

# The stages of progress in human society as studied by lewis morgan



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The notion of progress is used to mean “to step forward” that coincides with the Sanskrit word ‘pra-gat’. The fundamental meaning of progress, therefore, is the forward march or advancement towards a desirable end. There may be as many types of progress as there are desirable ends. Historically progress has an ethical connotation and is taken to mean advance towards the ultimate moral values which human kind had been striving all down the ages to attain.

Morgan was the first person to bring forth the definite order of human society systematically. He identified three main epochs through which human society progressed. These are savagery, barbarism and civilisation. He sub-divided savagery and barbarism again into lower, middle, and upper orders according to the progress made in the production of the means of subsistence. To him, “upon their skill in this direction the whole question of human supremacy on the earth depended.

Mankinds are the only beings that may be said to have gained an absolute control over the production of food. The epochs of human progress have been identified more or less directly, with the enlargement of the source of subsistence”. It would be interesting to elaborate a little more on how the human beings progressed from stages of savagery to barbarism and then to civilisation. a) Lower stage: Human beings lived in tropical or sub-tropical forests on trees. Fruits, nuts and roots served them as food.

b) Middle stage: Human beings began to utilise fire and fish as food. The new food made them independent of locality and human movement started geographically. Human beings of this stage predominantly used crude stones

as weapons. c) Upper stage: Human beings invented bow and arrow, wild animals were added to their food, and hunting became their normal occupation. Wood vessels and utensils were also used.

a) Lower stage: Human beings entered into the stage of barbarism with the introduction of pottery. b) Middle stage: It began with the domestication of animals in the East; and in the West it began with cultivation of edible plants, introduction of means of irrigation, use of sun dried bricks and stones for making buildings. c) Upper stages: This is very transitional phase. This stage begins with " smelting of iron ore and passes into civilisation through the invention of alphabetic writings and its utilisation for literary records. The use of iron ploughshare drawn by cattle, wide scale land cultivation, unlimited increase in the means of subsistence, rapid increase in population characterised this stage.

It is a period in which knowledge of further working up of natural products, of industry and of art was acquired. In this phase of progression human society has acquired sophistication in dimensions of life.