

# Unit 2


## Foundations of European Values: Ancient Origins, Significance, and Evolution (4 hours)

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### Overview

- Historical Roots
- Role & significance in ancient civilizations
- Key developments & milestones



  
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### Learning objectives:

- Understand and identify the historical origins of European values, dating them back to ancient European civilizations.
- Investigate the relevance and importance of European principles such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the context of ancient European civilizations such as Greece and Rome.
- Develop critical thinking skills in order to evaluate the impact of historical events and ideas on the evolution of European values and their relevance today.
- Encourage discussion about the role of historical values in developing modern European identity, as well as the need of maintaining and upholding these values in the modern era.

# Historical Roots

Human rights, democracy, the rule of law, equality, freedom, and human dignity are all examples of European values that can be traced back to ancient civilizations. While these expressions may not have had the same current connotations and contexts, important developments and concepts in ancient history set the groundwork for these values.

Learning objectives:

- Determine the earliest historical records concerning European values.
- Recognise the role and importance of European values in ancient civilizations.
- Examine key developments and points of reference in ancient history that influenced the evolution of European values.



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# Earliest Historical Records: Democracy and Athens

- The birth of democracy in ancient Athens represents a historical turning point in the evolution of political philosophy and European values. It was the first known attempt with a government structure in which citizens had a direct participation in decision-making. We shall look at the circumstances and evolution of Athenian democracy in this section:

Historical Context: During the 5th century BCE, Athens, a city-state in ancient Greece, saw enormous transformations. The Athenian democracy emerged during this period.

Cleisthenian reforms (approximately 508-507 BCE): The Athenian democracy can be traced back to Cleisthenes, an Athenian leader. He instituted a new political organisation structure that split the people into demes (local units), which served as the foundation for political representation.



# Earliest Historical Records: The Athenian Assembly and Citizen Participation

1. The Ekklesia, or Assembly of Citizens, was the central institution of Athenian democracy. This assembly was accessible to all adult male citizens of Athens, which, while revolutionary at the time, was restricted to a certain demographic.



2. Citizens had the right to propose and vote on laws, debate critical subjects, and make state decisions in the Ekklesia. A major component of Athenian democracy was active participation in political matters.



3. To prevent corruption and encourage broad involvement, numerous public offices were filled through a lottery system in which citizens were chosen at random to serve as jurors or magistrates.



4. The Athenians also established "ostracism" as a method of removing possibly dangerous persons from the political scene. If a person was judged a threat to democracy, citizens could choose to exile them for ten years.



# Earliest Historical Records: The Code of Hammurabi in Ancient Mesopotamia

- The Code of Hammurabi, one of the earliest known legal codes, is an important historical document that sheds light on ancient Mesopotamia's legal and social practises. Here, we shall look at the relevance of Hammurabi's Code and how it contributed to the concept of the rule of law:

## Historical Context (approximately 1754 BCE):

The Hammurabi Code was established during the time of Hammurabi, Babylon's sixth king. This region in ancient Mesopotamia has a long history of legal and administrative practises.

## The Code's Purpose:

Hammurabi's goal in writing the code was to build a complete legal framework that would bring stability and justice to his kingdom. The code was written on a stele (a large stone pillar) and displayed conspicuously for all to see.



# Earliest Historical Records: How the Code Contributed to the Concept of the Rule of Law

## Written and Accessible Laws

- The Code of Hammurabi's most significant contribution to the concept of the rule of law was its written character. Previously, laws were frequently passed down orally, which allowed for vagueness and inconsistent application. The decision by Hammurabi to have the rules recorded and displayed in a public area made them available to all, assuring legal certainty.

## Equality before the Law

- The Hammurabi Code established the principle that all individuals, regardless of social standing, were equal before the law. It emphasised the importance of impartial justice as a fundamental principle of the rule of law.

## Presumption of Innocence

- Individuals are deemed innocent until proven guilty, according to the code. This was a substantial shift from previous practises, which could have included trial by torture or trial by battle.

## Specific Laws and Punishments

- The Hammurabi Code outlined specific laws and punishments for certain offences. This precision aided in the establishment of predictability and uniformity in legal proceedings, both of which are hallmarks of the rule of law.



