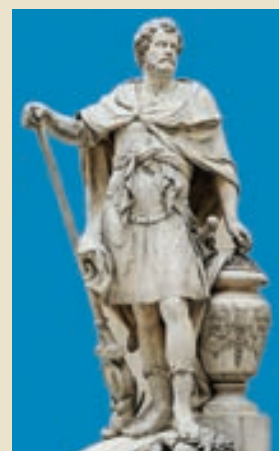
Society under Principate

During the period of Principate, the imperial ruling class became far more prosperous than under the republic. The period witnessed a great influx of luxury goods such as silk, spices, and gems from the east. Cities were built on a grand scale, with temples, theatres, stadia and colosseum, gymnasia, aqueducts, baths and markets. The rich people distracted the attention of the poor by organizing games and contests in circuses, where the gladiators were forced to fight and kill each other.

The most distinguished writers of the **Augustan Age** brought glory to the empire. Pliny the Elder completed a voluminous encyclopaedia of "science." He called it *Natural History*.

Punic Wars and the Emergence of Imperial Roman Empire

As Rome was growing in Italy, Carthage was growing in power in north Africa. The Carthaginians were the descendants of the Phoenicians who excelled in seafaring and trade. Rome and Carthage united to drive out the Greeks. Thereafter Carthage took Sicily and threatened the very existence of the Roman state. The three wars fought between them are called **Punic Wars**. Carthage sent a general named Hannibal. He defeated the Roman army and made a great part of Italy a desert. Fabius, who led the Romans, did not give up. In the second Punic War, Fabius confronted Hannibal and defeated him in the Battle of Zama. Pursued by the Roman army, Hannibal ended his life by poisoning himself. The third Punic War was declared on the Carthaginians by Rome. After the defeat and destruction of the Carthage in this War, Rome emerged as an unrivalled power in the western world.



Hannibal



Roman Empire

Seneca was another well known author of an encyclopaedia of science. Horace in his *Odes* developed a philosophy that combined Epicurean justification of pleasure with Stoic bravery in the face of trouble. Livy was more a prose stylist than a historian. The best known historian was Tacitus. Virgil's *Aeneid* glorified Roman imperialism. The Roman law attained its highest stage of development during the Principate.



Colosseum

After the death of Augustus in 14 AD (CE) Rome had few enlightened and capable rulers. With

the exceptions of **Trajan** (98–117), **Antoninus Pius** (138–161) and **Marcus Aurelius** (161–180), all others were tyrants. Marcus Aurelius stands apart from all others. As a philosopher, he authored many books. He was the first Roman Emperor to send an embassy to China and establish contact with an Asian power.

External Invasions and the Decline of Roman Empire

The empire, facing threats from “barbarian incursions,” depended on expensive mercenary armies. In AD (CE) 330 the centre of the empire moved from Italy to the Greek speaking city of Byzantium. But it was difficult to rule the western parts from such a distance. In 410 A.D. (C.E.) the Goth Alaric led his forces to sack Rome. The Frank Clovis took control of Gaul. The Ostrogoth Theodoric proclaimed himself the emperor of Rome. The final onslaught came from Vandals. In 476 A.D. (C.E.), disgusted by the rule of Emperor Romulus Augustus, the Roman army led by Odovacer revolted and deposed him. This marked the end of Western Roman Empire.

5.3 Empire Building in East Asia: China

Fall of Chin Dynasty

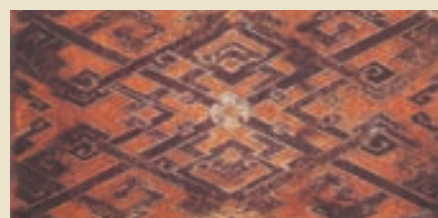
Wang Cheng, popularly known as **Shih Huang Ti** (meaning the first emperor), ended the age of warring states in China. He crushed all local rulers and established a strong central government. However, uprisings of the peasantry, unlike in other cultures, occurred again and again in China. Such uprisings led to the collapse of Chin dynasty.

Han Dynasty and Expansion of Chinese Territories

Han dynasty (206 BC (BCE) - AD (CE) 220, founded by Liu Pang, flourished for 400 years. Their capital was Chang-an. The most popular and powerful ruler was **Wu Ti**. His generals succeeded in driving away the Huns in the north. Thus the Han Empire once again threw open the silk road for trade. A large export trade, mainly in silk, reached as far as the Roman Empire.

In the north, artisans and herders of rival "barbarian" dynasties brought in new techniques like the methods of harnessing

The trade route from China to Asia Minor and India, known as the *Silk Road* or *Silk Route*, linked China with the West. Goods and ideas between the two great civilisation of Rome and China were exchanged through this route. Silk went westward, and wools, gold, and silver went east. China received Buddhism from India via the Silk Road.



