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## CONCEPT OF CIVILISATION: MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the concept of civilization in the light of the following questions: What is civilization and what are its core characteristics? What is the relationship between culture and civilization? What are the aims of civilization? How did civilization emerge? What lessons can we deduce from the study of civilization? The goal of the article is to describe the answers offered to these questions and provide insight into why and how the world has become the way it is. It is hoped that this description will enable the readers to have a glimpse into the past nations and their achievements, have a better understanding of the present world and determine which accomplishments of the people are the most notable. The main topics covered in this article are the meaning of civilization; types of civilization; civilization and culture, the inner-side of civilization; the material and non-material aspects of civilization; history of civilization, reasons for studying the history of human civilization; and characteristics of civilization. The translation of the *ayat* (verses) of the Qur'an related to this study is extracted from the work of 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text and Translation* unless stated otherwise.

**Keywords:** Civilization, Culture, Morality, History.

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## **MEANING OF CIVILIZATION**

Civilization or civilization is a general term. Hence, there is no one definition of civilization that can completely sum up what civilization is. Originally it meant "being civil" or "the state of being into civility or polite society" as opposed to "savagery" and "barbarism," meaning "being cruel and violent in behavior." However, over in course of time, the term has acquired additional meanings including the following:

a) A process of becoming civilized (cultured/refined/showing good manners or being polite) or transforming from barbarity.

b) A city based society. Common features of a city based society include dense population, financial institutions such as banks and insurance companies, markets where agricultural produce from the villages and other goods are sold, administrative centres, social or public amenities such as schools, play grounds, pedestrian walk, hospitals, sports facilities and clean drinking water, cultural heterogeneity, and materialism (people's life revolves around wealth and material possession).

c) A large organized community or a group of persons tied together by a common ethical code; a cooperative group of persons.

d) A society governed by law.

e) "The culture and way of life of a society or country at a particular period in time" (Nielsen (5 January 2010).

f) "A complex culture in which large numbers of human beings share a number of common elements" (Vurusic, July 1, 2014).

g) "A society organised upon the conviction that mankind is on earth for a purpose." - John Anthony West (West, 1993, p.6).

h) The sum total of cultures.

i) An "advanced stage of material development;" i.e. development to the level of sophistication.

j) "An advanced state of human society in which a high level of culture, science, industry, and government has been reached." - Dictionary.com

k) "The stage of human social development and organisation which is considered most advanced." - The Oxford Dictionary

l) High level of cultural, moral, social, and technological development.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the term civilization is used, both in a wide sense and in a narrow sense, to describe both the physical development, also known as man-made environment, and the moral refinement of individuals or cultural development. Hence, the study of civilization is about how human societies have changed physically or materially and morally.

## **TYPES OF CIVILIZATION**

Civilizations are categorized into two types: agrarian civilizations and industrial civilizations. Agrarian civilization is a large organized community or human settlement that focuses on production of food through agriculture. Mesopotamia was a home to the first agrarian civilizations which are believed to have developed at about 3200 BCE. Contrastingly, industrial civilization is a civilization that emerged after the

industrial revolution. It is defined as a large organized community or human settlement that primarily depends on industry.

### **CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE**

Culture and civilization are achievements of human societies. The former is viewed by some scholars as one of the aspects of the latter, along with cities, government, religion, social structure, writing and art (Vurusic July 1, 2014). This means, culture is an integral part of civilization; a civilization does not exist without it. In contrast, culture can exist independently of civilization, which means that the two terms are not interchangeable. Other scholars, however, view civilization and culture as synonyms or interchangeable terms, which means they mean the same or nearly the same thing. Hence, to be civilized means to be cultured or to lead a knowledge based life, that is, a life that is governed by the set of values. It is called a knowledge based life because culture is a set of knowledge gained through learning. Civilized persons or nations are distinguished from the barbaric by the following:

First, they are ethical and moral. That is, they adhere to a moral code and therefore, they are well-organized; they uphold their duties and responsibilities including the responsibility to care for the earth; they have a good relationship with each other; they are compassionate to each other; they provide support for each other; they respect each other's rights; they are loyal and obedient to the elders and leaders; they fulfill their promises, they forgive others' offences; they are kind to animals; they are patient in adversity; they maintain justice; they control their anger; they are honest, etc.

