

The background features a dark field with vibrant, multi-colored light trails in shades of orange, yellow, blue, and purple, creating a sense of motion and energy. A faint grid pattern is overlaid on the scene. Two horizontal bars are present: a blue one at the top and a wider orange one below it, both containing text.

ROY T JAMES

AN EASY ROUTE TO PEACE

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Introduction

I think, since long, humans are aware of the tumultuous nature of their society and the impending danger arising out of it, which could result in extermination of the race itself. Our history is in fact a chronological account of the damages we human race have inflicted on human race. As time goes forward, more and more people are waking up to this as a real possibility. And to counter this, we always have many philosophers and other public figures who advocate the need to cultivate impeccable personal qualities, peace, and harmony in a society. Such ones keep prescribing various do's and don'ts in this regard, which effectively yield nothing but making life a bit more uncomfortable for all. And it hasn't changed a bit, ever since.

Comotion keeps on occurring, at all times, for various reasons. Our reactions also vary.

We overlook it, or see it as a celebration, whenever the reason is a dear one. Like winning a coveted trophy, or electing one who champions what is close to us. We despise it, call it unruly behavior, and urge strong action, when it is truly unworthy, is a real one, and is directed on us. Like a hijack. But we take a philosophic view, close our eyes, and talk of commotion as a universal part of life, in all other cases, whether the reason is a worthy one or not. Like disruption of a public service, closing a road for religious events or ceremonies, or organized elimination of those promoting a progressive view.

In all such instances, we need to work with the same tempo, if commotion is to be brought to an end.

Or look for a reason, to make peace prevail?

Chapter 1

The Issues

I think we can make a fresh start with this question.

What can we do to make human societies peaceful, while not restricting people from progressing with their call? How to allow the natural propensities bloom unhindered?

In fact humans are never at ease, as it has been since ages. The unease may originate anywhere, like religion, love, or other matters like politics. Those specializing in each of such entities regularly come up with some remedy, which always fail. It seems humans have accepted that their society is a turbulent one. And for reassurance, they compare the same with the disorder existing among all other forms of life, and find that we are better off.

We are wrong here. There is a culprit, and I think it is human nature, the common factor of all such particularities or priorities of life. And the fact that human nature essentially is a set of abstractions, and each one of which have the power to derail any steps for correction or moderation, makes it all the more difficult, if not impossible, to remedy this. The most potent one is nothing but 'the ultimate aim of life', a global favourite.

How are we dealing with this currently? We in fact are addressing each individual component of human nature carefully and making an elaborate system of justice that consist of rules, punishments, etc. Thereafter we need to make an assumption, like what we presently do. That such corrective steps on individual components result in desired changes to one's nature. A better way is to manipulate directly, the parameter that encompasses all those components, namely, human nature. And it makes sense to do this.

For, when we issue lengthy, cumbersome advices to keep one odd facet of human nature in check, we are bound to face the brunt of the uproar and turbulence caused by other facets. Which, in addition to suppressing the potency of our control efforts, may give wrong feedback about the nature and extent of uproar, eliciting disproportionate or misplaced corrective actions, to say the least. (Think of adverse reactions to a medicine, and how it could be confused with the symptoms)

But, when we approach human nature holistically, one can expect comprehensive and steady progress in all aspects of whatever social turmoil

we may be reacting to.

However, owing to the style of living adopted by us so far, I think, the most potent component of human nature has become powerful enough to sustain its influence on its own merit. Hence it will be more appropriate to address this particular issue, namely, the ultimate aim of life, as a separate one.

Thus, these are the two issues, this book will address. Human nature, especially why it is far different from the nature exhibited by any other form of life. And the leaning, humans show to invent at the earliest, an ultimate aim for life.

Chapter 2

What ails human nature?

Let me see how the real and abstract variables of life play out, while beginning with an examination of human nature.

What is human nature, but a set of basic assumptions the humans have about themselves? And it seems, we all have reached a conclusion that these are of fundamental importance to our life. What is its significance to the race as a whole? Have we examined this question?

