

## EVOLUTION OR IMPERIALISM – HOMOSAPIENS TO INHUMANS

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### ABSTRACT

Homo sapiens as we know today is practically the only species to ever live on the earth whose existence influenced the past, present and future of everything else to an unimaginable degree. They might also be the only species that can study and evaluate their history, write books about them and then review those books. Today they are not only capable of breaking the natural law of selection, but they can also devise biologically engineered beings, cyborgs or give rise to life from inorganic materials. But we were not born as dominant species. We're the result of millions of years of biological, cognitive evolution who rewrote the laws of the natural order.

About 2.5 million years ago, the genus Homo evolved in Africa, with several other human species coexisting in shared habitats in the middle of the food chain. Slowly Homo sapiens gained control over their habitats, spread across every part and arguably are the reason for the extinction of all other Homo species and nearly 50 per cent of other creatures. Today the human is almost the god of this planet capable of creating new creatures or destroying all the life on the earth within hours.

How did an animal of no significance manage to be the dictator of the planet? This book Sapiens : A Brief History of Humankind tries to answer that question and also questioning most prejudices we hold on human development.

**Keywords:** Homo sapiens, Evolution, Agriculture, Religion, Ideology, Science, Imperialism, Capitalism, Happiness

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The author of the book Sapiens : A Brief History of Humankind, Yuval Noah Harari, has told the story humankind in a unique way because it is ruthlessly objective. It can be antithetical to many people because this book doesn't sugar coat the evolutionary process of humans and its wicked consequences. The humans didn't make it to the top of food chain without atrocious consequences to the ecosystem. We disrupted the entire natural order resulting in extinction of several thousands of species. Many are now on the verge of extinction. Our settlements resulted in unnatural increase in global warming and pollution. Sea levels are rising whereas rivers and lakes are shrinking. All this happened because of one single species that continued to dominate all species and manipulate nature to its will. But humans often deny that they're the monsters of this planet. They like to think of themselves as a superior intelligent race that is chosen by nature itself to rule this planet. But that is far from truth. Although we do rule this planet, we destroyed natural order of the earth to an unimaginable degree.

Harari also contradicts what every other historian considered beneficial to humans like agricultural revolution and economic beliefs like capitalism. He says, "The Agricultural revolution is the history's biggest fraud". And also that it is irreversible. He discusses how agriculture leads to human suffering contradictory to human development. He points out in the most bizarre way, that "it is the wheat that domesticated human beings for centuries although causing him immense suffering rather than vice versa"(75). This book takes an unbiased view on how humans evolved from a rudimentary ape to being the god of this planet and beyond. And the story of our evolution goes like this...

After the emergence of life on earth, diverse creatures evolved following the law of natural selection. Animals like modern humans appeared about 2.5 million years ago. They are members of a large family with close relationships with chimpanzees, gorillas and possess an abundance of uncivilised cousins like *Homo rudolfensis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo neanderthalensis*. Some cousins are even physically much stronger than *Homo sapiens*. For many years humans didn't stand out from other species in any way. The story of human domination can be told in three major revolutions that shook history and the natural order of the earth.

## **2. THE COGNITIVE REVOLUTION**

About 70000 years ago, organisms belonging to the species *Homo sapiens* developed new ways of thinking and communicating and the consequences are exceptional. Language is not unique to humans. Many other animals communicate with each other with different sounds and signs like monkeys, whales, and elephants. But the human language is amazingly supple. We can connect a limited number of sounds and signs to produce an infinite number of distinctive sentences. One possible reason could be the large size of our brains. It enabled early humans to tell stories and gossip. The scientific revolution

It is the revolution of ignorance. When humans questioned what they don't know, the journey towards answering those questions lead humanity and its entire existence into a new dimension of possibilities. But the science is unable to set its priorities. Because scientific experiments millions, the path of scientific development is intertwined with economy and politics. These important questions of human ignorance were first asked, funded and are explored by Europeans. The discovery of new islands and continents by sailors, geographers, ecologists combined with imperial leaders is the reason Europe was able to colonise most of the globe.

## **3. A PERMANENT REVOLUTION**

The foundation of the modern economy is the Industrial revolution. The moment humans realised they can manipulate the energy into different forms, the world was changed forever. They invented a steam engine to extract water from coal mines. It was then connected to a loom to produce cheap textiles. It was then connected to a train to move wagons of coal and then passengers. Then the internal combustion engine entered accompanying liquid political power. The raw materials became

cheaper with the discovery of new materials. New sources of energy are invented. It was not limited to factories.

It is a second agricultural revolution. The plants and animals are mechanised leaving fewer hands in agriculture. The people started to use their brains and machines to produce an avalanche of products. The supply outstripped demand for the first time in human history. But now, who's going to buy all this stuff?

It resulted in the birth of Consumerism. With the free markets, global trade and reinvesting profits in production, and combined with mass media and advertising, our once green and blue planet is becoming a concrete and plastic shopping centre. Rich remain greedy and reinvest while poor masses go into debt buying things they don't need. It also resulted in the exploitation of workers like the Atlantic slave trade and the European working class.