Second, they are religious. Religion and morality are not synonyms but they are closely intertwined. The Islamic and Judo-Christian view is that morality is dependent on God's Will, hence, it is part of religion. On the contrary, the secular view is that morality is independent of God's Will. Therefore, it is independent of religion. This means, human beings are capable of being moral and ethical without the need for God or religion.

Third, they have a vision for life, that is, they are clear about the purpose of their life; they know what they want to get out life. Having knowledge about the purpose of life is crucial as it creates a sense of responsibility and makes life meaningful. Life without a sense of direction is fruitless.

In a nutshell, civilization is not possible without a moral code and vision for life. While a moral code is meant to guide individuals and nations in determining what is right and wrong, just and unjust, good and bad, proper or improper, normal or abnormal, the vision for life gives them a direction to their life.

### **THE INNERSIDE OF CIVILIZATION**

There is meaning and purpose to the material life of human beings which cannot be known without belief in God or the Supernatural Being. Teaching humans the meaning and purpose of life is the objective of all religions, revealed and non-revealed. Religion is one of the reasons behind social cohesion and social solidarity. Therefore, there is no civilization that has ever existed without religious beliefs and

practices. To Allen Menzies (1845 – 1916), religion is “the inner side of civilization” (Menzies, 2018). Meaning, it is the spirit or life of civilization. Kennedy writes:

“If men are taught that there is no almighty and all-just God, no divine world-order and no future life, they will feel exempt from all obligation to obey the precepts of civilization. Everyone will, without inhibition or fear, follow his asocial, egoistic instincts and seek to exercise his power; Chaos, which we have banished through many thousands of years of the work of civilization, will come again” (Kennedy, 2006, p. 44).

“Every civilization is the expression of a religion, for religion signifies faith in absolute values and a way of life to realize them. If we do not have a conviction that the values a civilization embodies are absolute, its rules will become dead letters and its institutions will decay” (Radhakrishnan, 2017, p. 21).

According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“Religion is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement, and happiness of man result from obedience to the laws set down in the holy Books. Briefly, it is demonstrable that in this life, both outwardly and inwardly the mightiest of structures, the most solidly established, the most enduring, standing guard over the world, assuring both the spiritual and the material perfections of mankind, and protecting the happiness and the civilization of society is religion” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1994, pp. 71-72).

Ranganathananda described a society without religion as barbaric, which means, uncivilized. He wrote:

“If the spiritual value system of religion is taken away from human society, what remains is simple barbarism. Ancient civilizations were destroyed by barbarians bred outside those civilizations. But modern civilization, if it is to go the same way, will be destroyed by barbarians bred within that civilization itself” (Ranganathananda, 1991, p. 44).

Because of the help religion gives to people facing various crisis situations in their lives, Kennedy contends that it is necessary to have it even if it is not in possession of the truth. He writes:

“Even if we knew, and could prove, that religion was not in possession of the truth, we ought to conceal the fact and behave in the way prescribed by the philosophy of “As if” – and this in the interest of the preservation of us all” (Kennedy, 2006, p. 44).

In Mesopotamian civilization, known as the first human civilization, every human activity was subordinated to an overriding religious purpose. The Mesopotamians believed that “people were given life so that they could execute on earth the will of the gods in heaven” (Perry, et al., 1996, p.12). Perry, et al write: “Religion was the Mesopotamians’ frame of reference for understanding nature, society, and themselves; it dominated and inspired all other cultural expressions and human activities;” “No important decisions were made by kings or priests without first consulting the gods” (Perry, et al., 1996, p.13). The Mesopotamians believed that the gods, invisible to human eyes but omnipresent, controlled the entire universe and everything in it (Perry, et al., 1996, p.13).

Religion was also omnipresent in Egyptian life and accounted for the outstanding achievements of Egyptian civilization. Perry, et al also write: "Religious beliefs were the basis of Egyptian art, medicine, astronomy, literature, and government" (Perry, et al., 1996, p. 17) "Justice was conceived in religious terms, something bestowed by a creator-god. The Egyptians developed an ethical code, which they believed the gods had approved" (Perry, et al., 1996, p. 17).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778) argued that the first man to put a fence around his land was the first enemy of mankind. Similarly, Mizjaji regards those who divorced religion from other aspects of life as the first enemy of mankind: "Those who would separate religion from other aspects of life are the first enemies of man on Earth" (Al-Mizjaji, p. 23).

