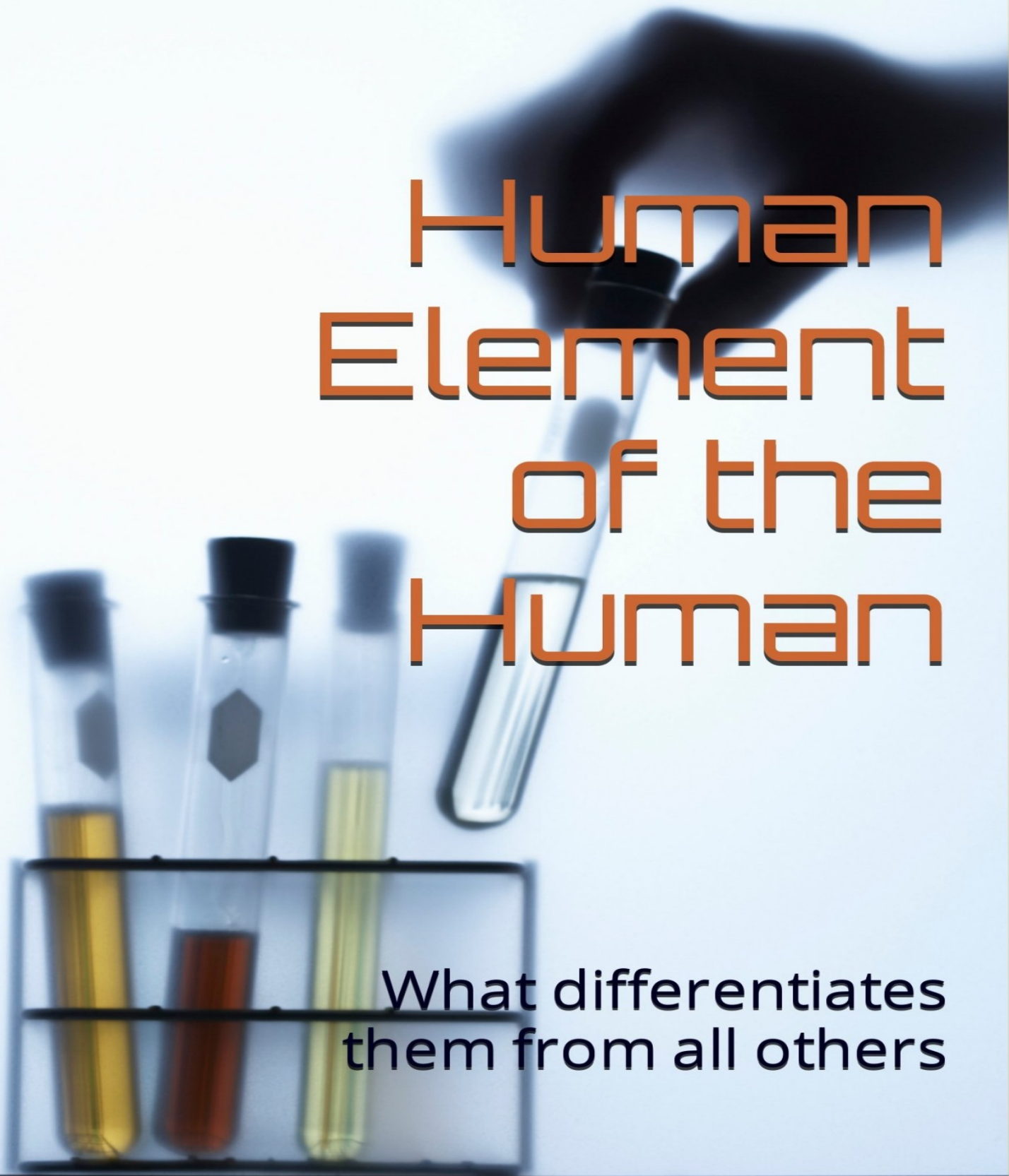


Roy T James

Human Element of the Human

What differentiates
them from all others



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I find, there is no one, who doesn't say, as far as human life goes, there is a lot of room for correction as well as improvement. I also find, though there is no one who says so, there is a need for a clear, unique definition and idea about human life.