# Earliest Historical Records: Equality Principles in Ancient Indian

- Ancient Indian thinking, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, embraced fundamental equality concepts that were central to the philosophy and social structure of the time

## Spiritual Equality

- This was a crucial principle in ancient Indian thinking. Everyone, regardless of social class, caste, or gender, was thought to have an inherent divine essence (Atman or soul) that was equal in all beings. This spiritual equality was the foundation for the concept of "moksha" (freedom) as the ultimate goal, which anybody could attain through spiritual endeavours.

## Karma and Reincarnation

- The concepts of karma and reincarnation cemented the notion of equality. These beliefs hold that one's acts (karma) in this life determine one's circumstances in the next. This philosophy claimed that individuals, regardless of their current social standing, had the ability to improve their future lives via their activities.

## Bhakti Movement

- Emerging around the 7th century CE, the Bhakti movement emphasised the idea that devotion to a personal god transcended caste and socioeconomic distinctions. Devotees emphasised spiritual equality and believed that honest devotion may lead to salvation.





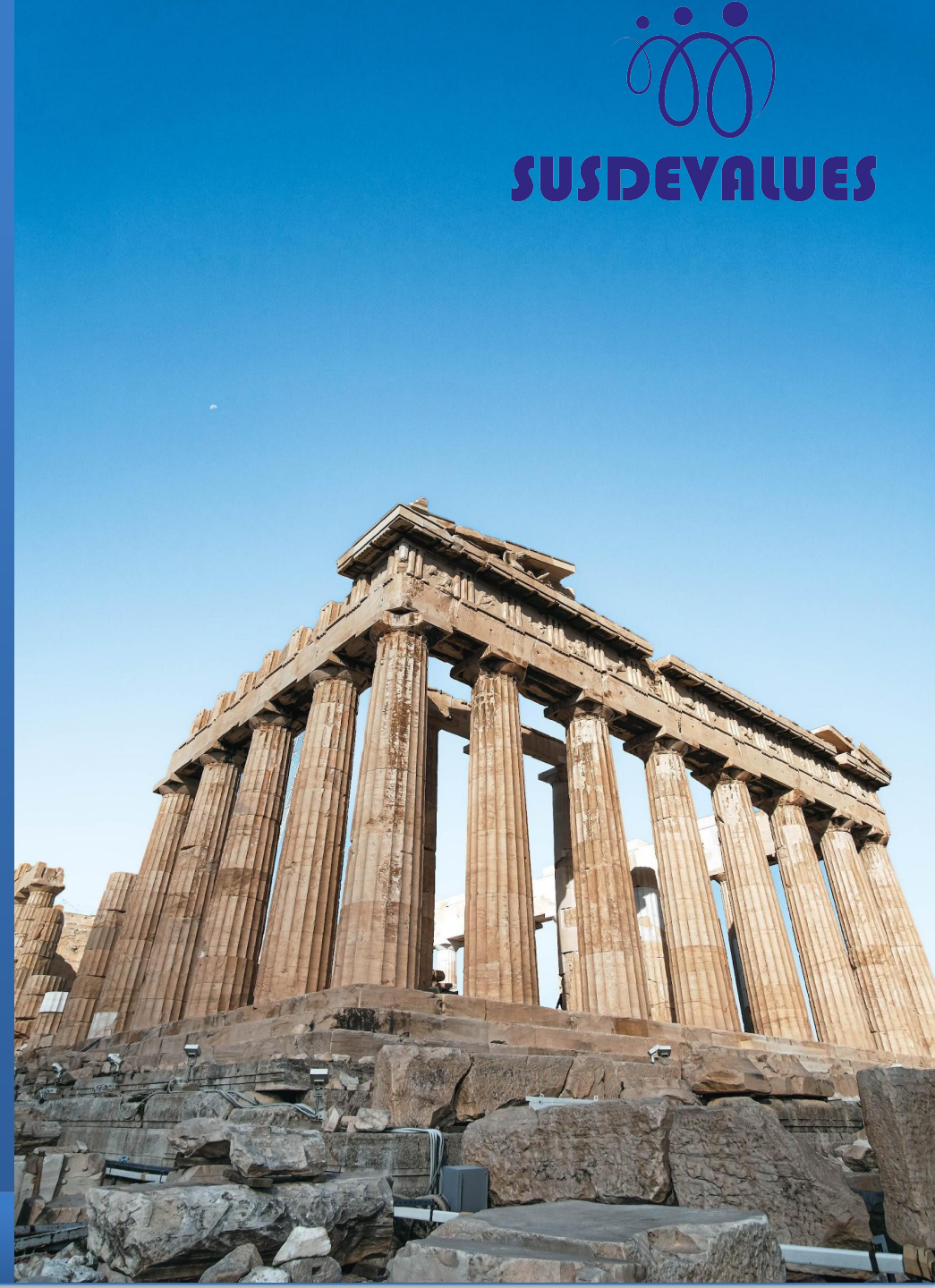
# Role and Significance in Ancient Civilizations: Democracy and Ancient Greece