The rise of capitalism shifted power to markets. The free markets and global trade unified the whole world. It diminished the national, cultural and religious borders. The state and markets replaced the bonds of family and community promoting individualism. Markets are controlling individuals to an ever greater degree including their romantic and sexual lives. The markets are exploiting individuals, and states employ their police forces, bureaucrats to persecute individuals.

Nuclear weapons have turned war into collective suicide, which made it impossible to seek world domination by force of arms. War is less profitable, peace is more lucrative than ever. There's a positive side to this. The state protects us from the violence between communities is decreased, violence against women and children, marital rape, theft and murder. International organisations are protecting human rights, stopping wars and promoting peace. It is possible only because the market has united humankind. If some positive results are expected in any policy or process, there are always some negative consequences. Not only business enthusiasts or entrepreneurs but also many philosophers have discussed these efficacious outcomes after a new policy has been introduced. In one way, it is understood that human beings are quarantined in the image of net.

Wittgenstein, a great philosopher, in his book *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, uses the image of the net to refer to the ideas, concepts and language ...the 'mechanics' which reveal man's interest in defining himself and his world in his book which gives new thoughts and ideas to many writers. He explains:

Let us imagine a white surface with irregular black spots on it. We then say that whatever kind of picture these make, I can always approximate as close as I wish to the description of it by covering the surface with a sufficient fine square mesh, and then saying of every square whether it is black or white. The different nets correspond to the different systems for describing the world. (137-139)

#### **4. HOMO SAPIENS AND HAPPINESS**

The earth has been united into a single market place. Science and technology have given humankind superhuman powers and practically limitless energy. There are astonishing developments in every field like art, music and philosophy. Are we happier than our hunter-gatherer ancestors? Or are we more peaceful than our ancestors in world wars on an individual level? There is no perfect scientific method to measure happiness.

After all we are the most luxurious generation of humankind. We have unlimited resources for entertainment. We don't fear dying suddenly in a war. But this doesn't necessarily mean we're happier. Even worse, Individualism left humans with feelings of alienation. Consumerism and nationalism work hard to make us imagine we belong to a larger community. But it can't fool us for long. Family and community seem to have more impact on happiness, however, those days have been vanishing day by day. Happiness can also be a matter of expectations. The only goal of mass media and advertising is to never make us satisfied with what we have.

Biologists say that happiness has nothing to do with external identities like wealth, health and security. Happiness is said to be a biochemical reaction. If we can manipulate our chemicals, we can be happy every time. But is that happiness or pleasure? People seem to be happy when they feel belonged. Can happiness be found only in collective delusions? Perhaps happiness is synchronising one's delusions with prevailing collective delusions. Or perhaps there's always an important cognitive and ethical component to happiness.

According to Buddha, happiness is ending all suffering of pointless pursuits of ephemeral feelings of pleasure or pain. We can't numerically measure if humankind is happy. It is also not convincing that people are happy while they are stuck in corporate clogs, doing jobs they hate, buying the things they don't need, alienated from relationships, accompanied by all the material waste they have accumulated in their tiny apartments, living a life of no significance.

The purpose of studying history is not to predict the future. The future can't be predicted because the predictions also influence future outcomes. But understanding history helps us to know what possibilities the future holds.

Foragers used to live within their communities believing in shared myths. Everything they can see and everywhere they can go was their home. They are also faced with many problems like disease, natural catastrophes and lack of food. But that was their world. Are they happy in their world? We don't know.

Although the life of average human became more secure and luxurious than ever before, we can't say that we're heading towards a more prosperous future. We're currently exploiting all the natural resources and disturbing ecological harmony.

We are lonelier than ever even in the midst of seven billion fellow beings, cooped up in between their separate tiny concrete walls, imagining virtual connections with strangers on their screens, devoid of any real relationships with others. Are we happy now? We can't say. This new linguistic skill helped humans to form myths. These myths like legends, spirits, gods, religions and ghosts helped in expanding small bands into larger bands, developing tighter and more sophisticated types of cooperation. Also, humans have been able to revise their behaviours rapidly following

changing needs. This opened a fast lane of cultural evolution, bypassing the slowness of genetic evolution. With the ability to compose fiction, Humans cooperated in very large numbers than any other species. This large social network is the reason humans won against all the species going from the middle to the top of the food chain.

## **MORAL VALUES AND MANKIND**

This storytelling doesn't end with religions, gods or spirits. Humans continued to tell much more sophisticated stories about nation, money, corporations etc. These stories are the building blocks of modern societies. Most sapiens bands lived as foragers, roaming for the search of food. He developed wider, deeper and more varied knowledge of his surroundings, became skilled in making sophisticated tools, their bodies and senses. And slowly about 10000 years ago, another major revolution happened which changed the way human societies functioned forever.