History of human race is nothing but an account of the creation, growth, or destruction that continued to take place while attempting to improve all that is part of its life. It still is going on in the same manner. Either we are applying wrong corrections to right things or we are doing right corrections to wrong things.

I therefore think, before we answer, what is wrong with our life, we need to find, what is wrong with what? If something is wrong with the part of life that we share with all the others of the living world, or it is with the part of life that is exclusively human, I think, we should not follow the same path or cure. And that brings us to an important question, what makes the human element in our life?

Chapter 1

The Idea of Life

Human Life is like No Other Life

What is our idea about our life, and how does it differ from that about the life of all the other forms of life?

Between the human form of life, and all the other ones, there are many differences. However, the one about the spirit, take the cake. But, those pertaining to appearance, strike us immediately. Also, we instantly notice,

appreciate, or denounce, things like food, clothing, or shelter, at any event or occasion. Or we remain fascinated by the amazing things, our intelligence keeps doing at odd times, while remain indifferent to the ones, all other forms of life do at all times. And we rarely register, the fact that each form of life is endowed uniquely and decently, and there is no need to take those as anything special for the human.

So, effectively, overlooking the big difference, we are always after issues that do not pose an issue at all, to all the others of the living world. As a result, other than for filling the little time we allocate for reflection and other forms of intellectual pursuits, we are busy with questions that mostly originate out of our own choices.

Why? I think, life, for a human, is but an expedient. Of course, a very important one to let one maintain a chosen lifestyle, one pivoting around a set of aims and ambitions, or answers to the above-mentioned questions. Whereas, for all others, the lifestyle each of those follow, is the one best suited for maintaining its life. So far, we have been looking at other forms of life and learning about our life. Consequently, while we are thorough about the life we share with all others, we are not very clear as to whatever constitute the unique elements of the same. Or, we have been overlooking the 'human' element of our life.

Chapter 2

The Core of Human life – Spirit

We Ignore Facts

Not only this, but also we have been giving hardly any attention to the composition of spirit and the role it plays. On top of it, we have been compounding it by assigning a fictitious role to it, and celebrating it with abandon as human specific. Had it not been so, our natural curiosity would have been on the act, producing another gem like gravitation or quantum theory. And also, by declaring spiritual affairs as an essential and unique part of us, we are discounting, the likelihood itself, of a future scrutiny.

We also Replace it with Fiction

By now, the fictitious one has usurped the original position held by the spirit, and has completely replaced it. On top of it, since long, we have been acting as though our ideas about the fictitious one truly describe the spirit, giving us an erroneous idea that spirit is something we have already mastered. Since this idea specifies spirit as something unique for human, we all tend to be quite pleased to accept it, with of course, a sense of pride. Naturally, future studies on this topic will come to a halt, at least, on ideas other than the one, we think we have mastered. Consequently, though we are seized of it at all times, we are not at all becoming clearer about the true nature and consistency of spirit.

Our understanding of the fictitious role being based mostly on contextual needs and desires, we are unlikely to realize this mistake. But, we will always find something amiss in all this. We are aware of it and are trying to counter it by giving rise to a set of immutable cloaks, called religions. It is as though we all have reached a mutual agreement that any idea that tries to throw some light on those fictitious stuff is beyond commonsense.

Why did it happen so?

As I suggested earlier, we have been consistent with an inquisitive mind, when it came to all that with and without life. We found it highly rewarding and beneficial to apply all that we learn, and perhaps, remain mesmerized by it. Therefore, little did we realize that we are happily going ahead with our ancient ideas and propositions, as far as the distinct facets of the human goes. By accepting this as another human specific phenomenon, we successfully got rid of future corrections.

Let me try to decipher the ideas that are prevalent, attempting to explain all those from first principles.

