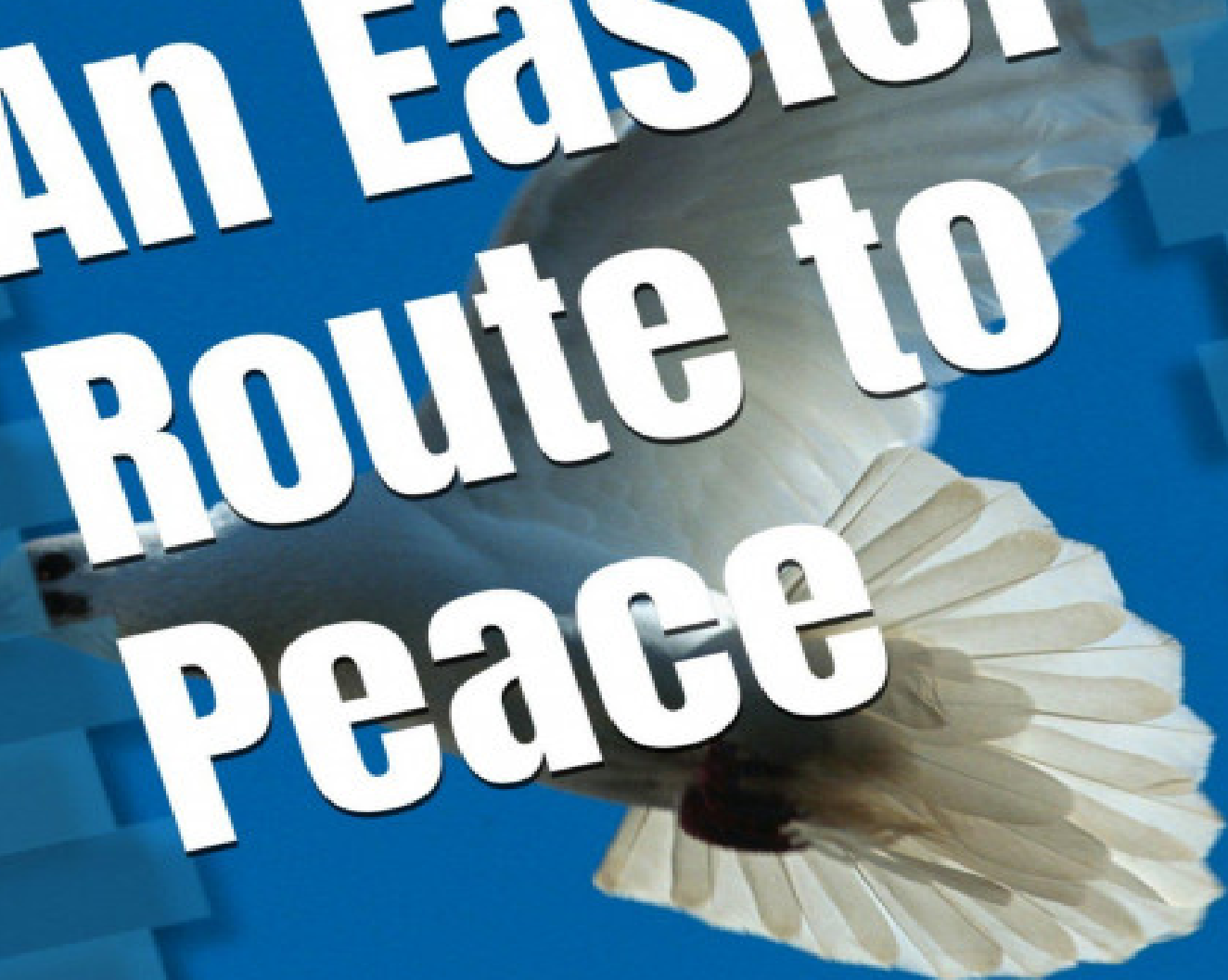


Roy T James

**An Easier  
Route to  
Peace**



# **An Easier Route to Peace**

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*Published By: Roy T James*

## **Introduction**

In my book, *An Easy Route to Peace*, I addressed one of the most relevant questions of the day. How to make our society, a naturally peaceful one? "What can we do to make human societies peaceful, while not restricting people from progressing with their call?"

I think, it is not difficult to say, peace will sustain, as long as none of our actions or reactions fail to meet an instant, and appropriate, end. And, in this book, I proposed a way to make it the 'default', as far as human society go. But, now I have a question. Why should, our actions or reactions that are not dealt with instantly and appropriately, pose a threat to peace and harmony?

