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Climate Change: A ray of hope?

Abstract

This article examines the causes for and the global impact of “Fridays for Future” movement and presents a succinct analysis of the current status of climate change. Accepting the possibility of social and environmental collapse in the near future, it then psychologically analyses the human potential for hope and action given the imminent catastrophe.

Our Fridays will never be the same again. Thanks to one young plucky kid from Sweden, from henceforth, whether we are for or against climate action, we will always associate Fridays with climate change. Whether you laud Greta Thunberg or deride her and believe that she is being manipulated by adults with corporate interests, you will still remember her efforts to bring climate change to the forefront of public consciousness.

In 2018, Greta Thunberg’s protests on Fridays for three weeks outside the Swedish Parliament had a domino effect: Students, first in Europe then increasingly around the world, followed suit protesting on Fridays in front of their Parliaments and demanding responsive climate action from their governments. Linking together on social media, they organised a school climate strike movement under the name “Fridays for Future,” for they demanded their future back.

The future of all young people, under the age of thirty, is under jeopardy because of humanity’s collective inability in three decades to reduce carbon emissions and prevent climate change. The future, one may well argue, is always in the realm of the uncertain, so why make such a fuss about it? Climate change, one may well argue, has been in the news in

the past three decades, so why make such a fuss about it? The answer is that we are no longer talking about climate change per se, but about the severity of the problem and the increasing evidence that along with environmental catastrophes associated with climate change, societal collapse is inevitable in the coming decades. 2018 data revealed that the reported impacts due to climate change were at the very worst end of predictions being made in the early 1990s.¹ For instance, a 2018 study on sea level rise predicts that the increase may soon enter the non-linear stage or “runaway change” affecting billions of people living in coastal zones.² And a World Bank report in 2018 predicts 100 million climate refugees or people who are displaced from their homes and societies as victims of climate change.³ Consequently, if climate change enters the phase of “runaway change” due to unpredictable feedback loops of the biosphere, the future will no longer be within the realms of human prediction.

So far studies in climate adaptation has been focusing on ways to maintain our current societies as they navigate through climate change.⁴ The new, unpopular, little-talked about news is that the magnitude of the environmental collapse will be so great that there will be widespread social disorder. As the *New Yorker* reporter Jonathan Franzen states, there will be “radical destabilization of life on earth—massive crop failures, apocalyptic fires, imploding economies, epic flooding, hundreds of millions of refugees fleeing regions made uninhabitable by extreme heat or permanent drought. If you’re under thirty, you’re all but guaranteed to witness it.”⁵ Students, worldwide, are rightly asking the question of why they should even go to school, for when they come of age, the world would be in a dystopia. How can they trust us adults to educate them, when we cannot even promise the stability of their social systems?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established by the UN in 1988, is the worldwide watchdog comprising scientists and policymakers that gives us updated information on climate change and its impacts on a periodical basis through its Assessment (and other) Reports. The IPCC published its First Assessment Report (FAR) in 1990. The FAR, pointing to the anthropogenic cause of global warming, cautioned against a “business as usual” scenario. Its Second Assessment Report (SAR) in 1996 spelled out the “Impacts, Adaptations and Mitigation of Climate Change” while a comprehensive Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) guided the negotiations of the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 21 held in Paris, 2015 so that world leaders could determine an alternative pathway out of the foretold doom. As per the Paris Agreement, nations agreed to limit warming to a maximum of 2°C increase in global average temperatures by 2050 and a more ambitious goal of trying to stay within 1.5°C. Unfortunately, while our leaders nodded their heads in agreement about the danger and pledged large amounts of money toward climate funds, not a single country has yet agreed to mechanisms or enforcement measures to cut down their

¹ See IPCC. (2018). “Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C.” Retrieved from <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/> and Bendell, J. (2018). “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy.” IFLAS Occasional Paper 2. Retrieved from <https://mahb.stanford.edu/library-item/deep-adaptation-map-navigating-climate-tragedy/>

² Malmquist, D. (2018). “Researchers Issue First-annual Sea-level Report Cards.” Retrieved from <https://m.phys.org/news/2018-03-issue-first-annual-sea-levelcards.html>

³ Rigaud, K. K., de Sherbinin, A., Jones, B., Bergmann, J., Clement, V., Ober, K., Schewe, J., Adamo, S., McCusker, B., Heuser, S. and Midgley, A. (2018). “Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration.” World Bank, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>

⁴ Lesnikowski, A.C., J.D. Ford, L. Berrang-Ford, M. Barrera, J. Heymann. (2015). How are we Adapting to Climate Change? *A Global Assessment, Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change*, 20:2, pp. 277–293.