Here the author compared moral values of present generation with past generations. He has clearly proclaimed the cosmic difference and transition in maintaining moral values from one generation to other generation by quoting the opinions of great philosophers. Another great philosopher and nature lover Iris Murdoch has mentioned various moral conceptions about human attitude and ecological balance. She said, "But I would suggest that, at the level of serious common sense and of an ordinary non-philosophical reflection about the nature of morals, it is perfectly obvious that goodness is connected with knowledge; not with impersonal quasi-scientific knowledge of the ordinary world, whatever that may be, but with a refined and honest perception of what is really the case, a patient and just discernment and exploration of what confronts one, which is the result not simply of opening one's eyes but of a certain and perfectly familiar kind of moral discipline". (Murdoch, 330).

## **5. THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION**

After thousands of years of living as hunter-gatherers, humans started to cultivate wheat and settle in villages. There might be many reasons why humans choose agricultural life over foraging. The cultural mechanisms like babies and children moved slowly, demanded much attention were a burden on nomadic foragers. Also, about 18000 years ago, the last ice age gave way to a period of global warming increasing rainfall, ideal for the growth of wheat and other cereals. People began eating more wheat, carried it to their campsites resulting in sprouting when fallen into the mud. Over time, wheat was grown near campsites and humans settled in one place for the first time. This provided much more food per unit of territory, thereby multiply exponentially.

But there's a dark side to these human settlements. With one staple food, humans deprived of nutritional balance. It enabled women to have more children, requiring extra food from fields, resulting in more hard work. It produced large numbers of weaker generations. It made life very difficult for the average human. Farmers broke their backs clearing rocks, fetching and carrying water from streams, weeding under the scorching sun, guard and protect wheat from pests and worms. It brought about a plethora of ailments, such as slipped discs, arthritis and hernias since the human

body is not evolved for such activities. But there's no going back. With increasing population and settlements, humans now can't go back to foraging. The agricultural revolution was a trap. It made human life only miserable. That is why the author says, that wheat succeeded in domesticating humans, rather than vice versa.

Humans are not the only victims of this revolution. They domesticated slow-moving animals like hens, sheep, pigs, cows and oxen. They altered their natural evolution killing aggressive ones, sparing fatty weak ones and fertile females. These animals provided food, raw materials and muscle power. With the increase in the human population, so did their domesticated animals. But this can't be considered an evolutionary success because of the brutal practices of domestication. Although their DNA prints are in huge numbers, they live a life without any emotional or communal bonding with other members of their species. Their lives has no significance other than a mechanised human product.

Humans settled in tribes created music, art, mathematics and medicine. The invention of numbers for storing data helped in establishing and unifying many villages to form empires. The people traded with other empires across the globe. The empires extended invading neighbouring kingdoms engaging in wars. The religions started competing with each other. But on a macro level, this process leads to the unification of humankind. According to the author, the universal orders that moved history towards unity are the following

- 1.The order of universal religion
- 2.The monetary order of economy
- 3.The imperial order of politics

Religion has been the third greatest unifier of humankind. The raising universal and missionary religions like Christianity and Islam slowly expanded over the globe acquiring qualities of a monotheistic god, dualistic devil, polytheistic saints and animist ghosts resulting in syncretic religions. They united people across many nations and cultures. Also, the natural law religions like Jainism, Buddhism of India, Daoism, Confucianism of China, Stoicism, Cynicism, Epicureanism of Mediterranean simultaneously united many atheists across the globe.

Money is the unique universal myth accepted by every human on earth. It united humankind with global trade to a level that can't be shattered. The imperialism of Europe and other nations practically united large parts of the world for several centuries. From an objective evolutionary point of view, we are the most successful species. But what if we define evolution as coexistence between species following law of nature?

Even though we are successful for now, what are we aiming towards by destroying ecological balance? Are we our own destroyers? Perhaps we're the only species capable of destroying ourselves and we may well be heading in that direction. We can never predict what is going happen. We can only predict the possible outcomes. We continue to live for very long periods of time becoming something we can't comprehend for now or we destroy ourselves and everything else with us, it doesn't matter. There's no destruction to the earth. There's only change. New species evolve again and rewrite their own story of history.

## 6. CONCLUSION

We are now evolving faster than ever. It took 600 years after inventing gunpowder to make use of it in artillery. It only took 40 years to make an atom bomb after the atom was discovered. The change we expect to see in the future might not be so far. And we never know how it is going to influence us. If our ability to tell stories and believing in them dictates our future, we need to ask ourselves two important questions.

1. What stories do we want us to believe?

2. What stories do we want our future generations to believe?

Our past generation had given us natural resources, wonderful climatic conditions, beautiful waterfalls, dense forests, seasonal weather and many more things. What we are giving and going to give to our future generation. One must introspect oneself and think about our precious planet which hasn't shown its full power of chaos to our humans. If we neglect this priceless planet, there is no wonder, only dead things live on this earth not any species.

The best example is this Corona virus which has changed every aspect and every field of this world. Is it not human negligence? Is it not overambitious nature of mankind? Is it not the disrespect people are showing towards environment? How can we save our nature and environment? While all living beings are being used as positive resources only human beings are not used as positive resource. At least, human beings should save the environment without which mankind cannot live. It is in our hands to protect our nature and get benefitted. People as homo-sapiens should not harm the nature, should not be overambitious, and should not neglect the natural wealth.

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