Let us say, actions and reactions should not be a threat to peace, even if directed inappropriately. If there is a way to achieve this, won't it be an easier route to peace? In this light, let us examine all our actions and reactions. To make matters simple, let us scrutinize culture, which is a treasury of all that our actions and reactions lead to.

## **Chapter 1**

### **ABCD Techniques and Culture**

I think, prioritize, is a well acknowledged management tool, and I have seen it in action in many and varied activities of importance. Sometimes called ABCDE technique of management, it is nothing but a planned and monitored allocation of resources. Put roughly, here, each constituent part shall get attention in proportion to its relative significance. All parts proceed smoothly, no time lost in waiting for any kind of intervention. The end result is, the activity as a whole becomes rather self-correcting, and also shall progress without the need of constant supervision.

I also think, we have been missing this from where it is most appropriate. Take human nature, one, which effectively is an edifice having as many parts as the population of this planet. We all know, there is no aspect of human life and living that is even remotely self-correcting. In addition, there is always an issue or two, in spite of constant supervision, not to speak of the new challenges that keep us on toes. Of course, we are very well aware of this, and many of us, especially the ones specializing in spiritual affairs, are always coming up with fresh techniques to manage or regulate human life.

I have a question. Why can't we think of an ABCD technique of self control? Had we employed and formalized such plans and procedures in the management of human affairs, wouldn't the world be missing all the wars and strife? Wouldn't that make, human society, a peaceful one by default? With this idea, let me see, how it will look, if we are to make a start, now.

Where to Begin?

Where shall we begin? Naturally, with something easier to comprehend or respond, human nature being a huge canvas.

What is the most widely visible part of human nature? Which part of human nature is in action, all the time? Undoubtedly, culture, without which, no human society exists. This only can account for almost all that we celebrate, and also, all that we find difficult to put up with. Or, not only that cultural values take a prime position, but also it contribute handsomely to all that is not 'OK' with the human society.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Mountain of Culture**

What is culture? In fact, it is nothing but a collection of contextually relevant abstractions mixed imaginatively, and pragmatically. So, there are many sides to culture, each capable of arresting our attention in full. At any time, depending on a few parameters like the environment, one side shall be assuming prominence. And, it will have a say, not only on all that one does, but also on all that one despises.

What do Culture do?

Here, we can make a good start by looking for the most significant side. Now, what is the most cherished part of culture? In fact, much of vagaries that culture can lead to, or the many and different ways it can manifest, finally results in things that have meaning or appeal that greatly varies with the circumstances. These give rise to 'social waves' that can land with a feather touch or a violent rock.

In the vast sea of cultural values, many such wavelets rise and fall, leaving hardly a mark. But, the waves resulting from the

expression of freewill do not do so. Such waves, more often than not, overturns, at least, all that is nearby.

In fact, culture can be functionally equated to an array of combinations of freewill, and abstractions like courage, fear, love, shyness, or happiness that are commonly found among all people. Or, we identify someone as cultured, only if freewill triumphs over all other human traits. A cultured one will 'know', when to respond and how. Like, when to feel shy, when not to, how it should be shown, and to what extent. Or, whether to show anger, and if so, how much and at whom.

Therefore, a study into freewill, its manifestation, and its repercussions, can enlighten us more about the value of cultural values. Look Qualitatively and Quantitatively In fact, among all the attributes, freewill is the one that enjoys the foremost recognition and value, as far as humans go. Freewill, in this case, is far different from whatever is the freedom that can be observed among all other beings. Put in a nutshell, it refers to the propensity to reach absolutely independent conclusions, even when it involves inconvenience or extreme danger, to oneself, or for all, and for reasons real as well as abstract.

(Historically, we have been confusing this with the free expression of one's choice in the activity of interest, which is more or less present among all forms of life. I think, because of this reason, freewill is not getting due attention. Each of us will be more attracted to things that are distinctly human, than the common ones.)

The Mathematics of Culture

To understand this better, let me introduce two kinds of mathematical equations.

One, which is quite common and clearly understandable to all. Where, an equation will have both LHS and RHS, and we manipulate one side (most often LHS – left hand side) to get the other side of our liking. All the activities that can be called meaningful or understandable, belong here. Everywhere, there will be a result that will have a link with a cause.

Two, which is not so common and not that clear to one and all, where, one can manipulate both the sides simultaneously. These equations can represent all our transactions that are beyond the limits of our senses, or those that cannot be directly experienced. Here we manipulate at will, both the LHS and the RHS. The more imaginative of those manipulations appear to us as derived knowledge, philosophical treasures, and many other forms of literary wealth, of which we pride ourselves. Here, a result and its cause need not show a link. Almost in all cases, what we celebrate as wisdom is nothing but the ability to originate such a link.

