**Neolithic Revolution and its influence on Civilization**

What we today often call Civilization began to appear about 5,500 years ago in the river valleys of the Nile and the Tigris - Euphrates; slightly later, Civilization appeared in the Indus valley and in the Yellow River Valley. Other early civilizations developed independently and considerably later in the Americas. From these original Cradles of Civilization, civilization spread outward in a series of stages over the course of the next 3,000 years. Following the end of the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age) era, a great revolution occurred in human history. It is called the Neolithic or Agricultural Revolution, and it began in the ancient Near East about 8,000 BC or 10,000 years ago, just at the end of the last Ice Age. Not long afterwards, Neolithic settlements appeared in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere.

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Why did humans change from hunters and gatherers to an agricultural way of life? Climatic warming may have produced a shortage of animals to hunt, thus forcing a growing population to seek alternative sources of food; at the same time, these changes produced a climate suitable for farming and the domestication of animals. During the next 3,500 years, men and women all over the world radically transformed their relationship to nature, from dependent to more independent. What was necessary for success? 1) a favorable environment (climate, water, and ease of food production; sources of transportation; raw materials); 2) ability and willingness to make and use technological innovation; 3) development of complex social arrangements; and 4) population growth.

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As human beings began learning to manipulate nature, they invented agriculture, which allowed production of a food surplus. They manufactured new types of tools, and they domesticated animals like dogs, sheep, goats, cattle, pigs and so on. Once a food surplus was produced, human beings began to live in fixed village settlements like Jericho in Palestine (Israel today) or Catal Huyuk in modern day Turkey. Innovations within these villages included a division of specialization of labor, the emergence of an artisan class such as weavers or potters, the development of trade, the invention of private property, and the development of basic political and social institutions which regulated human behavior and punished violators.

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