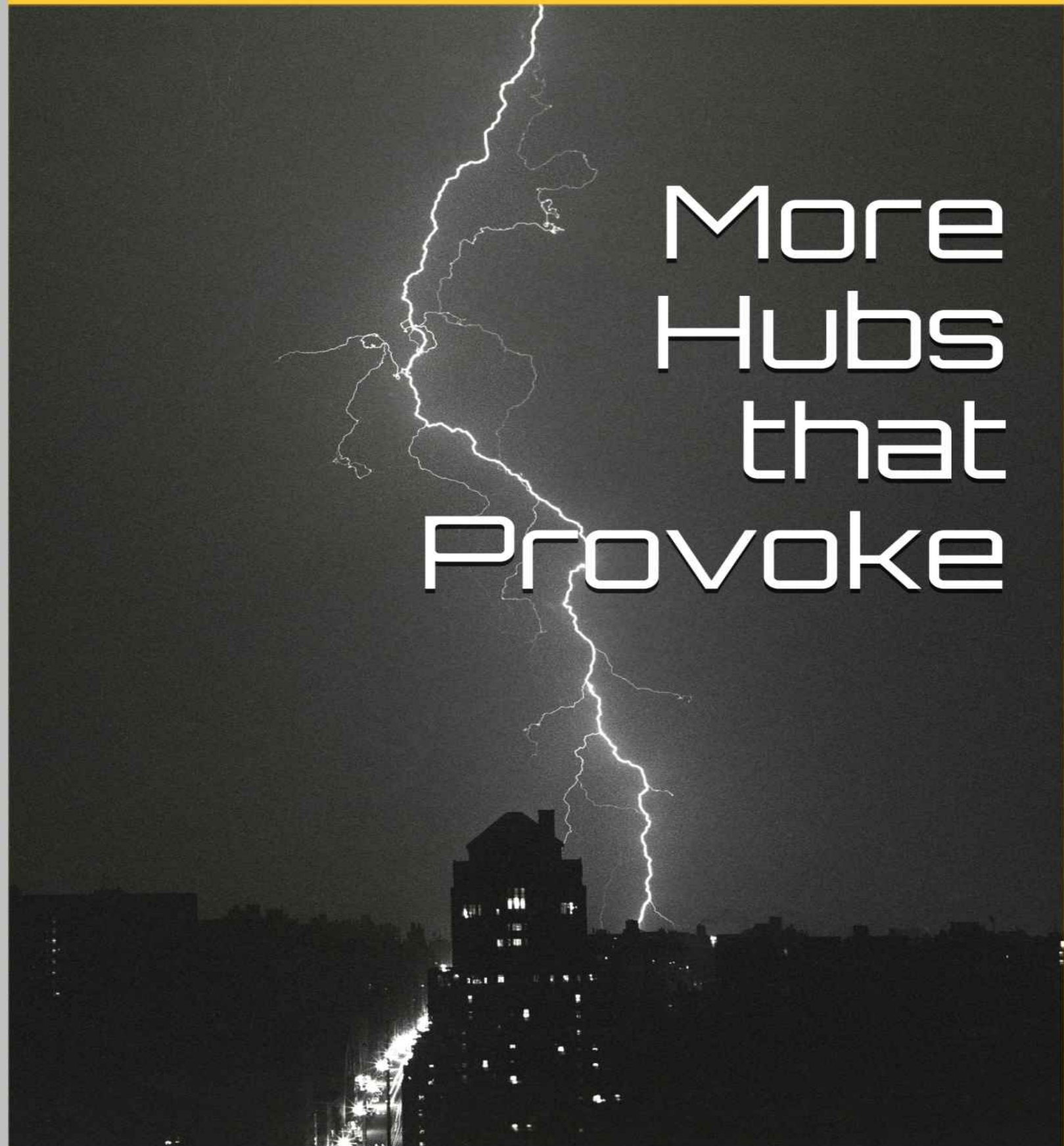


Roy T James

More
Hubs
that
Provoke



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These are my views on some of the issues that are always current in our society. They may not be fully and unquestionably right, nor will they be a farce, and completely devoid of merit.

Roy T James

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Chapter 1

How to get an idea about life?

Is there something that is unknowable? Are there things we can understand with our minds and, things we cannot? What is the idea in vogue? And, if there is something unknowable, isn't 'our life', top in the list?

Many explanations of life are alive at any time, thanks to one whole army of 'spiritual leaders' busy on the job, at all times, since the beginning of history. And it is a thriving profession, ever since. It seems the people have an unquenchable thirst, as far as theories in this regard go. That too, when for all other matters we are quite happy and contented with whatever ideas we possess. Even a new or useful theory gets introduced, it will have to go through a rigorous regime of proving itself, before the theory gets accepted. Why is it like this? I thought of investigating into it.

We know many things. We also hold a few things as beyond the mind, thus beyond understanding. Mind, on its part is conceived as an entity having its own limitations, posing another hurdle. All infinite and never-ending things are considered to be beyond the mind. And we attribute to everything, something infinite and never-ending. In such a case, it is far easy to be 'without any idea' of something, and be at ease, rather than to be aware of it, and be behind unknowns.

The difficulty in comprehending these things is accepted as something associated with life. And, everything that happens, the things we do, or think happens so, because of it. Should it be so?

Idea of space: space is everywhere, both inside and outside of everything. The presence thus has to be acknowledged of an infinite number of universes inside every atom in the universe. If a piece of a material is cut it in half, and cut the half in half and so on, it can go on. In this case, one will never run out of something to cut.

When you burn something, you are just turning the material into heat, light, ash and smoke etc. Also nothing is lost in this

reaction. Even the electric power that runs TV or computer is not lost. One can look at electric power as water flowing through the cord into the screen. This then sprays out into the room and back into the environment again. Nothing can be considered as lost. All that takes place is just a change in form, everything moves in a circle or cycle, back and forth. This, in a nutshell, can be considered as our present idea about material things.

In a similar manner, perhaps by using the process of elimination, extrapolation, or any other method of reasoning, one can learn about life. This, I think summarizes our approach to this question.

I feel we are wrong. We are going on a tangent. That too motivated by our predilection with the unseen dimension of life, the spiritual world.