Over the past several decades, cases of immorality have grown into major social problems which have ruined the lives of many young people and imposed heavy costs on families, organizations and governments. This has been attributed to the absence of soul:

Moore:

"The great malady of the twentieth century, implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially, is "loss of soul. When soul is neglected, it doesn't just go away; it appears symptomatically in obsessions, addictions, violence, and loss of meaning" (Moore, 1992, xi).

Al-Qaradawi describes the present-day civilization as materially well-developed but spiritually bankrupt:

"As a matter of fact, present-day civilization provides humanity with unparalleled and unprecedented means of luxury and comfort. Unfortunately, this civilization pays no attention to the human nature, characteristics, future or prosperity. On the contrary, it is a source of trouble and danger to humanity" (Al-Qaradawi, 1998, xi).

Tom Gilbert is also of the same view. He regards spiritual bankruptcy as the biggest problem of modern society:

"The big problem I see today is not so much that unemployment is on the rise and banks are foreclosing on homes (but please don't think I'm minimizing the plight of anyone dealing with those challenges). The problem I perceive is that too many people are going bankrupt spiritually. A very large part of the population seems lost in a culture that emphasizes materialism, consumerism and egoism. These things never satisfy. Not ultimately" (Gilbert, n.d).

Kennedy contends:

"Countless people find their one consolation in religious doctrines, and can only bear life with their help. You would rob them of their support, without having anything better to give them in exchange" (Kennedy, p. 44).

## **THE MATERIAL AND NON-MATERIAL ASPECTS OF CIVILIZATION**

Civilization has material and non-material components. Its material component consists of physical structures, objects or artifacts such as religious, economic and political centres, permanent settlements, infrastructures (transportation, water, power and energy, telecommunications, political, educational, health and recreational infrastructures), markets, monuments, clothing, metal objects such as weapons, items of adornment, tombstones, etc. The immaterial component of civilization entails ideas and thoughts, laws and standards for behavior, and a basic set of beliefs that guides actions of a particular society.

## **HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION**

One of the main issues in the study of societies is social transformation and societal development; i.e. how societies were transformed from small associations to small communities and to nations; how societies developed from small to complex societies; from nomadism to settlement or from hunter-gatherer to agrarian to industrial and to post-industrial societies; from a state of nature, savagery, or barbarism to a state of civilization; from the darkness into light.

The historical consensus is that: First, complex societies emerged from simple societies; i.e. societies characterized by features that include:

- 1) Hunting or food gathering/lack of agriculture.
- 2) Temporary settlements.
- 3) Small villages.
- 4) Small population.
- 5) Simple cultures.
- 6) Simple technology/simple tools.
- 7) Lack of a written language.
- 8) Lack of organized political structure.

Second, complex societies emerged when:

- (1) People of a particular culture interacted with people outside their culture.

(2) People found ways to disseminate knowledge by way of education and to store it by way of writing. Here it has to be noted that the introduction of writing brought a lot of benefits to human beings. It allows them reflect on the past; For example, it enabled the recording of history.

(3) Set of values and ethics was introduced to promote stability, continuity and prosperity of the people.

(4) Society was stratified and people acquired specialized capabilities as farmers, traders, fishers, administrators, artisans, spiritual leaders, bureaucrats, blacksmiths, builders, warriors, etc.

(5) Economic subsistence progressed through modern agriculture, urban commerce, and manufacturing.



(6) Farming (growing of plants and domestication of animals) was discovered. Farming is seen as the key to civilizations. Its invention allowed people to have surplus food and economic stability, thus, quitting the nomadic life as hunter-gatherers, constructing permanent homes and towns and increased in number. Taxes from growing crops and making items were introduced. Some of the taxes went to the rulers, mainly the kings, and some to the physical development of civilization, fertilizers were invented, containers were made from clay to store surplus harvests. Additionally, increased farming subsequently led to a new form of technology namely, iron technology. The time of iron technology is known as the "Iron Age" and was preceded by the "Stone Age" (Neolithic) and the "Bronze Age".

The term 'Neolithic' is composed of 'neo' meaning 'new' and 'lithic' meaning 'stone.' Hence it relates to the last part of the Stone Age, known as the 'New Stone Age.' It is distinguished from the first two periods of Stone Age; namely, Palaeolithic and Mesolithic by the following attributes: megalithic architecture, spread of agricultural practices and use of polished stone tools. This period marks the development or advancement of human technology.