### The Role of Attributes

In fact the life of an average person, as well as that of all forms of life other than the human, almost fully consist of activities that can be represented by the former style of equations. Here, all the milestones and components of living, like success, failure, happiness, or sorrow, occur in a manner that keeps the current equation, desirable as well as complete. If it doesn't happen so, one will be left with voids that will always be leading to some form of consternation, unless kept refilled. Generally such a void gets filled by the random activities of play, love, or fight, that

pervades every bit of the space, humans come to occupy. To doubly ensure this, each one of us is also having a few individual traits, which, in fact can enable one to make sense, even when no one else can. (This can also be spotted quite easily among all forms of life, though to a much lesser extent.) In fact, the many facets of a human, and the widely varying ambience that gets associated with each such facet, ensure that no trait goes without a room for expression. And, as mentioned, these expressions keep those 'voids' filled, letting us lead a contended life.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Role of Culture as a Whole**

What do culture do? How to find the effect of culture? I think, a quick and easy way is to add up the effects of the individual components of culture. To proceed further with this, let us take the most significant component, freewill. Other components also will be having similar functions, let us say.

#### The Strongest element of Culture

The role of freewill, just as that of all the other traits or milestones of life, is not difficult to fathom. It is yet another one of the traits, which is normally in a dormant state. However, it comes handy like a trump, at every moment when all other traits fail to fill a void. Therefore, in normal circumstances, nobody gets excited or agitated wildly on matters of freewill any more than the state of flux associated with other facets of life and living. I think, normally, each of the elements of culture shall be taking a role of prominence when none of the other ones merges appropriately with the current context.

But, there always will be a few, who do not fit into the above description. Some of those may even be known as geniuses. This is where, the latter style of equations come to use. Once we notice the 'genius' flag, we tend to forget about the simultaneous manipulation of the LHS and the RHS, and apply the same yardstick as the one earlier. But, it is clear that we cannot be expecting results similar to the earlier case, while manipulating the LHS and RHS simultaneously and at will. This where the idea of freewill comes to use, when it enables us to overlook the irrationality. Thus, in whatever proposition, one may find difficulty to digest, freewill becomes a universal expedient. So, an indigestible intrusion or a potentially inconvenient suggestion can easily become a tolerable one, once we apply the concept of freewill.

Is Freewill, a Standard Part of our Life?

One can perhaps make out, one thing stands out. Freewill does not add any real value, whatever may be the circumstances of use. If that so, how come we consider such a thing as the most coveted of our possessions? And are ready to face acute inconveniences, just to be able to exercise it? I think, before we could realize the true extent of its power or use, freewill has become a major player in human life. That should be calling for a reassessment of all that we have come to be.

I am sure, all will agree, humans need to learn how to do, before they actually do. This is true for all the activities of life, whether of food, letter, or all other things. In stark contrast, they have started their life well before they could learn how to live, and adopt a suitable lifestyle for themselves. Naturally, we came to acquire a default living style. And our life thereafter is a



continuous struggle to maintain the default. In addition, we also need to save the planet, the environment, and all other living things, from the ill effects of that style. We are further compounding the situation, not only by refusing to learn afresh, but also by incorporating new changes or corrections that enable us to continue with the old. Certainly freewill and our lifestyle are not a snug-fit.

## **Chapter 4**

### **We Shape our Life to Suit Culture?**

A couple of questions arise. What made us choose the current style of living? Can't we start on a clean slate and arrive at the appropriate living style to adopt?

I feel, our style of living is essentially the same, ever since the birth of our race. Also, there is no reason to think that our current living style is not the ideal one for this form of life. But, we do not live our life, following that style of living. (We, perhaps would have been living thus, long back. As I propose in my book, *The Unsure male*, we chose the present way of life to meet a big challenge.)

Or, we do not really know, what our living style is. In reality, we are constantly engulfed by a varying set of priorities, we entertain at any moment. And, our actual style of living models appropriately to be in tune with such priorities, making the appearance of a lifestyle, which we take as the appropriate one. (I think, rather than our priorities dictating our lifestyle, our lifestyle should have been the one that sets the terms for everything else, just as it is with all other species. This deserves further study)

Yes, we can start on a clean slate. But, for that we need to erase everything that is inscribed on its surface. Accordingly, we have to do two things. Firstly, identify clearly the 'surface' on which we have built our 'human' existence. Thereafter, make that 'surface' free of all that we added since the day we have been having such an existence.