Think of a group frogs residing in a well. And another group, one living outside. The cosmology of those inside may contain ideas of universe, as well as about the variety of species that reside in it, limited in its extent. For example, they would be having strong notions of cosmic background noise, as they will be hearing a lot of noise during their lifetime without actually seeing where the sound comes from. If the owner of the well follows a pattern of cleaning the well yearly, as most villagers do, those frogs may also possess certain ancestral knowledge about the end of the universe, and the events that accompany it.. A few ones might even succeed in predicting such events and getting acknowledged for their acumen. Getting recognition of divinity is likely, if we assume that some frog, in the past, happened to escape back into the well during the cleaning process.

Now think of the other group. These frogs will be having a totally different cosmology with better grasp about things and, will be free of illusions like cosmic background noise. Questions like the end of universe may not occur at all to them, having never experienced a discontinuity.

What does this story show? Where do we fit in? On all matters except those concerning life, we are like the latter group. (Assuming that reality exists beyond our perception) There is no logical necessity for an end, whichever facet of the universe is

under consideration. But when it comes to life, I think we are severely handicapped. Like the earlier group of frogs, our idea of life is only what we experience from inside life. Unless we are able to view life from a plane different from life, all the notions we entertain about life cannot describe life in full. (Nobody can say I understand what a globe is, unless one has a look at it, that too, from the outside of it) Moreover, our fondness of the spiritual dimension of life is effectively putting a brake in our quest for new ideas.

And for What Gain..

Now that we know about our limitations in learning about life, we can end up much wiser. By being more accommodating, as far as new theories go, and more willing, to tinker with the existing ones, we shall be injecting new blood into explorations in this regard. Future then shall become the golden age of life sciences. The question, what is life, is an apt one here.

Chapter 2

Altruistic Evolution - Need of the Hour

All over the world, human societies are in a state of disarray. Since commotions occur on a multitude of issues, like political, religious, or ethnic rivalry, constant attention is needed to keep those down, to maintain even a semblance of peace and orderliness. As a result, rather than preparing ourselves to probe and counter future challenges, the present is keeping us fully occupied. Why aren't human societies calm and serene? Where lies the problem? What can be done?

Where is the Problem

Let us say, how life appeared in human form is, more or less, as narrated by the theory of evolution. Which can explain what we do. All our actions are only natural responses to different stimuli, like other forms of life. Except that in our case stimuli could be real as well as abstract. Hence, I think the problem does not lie in our actions. Which is confirmed by the fact that though there is concerted remedial attempts from every nook and corner, be it political upheavals, religious decrees, or social engineering, each and every society remains as incendiary as before. That is, totally

different actions or approaches, which would have been the suggestions from these corners, remain equally powerless. True, religious, social, as well as political leadership recognize it, and constantly advocate some repair, mostly in the form of corrective or punitive action. But, since the very excuse for the choice of each, political, social, or religious leaning, is in the undesirability of the other two, such repair actions effectively do nothing but passing on the blame.

Where, then, lies the problem? A turbulent society is not an uncommon thing, for all species of life. But, unlike other species, human societies do not get corrected or settled on its own. And, if some correcting force is not available, or is insufficient, the society will surely meet its doom. Our history is replete with instances of decay and death of cultures, literary wealth of olden times show. Now, what is the correcting force, as far as other species go? Nothing but their living style, where, functional divisions and responsibilities nullify disturbing forces. But in our case, so far, repair actions were doing nothing but passing on the blame, with of course, (temporary) relief. We then forget about it, while the relief lasts, and then pass the blame, once again. Had we persisted, we would have had the occasion to experience or realize the root cause, the absence of a unique living style for humans.

The Root Cause

Some style would have evolved, had such frequent instances of unrest not been accepted as a part of our life, one can safely say. The living style should have been able to explain, why we do, what we do, and lead us to the answer we are looking for. Given that humans were intellectually oriented right from the beginning of their origins, since we have no information to the contrary, the living style that came to be adopted would have been taking into account, all the strengths and weaknesses of the race.

It didn't happen, then or later. We do not have a unique living style, even now. I think we continue to imitate blindly, other forms of life. Our mannerisms, our habits and all our priorities of life begin its journey from there. This, though we know, unlike all

the other forms, each human being tends to learn and adopt a style for oneself, for whatever one does. And we proudly do so in all matters not directly related to physical well being, like reading, writing, or mannerisms.

While we remain interested to learn more about life, and derive the benefits thereof, we seem to be uninterested to learn about the best way to live that life. This, though we know, nothing comes to us without learning. I therefore think, we have two issues in hand needing immediate attention, and a much larger question of great significance to our future. One issue is, learn, or derive the optimum living style for humans. And the other, incorporate that style for the race in a suitable manner.

(And the larger question, that is, how is such a grave situation going unnoticed since time immemorial, will also get addressed, while deriving the optimum style. Concede, as it stands, we are approaching all issues in the material plane logically and with reason. We always compare the actual with the desired, compute corrections wherever necessary, and apply those, to marry the actual and the desired. However, in all other areas, as our behavior is guided more by certain irrational interests than by natural propensity, a good part of human transactions lead to unintended consequences, which in many cases are highly destructive. While deriving the optimum lifestyle, since we will be doing a rather thorough study of human transactions, specifically of those lacking in reason, appropriate guidelines would emerge.)

Humans Lack A Style of Their Own

Let us once again look at the human species. The issue is a simple one. The appropriate ways of doing things, especially for those activities that are observed to be essential for life, do not come to one, on its own. This is quite different from all the other forms of life, where such an ability is there, at the time of birth itself. Rather than investigating into this with a view to establish whether these activities have a human equivalent, or not, we just copy other beings. (And we have no qualms in viewing it as a unique quality of the race, and feel proud about it!) One has to learn things in one's early years, if one is to enjoy the years, one

is capable of enjoying. Still we continue to imitate other forms of life, while not making any efforts to make an original study. I do not know whether we are aware of this, we make it a point to spoon feed the next generation everything related to life, much of which we ourselves are not clear about. And, more than anything else, it makes our ignorance perpetuate.

Before suggesting a living style, let me examine a few unique aspects of human life, especially to see, whether we have been missing any. One can safely assume, all the aspects we have not been missing would have already become a part of whatever lifestyle, we currently follow.