Greek democracy, particularly in Athens, played a pivotal role in fostering political engagement and debate.

Athenian democracy encouraged citizens to actively participate in the political process. Citizens could utilise a lottery system to propose and discuss legislation, vote on key issues, and even hold public office. Citizens were urged to join in political discourse at this degree of participation.

As a primary gathering place, the Athenian Agora enabled public debates and discussions. Citizens gathered to offer their perspectives on a variety of themes, supporting open dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

Rhetoric, the art of persuading others, flourished in ancient Greece's democratic society. Powerful speeches by prominent leaders like as Pericles and Demosthenes influenced political decisions and the direction of the state.





# Role and Significance in Ancient Civilizations: Greek Democracy's Influence on Later European Political Thought

Greek democracy had a long-lasting influence on European political theory, particularly during the Enlightenment and the emergence of contemporary democracies.



Greek democratic ideas impacted philosophers of the Enlightenment such as John Locke, Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. They advocated for notions rooted in ancient Greek political thinking, such as individual rights, distinction between powers, and the social contract.

• **Enlightenment Philosophy**

Greek democratic values inspired the concept of a republic, in which citizens have a say in governing. This principle was crucial in the development of democratic republics in Europe and the Americas.

• **Republicanism**

The dichotomy between direct democracy (as witnessed in ancient Greece) and representative democracy (in which individuals elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf) is a central argument in contemporary political thinking, with roots in the Greek model.

• **Direct vs. Representative Democracy**



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# Role and Significance in Ancient Civilizations: The Legal System of the Roman Republic and its Contributions to the Rule of Law

The legal system of the Roman Republic was a cornerstone of Roman society and governance, and it made significant contributions to the establishment of the rule of law.

The codification of laws was one of the Roman Republic's most significant contributions to the rule of law. In 451-450 BCE, the Romans developed a written law code known as the Twelve Tables. These tables codified the basic concepts of Roman law and made them available to all citizens. Because citizens could refer to written laws to understand their rights and obligations, the codification brought legal certainty.

The principle of equality before the law was recognised by Roman law. This principle, known as "iuris praecepta sunt haec: honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere" (translated as "The precepts of the law are these: to live honourably, injure no one, and to give to each his own"), reflected the idea that justice should be administered impartially, regardless of a person's social status, wealth, or background.

The Roman legal system emphasised due process and fair trials. Individuals accused of a crime had the right to defend themselves, present evidence, and face their accusers, all of which contributed to the concept of justice and the rule of law.

Roman legal thinkers such as Gaius and Cicero were influential in the development of legal notions and theories. Their contributions to jurisprudence (law philosophy) aided in the refinement of the principles of justice, equity, and the rule of law.





# Role and Significance in Ancient Civilizations: Roman Law's Influence on Modern Legal Systems

The impact of Roman law on modern legal systems has been deep and long-lasting.

Roman law established the civil law tradition, which serves as the cornerstone for legal systems in many countries, particularly in continental Europe. Civil law systems are founded on the ideas of legal codification, equality before the law, and reliance on written laws.