I think, the current version of the human has its beginnings in the industrial revolution, and the success we achieved in bringing under control, a whole lot of issues affecting our health. Even the most celebrated of human attributes, cultural values, owes to it. The huge changes in productivity, along with mechanization of agriculture, presented us with a phenomenal amount of free time, and that brought all our dormant traits, out in the open. Each of the dormant traits, which would have been serving the purpose of filling 'voids' in human interactions, started to attain a larger than life status. Culture, in fact is nothing but a direct result of this, a cumulative effect.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Let Culture Shape Itself to Suit our Life**

What does culture do? Culture, by making a few traits more appealing than others, and by suppressing a few, destroys the randomness that exist here. Needless to say, things like social noise are no more in check. Where, in the absence of culture, all those traits, together used to maintain an ambient social 'noise' due to mutual interactions, just like any other species of life. Culture, which in fact is nothing but an accumulated version of our traits, moderate, or effectively suppress each such trait, but for the ones that gels with it. And, there will be someone from the human race to espouse each trait. Since randomness is

gone, now there is no mutual annihilation. Consequently, all the suppressed ones shall wait for its turn to peak somewhere, before disappearing by merging with the ambience.

This is, what can be called the 'Lenz's law of culture'. Those traits that get such an opportunity, though vacate or dissipate fast, adds considerably to the existing social 'noise'. Those that do not get such opportunities, remain, ready to flare up at the next spark. This causes a rather 'stuffy' atmosphere to permeate, where arguments or misunderstandings flourish, effectively pointing to the death of culture. More so, when the trait in question is a prominent one like freewill, and the resulting commotion becomes good enough to cause large scale instability or destruction. Also, the larger the crowd, the greater, the commotion.

But, in reality, no permanent damage takes place, and culture does not die. And, in the course of time, even though quite a few of those traits disappear, culture remains put. Why? Here, something human-specific is in action. I think, we acquired those traits during our long journey from a brute to the modern man. Other than celebrating those as our cultural wealth, we haven't been paying any attention to those. Now, all of us are aware of the existence of such traits, both the ones of helpful nature, and those destructive. Other than, say, abstract musings, such attributes enter into an exchange or a discussion, only when those are identified or linked with a living person, either past or present. Had we been subjecting the traits to a critical examination, just as we do about all things without life, or about living beings other than ourselves, we could have done away with the destructive ones, and made the other ones stronger.

In fact, we tend to identify each trait with certain people of prominence, or we generally overlook the ones that are not found among prominent people. Now, we immediately link those personalities with the cultural or social flares, mostly terming the noise as violence initiated by those. And as a result, not only that we miss the abstract, cultural elements that gave rise to it, but also bring to a stop, any possibility of further investigation as well as correction, since it is already concluded that the violence is due to these personalities. Thereafter, we will be shaping our reactions based on the images we happen to nourish about those people, and directing those responses in support, or in opposition. Effectively we have increased instability and violent nature, and sealed it by terming it as the signature of our race. Or, culture gets immunity against the forces of time and tide, since, the forces of natural reaction are redirected, effectively, to random people.

### Let Culture follow its Natural Path

It is important to remember one thing. Culture, in reality, is nothing else but an accumulated version of individual traits. In the natural flow of time, each such trait shall be losing or gaining its position or relevance, owing to changes in lifestyle or living conditions, if nothing else. This will have a direct effect, culture giving way to local and temporal changes, for example, in outlook, or in fashion. Therefore, culture can remain as a permanent and active component of the society, only if the current populace takes efforts to nurture it against the forces of time and tide. Else, it will be taken over by the reigning forces of the society, like fashion, revolution, or ideas.

Such corrective efforts also add to the instability in the society, and, more importantly, make us mistake the social noise as a necessary and fundamental part of our society. A direct consequence is that we give undue importance to this noise. We attribute it to the loss of cultural values, and make all spiritual and social leaders to constantly wail about it. Due to this, we forget the fact that the noise is from our efforts towards imposing the vanishing traits. Additionally, everything old now looks attractive and devoid of this noise.

Think of Laying a Path

Suppose we provide a 'virtual garden', where, such traits can either blossom to glory on the quiet, or die on the quiet and quieten the ruckus that can result. Which is what happens, when people enjoy themselves. Here, one will learn to derive pleasure from one's own efforts, results, and reactions, rather than by outshining others. Since no trait will be waiting for an opportunity to blossom, there will never be a need to suppress a trait.

You see, we can easily bring lasting peace to a society. We only need to devalue a bit, cultural values, with freewill taking away much of the devaluation. Or, we can at least stop adding to its value, by giving less importance to matters of freewill. In which case, culture is bound to take shape as a dynamic and volatile variable depicting the current state of a society. This, in fact should spell doubly good fortune. The dynamic nature makes it to be of instant merriment for us, while the volatile nature releases us from the clutches of a distant past.

**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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