Is Man a Thinking Animal

I have heard it often, man is a thinking animal, and our lifestyle is largely based on this. I think the statement is not entirely right, since it promotes the idea that animals do not think. For whatever activities humans may do involving all dimensions of thought, something of comparable complexity exists in the animal kingdom too. I think this deserves further study.

In his bestselling book 'Thinking fast and Slow', Daniel Kahneman puts forward the idea of thinking as a mixture of two different activities. 'thinking fast', and 'thinking slow'. To put it in a simplified way, each of us is constituted by two individuals, one, identifiable as the experiencing self and the other, as the remembering self. Appropriate combination of the acts of thinking and the one who performs it, is the need of the hour, anytime. I plan to show some audacity by making a few suggestions here.

'Thinking fast' could correspond to immediate reactions, or instinctive response. Which also is what is done by all forms of life excepting humans, where, every stimulus is reacted upon instantly.

'Thinking slow' points to studied responses, perhaps the appropriate ones, when we consider humans. Where, rather than reacting instantly, the focus is on the effectiveness of the response, or the desirability of whatever real or abstract consequences it may lead to. Which could entail some amount of

reflection, with the help of symbolic logic or various form of language. In fact, the prime function of a language is nothing but this.

Now what is remaining is only a logical conclusion. 'Thinking fast' denotes animal instinct, what can be called instant reactions. And 'thinking slow' is what we should have been having in our minds, whenever we use the word, thinking.

Then, and only then, Man is a Thinking Animal.

What can we do, such that we become one?

We either stop 'thinking fast', or always resort to 'thinking slow', or both. Our natural response to every trigger should be to 'think slow', resorting to 'think fast' when it is not advisable to do so.

Now, let us see how to put a stop to 'thinking fast'. When do we react fast? When the mere presence of something calls for immediate response.

When do that happen? I think the general idea is, at any time, our response shall also be colored by whatever is affecting our minds most, at that instant. Which can be probed further. While each and every idea continue to prod our brains, wherever we are not able to come up with an instant and satisfactory answer to the issue it posed, a reaction will arise. It is this reaction, which is coloring our response. And the reaction, of course, would have been shaped by one's (lack of) priorities in life. (e.g. One who is very clear about one's priorities in life, seldom will face a situation, where one is affected by one's bad temper)

But, an instant and satisfactory answer could be there, which can obviate such instant reactions, if only one is ready to think and come up with an answer. Our idea should be to make thinking the default activity, as far as humans are concerned.

Why do we think? We think, because, the very act of thinking is immensely pleasurable. How do we derive pleasure from it? I think we constantly compare the outcomes, consequences, conclusions, etc., almost at every instant, with whatever idea, concept, or expectation we already have in us from the immediate past, like the results of a preceding calculation, or

those leanings that are sways there. And, when there is nothing left to compare to, we resort to action. When looked at in this light, there is no reason why humans should try 'thinking fast', especially on new things or ideas. Since there is nothing to compare to, or there is no opportunity to relish the results.

So, the more we are aware about the many sides of a random issue that comes up, the more solid, our propensity to 'thinking slow'. Which calls for keeping ourselves, always well informed and updated.

Our default mode shall then be that of 'thinking slow'. Now, since our natural choice in all matters will be the one providing most returns, we need to make 'thinking slow', one attracting the most benefits. Had it been so, one benefit surely would have been the discovery of the optimum lifestyle for humans, followed by its adaptation by all. 'Thinking fast' could be there, say, for emergencies.

Presently, all of us engage in 'thinking fast', since it comes to us effortlessly, as we are trained and encouraged to be so, from birth. Many of us happen to turn out results that are highly cherished. (Since the first thing we learn in life is to cherish such results!) As a result of which, they lead a wonderful life. They value those results, and get together, perpetuating it. And a human society is born. Many more of us, though not that successful, manage themselves to fit into the society. The few leftover, who are a failure as far as 'thinking fast' go, resort to 'thinking slow', producing matters that guide all, including those who think fast. (It is because of this unintended guidance that our society remains in one piece, since it would also have been compensating for the seeds of destruction, every instance of 'thinking fast' would be producing) And they remain on the borders, or as outsiders beyond the society, or, the society models itself to accommodate them in whatever form they are.

In Conclusion

To summarize, from the early days of evolution, humans did not make an attempt to identify the optimum style of living. Instead, they chose to hang on to the default, the lifestyle adopted by every other variety of life, something easily visible to them.

Which continued ever since. As a result, human race is always in disarray. To make a change, and derive the perfect living style, we should now begin on a clean slate. Fashion our life from the very beginning. We need to identify 'thinking fast' as another of our animal instincts, and resort to it sparingly, just as we do with other reactions of such nature. Humans could identify themselves as a form of life, where the default is to 'think slow'. And when that happens, gone will be the excesses, differences, or skirmishes that engage the race perpetually in wasteful and harmful ventures, bringing a bright future to our future.

Chapter 3

How to make humans live in peace.

Why humans do not live in peace. Why do they find enemies among their own, unlike all the others forms of life. What do we need to do? Isn't this a strong indication that there is something wrong with our lifestyle, or our priorities? What can we do, right now?

During all my years in the navy, what I ended up doing most often was to 'regularize', or to seek assistance from someone else for doing the same. Referred to by many different expressions, like tying loose ends, this is an important activity that needs to be mastered by everyone. Whatever work, one may do, unless one completes this activity, others shall not get a desirable image of it. One can therefore say, success in the professional sphere is in fact a reflection of one's ability to dovetail this particular activity with the unfinished jobs that happen to be left in one's charge, and that too, in a manner that does not leave a shadow on other agencies or offices. In fact one can take up and continue with whatever activity that pleases one the most, provided one can 'regularize' it by end of the day. And, unlike what is said in the books dealing with leadership, or management, the one who can regularize the best, is the ultimate winner.

'Regularize', in this context becomes an all pervasive word, most helpful to people like us who are prone to act without a well thought about plan. Sometimes it entails correction of records. Sometimes execution of certain defined process. Sometimes

both. The beauty is that there is nothing that cannot be regularized.

While in navy, more so, since I was in the naval aviation where time is always at a premium, I was required to find answers to every issue that comes up in the quickest possible manner. Since speed of completion was the prime parameter, and the search for an answer involving interaction with many different agencies, such answers would have been leaving some dots unconnected. And all such instances, though of a fairly insignificant nature, needed to be corrected appropriately, especially in view of surprise inspections we were always wary of, and the short-cuts that were always inviting. Now I fondly recall, how the 'global' power of 'regularizing' used to come to my rescue often. It was that activity, which made our day to day life a pleasant one, protecting us against the frequent and unwelcome surprises and other disturbances.