Clearly, in all other areas we dwell upon, like the living and non-living objects, we apply every possible argument and reason, however far-fetched, to test conclusively, whatever assumptions we happen to make. Thereafter we may incorporate those assumptions on a trial basis. If and only if no abnormality could be found during this time and proven beyond doubt, we accept such assumptions as a part of our life. But, when it comes to human nature, sadly, such prudence is not there at all. We merrily accept all the basic assumptions as proven facts.

I therefore think, there is room for two questions. One, how come we landed up in such a state, as far as this question go? And two, how to extricate ourselves. That is, what should be human nature? Since the second question points to an urgent need, let me address it first, leaving the first one, which perhaps is more of academic importance.

While writing down my thoughts on a variety of topics that are intrinsically linked to our day to day life, what I could find was that we humans have a penchant for rather hasty generalizations. These always lead to error, and for correction and prevention of which, we have an elaborate structure that is always in the making, of collecting and processing information, and acting on it. Which could time to time necessitate the issue of certain guide lines, for the future, for acting on fresh errors, and for getting the structure itself augmented. And we take enormous pride in this structure, calling it the unique part of human.

I have a question. If being in error is not a part of human nature, where is the need for such a structure as this? Rather than what this structure is doing, that is, locating and administering remedies to a myriad of activities,

occurrences, or events, why can't we think of specifying correctly, a single entity, namely, human nature.

I think it makes sense. When we need to learn human nature, just as we do, either by being taught or by experience, everything else, we can specify ourselves to be, say, error free .

Now, what exactly 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 the fortunes of human race? And, What is the optimum way of handling it?

How do machines acquire a nature

Let us tackle a simpler issue. Think of inanimate objects. I think mainly owing to the 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, or any other implement, shall be the one, where the particular peculiarity is apt for the current 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 behaviour, 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, desirability, and living style in our current environment goes. But, quite non-intuitively we have been hanging on to these. Labelling 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 routine repair 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!

Chapter 3

How can we manipulate human nature

We have found it profitable to learn and adopt various facets of human nature. But, for its practical implementation and further usage, or for deriving more mileage, we need to define it. For, definition of an entity makes it easy to know that entity. Rather than a broad idea incorporating all we can feel, see, or hear in our way, this permits us to overlook a few, while noticing clearly and closely, few others.

Here we can consider it as consisting of two parts. One, common with all other forms of life, which could account for the vast majority of emotional or other characteristic traits, like love, anger, playfulness, etc. Two, what is found only in humans, which perhaps is language, and the ability to use it for abstract transactions like thought, expression, and communication.

As far as the traits common with other forms of life go, there is no absolute necessity, to define human nature. For, inferences can be drawn by comparison, and we have suitable references available aplenty. But, for the traits unique to humans, want of a definition shall give rise to disorder, to say the least. For, humans being a form of life, the responses of which are guided more by reason than instinct, commotion is an easy possibility when a multitude of responses thrive. And here, if there exists a unique definition, all humans will take the easy path of aligning with it, making commotion a rarity.

Thus, let us limit our definition of human nature to matters related to thought and expression. In his best-selling 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 nature, or the intended effects, of the acts of thinking and the 'self' who performs it, is the need of the hour, any time. For example, when exposed to a situation, one needs to quickly decide, who will answer it or take action. The thinking self, if it needs to be a comprehensive one, and the experiencing self, if the reaction needs to be instantaneous.

I think we can think of 'Thinking fast', for 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. And in that case, there will be some thought even behind our instinctive responses.

And human nature can now be defined as the affinity towards thinking slow, except wherever it is not possible to do so.

Chapter 4

The part is larger than the whole.

This is most true, for the mother of all abstractions, the ultimate aim of life. This is omnipotent, and it can justify any action however unreasonable, while making it easy to defend, even the worst instance of inaction.

Is there an ultimate aim for life?

I think there are many answers. Theology specializes in dealing with this issue. It links the ultimate aim with a short fall that can happen to one at add times. And how, this shortfall (sin) is to be compensated. It overlooks the significance of immediate gains. Science looks at all the aspects of immediate gains. But it leaves the ultimate one to winds. Literature tries to meet both, but I think, never crosses the half way mark. Let me now face the question for both.

