

SAPIENS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANKIND

*Review by: Sara Aleem**

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Sometimes, nonfictional literature captures readers' attention to the extent where turning a blind eye is impossible. It all depends upon the author's native skills and literary observations shaping into words to become a manuscript like "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind." This work is predominantly based on evidence from biology, paleontology, anthropology, and economics, crossing the chronological order of over 2.5 million years of genus Homo to unfolding the achievements and dominance of Homosapiens. It begins by examining the first human inhabitants to walk on earth to the radical discoveries of the Cognitive, the Agriculture, and the Scientific Revolutions serving in the evolution of Homosapiens throughout history. These revolutions generate extensive human history and various discussions by interpreting early human migration, cultural and socio-economic adaptation to environmental challenges, and technological breakthroughs.

The author starts discussing the Cognitive Revolution, 70,000 years ago, taken as a monumental phase of the supremacy of Homosapiens, as it renewed the sapiens brain and gave them an edge to spread out from East Africa to the whole of planet earth. The ability to share, gather around the myth, communication, reasoning, and build upon information is a distinguishing feature that helped sapiens cooperate and thrive. The discovery and domestication of fire played a crucial role after language in humans' evolutionary past. The usage of fire allowed the sapiens to expand, inhabit, or colonize the distant colder realms. However, the author did not mention how the Cognitive process developed about the socio-cultural environment. The development of modern humans' cognitive skills requires literacy, schooling, complex urban life, vast cultural experiences, and advanced technologies.

According to the book, Homosapiens, around 12000 years ago, underwent an agricultural revolution that profoundly impacted the way humans functioned in the ecosystem. Humans began to influence their surrounding environments by domesticating animals and plants. However, the author believes that the agricultural

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revolution is 'history's biggest fraud.' Primitive hunter-gatherers tend to know the natural surroundings more, thus, living a happy life as nomadic wanderers. The agricultural revolution is thought-provoking but unconvincing to many as it is synonymous with creating a choice when there is none. The agricultural revolution surrounded humans with infectious diseases and endless labour exploitation. The author overlooks the reality that agrarian societies specialized in numerous tasks that led to the development of written languages, innovations, and cherished art. It is not as if humans can go back in time and start to live again as hunter-gatherers.

The author notes that humans' greatest strength differentiating them from all other living beings is convincingly conjuring up stories related to fantasies. History centres upon tales; some are for understanding, and others prompt to cooperate in achieving common goals. The scientific revolution transformed the world of humans from a primitive hunter-gatherer society to a technologically-advanced modern world. Previously, humans were inclined towards religious scriptures to hunt for knowledge about the world. The science helped combine empirical observations about the world with various mathematical tools that brought clarity to the human minds towards their understanding of the world. It can be inferred from the recent development in science (NASA) seeking religion's help in dealing with extra-terrestrials.

The author delineates that modern scientific advances are about gaining insights and knowledge on scientific advancements. Humans have become obsessed with science and trying to achieve progress through it, which is worrisome. He discusses that mainly government (imperialism) and big corporations pay for scientific research. They only fund those researches that help them make more money or yield more power than those beneficial to humankind. European imperialism and the scientific revolution supported the capitalist society to live in today. The author showed his deep scepticism about new technological advances in medicine, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and bio-engineering.

This book has received worldwide acclamation for a unique insight into history. The concept of human evolution described in the book contradicts many religious scholars but is considered scientific. The split of lineage into two and the development of the new species of Homo is somewhat contradictory to religion because followers of all divine faiths believe that God created Adam and Eve and gave birth to the human race. This book also received criticism for its assertion regarding human rights, which the author considered a myth and further compared them with the US Declaration biologically. However, this work is a unique concept about the human evolutionary process. The book eagers to encompass almost the entire human past, from evolution to capitalism and modern genetic-bio engineering, to explain why sapiens are the way they are. Humans sooner or later, if they become immortal, as per the author, could no longer describe themselves as Homosapiens. Today's humans may become irrelevant in the future; they will become a new species altogether.