Spirit – Fact and Fiction

Spiritual comes from spirit, and, spiritual will head to where spirit heads. So, let us see where does spirit come from and where it will go.

What role does it play in our appreciation of the reality all around?

A little reflection tells me, spirit is, what we first sense, appreciate, desire, or learn. For example, a child names and recognizes all that catches its

attention using words, phrases, or expression that depict the impact, each article will be giving rise to. Such an impact will be dependent on an amalgam of contextual needs and desires, much of which even could be from external prompts. The identity or name of things and beings become the notable effect, each can make on the child. Like, a pet becomes a ‘bow-bow’, or ‘miaow’, and a car may become, a ‘pom-pom’. And, even in our later life, spirit will be performing such a function or role, with, of course, the words or phrases changing appropriately.

But, we make it a point to spoon-feed it with grammatically correct names or expressions, and take efforts to instill it, everywhere. As a result, the child picks up a lot of data or other stuff for which it has no natural taste, and goes on to become a master of an edifice. Nothing much will be there, binding the child, either as one, or as a grown-up, to such an edifice, other than the appreciation, or other temporal benefits, it stands to get. We identify this edifice as the material world, where the child may be partly fitting in, if at all. (Otherwise, the child would have learned all this and much more, but, after taking time for picking up the bricks and the mortar on its own. But, then, it would have been completely at home with whatever may be the resulting edifice, just like all other varieties of life.)

Chapter 3

The Growth of Spirit

Fiction and Facts Mix

When it starts mastering the material, especially where it blends well with its persona, the corresponding spiritual elements fade into oblivion. Or, those spiritual elements act as volatile variables. At any time, the remaining ones are the ones making the edifice of whatever spiritual world, it will choose to be a part of. That makes, one’s spiritual world as nothing but an aggregate of the material elements that currently do not mix well with one’s persona. Naturally, the spiritual world shrinks, as the child grows up. And, the more one learns and familiarizes with the material world, the more rewarding and beneficial, it becomes.

Geocentric Outlook

Now, it should be clear. Unless we devise ways, specifically to keep the spiritual side alive, the material shall become the sole inheritor of the human world. This would have happened, that too unnoticed, if, at all times, there is a continuous and gradual transition to the material. But, in reality, it is not so, because of our particular approach to the spiritual. For example, take tides. Long back, we used to believe, tides are caused by certain spirit. Then we learned of the astronomical theory about it. Instead of letting it withdraw from the scene, we now believe, the same spirit causes the actions proposed by the astronomic theory. In all the issues, where a new or improved idea challenges the spiritual one, we follow a similar path. Naturally, there will be plenty of humps, and a perpetual state of disagreement between the material and the spiritual. We tend to take such disagreements to heart, leading us to term those as totally separate entities.

I think, we should have been following a learning process that result in a smooth transition from the spiritual to the material. This could not be so, since we want to continue with the spiritual unchanged and the material, dynamic. To make it happen against the forces of nature, in this aspect of life too, we are going ahead with a ‘geocentric outlook’. An outlook we started to entertain, when, both the ill that happens, and the good that falls, instead of examining critically, we accepted as a fallout of the contorted path traced by a few objects of the sky. Else, we would have been taking pains to appreciate instantly, every aspect of the material that confronted us, in a manner that left nothing much to explain or justify.

Mixture appears better than Facts

Or, we added every unclear element to the spiritual, and we are left with many notable aspects of our world that lacks explanation. But, we are happy with the world as a repository of such phenomena that enthralls us. Again, because of the geocentric outlook, we ascribe rather hazy properties to each of those. As prompted by the outlook we entertained since childhood, we are naming the unknown material properties, spiritual terms, effectively marking those for future reference and attention. Of course, future generations could have been registering all such good intentions, and acting on it. And it would have made the progress we made so far, look silly! But, it couldn’t be so, since, we are yet to adorn a heliocentric

outlook, and are stamping the past merely as the dark days. Due to which, all those spiritual terms become hanging variables. And, instead of paying attention, at all times, we keep ourselves busy to ensure that no harm comes to those, even from the wayward glance of a random individual. Towards which, not only that we manufacture stories with plots and scenes specifically crafted to accommodate each of those, but also heavily and violently restrain those who try to fiddle with the same.