How are we to answer a question? In, say, a verbal exchange, both the words and its setting are equally important for formulating a good and appropriate answer. And, the answer should depend on how, this question was originated, or its context. I also feel, questions generally does not have a meaning unless qualified by accompanying statements or declarations, explicitly, or otherwise. For, life or living is just an umbrella verb for a large collection of words that denote action, like fishing, eating, sleeping, reading, and so on. The question regarding the ultimate aim, therefore, does not make sense instantly. But it can convey a lot, when it is used along with such a collection of activities, and a picture of which, except when spelled out explicitly, are to be there in the imagination of those who give answers.

For answering, let me first see how we would have arrived at this question. I think the first question that would have perplexed mankind is, what make beings alive, or what is the purpose of life. We can see everywhere, the joy our young ones keep getting while learning the nuances of things, one comes across. And we can safely conclude, our past heroes also would have been mastering everything that came on their way. The only questions that remained without any resolution would have been the ones of this genre. And it would have been giving them a really tough fight, given the popularity of religious organizations and movements that are primarily meant for answering such matters, even now.

While getting exposed to new and varied situations and encounters with things living and non-living, our forefathers would have learned to look for a cause, for whatever, and which would have enabled them to make things happen, as they chose. Possibly this is the first step of enquiry, both what our ancestors learned, and where they met success the most. And in that process, it seems they understood this as true for of all things in nature, that things will continue as they are, till something made it to do otherwise. Which later came to us as Newton's first law.

(The hunt for the ultimate aim of life should have ended then. Life will continue to be, till something occurs to stop it. I think we humans didn't want to be merely obeying a law that applies to a stone!)

Now, since any living thing will look for a reason to discontinue what it is busy with, it is natural that the earliest question that vexed our ancestors was, why am I living, what for? This, for two reasons. One, they would have been meeting great success in finding an answer to such questions, as far as non-living things go. Two, death would have been catching them unaware, and it would have been natural to experiment about extending life, or delaying death, the leftover signs of which we diligently classify as remnants of say, pagan ceremonies.

Chapter 5

Why Search for a Meaning for Life?

Now, I think all the imponderables of human society can be condensed to this particular question. For, mankind's foray with knowledge, by now, have succeeded in offering a satisfactory answer to almost all the other ones. And also, having been coming across fresh insights, while shaping many and varied answers since long, only a few facets of life is still remaining unanswered. Hence the original question regarding the nature and constitution of life has taken a turn to the abstract, as, one seeking the ultimate aim in life. Or, this is one of the odd questions that remains to be answered, having understood much about the nature and constitution of everything else.

Ease of Re-definition Leads to the Spiritual

There are already many answers, each of those giving a fresh meaning to life. Also, every new one turns out to be a little more abstract than all the earlier ones. Many more are in the making, again of course, of the same vein.

But I think this question is not a difficult one to solve, and the clear answer is the desire to have a comfortable life, whether it is in this world, elsewhere, or both. However, it is impossible to have a life that is generally at ease and comfort, since at least one facet of it will be leaving us, more or less perpetually, in dismay. What do we do? We constantly redefine life, and to overcome the limits of a language or its vocabulary, we let the same words taking fresh meanings, and at will. Which is not possible in the material domain, where meanings can't change arbitrarily. Hence humans embraced spirituality, which makes it easy to accord whatever meaning one may find fit, wherever. (In fact the particular dismay mentioned above, which is a part of all forms of life, is the theme of my book, *The Unsure Male*)

But, over the ages, the real reason for us to invent spirituality got lost in the brilliance it created, and kept mankind enthralled for long years, I think. Or it became a container word to accommodate the words that failed to make an instant connection with something easily perceivable. And since human life would have been progressing dynamically, fresh landscapes, new experiences, and changing situations added quite a bit of roughage, which we have been successfully connecting to one another, humans being an imaginative species, managing to make a grand spiritual domain. We now deal with it in the most intelligent manner that can ensure its survival for ever, and with the best of health. Define it as something beyond human comprehension.