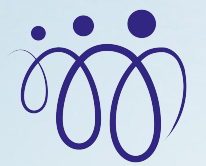
## • Civil Law Tradition

Roman legal ideas about property rights and contracts impacted modern property and contract law in many legal systems. The Roman idea of "jus civile" (civil law), for example, aided in the establishment of property rights and the law of obligations.

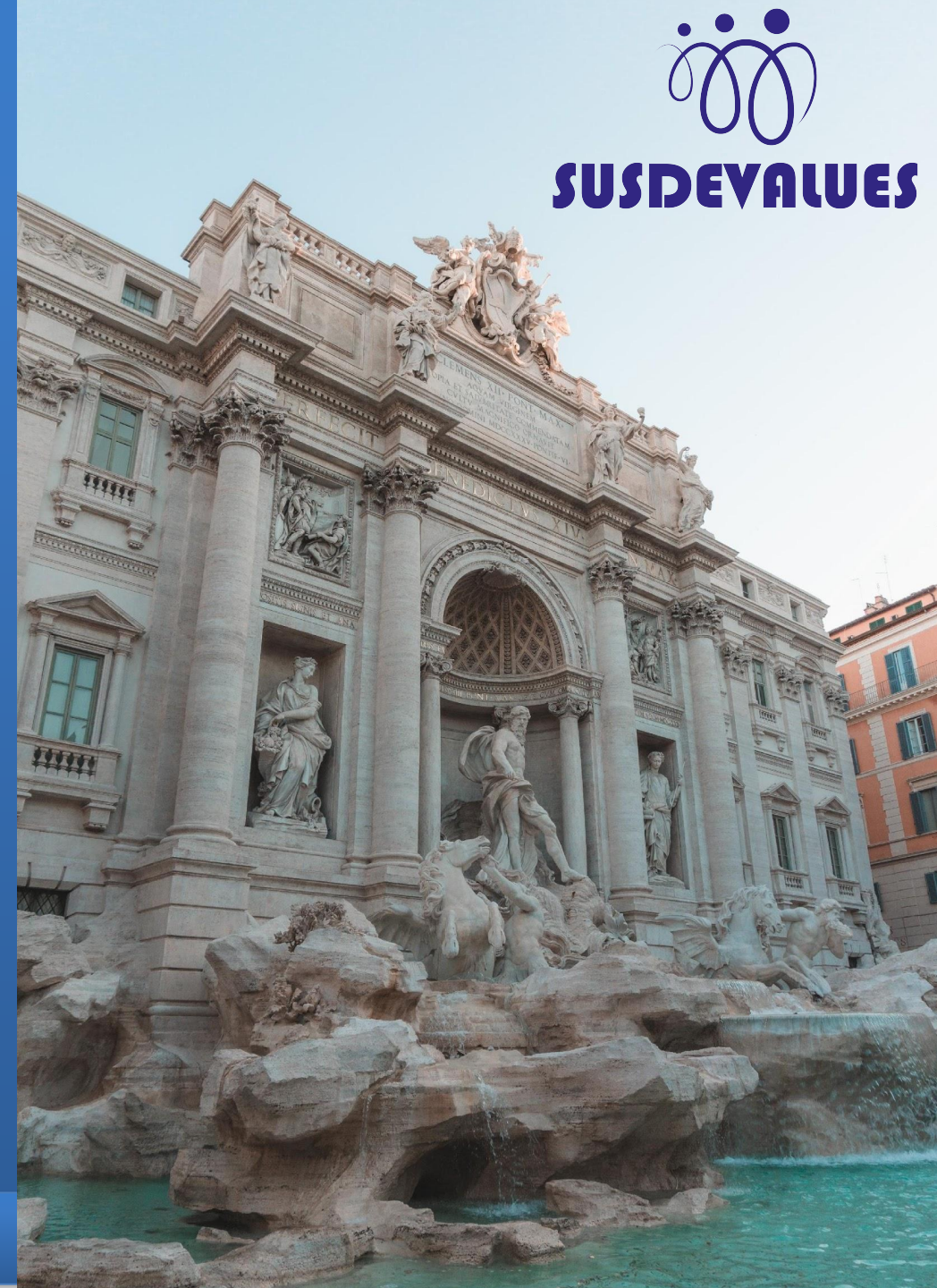
## • Property Contracts

Latin legal vocabulary, such as "habeas corpus" and "pro bono," has been assimilated into current legal systems and is still widely used.