Chapter 4

The Blossoming of Spirit

Spiritual World comes of Age

So, spiritual elements appeared much earlier than the material ones, and continued to be in action. By being human specific, these would have been attracting our attention in full, and our fanciful thoughts came up with scenes to fit them all. Naturally, our imaginative talents came to full bloom, and a big edifice that can be called the spiritual world came to exist. Which, in fact, is nothing but a set of contexts and circumstances when all that one sees, feels, or experiences, can be made to appear the way it pleases one. And, was having a lot of relevance where much of what we needed to do for living, result in a not-so-pleasurable experience, as it was in the early days. Also, in the present times, we seem to be resorting to a journey to this world, whenever we are not in full contentment. Yes, in our life, discontent is not at all an uncommon, and, spiritual elements continue to enjoy a prime position.

Why Fear Unknowns?

After having taken a prime slot in our life, spiritual elements go a step further. It starts dictating the fortunes of human race. Why? How did it happen so? I find, almost all the literature I could lay my hands on, attribute this twist to the fear of the unknown. And it seems, all are in agreement here.

I differ. We fear an unknown, only when we can link it with a known element that is capable of causing injury or danger. As far as the spiritual

go, there is no such element. Rather, we, in childhood itself, was introduced to the spiritual elements of life in a rather scientific manner. Where, we started by familiarizing ourselves with fatherly and motherly figures who engaged in nothing but love except on matters that are to be avoided. Only those that took to spirituality as a profession, or those who volunteered, needed to undergo a tougher regime that called for strict discipline, and talents of imagination, perseverance, and skill. Naturally, spiritual matters were endearing to all.

Moreover, look at any form of life except the human. None will be making a deviation from the established pattern of living. Whether it is about food, way of organizing the stuff necessary for its life, or of finding and making a shelter, they all follow the same old pattern. There is no room for such a fear, they just don't deal with unknowns.

Now look at ourselves. Our pattern of living is always on a move, about which, we revel. Our food habit also is on notice, where, if not for environmental factors, we will invent reasons like scientific or medical discoveries, for discarding the same. And we will have to shelter the planet from the ill effects of the way we shelter ourselves. In all these, we freely venture into unknowns till it becomes a known. And, when it becomes a known, only after we confirm that it can cause us danger, we start fearing it. Rather, we will still be venturing, but, with caution. Thus, here also, there is no room for such a fear.

Chapter 5

My View of Spirit

Outsource the Spirit

In fact, spirit can be considered as nothing but the natural result of a human exercising one's ability of imagination. We freely exercise this, when we are young, where we are not answerable for the consequence. On growing up, we resort to this, less often, as the aftermath of the previous instances of imagination keep us fully engaged and most often, divert us to a path of action. Naturally, the only ideas that would have been surviving are ones we nurtured as a child. These ideas metamorphosed into spiritual elements, and

those already would have been close to our hearts as the first ones to impress us.

Perhaps, early humans felt it as too childish to acknowledge such a descent to something they wanted to hold in high esteem. So, they would have sowed the seeds of the popular idea that these elements originated from religions. Or, they would have been honestly believing so, since, religion acts as a repository for all that is not clear.

I differ again. Religion came as a result of outsourcing spirituality. The early generations would have had to face fast changing scenarios of implements and its spirit, and keeping an account would have involved very many cumbersome steps. As they learned more and more about whatever was to be confronted, idea of spirit, or that of matter, would have needed constant improvisations and alterations. Of course, such steps would have been putting a spoke in their daily living, prompting them to come up with something that can bring comfort. They were faced with a choice – matter or its spirit. In the earliest of times, both matter and spirit would have been equally vague to us. Of the two, spirit would have been more amenable to manipulation, since it did not call for sustained efforts, dedicated instruments, tailored processes, or appropriate procedures. And, not only that matter called for all those, but also a lacuna in any of those could be leading to acute inconvenience, if not a disaster.