The birthplace of farming was the major river valleys which "provided water for crops, and served as avenues for trade" (Perry, et.al., 1996, p. 10). In a nutshell, introduction of farming led to the rise of agricultural based societies. Each society cultivated different crops and raised different animals for food, milk and clothing which they traded out with other civilizations.

(7) The state - political authority - was created through what is believed to be a "social contract" or the agreement between human beings to live together under laws, government or state.

(8) Religious life grew more organized and complex and a centralized religious-political power grew in the cities. Generally, religion - a system of beliefs and behaviors that deal with the meaning of existence - played the role of a uniting force in all civilizations; it made societies ordered and organized. This kept the running of civilizations smooth. This led to the emergence of "a powerful and wealthy priesthood." Not only that religion explained the meaning of existence but it also provided certain rules for the people to follow.

(9) The intellect (understanding) dominated over passion and superstition. Intellect of one of the great blessings from Allah to mankind. It is the capacity for knowledge; the ability to reason, reflect and make the right choices in life.

### **REASONS FOR STUDYING THE HISTORY OF HUMAN CIVILIZATIONS**

We study the history of human civilizations for a wide range of reasons such as:

- 1) To develop a better understanding of the modern world or, in other words, to know the changes made to human life.
- 2) To understand where we have come from and why we are here.
- 3) To know the contributions of the ancient people to our modern life. For example, the knowledge they have passed down:

"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" - Isaac Newton (quoted by Albert Einstein).

“Perhaps there has been no *ummah* in the history of the world which has not made additions to the pages of the history of civilization” (Siba’i, 1984, p. 2).

“Today’s civilisations owe an immense debt to the powerful empires and mighty cities of antiquity. Their inventions, techniques and concepts enabled the advancement of humankind and lay the foundation for life in the modern world” (<http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history>).

4) To understand how the different elements such as a shared culture, urban centres, state or government, farming, a writing system (written language), craftsmanship technology, social stratification, division of labour or specialized activities, massive infrastructure, a common system of measurements and religion contributed to civilization.

5) To learn from the mistakes of the past nations so that we don’t repeat them. The Qur’an contains many verses in which we are implored to travel and observe or read and reflect:

“And now they reject the truth when it reaches them: but soon shall they learn the reality of what they used to mock at. See they not how many of those before them We did destroy? Generations We had established on the earth, in strength such as We have not given to you - for whom We poured out rain from the skies in abundance, and gave (fertile) streams flowing beneath their (feet): yet for their sins We destroyed them, and raised in their wake fresh generations (to succeed them)” (Qur’an, 6: 5-7).

As human beings, we not only learn from our own mistakes, but also from the mistakes of other people. Worth mentioning here is the following statement from Abu al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi (1116 - 1201 CE), a major historian, hadith scholar, jurist and popular preacher in medieval Baghdad., best known to scholars for his 19-volume history of the medieval world, *Al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk* (*The Well-Ordered History of Kings and Nations*): “Take heed from lessons of those who were before you, before you become a lesson for those who will come after you.”

6) To know the importance of water to our lives. In Islam, water is described as Allah’s mercy and provision to mankind and also a basic element of life. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (Qur’an, 21: 30).

“O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink but waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters.” (Qur’an, 7: 31).

From these verses we understand that it is a moral obligation on every one of us to conserve water so that life perpetuates on Earth. It is worth noting that most of the ancient civilizations were centered around rivers and they collapsed from drought. That is, when the land could no longer supply people with the food and water they need to live. One of the biggest challenge to the modern civilization is global warming and climate change which has led to the extinction of many plant and animal species. This and many contemporary problems are attributed to human activities. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Mischievous has appeared on land and sea because of



(the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that ((Allah)) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)." (Qur'an, 30:41).

7) To travel backward in time in order to know what the past was like as well as into the future. This type of travel is known as 'mental travel'. It is contrasted to 'physical travel' which enables human beings to gain exposure to the world, understand the commonalities and differences among people, their cultures and environments, earn a living and more importantly establish connections with other fellow human beings in different parts of the world. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the Resurrection." (Qur'an, 67:15).

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)." (Qur'an, 49:13).