⁵ Franzen, J. (2019). “What if we Stopped Pretending?” Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/what-if-we-stopped-pretending>

national emissions. Consequently, despite prophetic warnings since the nineties, today, the global mean temperature today, as reported by scientists at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies is 0.9 degrees Celsius above the mean temperature in 1880.⁶

It has not just been “business as usual,” it has been unbridled, rampant business like an unchecked cancer. For, instead of curbing our carbon emissions, humanity as a whole has emitted as much carbon in the past three decades as it did in the previous two centuries of industrialization.⁷ Admittedly, changing our complex globalized economic system will not be an easy task, but, first and foremost, what is lacking is the political will to do. In the past few decades, our democracies have been insidiously undermined by powerful corporate lobbies, so much so that our political leaders find it politically inconvenient to change the system and curb unbridled growth. It is easier to deny the “inconvenient truth” by deriding the science that links climate change to the anthropogenic causes or play Russian roulette with our future with palliative measures on climate action. In retrospect, from a historical analysis of how IPCC came to be formed, it can be deduced that the pro-business US administration of the nineties muzzled the power of science by insisting that the assessment reports of IPCC, based on a synthesis of peer-reviewed scientific papers, need to secure consensus agreement from every one of the participating governments.⁸ Consequently, IPCC pronouncements are on the conservative side. The future is likely to be much worse than that predicted by IPCC.

Welcome, to the Age of the Stupid. Like the old parable, it needed a child to speak out against our collective myopia by shouting out publicly that the “emperor is wearing no clothes.”

The #FridaysforFuture movement has gathered rapid momentum since it started. After Thunberg addressed the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poland, student strikes took place every week somewhere in the world. Then, in 2019, during the worldwide Global Climate Strike from September 20-27 millions more, students and adults, joined the movement. In 2019, there were at coordinated multi-city protests involving millions of people, and on September 23, Thunberg galvanized the world when she addressed the UN Climate Action Summit with a short, emotional speech stating:

This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you! For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away and come here saying that you're doing enough, when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight.⁹

The moral justification of Thunberg's outrage is unquestionable. So much so that all over the world, people, groups and organizations with a conscience, have joined the movement for

⁶ Retrieved from <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>

⁷ Franzen, J. (2019). “What if we Stopped Pretending?” Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/what-if-we-stopped-pretending>

⁸ Weart, S. (2011). “The Discovery of Global Warming: International Cooperation: Democracy and Policy Advice (1980s).” American Institute of Physics. Retrieved from <https://history.aip.org/history/climate/internat.htm#S9>

⁹ Retrieved from <https://www.entraveller.in/story/full-text-greta-thunberg-speech-how-dare-you-un-climate-action-summit/>

climate action. For example, the editor-in-chief, of the influential international paper *The Guardian Weekly*, Katherine Viner directly credits Thunberg for the pledge of the organisation to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.¹⁰

Admittedly, cynics believe that many corporations are jumping on the climate bandwagon as it is the latest social hype and thus effective as a sales ploy. Even if the original intention of an organization be pure, without robust systemic changes, it is likely that at some point the organization will succumb to the systemic forces of capitalism thereby vitiating the potential for change. As founder of the Deep Adaptation Forum, Jem Bendell says, climate action cannot be divorced from “the governance of markets, finance and banking.”¹¹ Effective systemic changes to the economy would also need to include a rights-based approach to development, for currently climate funds further the neoliberal capitalistic mode of development, which has led to an increase in violations of human rights in the Global South.

In September 2019, just before Thunberg took the podium at the UN Climate Action Summit, the first ever global summit on human rights and climate change was organized in New York. Titled “The People’s Summit on Climate, Rights and Human Survival,” it merged human rights with climate justice in what Craig Mokhiber, director of the New York Office of the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights described as a “marriage of movements.”¹² As the head of the United Nations, Secretary-General António Guterres believes, perhaps, a worldwide people’s movement will get recalcitrant governments into action.¹³ Similarly, in June 2019, Farhana Yamin, an international environmental lawyer and Extinction Rebellion activist, had advocated a mass civil disobedience and called for “a movement of movement,” to create a new international political reality that would not be factionalized but jointly take up the two most palpable threats to the planet—the sixth mass extinction and irreversible climate change.¹⁴