We then took spirit to our hearts. And we gladly encouraged such elements to dictate our path, which would have been far better than whatever was possible in the existing technology. But, as time passed, we would have picked up necessary talents, know-how, and the wherewithal, to handle matter with relative ease. Many of us became well versed on the material aspects of matter that could add convenience, comfort, and new vistas of deriving pleasure from life. Spirit proved to be a tougher nut to crack, as it was imagination intensive. It would have been a really difficult task to keep pace with the fast growth, which was happening everywhere else. So, our forefathers tried something that will become very popular later. They outsourced spirit, and religions came to exist. How?

From Spirit to Religions

Presently, spiritual elements are thought to be an offshoot of religions. And religions came to exist as the earliest medicine we found to battle the fear that used to engulf us, I find as a popular rationale. I do not agree at all. A casual glance at the kingdom of the living ones is enough to show, human is the most lazy among the whole. Particularly due to the higher degree of intelligence, this form of life will always have a lot of free time. And is constantly is on the lookout for ways to make living more pleasant or to reduce the load of meeting its needs. (As I have mentioned elsewhere, those well-endowed with mental and physical faculties, took to this route, and made the material world. Others took to an extravaganza of imagination that led to the spiritual world!)

Consequently, they would have been exposing themselves to more and more implements, things, and associated changes in style and circumstances, all adding to the complexity of living. In addition, they would have sensed a heavy burden in manipulating and organizing spirit, and would have been on the lookout for an escape. They also would have been realizing, the more they associate with the material, the easier and better, their life turns out to be. It would have then been a conscious decision to outsource spirit. And religions came into being, which could meet all that was done by their spirits. Now they could enjoy the comfort, the spirits used to bring, while not obstructing the good, the material was promising to bring.

Why Religions Triumphed

To appreciate further, let us look at the path we traversed for reaching here. Yes, we began our life with tough times. As days went by, things became better, and we kept learning, how to learn better. But, the few who happened to choose the spiritual, were free, rather encouraged, to let their imagination run riot, the wide canvas of religion affording unlimited opportunities. I think, nobody will disagree, establishing a fanciful spiritual domain is the best move, ever made by our forefathers. Look, at a time when the ability to create an ambience of comfort was not at all existing, and when the weather and the wilderness were serious threats, the opportunity to derive pleasure at will would have been a boon. Or, spirit is as much old and complex to

understand, and also as freely amenable to exploration and study, as matter is.

From what is discussed above, the human race had a fantastic childhood. There was nothing to lead to a persisting state of restlessness that would result in the best of creations or the worst of wars and leave plenty of remnants of the times. This perhaps is the life we lived from the beginning, till we met a substantial singularity.

Spirit, the Moderator

As mentioned, we outsourced spirit, and religions came into being. These could satisfactorily meet all that was being done by the spirits, with hardly any effort. So, we have in our early history, very many religions centered on, at least an equal number of deities. And, very many gods would have appearing or withdrawing whenever the necessity arose to accommodate, say a particular expression of spirit that was rendered useless or redundant by a change in fortune like an invention or a discovery. Or, to explain something that was not able to address the current threat or an explosion of logic. Or, to smother a violent spirit, acting like the moderator in a nuclear reactor.

I think, then came the singularity of omnipotence. Now, such transactions had to come to a standstill, as there will be nothing that an omnipotent one cannot confront and answer. But, how did it lead to a violent society?

Look. Till now, every spirit stood equal chance of becoming an adorned one. For, in any context, references originating from all quarters shall be automatically restricting itself to the domain of interest. The most powerful spirits of a domain would have become the reigning gods, who could keep under control, all that was within its domain. The only exception would have been when the spirit associated with the domain of interest is different from that of the domain, which is nothing but whatever, one was seized of. So, in any case, matters pertaining to the domain of interest take the primary spot.

