

Book Review

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* (London: Vintage Books, 2005, p. 480).

Being the author of *The Third Chimpanzee* Jared Diamond needs no introduction. His *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is one of the top ranked books available during the final years of the last century. It has won numerous awards which also include the Pulitzer Prize. This book has also been translated into many languages. This was the time when all other famous non-fiction subjects were focused on personal affairs, Diamond turned out the attention of the people towards mesmerizing explanations of 13,000 years of humanoid evolution and development. It is noteworthy that the book was also a theme of documentary presented by National Geographic. This book has been more influential and comprehensive than his earlier work *Third Chimpanzee* (1992), and later *Collapse* (2005). This book contains information about the histories of various cultures across the world and includes explanations of scientific methods, used to study these cultures. Starting from how the archeologists seek the origins or beginnings of agriculture to how written traditions developed and how etymology traces the movements and actions of peoples around vast geographic areas.

In *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Diamond aims at replying "Yali's Question." Author met Yali (a politician) in New Guinea in 1972, Yali enquired: "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?" Author also

raised and answered many questions like this, how some civilizations thrived and expanded sophisticatedly while some others could not? For Diamond, Yali's query destined to explain how Europeans became so capable of dominating, controlling and ruling the indigenous people of other civilizations and continents? The book examines all these issues deeply and gives an in-depth study of how some civilizations were geographically lucky for overcoming others. Diamond's main concern was over two major factors which affected the progress and expansion of human civilizations: one is the abundance and types of plants and vegetation, second is the comparative size of continents and its geographical location. The author claims that differences in failure or success among different human civilizations are because of the accidents of agriculture.

Diamond sought for an answer by probing into millions years history, mapping the migrations of early homo sapiens from Eastern Asia to the Pacific Ocean islands, from Africa to Eurasia, and from Siberia to the South and North America. He followed human beings as they progressed biologically. After that, his concentration turns towards some representative societies in order to illustrate his results. Diamond asserts the idea that the success of early Eurasians can never be regarded as distinctive European superiority neither rational nor genetic. However, this was all due to geographic luck. Diamond's key concern is to discard any simple cultural explanation of the seeming dissimilarities in cultures among different areas of the planet. Particularly, he debates that there's no vital differences in intellect between races, certainly, those who were and are capable to endure dangerous and harsh environments, like New Guinea, are smarter than those who have sedentary existence in the United States, as mere existence needs much more skill for former than for the latter. Much of Diamond evidence is anecdotal, accounts from his personal involvements with 'primitive' peoples.

In addition, the author argues that readily available supply of vegetation or grains like wheat and animal

domestication such as horses, buffaloes and cows that made Eurasian to be capable to develop so rapidly. Diamond explicitly claims that all the development and expansions of humans in one continent was not because the people here were more intelligent than other but all because of environmental and geographical factors. He, therefore, is of the view that non-Euradians struggled along smaller amount of nutrition and with far more difficult and tough crops like mazes. The lands other than Euradians were not suitable for domestication of animals (or the availability of animal was not possible for them). Moreover the larger size of Eurasian continent led its people to expand trade, travel and develop which was not possible for the inhabitants of other continents. *Guns, Germs and Steel* also explains the landmass orientation, the continents that are spread more towards east-west they can support related domestic life, while the north-south extension generates disparities or differences in climatic settings which prevent it. This basket of advantages of objective conditions has shaped the pattern of development for humans in Eurasia while Americans have only some ingredients. Moreover, Europeans could write and read which provided them an upper-hand over the ignorant societies. Knowledge permitted Europeans for drawing maps, in depth study of accounts by earlier explorers, and so on. Diamond also focused in his work, why Europeans had more writing skills which the other societies did not.

Diamond analysis is captivating and thorough. However, Many of the critics argue that it seems somewhat deterministic as though Euradians' supremacy was inevitable. On the other, hand Diamond does talk about other concerns to little extent, but not entirely according to the historians' expectations. Still, his work portrays an interesting view at certain factors, which nobody else did, which influenced and altered the course of humanoid development. Diamond had the strong writing and explanatory power which few other scholars can match. He is undisputedly a sophisticated thinker, *Guns, Germs and Steel* is a masterpiece that will prove influential for the years to

come. His intellectual triumph cannot be taken lightly. It's a thought provoking work throughout, continuously pointing to unusual questions as it responses old ones. This work is not without having flaws, however, its strengths contains interet for the readers exploring the arena of history.

This book is a remarkable achievement that has not only given a new dimension to the historical development of the world, but also contributed to the complex world as well. Overall, it delivers a qualitative and intellectual reading experience. Thematically, the work is very forceful and reflexes the author's keen interest, observation and experience. The book has a good value for the philosophers and historians and for those who use reason to think. Though interesting, yet not conceptually easy to be recommended for the common readers. This book presents very refreshing material to the already available works produced by the historians and scientist. It is a must read book for the historians.

Adeela Ghazanfar