As a result of all this, one can say, each and every one of us leads a life fitting to one's own definition, which for convenience, we have come to adopt from our parents. And, I am sure, an answer appropriate for the redefined one is on the tip of every tongue, for, nobody loses an opportunity to pontificate on such matters. Except that all those answers suggest quite complex and time consuming observances, ceremonies and other imponderables that can hamper one from seeking other pleasurable experiences that would have been occurring in the natural scheme of things. Won't there be a short cut to it, which perhaps can save us from such a loss?

Chapter 6

The Search for a Shortcut

Search for a Shortcut?

Yes, I feel there is room for one. I also think, none of us have tried for it, so far. Reason is rather simple. In fact, irrespective of one's leaning, whether it is towards the spiritual or the material, all of us go ahead with one's own life, more or less in the same manner. Since the actual manifestation of the events and occurrences of life, the priorities, or the living style that controls the way we perceive it, vary greatly, we think of the spiritual and the material as vastly different. But the gains both the paths lead to are more or less the same, since the end result is a comfortable life, one without incurable troubles or worries. Hence, depending mainly on one's broad understanding of life, we can group all people into two. Those leaning towards the material, where life is predominantly a predictable one, and the other that could include the many shades of the spiritual, where it is essentially something beyond our senses.

How Commotion Enters Human Life

In each, the very definition of life changes appropriately to accommodate whatever observances, ceremonies and other imponderable that get added routinely. And commotion is nothing but a result of such imponderables, the real cause of which is the redefinition, and the new entities that get added, or the old ones that get removed, as a result. The type, nature, and depth of all these entities differ, and can take any combination or form, which are nothing but random events or occurrences with contextual relevance. For those oriented to the material, it normally is in the various manifestations of whatever little unpredictable is left, which generally take the shape of abstractions like prestige, honour, style, etc. For others, a wide canvas of impressions and experiences that are dependent on nothing else but how creative, imaginative, or ingenuous, one is, provide unlimited scope. By now, we are all so accustomed to these meaningless (remember, there is no direct link between these and life) activities of life, we accord them the highest status. In short, what we celebrate as the essential and unique elements of human race, and what we time to time figure out as just commotion, are not much different.

The short cut, if found, would release the human race of such an infructuous load, and should work for both the groups.

In any case, the current thoughts about having a comfortable life, I think veers around one point. Maintain a healthy society consisting of good individuals.

Which opens up two questions. What is the best society, and what should term an individual as a good one. Since answer to the former question depends a lot on whatever answer, the second one fetch, let me try to answer that.

How can we define a good individual? Though so far I have not come across a clear and concise definition in this regard, I am seeing our world flooded with opinions, advices, or instructions on how to become a good human. Everywhere, those happily issuing such a recommendation are doing so, with reference to their own definition of such a one.

Why it Does not Happen with Other Things

While for everything else, lifeless objects, plants, or animals, there is a definite yardstick, one that has universal agreement. And the yardstick is contextual in nature, and automatically occurs to one, wherever such an entity's name comes up. (This is the ultimate gain of having an educated society) The mechanism of making an actual measurement varies, and it differs for each circumstance of its link with human race, however remote. And, whatever conforms to the yardstick being used currently, is the good one. We then adjust ourselves to utilize whatever benefit it could be of. In fact this is the main criterion to judge an individual, that is, how well one is able to get the best services from the things that are in one's control. Over the years we have been finding such an approach as the above yielding worthwhile results, and continuing with it, while being ready at all times to make any alterations, if current experiences dictate so.

How Commotion Remains with Us

Quite in contrast, while judging humans, an established yardstick plays only a less significant role. Rather than following a well known standard, we choose the one which satisfies the current requirement the best, as the one to use. Then comes another complexity. The additional issues due to memory. Which I think can be reduced to another variable parameter, namely, reputation, which is nothing but an image, derived primarily from the record of past accomplishments that are still in memory. It colours all experiences, mostly boosting the effects of various actions, and, it affects the one judging, and the one being judged, more or less equally.. Like amplifying or playing down the outcome of one's deeds, or the impression it makes. Now, the ones selected as the good ones are the ones who successfully go through this contextual sieve. Neither good deeds, nor a worthy reputation, can facilitate

this without the help of the other. Over the years we have been finding that such an approach as the above leads to frequent skirmishes or other unpleasant experiences. Still we are continuing with it, while being ready at all times to make any alterations to our life, and let the above approach stay.