The above comes to my mind whenever I read about disturbances in human societies, the more menacing and radical ones being those initiated by some abstract reason. The deeper I think about it, whether it is about the commotion about different sects, religions, linguistic groups, political leanings, or economic stature, the harder, I am reminded of the soothing and calming effect, every instance of 'regularizing' used to bring along. (And how we used to find that as a good reason to celebrate!)

I therefore feel, a strong case exists for regularizing human society and the many transactions that constitute it. People can be busy for a full day, with whatever entertains them the most. And take certain corrective steps before the day ends. Since those are entirely dependent on each one's build, human nature, I think is the first entity that deserves attention. Especially since in all kinds of social disturbance or commotion, human transaction is the only common factor.

We all know, from the time of birth, one continues with the learning process. There is nothing that is not learned, and one's stature and capacity in life depends a lot on how good are the opportunities for this, and how well one utilizes it. Why is that we

never thought of making a handbook about human nature and teaching it in a formal manner.

Let us say there was a handbook, and it contained clear instructions about one's priorities in life. What those are, how to identify the one for one, and the ways to attain. How peaceful would have been our society while being keen, sharp, and receptive or whatever was most beneficial.

Presently, we are just continuing with imitating our past generations. As we progress with our life, everything new, we find is almost overturning some ideas we were holding as dear since long. And we happily continue with mimicking the past, but for the unavoidable changes, it might have caused. (Though those instances should have made us rethink about all other ideas we hold as gospel truth. For, such is the approach we take while dealing with all other phenomena, whether related to animals, plants, or inanimate objects. We also know, this is the reason for profess, the human race makes in leaps and bounds.)

What do we need to do? Make a handbook of human nature, specifying what it should yield, say at different circumstances.

Let us have a good look at the literature already existing on this topic, and see, whether it meets our need or not.

There are a number of perspectives regarding the fundamental nature and substance of humans, the gist of which can be as shown below. Abstract ideas about the physical body and its spiritual element emerge here, giving rise to as many divisions for each of these approaches as an imaginative mind can produce.

Philosophical approach: A set of views that humans are purely natural phenomena, aided and assisted by other such phenomena to reach the present. Further, labels placed by society introduce mechanisms that can make alterations to it. The issue of free will, determinism and morality underlies much of the debate about human nature, and, this being an area open to opinions, the debate persists.

Religious views: This hold that a human is a spiritual being which was deliberately created by God. Good and evil are to be

decided, based on how well human beings conform to God's hopes and ideas about man. For some religions, it entails adherence to certain rules of behavior, and for some others, it entails one to identify completely with God. The idea of an unquestionable entity is at the heart of all these, which gets evoked whenever the need is felt to end a debate.

In one case, the debate goes on with no answer in sight. And in the other case, the debate ends soon with reaffirming the omnipotence of God.

No, one will have to come up with a new one, as far as the handbook goes. Which in fact reaffirms my earlier proposition that we urgently need to regularize all that we do. And it is a vast field encompassing all that we dream, think, plan and do. Each and every one of us has the potential to contribute to it, provided we are in possession of such a book,

I shall try to write the first and most important chapter of this book, one dealing with the human predisposition with the superlatives or the extremes.

We tend to nurture our ability or skill since it leads us to a pleasurable experience. We start enjoying it, and we use it to do things more often, as it pleases us more. As an offshoot, we get appreciated as a talented one. Sooner than later we forget about deriving pleasure from what we do, focusing only on the comparison of one's ability with that of the rest. (The latter is much easier!) And in any comparison, what stand out are only the extremes, in one direction, or of the reverse of it. Which affects us everywhere, we losing the ability to appreciate ourselves being the immediate one. We grossly overlook the loss, especially because we tend to equate the particular ability with selfishness, which has been taught to us as an undesirable element of one's character. As a consequence, rather than self confidence that abounds in every human child, we all grow up with a whole lot of social needs at every stage, like that of attention, approval, recognition, and encouragement. And the surest way to gain it is to be the superlative, which also we learn from experience.

What is the result? A society that is always on the go, more or less specifically in search of the superlative. (All living beings are naturally desirous of maximizing comfort) The few, those happen to be very clear about the destination, and also having the wherewithal to pursue it, tread a stable path. Others also continue this search. However, since the destination, or the paraphernalia necessary for a fruitful journey, or both, are not clearly known to them, they falter. All people of all age groups, whether they follow successfully their vocations, or unsuccessful in their ventures, irrespective of spiritual, political, or other leanings, can be divided into these two. Countries shall remain healthy and flourish when the former is in majority, and widespread unrest shall prevail when it isn't so.

This is where regularization comes in. From the above it is well clear that human can also have a peaceful existence in this world, provided we do something that prevents the falter. For that, whenever one happens to be unclear about the destination, or feel inability in pursuing it, a mechanism should suggest an alternate path, bringing back stability. All stable systems shall remain stable as long as the fluctuations that may happen due to any reason do not cross the threshold beyond which correction is not possible. Thinking in a similar manner, one can say, as long as human feelings or reactions do not cross a certain limit, say beyond which, one becomes unreasonable, human society shall remain stable.

Now, to regularize. I think a good way is to establish a regimen that will put in place a self-regularizing human nature. If one takes a cue from the physical world, one can see, self contained systems have extensive arrangements of sensing on its own, external signals of interest and acting on it, while keeping the interfering ones away. We need to incorporate something similar in our lives. In fact such was the social life in the distant past, I think. All children were transferred to a centralized nursery, where they were given necessary lessons. (This would have been saving them from the present danger: parents, who were born in a different time, tend to confine the children to what they think should be taught to the children.) Which continued till they reached the age where they are fit to take up the roles they got

assigned for themselves. Having already learned about their role and task in life, it won't be difficult to set their priorities, which alone is enough, to self-regularize. And, unlike it is now, humans, like all other forms of life, will be engaging in activities that are helpful for living, while desisting from things that aren't.