It was left to Greta Thunberg, however, to author such a massive global movement through the #FridaysforFuture campaign. The Thunberg effect of widespread solidarity for a cause is similar to other peoples’ movements such as the “Occupy Movement” and social media campaigns, notably the #MeToo campaign, which led to cultural changes in the world and threatened the status quo. What is singular about the #FridaysforFuture movement and climate change activism, however, is that it seeks to tackle an issue, which affects not just one particular oppressed sector of society but the entirety of humanity. Never before has such a cause as climate action, to curb our carbon emissions and limit global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius as recommended by IPCC,¹⁵ united diverse human populations all over

¹⁰ Viner, K. (2019). “Today we pledge to give the climate crisis the attention it demands.” Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/16/today-we-pledge-to-give-the-climate-crisis-the-attention-it-demands>

¹¹ Bendell, J. (2018). “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy.” IFLAS Occasional Paper 2. Retrieved from <https://mahb.stanford.edu/library-item/deep-adaptation-map-navigating-climate-tragedy/>

¹² Piven, B. (2019). “Human rights groups take climate fight to big corporations.” Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/human-rights-groups-climate-fight-big-corporations-190918175331463.html>

¹³ Worland, J. (2019). “U.N. Head: Climate Change Can Prove the Value of Collective Action.” Retrieved from <https://time.com/5602482/antonio-guterres-climate-change-united-nations-summit/>

¹⁴ Yamin, F. (2019). “This Is the Only Way to Tackle the Climate Emergency.” Retrieved from <https://time.com/5607152/extinction-rebellion-farhana-yamin/>

¹⁵ At the behest of the United Nations, IPCC released a special report in 2018 (SR15) that details what it would take, in terms of carbon mitigation and adaptation measures to reach the 1.5°C target. The report reviewed by 1000 scientists states that to stay below 1.5°C requires slashing global greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent

the world. This is our moment of destiny in the Anthropocene era¹⁶— are we *as homo sapiens* truly wise or sapient enough to collectively transition into a future that will definitely be very different from the one we had envisaged? What inner reserves of strength will we need to draw upon? What would our collective values and actions be? Will we continue to rail in anger against our leaders, sink into apathy and helplessness, or even expedite the impending doom by increasing our consumption in the belief that we have already gone past the tipping point? Or will we, even as the fear of social and environmental collapse gnaws at our bellies, continue to strive in our efforts of conscious consumption to stay within the per capita annual carbon budget of 2.1 tons and channel unprecedented creativity for maximum resilience? While the future is beyond our control, how we navigate it, as individuals and communities, is still within our control. And how we navigate life as individuals and as a species reveals bears testimony to how consciousness unfolds in this world. In the remainder of this paper, given the potential end of the Anthropocene era, I make a few observations about the evolution of human consciousness as a response to climate action.

“Evolution” and “Consciousness” are not easy terms to define as the meanings of these terms are constantly contested. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “consciousness” as “sentience or awareness of internal or external existence,”¹⁷ but the term could be enlarged to include a person’s ability to experience and feel. The study of consciousness in psychology is generally limited to the individual, but the term can also be used, as I do in this paper, to refer to the state of awareness of a society. The term “evolution” is “both generally used to indicate a developmental process over time, and also specifically used, in a more scientific sense, to indicate the processes of self-organization, complexity and spontaneous emergence that characterizes growth in a complex system (Mohanty, 2008).”¹⁸ In the human species, “evolution is no longer genetic, it is sociocultural (Laszlo, 1987).”¹⁹ Building on this idea of sociocultural evolution, Carter Phipps enjoins us to make conscious choices about how “to expand our own awareness and cognition, to reach for richer, more complex and integrated perspectives, to create novelty and beauty, and to contribute in some small way to the further development of human consciousness and culture.”²⁰ In his work, *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Sciences Greatest Idea*, Phipps documents all the well-developed philosophical and spiritual traditions that believe in the human potential for conscious evolution.

It is important to distinguish between a conscious act or feeling and an unconscious one.²¹ As indicated by the etymology of the word, “conscious,” conscious acts or feelings are those that occur “with knowledge.” They are deliberately chosen by the self, while with unconscious acts or feelings, the self is overcome by an emotion or a reaction. For instance, anger, fear,

below 2010 levels by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050. For more details, see IPCC. (2018). “Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C.” Retrieved from <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

¹⁶ Some authors use the term “Anthropocene era” to indicate that the current geological era has been shaped by humans. For example, see Hamilton, C., Bonneuil, C., and Gemenne, F. (Eds.). (2015). *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis*. Routledge Environmental Humanities Series. Routledge, Abingdon.