Woven silk

horses, use of saddle and stirrup, techniques of building bridges and mountain roads, and seafaring. Such innovations made Han Empire prosperous. At the beginning of the Christian Era, the Han Empire rivalled that of Rome in size and wealth.

Buddhism came to China from India during the reign of Han dynasty. With Buddhism came the influence of Indian art to China and from China this spread to Korea and from there to Japan. Some of the Buddhist art of the time show the impact of Hellenistic styles.





Buddha (China)

Han emperors found it extremely difficult to control the big land owners. So after some decades of consolidation, China saw the emergence of several rival kingdoms marked by civil wars in north China. People abandoned their homes and farms, and fled from there to the Yangtze region and beyond. The period after Han ruled witnessed political instability across the country.

5.4 Rise of Christianity

After a brief period of glory in the days of David and Solomon, the Jewish people had a great fall and experienced extreme hardship. While spreading out all over the Roman Empire and elsewhere, they hoped that a Messiah would arrive to restore their pristine glory. Initially they laid much hopes on Jesus. Jesus was against the rich and the hypocrites, and condemned certain observances and ceremonies. This was not to the liking of the priests, who turned against Jesus and handed him over to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Looked upon as a political rebel by the Roman authorities, Jesus was tried and crucified.



Jesus addressing his followers

After Jesus's crucifixion, St Paul started spreading the Christian doctrine. Paul succeeded in his effort and Christianity gradually spread. Romans were prepared to tolerate Christianity. But the refusal of the Christians to pay respect to the Emperor's image was viewed as political treason. It led to the persecution of Christians. Their property was confiscated and they were thrown to the lions. Yet the Roman Empire did not succeed in suppressing Christianity. One of the Roman emperors Constantine himself became a Christian. Christianity thus became the official religion of the Empire.

St. Sophia Cathedral

St. Sophia Cathedral was built in mid-sixth century AD (CE) The most



magnificent building in Europe at that time, it was known for its innovative architectural techniques. This Cathedral was turned into a mosque by the Ottoman Turks when they captured Constantinople.

5.5 Byzantium

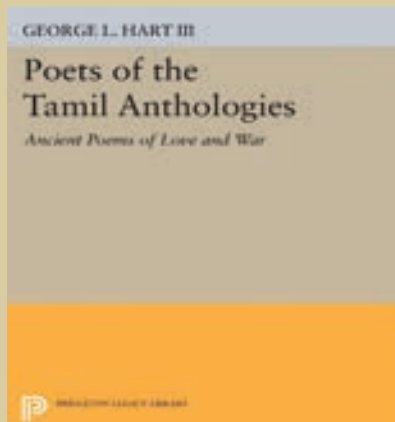
The Byzantine emperors, who ruled from the city of Constantinople for about 1,000 years, called themselves Romans. But their language was Greek. The splendour of Constantinople with its luxurious royal palaces, its libraries, its scholars familiar with the writings of Greeks and Romans and its fascinating St. Sophia Cathedral are the legacies they have left behind.

However, in terms of development of science and technology, there was no progress during this period. The economies of the Empire's provinces were in the hands of large local landowners. The small peasants always lived on the edge of poverty. The fundamental weakness of Byzantine Civilisation stood exposed when the participants of Fourth Crusade pillaged it and ruled it. The tottering empire finally fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

India during the Classical Period



The Kushan period corresponded with the last days of the Roman Republic, when Julius Caesar was alive. The Kushan Empire is said to have sent an embassy to Augustus Caesar who succeeded Julius.



Eighteen major works of Sangam age Viz eight Anthologies (Ettuthogai) and Ten Idylls (Pathupattu) compiled during the first three centuries of common Era were composed during this period. Sangam Literature hailed as first secular literature of India.



The corresponding period 4th and 5th A.D. (C.E.) in south India, characterized as Kalabhra period. Teakwood, pepper, pearls, ivory, brocades and precious stones and the like were exported from the Malabar Coast to Babylonia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Trade with Rome further flourished.

Recap

- The Greeks fought patriotically and repulsed the invasion of Persians.
- Athens rejected monarchy and oligarchy, and opted for “democracy.”
- During the reign of Pericles, Athens was in a higher plane of civilization.
- After the death of Alexander, Science, Mathematics and Philosophy reached its peak in the Greek-Egyptian city of Alexandria, heralding a new Hellenistic era.
- By the late 6th century BC (BCE), Rome became prosperous and developed into a republic.
- Class wars between Patricians and Plebeians, and slave revolts led to emergence of Rome as an Empire.
- The period of Principate in general and Augustus in particular witnessed rich contribution of Romans to science, engineering, architecture and sculpture.
- Internal crisis and invasion of Franks, Goths and Vandals ended the Roman Empire.
- Romans carried on their civilisation in the East with Constantinople as capital. This is called Byzantine Civilization.
- Christianity became a state religion of Byzantium and began to spread in Europe.