## • Legal Terminology



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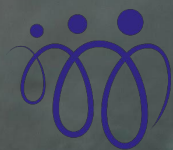


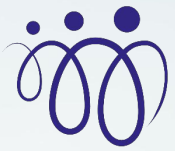
# Key Developments and Milestones: Magna Carta and its role in shaping ideas in Human Rights and Rule of Law

The Magna Carta established the framework for the preservation of individual rights and liberties. It defined the idea that certain rights, such as property rights and the right to a fair trial, should be protected from arbitrary state interference.

Magna Carta emphasised the importance of the rule of law as a check on governmental power. It established the notion that everyone, including the king, was subject to the law and that no one was above it. This concept has evolved into a key tenet of democratic society.

The Magna Carta had a significant impact on later legal and constitutional developments. It inspired the English Bill of Rights (1689), the United States Constitution (1787), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Elements of the Magna Carta can be seen in these and other foundational documents, demonstrating the document's lasting influence in developing notions about human rights and the rule of law.





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# Key Developments and Milestones: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#) on December 10, 1948, as a modern formulation of European principles, particularly those that have evolved over generations. While the UDHR was a worldwide endeavour, it was greatly influenced by European experience and ideas derived from European history and philosophy.

The UDHR leaned heavily on the Enlightenment era, which was centred in Europe. Individual rights, freedom, and a social contract were pushed for by philosophers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire, who created the intellectual framework for the concepts embodied in the UDHR.

- **Enlightenment Philosophy**

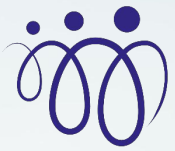
The destruction of World War II, with its atrocities and violations of human rights, had a significant impact on the development of the UDHR. Many of the countries engaged in developing the statement were European nations that had firsthand experience with the implications of unfettered state authority and human rights violations.

- **Post-World War II European Experience**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights incorporates European legal traditions, such as equality before the law, the right to a fair trial, and the preservation of individual liberty. These concepts had profound roots in European legal history and were formalised throughout time in numerous European legal writings.

- **European Legal Traditions**





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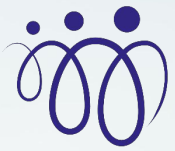
## Key Developments and Milestones: Global Importance in Promoting Human Dignity and Freedom

The UDHR declares that human rights are universally applicable, transcending geographical, cultural, and political constraints. It emphasises that all people have human rights, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, or social status.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves as the fundamental text for the international human rights framework. It sparked the creation of a slew of international treaties and conventions aimed at safeguarding and advancing human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has gained universal moral authority. It acts as a lighthouse for human rights advocacy and challenges to human rights violations. It has helped to hold governments and institutions accountable for their activities.





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## Key Developments and Milestones: Global Importance in Promoting Human Dignity and Freedom (Cont.)

The ideas of the UDHR have been incorporated into many countries' national constitutions and legal systems. The UDHR serves as a model for regional human rights conventions such as the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has played a critical role in preventing and responding to mass crimes and genocides. When human rights breaches reach crisis proportions, it has provided as a foundation for international action.

The UDHR has given civil society organisations and activists around the world the ability to advocate for human rights. It has served as a springboard for social movements and campaigns tackling issues such as prejudice, injustice, and inequality.

## In conclusion

The roots of European values can be traced historically and go back to ancient civilizations. Understanding the historical context is significant for a better understanding of these values. Ancient Greece and the birth of democracy was a significant milestone, while Roman law has been deep and long-lasting. Centuries later, the Magna Carta established the framework for the preservation of individual rights and liberties and had a significant impact on later legal and constitutional development. Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that was adopted on December 10, 1948 and serves as the fundamental text for the international human rights framework, is of great significance because it has gained universal moral authority. It acts as a lighthouse for human rights advocacy and challenges to human rights violations.

