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What do we teach the children of the 21st century? How do we combat the increasing emphasis on the gradual shift towards the automation for what were previously mechanical jobs? What will the economy or the political structure look like in the next 50 years? Why is liberal democracy in crisis? Is God back? Is a new world war coming? What does the rise of Donald Trump in the USA signify? Should Europe keep its doors open to immigrants? What should we do about terrorism?

These and many more are admittedly big questions, and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* is indeed a sweeping book by Dr. Yuval Noah Harari, a professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem with a Ph.D. from Oxford University in History. In this book, there are chapters on work, war, nationalism, religion, immigration, education and 15 other weighty matters. But its title is slightly a misnomer. Although one will find few concrete lessons scattered throughout, Harari has mostly resisted in giving out handy prescriptions. He however, does go all the way, in describing and connecting the terms of the discussion and giving a well-defined historical, political and philosophical perspective.

Most of us can scarcely bear the costs of examining these inquiries, since we all are tragically enslaved by our day to day mundane activities; we need to get down to business, deal with the children, or care for old guardians. Tragically, history makes no concessions. In the event that the fate of humankind is chosen in our non-attendance, since we are too busy bustling about, trying to nourish and provide for our children – they and we will not be excluded from the outcomes. This is exceptionally out of line, one will say; however, who said history was reasonable?
Harari, in his third book is refreshingly blatant. He starts the book with a poignant note about the likelihood of economic disparities and unemployment that will be caused due to new technological advancements, as Artificial Intelligence, AI, takes over the majority of the tasks that were once done by humans: *It is dangerous just to assume that enough new jobs will appear to compensate for any losses. The future is unknown with the advent of these kinds of technology professing social and political damages.*

This book is categorized into five sections, of which the first is the most exciting and pertinent. It concerns the coming innovative changes, which Harari first investigated in *Homo Deus* his second book. A great many people in Wellington, Jerusalem, Congo and New Delhi are just faintly mindful, if by any stretch of the imagination, of the ascent of manmade brainpower and its potential effect on their lives. It is indubitable, in any case, that the technological revolution which has taken full force right now will assemble into a gigantic power in the following couple of decades and will stand up to mankind with the hardest questions of ethics and philosophy we have ever had to answer.

He deploys, for example, a clever experiment to emphasize how far humans have come in creating a global civilization. Imagine, he says, trying to organize an Olympic Games in the year 1200. It was clearly impossible. Asians, Africans and Europeans did not know that the Americans existed. The Mongolian empire did not think any other political entity in the world was even close to being its equal. Not even one country had any national symbolism like a flag or an anthem.

The point is that today’s competition among nations — whether on the sports field or the stock markets — represents a global agreement which all of them have undertaken either knowingly or unknowingly and that global agreement makes it easier to cooperate as well as compete. What’s more, our worldwide understanding makes it simpler for us to collaborate just as we contend. Remember this whenever we begin to question whether we can take care of a worldwide issue like climate change. Our worldwide participation and collaboration may have made several strides back in the previous two years, however before that, we did step a thousand years forward!

Sprinkled throughout the book is some practical advice, including a three-prong strategy for fighting terrorism and a few tips for dealing with fake news. But, his potential solution to all problems comes down to this: Meditate. Evidently, he is not propagating that the world’s problems will vanish, if enough of us start sitting in the lotus position and chanting *Om*. But, he does categorically state that life in the 21st century demands peace and harmony of the mind and body — getting to know ourselves better and seeing how we contribute to suffering in our own lives and those of others.
In a world consumed by information overload, clarity is the only thing guiding us, Harari is additionally more aware than most about the dangers of ‘algocracy’ (A. Aneesh, the author of Virtual Migration (2006), coined this word as against bureaucracy, first putting forward the concept of “algocracy”, which is now widely used, to convey the growing importance and threat of algorithms in social life.) He elaborates on the circumstances that emerge when we delegate choices to machines, since they are supposedly better and definitely more efficient than the ones that we make. He says, “When we start to rely on AI to choose what to think about, where to work, and who to wed, human life will stop to be a show of basic leadership.” For example, envision Anna Karenina taking out her cell phone and asking for a Facebook calculation as to whether she should remain wedded to Karenin or run off with the dashing Count Vronsky; this case scenario, where algorithms are assumed as being capable of making such personal decisions as to whom to get married to, could have pernicious effects on the human psyche. Warning about ‘algocracy’, he recommends that people could end up as minor “information cows” if information was distorted to win the elections in certain countries and influence ordinary people to sway to popular opinions just by the means of a few algorithms.

Harari is a liberal and a true globalist, calling attention to sensible worldwide issues. He depicts the EU as a “marvel machine”, which Brexit is tossing a spanner into. He does not consider patriotism to be an issue in itself, despite the fact that he sees that for a large portion of our history, we have not had countries, and that they are unnatural things and difficult to construct, deconstruct and/or resurrect. Indeed, he supposes they can be certain, that no matter how the issue begins, amiable enthusiasm transforms into petty ultra-patriotism.

The writer cogently describes the hypocrisy of fundamentalist extremists by citing several recent examples. For instance, he notes in the book that the Islamic States killed a great many individuals, toppled archeological places and wrecked every indication of Western social impact in the wake of vanquishing portions of Syria and Iraq. Harari then includes that similar contenders denied supplies of American dollars, which had the faces of American presidents. They did not destroy the dollars as they realized their significance in the international markets, despite the fact that the notes celebrated American political and religious beliefs. Harari recommends that religious fundamentalists and dogmatists also have a plan at play. Regardless of whether it is an Islamic State, North Korean dictators or Mexican mafia, all bow before the almighty dollar.

However, the chapter on community was a little disappointing. Harari argues that social media, including Facebook have contributed to political polarization
by allowing users to cocoon themselves, interacting only with those who share their views. It is a fair point, but he also undersells the benefits of connecting family and friends around the world, which, on the other hand, is totally unfair. He also creates a straw man by asking outright, whether Facebook alone can solve the problem of polarization. Answering that, on its own, of course it cannot — but that’s not surprising, considering how deep the problem cuts. Governments, civil society and the private sector all have a role to play, and I wish Harari had said more about them and included it in the book to make it more interesting and complete.

As pointed out earlier, Harari contends that online networking websites including Facebook have added to political polarization by enabling users to cocoon themselves, associating just with the individuals who offer a perspective very similar to that of their own. It is a reasonable point, yet he does not credit the advantages of connecting family and companions the world over, which is an undeniable fact. He likewise makes a straw man by asking whether Facebook alone can tackle the issue of polarization. All alone, obviously it can’t — however that is not astonishing, considering how profound the issue cuts. Governments, corporations and the citizens all have a task to carry out, and I wish Harari had said all the more regarding their contribution.

Overall, it’s a compelling read with chapters raging from Nationalism to Meditation. It provides a deep insight into how Harari perceives the world around him and his thoughts on what our society may look like in the coming years without sounding apocalyptic. He presents a fair understanding of all domains of human interests in a thought-provoking depiction of changing global dynamics and Human sensibilities.