Chapter 4

The Story of Human Names

Why is that humans have the practice of identifying each one by a name that does not carry any form of useful information or intelligence? And we stretch our imagination to find unique names. In fact it seems long back in history, names always carried some information that is relevant to the society, surviving old names, like Miller, Smith, etc., show.

An important lesson we all learn in our initial days of association, be it with programming, engineering, medicine, science, or arts, is that the variables, constants, or other entities, are to be named in an intuitive way. By doing so, it becomes easy to keep track of the ones that take part in various manipulations. Which will obviate such entities getting mixed up or lost, while ensuring a seamless flow of reasoning and judgment, an essential feature of success, anywhere.

Now imagine we all are named in such a manner. That is, each name will somehow indicate the salient features of one's connection with the entity (constant, variable, etc) that is of current interest. A name will instantly bring up many connotations. Think of the benefits. Every social transaction shall be meeting its desired end, and nothing more, and nothing less, since there is no mismatch between the sides that take part. Nobody shall be feeling the need to assert oneself, and neither will one feel the urge to ignore, since all those who take part in various transactions, are the ones made for each other. For example, if I need a loan, I can easily approach the person whose name shall be indicating, say a big heart, or if I need to dispose

off something, I can ask the one whose name sounds needy. Gone are the irritated, disappointed, or the thankless, and the ones who are otherwise pissed off.

You see, life is so simple.

Aren't humans an interesting lot? They very well know all this. How, having a meaningful way of identifying an entity, makes easy, everything that follows. And they apply this logic everywhere, in things living or abstract.

But they have been carefully avoiding this in naming themselves, which would have altered our history. And by doing so, they opened up an easy way for misunderstandings, redundancies, and other negative aspects to find its way in, and prevail. Which is leading to society that constantly face social disharmony and danger of self annihilation. (This is another proof to my theory that humans have an ulterior interest to keep everything related to life, complex!)

Then they rightly identified the prevailing danger of disharmony, and are always busy with corrective measures, some of them, permanently so. Surprisingly, almost all remedial measures are aimed at making humans more accommodating to such divergent views, ideas, and practices. Whereas, a more meaningful name would have eliminated the likelihood of such dividing forces, in the first place.

What do we need to do? Why can't we think of rolling names? Suppose one is given a name at birth, which points to one's salient features that are of significance, at that age. Identifying easily, the child's priorities, all grownups can easily prevent the child from getting upset, or hurt. All children will find themselves upset on fewer occasions, as a result. The name, then can undergo changes, at every stage that necessitate addition or deletion of features, like completing education, gaining experience, or other eventualities of interest. When we

communicate, each of us would naturally assume relevant roles, for example, one of authority, one of receptiveness, or submission, such that there isn't any loss. And, being fully aware at all times, each and every one will feel encouraged to live up to one's name, making peace only, to prevail.

Chapter 5

The Story behind Human Nature

Human nature is celebrated extensively. It gets used as a good excuse to cause inconvenience to others, or to tolerate excesses, or for something else, if it pleases one. However, a hard look reveals that all the failures of human race is due to it. And what about the instances of success? Well, suffice to say, all those who have achieved great success, other than the instances where brute superiority did the trick, did deviate from the paths that would have been the natural ones, then. Hence it won't be incorrect to say, one needs to go beyond the limits set by one's nature, to achieve success. If so, doesn't this call for a rethink about human nature.

What is human nature?

I feel, currently we think of humans to be differing greatly from all the other forms of life. But, do they? As far as the functions essential for the maintenance and progression of life is concerned, there is no great difference. Both are well equipped to perform all such functions, each following its own style and extent. But on closer look, there is a difference. One's nature, for all other species of life, support unfettered growth. For humans, unless they keep their nature in check, they will be meeting their doom, very soon. And humans perpetually are busy doing something, where, each one will be busy with something that is in consonance with their nature. All this points to a big difference. And this difference is the one, which has come to known by the term human nature. This I think needs some explanation, since a few questions arise instantly. What is it? How did humans acquire it? What effect does its have on human race? And, What is the optimum way of handling it?

How do machines acquire a nature

Let me start with inanimate objects. I think mainly owing to its environmental particularities of use and the personal priorities of the user, one can say, things acquire a sort of personality. To mention an example, think of a kitchen, a workshop, or some such place having many knives of the same type. For a particular use, one will be relying more on a specific one. And, because of this, it could get used more often, fortifying its position as an apt knife for a particular need. In some time, each piece of implement shall acquire certain peculiarity of its own, which incidentally can be noticed in its rate of wear or the frequency of replacement. When a necessity arrives, the chosen knife shall be the one, where the particular peculiarity is apt for the need.

Things are a little more clear when we deal with more complex objects. Think about putting to use, a machine, an instrument, or some other expedient. Say, a mechanism to pump water.

As we install it, we shall be learning of many requirements necessary to put the particular pumping system to work satisfactorily. Like appropriate fittings, joints, and connectors to fabricate and match various elements of installation, provision of electrical power, incorporation of safety devices, or protection from weather. As a result of which, quite a few devices, systems or equipment shall form a part of this installation. And to this, some more will get added up, as and when we face bottlenecks, both while installing it and during the run-in-period thereafter.

Thinking in a similar manner, each and every living being acquire its nature while growing up in its environment, which, over many generations, the environment being more or less the same, becomes attached permanently. However it is susceptible to changes, domestication, for example. We can say, it is not at all difficult for a living being to be freed of its nature, provided, we feel the need.

How the Machines are Freed of its Nature

Over a period of time, these issues shall be getting sorted out, which shall be rendering many of the elements that have become a part of the installation, redundant. What normally happens in a

well run case is that we would strive to utilize some of these redundancies, sometimes as spares, sometimes for improvisation, or for selling as scrap. However, when the machine undergoes a planned overhaul, we discard all these and bring the machine to its specified consistency. This in fact is the main purpose behind an overhaul, which is an essential part of all such systems.

How do Humans Acquire a Nature

Something similar is true, in the case of human race too. In our long journey, which we now imagine as one from the state of a primate-like being to the relatively civilized ones of today, human race must have added quite a few particularities, whether of lifestyle, of behavior, of ambition, or of outlook. (Even if it began with an intelligent design, situation need not be much different) We continue to cling on to these, though none are relevant, and quite a few are rather dangerous, as far as the needs, desirables, and living style in our current environment goes. But, quite non-intuitively we have been hanging on to these. Labeling these as the unquestionable elements of human nature, we make it rather everlasting.

