

# **TRENDS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

## **MODULE II-VICO AND NEW SCIENCE**

**TOPIC: II-TOYNBEE AND STUDY OF CIVILIZATIONS**


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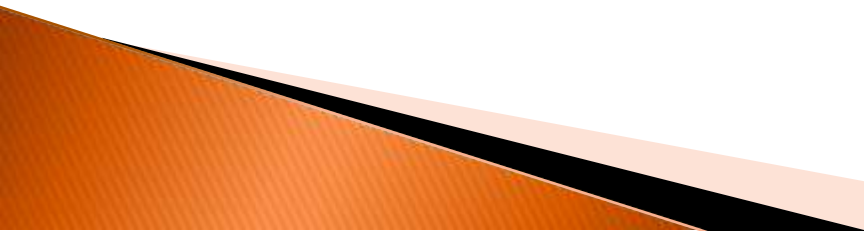
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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

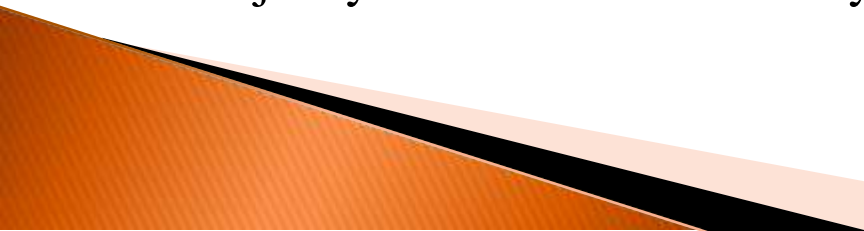
**LITTLE FLOWER COLLEGE, CUPRIVAYOOR**

# ARNOLD TOYNBEE(1899–1975)

- ▶ Great English historiographer
  - ▶ Author of a number of books
  - ▶ Magnum opus- *A study of history (in twelve volumes)*
  - ▶ Major works- Nationality and war, Greek historical thought, Civilization on trial, A historians view of religion, and A Autobiographical work
  - ▶ A study of History is a single handed historical achievement
  - ▶ In this monumental work he has examined the genesis the growth and decay of all the civilizations of mankind
  - ▶ Discusses the rise and fall of 21 world civilizations, flourished during a period of nearly 6000 years, all decayed or perished except that of western civilization
  - ▶ Provides a naturalistic interpretation of history, based on the cyclical development and decline of civilizations
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- ▶ The genesis of a civilization is not due to the race ,factor or geographical environment, but related with the work of a ‘Creative minority’ and a set of circumstances
  - ▶ He introduces the theory of ‘Challenge and Response’ in relation with the genesis of civilizations
  - ▶ All civilizations have emerged from the interplay of challenges and successful responses to them
  - ▶ Civilization rise when a society successfully responds to the challenges, through its creative minority
  - ▶ To him every civilization is the product of the challenge and response and it is the rhythm of history
  - ▶ The challenges and responses are normally presented by social and physical environment
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- ▶ Toynbee terms this process of transferring energy from a lower sphere to higher sphere as ‘Etherealization’, which means progressive simplification of techniques
- ▶ Toynbee deals with three fundamental problems, namely the genesis, the growth and the decay of a civilization
- ▶ Whether it is an individual, a nation or a society, everyone is faced with these challenges and responses from beginning to end
- ▶ Toynbee argues that there will be a ‘withdrawal and return’ in the process of any civilization
- ▶ Certain civilizations may take rest in the form of a withdrawal for sometime and comeback in the form of a return with increased vigour
- ▶ Importance of the action of the creative individuality
- ▶ Eg: Buddha

- ▶ He used the Chinese term 'Yin' for the period of comparative rest and 'Yang' for the period of increased activity
  - ▶ Toynbee states that there will be 'Times of troubles' in every civilization
  - ▶ The times and troubles denote period of serious disturbances and challenges
  - ▶ The breakdown of civilization occurs mainly due to the 'nemesis' of the majority
  - ▶ The creative minority may transform itself into less powerful section and the mass will break out from the control of the minority
  - ▶ The society will lose its capacity for self determination and may move towards its breakup
  - ▶ The failure of the creative power in the leadership, the nemesis of the majority and loss of social unity, complete the breakdown of civilization
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- ▶ History is the fulfillment of some divine plan, but within this plan man has the freedom of will and can defy the challenge in a number of ways