Hence, in addition to the above mentioned benefits, physical travel allows us to learn about others; the way they live their day to day lives or the way they interact with one another. On the contrary, mental travel allows us to reflect on what we see. This includes the way we live our lives as well as the way others live their lives. It is a two-way process.

8) To improve our understanding of life in particular and the world in general. From the annihilation of the past civilizations, we understand that humans are fragile and so are their achievements. No matter how complex a nation or civilization is, it will be gone one day. Nothing is permanent. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "That was a people that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case!" (Qur'an, 2: 134).

## **REASONS FOR CIVILIZATION**

It is evident from the foregone definitions of civilization that civilization aims to:

- 1) Link together the members of society
- 2) Establish law and order for the smooth running of society
- 3) Offer goods and services to the society to keep it in motion
- 4) Build harmonious relationship with of different races and ethnicities
- 5) Interchange ideas and experiences among people
- 6) Improve the quality of life or in finer terms, comfort and luxury
- 7) Lead mankind to prosperity and greatness
- 8) Ensure mental and spiritual wellness of the members of society
- 9) Safeguard people against cruelty
- 10) Ensure justice for all
- 11) Improve the material conditions of life
- 12) Ensure the body has everything it needs for good health
- 13) Inculcate the meaning and purpose in the material life

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF CIVILIZATION**

Characteristics of civilization are the traits that make a complex society different from simple societies. These include the following:

### **Diversity**

Differences among people based on race, ethnicity and geographical area have been influential in the establishment of diverse civilizations over the thousands of years of human history. For example, there is Mesopotamian civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization, Egyptian civilization and Islamic civilization. Each of these civilizations developed in a different natural environment. They were unique, multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Having said this, they promoted unity, harmony and peaceful co-existence among people of different ethnicities in order to grow and remain stable for a long period of time. The world's most widespread moral rule, the Golden Rule, is: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" dates back to time immemorial. It means: "Treat others as you would like others to treat you;" "Do not treat others in ways that you would not like to be treated;" and "What you wish upon others, you wish upon yourself." The first meaning is the "positive or directive form" of the rule, the second is its "negative or prohibitive form" while the third is its "empathic or responsive form." These teachings are found in the world's major religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism, and in the ancient Greek and other philosophies.

### **Gradualism**

The suffix "-ization" indicates that civilization or the act of changing nature or of bringing people out of darkness into enlightened state, from less-developed state into advanced state is a gradual and "a continuous process," (Elias, 1978, p.5) that is to say, there are stages to it. The term 'continuity' here, however, doesn't indicate perpetuity as there is an optimum to development. There have been many civilizations in the past which reached the optimum of development and subsequently, they started to decline. Also, there have been many civilizations, which have either died due to invasion, interruption or other factors, or been destroyed by Allah due to excessiveness, ungratefulness, arrogance, corruption and denial of Divine Revelation. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Does it not teach them a lesson, how many generations We destroyed before them, in whose dwellings they (now) go to and fro? Verily in that are Signs: Do they not then listen?" (Qur'an, 32: 26).

"Is it not a warning to such men (to call to mind) how many generations before them We destroyed, in whose haunts they (now) move? Verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding." (Qur'an, 20: 128).

It must be noted that: First, the destruction of nations was not abrupt. Each nation was given a respite:

"Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy Lord, (their punishment) must necessarily have come; but there is a Term appointed (for respite)." (Qur'an, 20: 129).

“How many towns have We destroyed (for their sins)? Our punishment took them on a sudden by night or while they slept for their afternoon rest. When (thus) Our punishment took them, no cry did they utter but this: “Indeed we did wrong.” (Qur’an, 7: 4-5).

“Such were the populations we destroyed when they committed iniquities; but we fixed an appointed time for their destruction.” (Qur’an, 18: 59).

The destruction of nations came after the proof had been established against them; until the truth had been made distinct from falsehood:

“But your Lord does not destroy habitations without having sent an apostle to their metropolis to read out Our commandments to them. We would never have destroyed cities if their inhabitants were not given to wickedness.” (Qur’an, 28: 59).

“(The apostles were sent) thus, for thy Lord would not destroy for their wrongdoing men's habitations whilst their occupants were unwarned.” (Qur’an, 6: 131).

“Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: who goeth astray doth so to his own loss: No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another: nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent an apostle (to give warning).” (Qur’an, 17: 15).

“And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray; but We sent aforetime, among them, (apostles) to admonish them.” (Qur’an, 37: 71-72).