In fact each of these elements are snippets of whatever was the current events of significance, some time in the past. These would have been serving an actual purpose then. And later, even after getting replaced, these continue to remain with the human society, joining a vast kitty of abstractions. And does not leave us, even when situation demands so.

Why we are Never Freed of our Nature

As mentioned, many of these would be the ones that got discarded at opportune moments in the past, when external or internal forces made our forefathers view some part of the current living style as superfluous, inconvenient or dangerous. And remained with the human society, though redundant. But, unlike the way mechanical elements got treated, there was never a planned attempt to identify and eliminate the redundancies of life. On the contrary, later generations started holding these in very high esteem.

In fact it is worth noting here, how, while dealing with machines, the full range and power of human intelligence always come to fore. We very well know, everywhere, some form of de-weeding is necessary, at intervals based on the conditions and circumstances of use. Note also, how we take pride in our ability for identifying the cardinal as well as for overlooking the insignificant. But all these are missing, when we deal with our own fortune!

The result is: we have successfully added another abstraction called 'fond memories', which made it all the more attractive to hoard these for no reason. Not only that there is no gainful use, but also the time and effort spent on these, effectively put a brake to the forward momentum, the human race would have acquired. Consequentially, there is a delay in identifying, receiving and responding to fresh input. In short, we are in a vicious circle. Because of the hoarded memory, fresh input gets colored before we have a chance to react. Hence our reaction is incorrect, which lead to unsavory results, and we go back to our memory.

And the Way Ahead..

I think what is happening is, unlike all other species of life, humans are in a continuous process of learning their response to inputs. Memory, in fact the past responses stored therein, makes it easier to form a fresh response by providing an easy guide, a reference, or a standard. The same becomes rather difficult, when the input, and consequently, the desired response, are changing fast. Or, in a fast changing world, it adds to the constraints, one is already in. Therefore, the race needs to undergo a planned overhaul at certain intervals and shed much of the stored responses, such that human nature always is in sync with the current realities.

I find it rather amusing that we haven't thought about this earlier. By now we know. Unlike other forms of life, humans have to inculcate and develop necessary routines, patterns and other requirements, and changes in habits, for the very need of staying alive. But why is that, here we overlooked the need to de-inculcate the old ones? When we know that clearing the

unwanted or the excess is an essential need to maintain the health of machines, or of the domesticated animals, why didn't we institute a regime to discard old and unwanted experiences. Which will result in a lifestyle that shall also release mankind from the influence of the past?

I think we are just following whatever we have come to observe among other forms of life. But all the elements that are unique to humans have so far not received the attention it deserves. Therefore the current understanding of human nature is grossly inadequate, to say the least. Though many of the behavioral patterns we proudly brandish may happen to be helpful to us, it is limited to functions and activities we share with other forms of life. (Even then, one cannot be sure that there isn't a better way, unless one makes an attempt to find one!)

Human race needs to go back to the plotting table, and come up with fresh ideas about how to live, and originate human nature.

Chapter 6

How to Make Human Society Peaceful

If all that is wrong with us is in the misplaced or untimely choice of our responses, how can it be corrected? Well, let every form of response flourish. The one most suitable will naturally survive.

Today, we understand that infectious diseases like flu, chickenpox and pneumonia are caused by microscopic organisms – bacteria and viruses. This, the germ theory of diseases, in fact opened our eyes. With this knowledge, we have developed ways to treat and prevent infections, or diseases spreading unspeakable tragedy.

The Issue

In a similar manner, won't a new and different approach to mental health empower us in facing issues of harmony in society? I think, yes, it will. In fact all our issues in the behavioral plane can be grouped as misplaced or unsuitable responses, whether as actions, reactions, or other expressions, which would have been the desired choice, elsewhere. To me, while seeking the origin of such an incongruence, one thing is becoming clear.

Our adherence a particular set of responses, which we term as the appropriate ones, does have the potential to make any natural response, unacceptable. And it is a huge canvas, limited only by the current ambiance. Or, we involuntarily suppress much of our natural reactions, at least some of which could have been the best suited ones at that instant. Or, our reluctance to accept any other kind of response even when suggested so with all sincerity, could be making our position untenable to others. And the cascading effect of the original response followed by such unsustainable actions and reactions by various entities that come across this, results in instances of unrest, that too, for no specific grounds. (Actually this is why we find it difficult contain unrest, there is no real reason!)

Once the unrest sets in, the original, in-congruent response of some random entity that would have caused it, gets submerged in a sea of reactions. Each such reaction assuming a degree of depth, urgency, or other parameters depending on the instantaneous feeling of intensity or abhorrence felt by the reacting entity, the responses tend to assume a form that will be unrecognizable from the original action of in-congruence. Also, the response can occupy a wide canvas, depending solely on things like creativity, imagination, or aesthetic sensibility of the respondent. As a result, anybody trying to find an answer to the instances of current unrest will never have the luxury of having an inkling about the in-congruent actions, the original cause. In addition, each such response (from different entities) being wholly dependent on the dramatic capabilities or exhibitor leanings of the respondent, those who prod further will find it difficult to see beyond its bedazzlement. This is the reason, I think, all instances of disharmony, the fundamental cause is never found. (In fact due to the same reason, much of the writings on such topics are quite abstract, philosophical, and perhaps scholarly, dissertations)

The Cause

But the fact is, when our (conditioned) response start producing such established, dazzling reactions, it becomes an issue. That being true for the natural responses from each of us, turning anything into an issue is dependent only on current or local

sensibilities or both. For example, see the religious sphere. Rather than the 'hate' content of an event, what really would spark an issue is the current, local reaction to certain happening. You see, an event does not maintain its 'hateful' nature, except in a social group, which, for certain reasons would have painted it so. Rather, that particular group is a conditioned one.

Or, we can say that conditioned behavior is acting like a germ. Just as germs are spreading diseases without our knowledge, our dazzling, conditioned responses are also spreading issues of mental health with no intervention from our side. (I agree, presently we do not see this as issues of mental health, but we must) Thus, whatever social issues are there in our midst could be happening as a result of some of our conditioned responses. Either in the form of impediments we impose on our conduct, or unbridled celebrations, or both, either by us, ourselves, or by others.