..Even After we Try our Best

My doubt is this. Why do we choose this complexity? Why don't we pick up the habit of judging each one based on one's inherent worth, and then mould ourselves to extract the desirable? In which case all those engaging in communication will be generally at ease. You see, the side that starts the exchange has already confirmed the appropriateness of the other side, and is already in a receptive state. And for the other side, since the questions that come to them shall be only from their core areas, they shall only be happy to answer them. Needless to say, such a scenario leads to better exchanges and a serene society.

Whereas, where are we? What is preventing us here? We have no ways of establishing suitability of participants, before an exchange actually take place. We keep facing issues of communication constantly, and for which, we have many a dedicated branch of knowledge in existence. Where, instances of inadequate or inappropriate exchanges and the related destructive effects are analysed, mostly for offering corrective solutions. We incorporate those, and perhaps because of the additional complexity that gets introduced, find ourselves in the same boat once again. That calls for more corrections. A vicious circle has come into existence.

Chapter 7

A Freak Shortcut for Peace

I think we need to look for a solution that does not introduce any fresh variables, computations, intricacies, or other forms of complexity.

Supposing we all are named intuitively. The name is chosen in such a way that effectively broadcasts the salient features of the owner that could be of current interest, at any instance.

Say, we think of rolling names. One is given a name at birth, which could point to the salient features that are of significance, at that age. Like the kind of entertainments or games that can make an instant connection, or the type of foodstuff that one abhors, etc. And all those who transact can find a perfect match, whatever be the need. (Gone are the sights of wailing children!) The name can thereafter undergo changes at every stage that necessitate addition or deletion of features, like completing education, gaining experience, or other eventualities of interest. At every stage in life, whether it is of a commoner or one of authority, one seeking a husband or one looking for a wife, or, one submissive or one rebellious, name could divulge one's qualities, orientation, temper, and other features of relevance in a context.

Now see the benefits. Whenever there is a need to communicate, one can choose to initiate one only when the other end is a suitable one, or has taken an appropriate position. And we can expect both the sides to be equally clear about the nature of an exchange, or the aim thereof. As a result, each of us would be automatically assuming relevant roles, for example, one of authority or submission, one of regulation or receptiveness, or that of substance or playfulness. In which case, there is no chance of a loss or error, whenever exchanges take place. Also, each and every one will feel encouraged to live up to one's name, making peace only, to prevail. You see, nothing will transfer in excess, nor will something in deficit. The desired results will be met, every time. And think of the good days, the mankind have in store, when a major part of the human effort that is devoted to inculcate and maintain discipline in our society, can be redirected to productive ends.

And, if there is an ultimate aim, the above paragraph spells a short cut to it, where, rather than being instilled in one's formative years, each one will experience one's aim as a part of one's own life. Which assumes significance, for another reason too. In the beginning of this essay, life has been shown as a combination of very many activities, pointing out, how cumbersome is it to divide all these into two, namely, the desirable ones, and those undesirable. Thereafter one needs to immerse oneself in the desirable ones, while keeping oneself well away from the other ones. Here incursion is likely by accident, if not by design. Presently we have established extensive arrangements (All religions are in agreement here) to enable one to do some corrective actions or penance whenever one fails to adhere to it perfectly. This, evidently is prone to errors, in addition to the frequent need of repentance, punishments and all, and which can be avoided if one sticks to the short cut.

Think again, of the future that would be immensely bright, when aims go hidden in names.

Chapter 8

Summary

Humans are never at peace with themselves. Various abstractions, like religion, love, or prestige, keep the society always on the boil. We can find the culprit in human nature, a common factor of all these. Which in combination with another abstraction called 'the ultimate aim of life', can play havoc. We need to moderate our dependence on such abstractions. An easy way for which is to name each one of us rather expressive terms of contextual relevance.

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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