So, to be powerful, one only needs to keep at bay, challengers from the same domain. And, violence came and violence went, violence did not spread, since, the god of one domain played no influence on that of another

one. For example, ancient heroes of the Greece or Rome or elsewhere remained as one, till vanquished by a man or a god. And, when that happened, they ended up forgotten, since, another one had already taken that position.

Chapter 6

The Singularity of Omnipotence

Spirits lose Vigor

Omnipotence changed all that. Firstly, it removed the dynamic nature of god as well as spirit, and effectively removed from our life, all the different kinds of spirits. Now, there is no natural way to accommodate, say a particular expression of spirit that was rendered powerless or redundant by a specific invention or a discovery. Or, to explain something that was not able to address the current threat, or a negation of logic, without resorting to a high degree of imagination. Had we realized this and shaped a spiritual domain that is a good fit for all events and circumstances, things would have been different. Rather, we resorted to a short-cut. An idea to administer all the spirits of all the domains from the same summit, which got termed as omnipotence. Which was a welcome step, especially in those days when keeping track of new things and its spirits would have been posing a big challenge.

The Perils of Omnipotence

Now, when things go well, I concede, omnipotence is of great help. Here, we need to devote our attention to a single entity only, which can leave us with ample time to pursue our priorities. *(In fact, this free time is the one that resulted in the industrial revolution. The omnipotent one, effectively dethroned many with specified might, or limited area of influence, or those specialized in certain kind of ills or favors. Quite a few ‘effects’ started to lose its ‘known’ proponent, and we were saddled with fresh, unanswered, questions. The inquisitive ones among us took it as an ocean of opportunities, and produced wonders.)* Also, there is no room for a clash due to a mismatch between the varying needs and desires from followers of different gods. I think, because of these two reasons, our forefathers

happened to overlook the earlier-mentioned redundancy and were quite happy with omnipotence.

But, when things do not go well, we will be in a quandary. Both for the remedy, and for the appreciation of its effect, we need to exercise our talents of imagination to its brim. Such talents showing a wide variation over the whole populace, there will be considerable disparity in each one's appreciation of both the remedy and its effect. Some may be happy with it, and some, disgruntled. Violence is nothing but the manifestation of the disgruntlement.

Presently what we are doing to explain this disparity only stands to worsen the issue. We are taking the easiest route of naming an abstract cause. Where, we are declaring the variation of remedy as well as its effect as something due to the differences in the degree of faith or an offshoot of improper religious observances. Firstly, this introduces a great degree of subjectivity in these matters. On top of it, this will make people see, appreciate, or accept, only the extremes in the practice of religion. As perhaps known to us all, belittling another religion, or blaming another observance, is a popular way for assessing or comparing religions, or for that matter, anything, that too, an easy one. We will be saddled with two loads. Irrational practices from one's own end, and the dangers posed by inter-religious rivalry.

The present state of our world is the final result. Now, there are plenty of things to lead the mankind to a persisting state of restlessness. Consequently, the world shall witness the best of creations or the worst of wars and leave plenty of remnants of the times. This perhaps is the life we will be going ahead with, at least, till we meet a substantial singularity.

Chapter 7

The Next, and perhaps the last, Singularity

The Path Ahead

Well, though I can't think and name such a singularity, I know what good could happen, if we meet one. Spirit can become something embedded in

everything, whether real or abstract. Just like a child identifying spirit by the effect it makes on itself, a grown-up will identify a spirit by the effect, one has in mind. And, when that happens, both the spiritual world and the material one will be fusing together into one, becoming the distinct world of the human. The spiritual side of life, and the material one, will coalesce, and the whole of humanity will metamorphose into a new creation.

Naturally, unlike now, where we are blindly following other forms of life to arrive at a style of living, we will be finding a unique way of living in this world, afresh. No more shall our life-style, land us in a disease. No more shall be the earth, wary of our life. And, gone will be the issues, we have been grappling with for long.

Now we can think, observe, ruminate, and put into words the ultimate theory that shall describe and define human life.

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 nonliving.

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