What are we doing now? I agree we are always aware of the incendiary nature of our society, the most common places to observe sparks of a destructive nature being language, religion or ethnicity. But events do not elicit an appropriate reaction. Since, whenever we observe a violent reaction, say in matters concerning religion, rather than looking for the source of violence, we direct our efforts to the particular aspects of religions that took part in it. And we may issue corrective or punitive actions to contain those aspects. This goes on, as it had been since the dawn of history. Whenever the disturbance becomes too much to handle, we resort to some kind of urgent, symptomatic cure that can make some difference. And forget about such issues till the next time it erupts.

(Such a lackadaisical approach to an issue that is crucial to our well being needs to be investigated further. Contrast this with the material world. Here, I think we approach even less significant issues with an open, alert mind, and keep looking for answers. And answers come, making our life more and more comfortable.

But, when it comes to the spiritual world, we are very clear about two things. One, we are unwilling to question spiritual matters.

Two, we are quite vehement in our objections to others doing so. Whereas the opposite is true for the material world; not only that we are quite happy to question any matter relating to the physical world, but also we are eager to help others doing so. Why so? Are we afraid that we may stumble upon some answer?)

My Answer

What do we need to do? I think we need to be more inclusive, while teaching ourselves about correct responses. In a given situation, rather than assessing a few of the responses as correct, and some other ones as wrong, we need to mold ourselves to appreciate all responses as valid, a few of those perhaps more appropriate at the given instant than the others.

For example, we already know there are many dimensions to each issue. Some of those, I myself have tried to portray, through my 'hub's. What stops us from re-evaluating all our priorities and responses, in the light of those? Perhaps that can result in a complete shift, to our system of education? Which will usher in a society with a different set of ambitions, desires, etc. that are more conducive to peace and harmony?

But, it is Nothing New

In fact we already know this. We apply this philosophy in our appreciation of the material world. For example, we know, different elements, compounds, and other stuff need to go into the constitution of things, to meet the desired requirements. And we never rest, taking one line of analysis, even if it led us to the desired result. We know that every constituent is there to meet some need, or cause something undesirable, or both.

But when it comes to the societal plane, we have molded ourselves to think of all responses other than a few chosen ones, unnecessary, or dangerous. And by constantly suppressing some of our responses, we are encouraging unknowingly, instances of unrest. Therefore, we need to permit a wide variety of responses from all, leading to spontaneous evolution of priorities. And the actions for it should begin at home, don't be adhered inflexibly to whatever one is attached to. Remember also, a flexible adhesion

makes a stronger joint, one that can withstand more forces of disruption.

The Ultimate Answer

That completes all that is needed to put an end to instances of unrest, which is only this, let each and every reaction bloom. (Selective breeding of ideas, the favorite pastime of the world since long, is still possible. But at a much slower pace, one not discernible easily)

Chapter 7

Isn't there room for A New Lifestyle

I have written many articles, each of which featuring a new or varied look at some part of human nature. I think most of it veers around one idea. How incorrect or misplaced we are, when we continue to react, appreciate, or sense, as we currently do. A few of the questions that were examined illustrate this, like, how harmful is unity, why the current pattern of education is fit for a change, etc. And it is not difficult to come to this conclusion, whatever is common to all these issues is the one that deserves to be attacked first.

If we are to proceed with the re-examination of all that we currently consider as wrong, unsuitable, or inappropriate, the very first entity that pops up is our current lifestyle. I think there should be no doubts about this, since it is a prime common factor, which in fact engulfs everything else.

Our current lifestyle is one of permanent settlement, and the earlier one can be considered to be a fully nomadic one. When we compare both, one thing stands out.

In a settled life style, everything good or bad in a society gets distributed in a rather narrow centralized way, limited both in time and space. Whereas in a nomadic one, all this happens in a broad, decentralized manner, spreading fast in all dimensions.

As a result, in the former case, people get fed up of good things fast, since they are virtually confined to the same spot, where they are repeatedly exposed to the same ambiance. And when we look at the bad things, the torment continues with no respite. In spite of all this, people continue to revel in their fortunes, since they hardly get a chance to learn of any other way of life.

But in the latter case, exact opposite happens. Here, the good gets distributed, making more people happy. When the bad follows suit, inconveniences

smooth out due to spreading. Also, at any time, they shall remain better informed about whatever possibilities that may occur about enhancing their means, outlook, and happiness, always being in touch with a wider cross section of the world.

Undoubtedly, the nomadic approach is the better one.

But we chose to be otherwise. And are continuing to remain to be so. Perhaps farming did the trick, the agrarian community of that era couldn't have afforded to be always on the move. We hence follow a lifestyle of settlements and communities, even though the good dies here fast and the bad lasts longer. But, since the original compulsions of the agrarian society are no more applicable to us, we can very well do a rethink.

Now, if we are to utilize the benefits of the progress, we made so far in the areas of science and technology, we can make a suitable mix of these two lifestyles. This can let us enjoy the benefits of both, while avoiding the many disadvantages, each have.

Chapter 8

Life or Lifestyle, Which is Evolving, and How?

Human lifestyle is constantly evolving, and, all the disquiet that is seen in our societies is a direct result of this. What is necessary is to have a theory of evolution in this regard, which can guide the populace to arriving at the correct priorities in life.

There is no sign to show that we are evolving. But there are far too many signs that show, human lifestyle, or the set of priorities that constitute it, evolving constantly. Why didn't we think of a theory in connection with this, which could have helped in the adaptation of the appropriate lifestyle for humans, without leaving the human society in perpetual turmoil, as it is now.

I think there was room, waiting for a theory in this regard. And I also think, it happened to get filled by the very first theory that came up, since it turned out to be a brilliant one, though it not the right one. And its brilliance effectively stopped further research.

Let facts speak for itself. There was neither a sign that necessitated man to evolve, particularly in physical appearance,

nor was there another one, that showed partially evolved ones. But there were enough signs, which showed everyone nurturing a constantly evolving set of priorities that greatly influence the way the life progress, for one and all. We call it by the noun lifestyle, which is nothing but the aggregate of such a set of preferences. So, though in reality, more than humans, human lifestyle is the one which is evolving, and since we noticed the former, differences in appearance took better of us, prompting one to come up with a theory.