Second, according to the following verses, the destroyed nations and cities of ‘Ad, Thamud and others had attained a high degree of material and physical development which had never been seen before:

“See they not how many of those before them We did destroy? - generations We had established on the earth, in strength such as We have not given to you - for whom We poured out rain from the skies in abundance, and gave (fertile) streams flowing beneath their (feet): yet for their sins We destroyed them, and raised in their wake fresh generations (to succeed them).” (Qur’an, 6: 6).

“And remember how He made you inheritors after the ‘Ad people and gave you habitations in the land: ye build for yourselves palaces and castles in (open) plains, and care out homes in the mountains; so bring to remembrance the benefits (ye have received) from Allah, and refrain from evil and mischief on the earth.” (Qur’an, 7: 74).

“Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the ‘Ad (people), of the (city of) Iram, with lofty pillars, the like of which were not produced in (all) the land? And with the Thamud (people), who cut out (huge) rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh, lord of stakes? (All) these transgressed beyond bounds in the lands, and heaped therein mischief (on mischief). Therefore, did thy Lord pour on them a scourge of diverse chastisements.” (Qur’an, 89: 6-13).

“How many populations have We destroyed, which were given to wrongdoing? They tumbled down on their roofs. And how many wells are lying idle and neglected, and castles lofty and well-built?” (Qur’an, 22: 46).

Third, after the destruction of a nation another nation was raised to power.

Fourth, there is a lesson in the destruction of nations for those who reflect:

“And we rained down on them a shower (of brimstone): Then see what was the end of those who indulged in sin and crime!” (Qur’an, 7: 84).

“Then after them We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they wrongfully rejected them: So see what was the end of those who made mischief.” (Qur’an, 7:103).

“Say: “Go ye through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty (of sin).”” (Qur’an, 27: 69).

“Then see what was the end of those who were admonished (but heeded not)” (Qur’an, 37: 73).

### **Complexity**

In the broad sense, the term “civilization,” according to other scholars, denotes “a complex way of life” or “a complex society” characterized by (some of) the following features:

- 1) Dense population
- 2) Permanent residential housing
- 3) Urban settlement/ development of cities
- 4) Organized political structure
- 5) Advanced economic system
- 6) A system of law
- 7) Belief systems
- 8) Political systems
- 9) Traditional customs
- 10) Ethical and moral values
- 11) Specific artifacts
- 12) Surplus production. This necessitated the construction of irrigation systems.
- 13) Pursuit of knowledge (reading and writing)
- 14) Complex systems of belief/ Growth of religious life
- 15) Record-keeping and writing (codification of laws)
- 16) Cultural development
- 17) Social stratification
- 18) Specialized labour
- 19) Inventions such as tools
- 20) Well-organized defenses

The first known complex society is believed to have appeared in Sumer, located in Mesopotamia (now southern Iraq, between the mouths of the Euphrates and the Tigris), in the 4th millennium BCE. – over five thousand years ago – and the Sumerians are credited as the inventors. They built the first cities, created the first government, the first laws, developed the first form of writing, began the first large-scale agriculture, etc. Euphrates and the Tigris provided water to irrigate the fields, and they offered the easiest method of transport for a society without paved roads.

### Interdependency

Civilizations are related and mutually influence each other. According to “The interdependence theory” of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, human beings depend on each other. This means, they work harmoniously together; they exchange goods and services to meet their needs, and they share knowledge and understandings.

### CONCLUSION

The above is a description of human civilization in regard to its meaning, components, emergence, objectives, types and characteristics. First, it is clear from the foregone that the rise of civilization is the greatest achievement of human beings. However, this achievement would not be possible without knowledge. The study of civilization is the study of Man’s journey from darkness to light; from barbarism to civilization. It is also the study of how Man has advanced in knowledge, among others. Therefore, knowledge is the main factor that brought about the dawn of civilization; it is the central force in material and spiritual development, and therefore, it can be described as the key to civilization without which the emergence of civilization would have been impossible. Second, civilization is vital to Man’s living. It provides him with basic needs to improve the standard of his living or the quality of his life (infrastructure). These include communication networks and computing facilities, transportation, sewage, water and electric systems, schools, hospitals, libraries and parks. Third, civilization means different things to different people. There is no one comprehensive and permanent definition of civilization due to its complexity and diversity.

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