EXERCISE



I. Choose the correct answer

- _____ is the Greek city-state which resisted the Persians to the end.
a. Acropolis
b. Sparta
c. Athens
d. Rome
- The other name for Greeks was _____.
a. Hellenists
b. Hellenes
c. Phoenicians
d. Spartans
- The founder of Han dynasty was _____.
a. Wu Ti
b. Hung Chao
c. Liu Pang
d. Mangu Khan
- _____ was the Roman Governor responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.
a. Innocent I b. Hildebrand
c. Leo I d. Pontius Pilate
- The Peloponnesian War was fought between _____ and _____.
a. Greeks and Persians
b. Plebeians and Patricians
c. Spartans and Athenians
d. Greeks and Romans

II. Fill in the blanks

- Greeks defeated the Persians at _____.
- _____ stood in favour of poor peasants in Roman republic.
- Buddhism came to China from India during the reign of _____ dynasty.
- The most magnificent building in Europe was '_____.
- _____ and _____ were Magistrates in Rome.

III. Find out the correct statement

- (i) First Persian attack on Greece failed.
(ii) The downfall of Roman Empire is attributed to Julius Caesar.
(iii) The Barbarians who invaded Rome were considered to be culturally advanced.
(iv) Buddhism weakened the Roman Empire.
a. (i) is correct
b. (ii) is correct
c. (ii) and (iii) are correct
d. (iv) is correct
- (i) Euclid developed a model for the motion of planets and stars.
(ii) Romans established a republic after overthrowing Etruscans.
(iii) Acropolis became a famous slave market.
(iv) Rome and Carthage united to drive out the Greeks.
a. (i) is correct
b. (ii) is correct
c. (ii) and (iv) are correct
d. (iv) is correct.



3. (i) Silk road was closed during the Han dynasty.
(ii) Peasant uprisings posed threats to Athenian democracy.
(iii) Virgil's *Aeneid* glorified Roman imperialism.
(iv) Spartacus killed Julius Caesar.
a. (i) is correct
b. (ii) is correct
c. (ii) and (iv) are correct
d. (iii) is correct.
4. (i) Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius was a tyrant.
(ii) Romulus Aurelius was the most admired ruler in Roman History.
(iii) abius was a famous Carthaginian General.
(iv) Tacitus is respected more than Livy as a historian.
a. (i) is correct
b. (ii) is correct
c. (ii) and (iii) are correct
d. (iv) is correct.
5. (i) Buddhism went to China from Japan
(ii) After crucifixion of Jesus, St Thomas spread the Christian doctrine
(iii) St Sophia Cathedral was the most magnificent building in Europe
(iv) Trajan was one of the worst dictators that Rome had.
a. (i) is correct
b. (ii) is correct
c. (iii) is correct
d. (iv) is correct.

IV. Match the following

- | | | |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| 1. Acropolis | - | Consul |
| 2. Plato | - | Athens |
| 3. Marius | - | Philosopher |
| 4. Zeus | - | Materialist |
| 5. Epicurus | - | A fortified city |

V. Answer the following briefly

1. Attempt an account of slavery in Rome.
2. Highlight the main contribution of Constantine.
3. What do you know of the Carthaginian leader Hannibal?
4. What were the reasons for the prosperity of Han Empire?
5. Write about St. Sophia Cathedral.

VI. Answer the following in detail

1. Discuss the rise and growth of Athens, pointing out its glorious legacy
2. Write about India's position during classical position.

FUN WITH HISTORY

Activities for Students

In an outline map of Europe, the students are to sketch the extent of Western and Eastern Roman Empire.

Students are to be guided by teachers to Google the architectural splendours of classical civilisation of Greece, Rome and China.

Assignment with teacher's guidance

Preparing albums, with masterpiece arts of Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Chinese. Writing the brief biography of the distinguished Roman Emperors.



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ICT CORNER

The Classical World

Let us learn Greek civilisation through this game.



- Step 1:** Use the URL/QR code to open the activity page "Adventures in Ancient Greece". Click the 'OK' button and type your name to start the activity.
- Step 2:** Type the needed notes on the 'note scroll', shown in the right side. "Timeline, Map, Athens", options are given below.
- Step 3:** Click 'Timeline', a match board will appear. Drag the options from right side window and 'Submit'. Some important cities and the life style of Greek people are given in "MAP".
- Step 4:** Click 'Quiz' and answer the questions.

Website URL:

http://mystery-productions.com/hyper/Hypermedia_2003/Miller/AM_hypermedia/Artifact/go.htm



*Pictures are indicative only.

*If browser requires, allow Flash Player or Java Script to load the page.