I think it happened thus because of this difficulty. Far too many aspects related to our lifestyle show signs of gradual change. That can lead to many variables involved in the examination, and can make the study on the mechanism of its evolution, an impossible one. As a result human lifestyle has become a complex stuff, and is progressing, perhaps in a haphazard manner, without any worthwhile contribution from us, whereas, it is our input that makes our life pleasant everywhere else. (We take pride in the fact that our life is complex, as well as belittling other forms for having a life of simplicity and ease!) Also, we are always ready to make any alterations to whatever is our way of doing things currently, just to make our life more pleasant, or to let it progress in the same manner. That is, we agree to make any changes anywhere, just to enable us to continue with our current lifestyle. Why is that, in spite of the admirable progress we make in all spheres of life, like technology and medicine, human life does not flow smoothly?

In fact here we are lucky. Human life can be simplified as a complex set of preferences. And there is a single point which controls all such preferences, whether it is about social life, professional one, or whatever. It is nothing else but one's God, and it makes our task, a really straightforward one. More than whether man is a product of evolution or not, or rather than investigating into the vast foray of unpredictable priorities that form our lifestyle, we could spent all our efforts in only one direction - debating about the evolution of God. Though there are far too many signs indicating to the evolution of God, we dismiss all such signs with a stock response. 'Whenever the ancients made a reference to animals, natural wonders, or some other

sign as God, they really were having whatever is our current idea, in their mind.'

In fact, God is a unique idea, which, while dictating and controlling all that we think or do, splendidly supports itself. One can see it evolving every day, when our current idea about God shapes itself to keep in pace with new developments, especially in science, while simultaneously and silently altering our appreciation of all things. (All this happens on the quiet. The moment a theory or observation that is likely to cast a shadow on the existing idea of God, becomes rather indisputable, the very idea of God turns a little in the abstract, just enough to circumvent or nullify the effects of such a theory.)

While discussing the evolution of religious belief, I found one book mentioning something very important. When thoughts like that of God originated in the early humans, the idea of God would have been one as real as the mountains, waterfalls, forests, thunder, lightning, or eclipses, which all were thought to be the homes from where Gods came. The idea of God was something quite similar to whatever idea they possessed about such magnificent sites. As time went by, they learned more about all these wonders. That these are, more than wonders, real, consisting of different substances, having certain composition, and identifiable functions, all of which alterable to a great extent, by their effort. And they would have learned to tame some of these for better living. But, all these while, the idea of God remained intact. How did this come to be? To make this a possibility, we constantly attribute style, power, and a fertile imagination to the ancient ones. (We attribute them with ignorance, everywhere else!) Some of them think in a particular manner and unearth the secrets of nature, while some others think in a manner exactly opposite to it, to keep the idea of God safeguarded from any change. It seems all those who thought, deliberated or wrote about this are in total agreement here.

What can explain the above? What makes us exhibit such a context sensitive intellect?

As far as real things go, the ancients must have felt encouragement from all quarters. And the pursuit of the secrets

of nature, naturally followed. But we know, for imagination to flourish there should be something, like the society, to appreciate and support it. A king, like in earlier times, or a government, or other organizations that offers encouragement. One can see, the prevalence of great poetry, or impressive sculptures, indicate as much to the supportive nature of the society as to the creative talents of that era.

In this light, our assumption about the ancients having an expressive, fanciful, and fertile mind seems to be wrong. Ancient world could not have been one where talents of imagination flourished. You see, the very activity of staying alive would have involved protecting themselves from the dangers posed by the weather and the wilderness. And a lion's share of human effort would have been spent here, leaving hardly any time for reflections, debate, or discussions about the routine tasks involved in progressing one's life. Rather than ascribing motives of supplication, exploration or experiment, I think we should see the remnants of the distant past, more than as products of imagination, as a record of observations, or reactions to all that was impressive.

Look, all animals are capable of doing something no man can do. This is all the more striking, if we think of the days before the appearance of implements or weapons of various nature. Imagine of the discomfort, an unfriendly animal would have caused, and the help or benefit, a friendly one could have been of. It is only normal that such beings become a revered lot. For each and every activity that man cannot do, there is some other being from the kingdom of animals, who excels in it. Man was comfortable with his limited superiority.

Time went on, changing our perception about things, and altering greatly, the capabilities of man. We reached a position where there is a ready explanations regarding almost all things. That creates a vacuum, since there is nothing to submit to. We hence started to imagine of some entity, and present ourselves to it. Here one needs to admit, our fertile mind came up with admirable acuity. And provided a simple, but effective answer. Think of all those we used to submit to, as two, rather separate, entities. One we can see as well as sense, and another we can

only feel. Which will be giving rise to a plethora of objects, both real and imaginary, all of it fitting into three heads, namely, religion, science, and those not belonging to either. Religion happened to get accumulated with things we can see and feel, as long as one can do it successfully. Then science comes and takes over a few things, starting with areas where religion clearly falters. Things that can belong to either heads also got into groups. Like the many facets of arts, and those belonging to neither religion nor science. These can come to great use, where none else fit.

Science is progressively displacing religion and God. I think the final gasps of life is coming out from both religion and God, painting an ambiance of violence everywhere. A discernible replacement for God and religion is evolving, bringing this to an end, even if none of us recognize this. (It can happen much earlier, if we pay heed to these thoughts.) And we shall then follow the true lifestyle, which we should have been following, from the days of 'big bang' itself. (We wouldn't have been facing this situation had the theory of evolution addressed the spiritual sphere of life instead of the biological one. Since Darwin took an easy path and examined the living forms physically, similarities could be seen among different species of life. Had he chosen to examine the less obvious features of life, origin of deities would have been the outcome, and perhaps, an insight into how our priorities change. Which could have thrown more light on the spiritual dimension of life, and how to bring it in tune with the current priorities at all times. Not to mention of the good that would have happened by now, had human efforts been directed away from wars and strife)

About the Author

He has taken to writing on retirement from Indian Navy in 2013 after a lengthy career, during which he had the good luck to come across as colleagues, subordinates and superiors, a real, wide cross section of India, and quite a bit of the rest of the world. Every second person, during those years, that one had to do business with, thus being from entirely different backgrounds and consequently exposing a kaleidoscopic view of society, he

couldn't but reflect on human transactions in many colors, each of them leading to a horde of imponderables, human or non human, living and non living.

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