¹⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consciousness>

¹⁸ Mohanty, B. *Spiritual ideals and social psychology of Auroville: A transdisciplinary interpretive inquiry*. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2008.

¹⁹ Laszlo, E. (1987). *Evolution: The Grand Synthesis*. Paris: Gauthier-Villars.

²⁰ Hunt T. (2015). “Evolutionary thinking: A conversation with Carter Phipps about the role of evolutionary thinking in modern culture.” *Communicative & integrative biology*, 7(6), e993267. Retrieved from doi:10.4161/19420889.2014.993267

²¹ Phipps, C. (2012). *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Sciences Greatest Idea*. Harper Perennial, New York.

and helplessness are all valid responses to the threat of climate change, but they are generally unconscious reactions to the possibility of widespread loss. Further, Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, arguably one of the most philosophically developed evolutionary spiritual traditions, regards emotions such as anger, fear, and helplessness as arising from the “lower vital” and perhaps evolutionarily linked to the reptilian part of the brain, while emotions such as compassion and solidarity are classified as belonging to the “higher vital” and can be associated with the limbic part of the brain—the part that evolved later with the evolution of mammals.²² Viewed thus, the term “evolution of human consciousness” can be regarded as a shift from self-centred emotions and values to emotions and values that are cognizant of others—other races, cultures, and eventually the entire biotic community. I purport that such development has to be first, consciously undertaken by individuals, but to be termed as “evolution,” such changes have to occur *en masse* and bring about a paradigmatic shift in the worldview of the society. It is claimed that from the mid-19th century onwards social evolution, guided through conscious decisions, has resulted in the end of political colonization, slavery, and universal suffrage.²³ If this claim be true, then it gives us hope to believe that we have the power to end the corporatization and neoliberal-political dominance of society to avert the worst effects of climate change.

Already about two decades ago, Tim Flannery on his book on climate change referred to human beings as the “weather makers.” Flannery noted that human beings now had the power, akin to that of planets, to change the weather.²⁴ But we had not set out to be weather makers, it was an unconscious side effect of our way of life. But if we take on the challenge of climate change and stay within the carbon budget we become *conscious* weather makers.

What would it take to make conscious choices in the face of climate? Bendell in his work with students inviting them to “consider collapse as inevitable, catastrophe as probable and extinction as possible,” says, that “it has not led to apathy or depression” but engenders “a new creativity about what to focus on going forward.”²⁵ For Charles Eisenstein, author of *Climate — A New Story*, the evolutionary step we need to take as individuals and as a species confronted with climate change and other ecological crises is to become conscious of our inter-connectedness, for existence is relational. And, as human beings we need to align our sociocultural and political systems without compromising on the health of the biosphere.²⁶ Both authors believe that human beings are resilient enough to consciously cope with despair, perplexity, and the fear of the unknown as they prepare for living in an unpredictable future. And, Yamin embraces the values of ecofeminism when she bravely states: “Yes, it is too late to prevent all the negative impacts of climate change. But this cannot destroy our capacity to nurture. It cannot destroy our capacity to love and our sense of justice.”²⁷

Environmentalist George Marshall offers a psychological explanation of our inaction on the climate front with by pointing out that our brains are not wired to deal with far-off future events. However, he also makes insightful psychological observations of how we can

²² The interpretations of Integral Yoga here are those of the author. For a more detailed explanation see, Mohanty, B. (2004). *Integral Yoga*. All India Press, Pondicherry, India.

²³ Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscious_evolution

²⁴ Flannery, T. (2001/2006). *The Weather Makers: How Man Is Changing the Climate and What It Means for Life on Earth*. Grove Press, New York.

²⁵ Bendell, J. (2018). “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy.” IFLAS Occasional Paper 2. Retrieved from <https://mahb.stanford.edu/library-item/deep-adaptation-map-navigating-climate-tragedy/>

²⁶ Eisenstein, C. (2018). *Climate—A New Story*. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California.

²⁷ Yamin, F. (2019). “This Is the Only Way to Tackle the Climate Emergency.” Retrieved from <https://time.com/5607152/extinction-rebellion-farhana-yamin/>

overcome this shortcoming to deal with the greatest challenge we have ever faced.²⁸ For me, evolution of life on this planet has largely been a response to the environment, and if we were to extend our consciousness to include the stratosphere as part of our immediate environment coupled with an inner, integral search for values for living in a post-sustainable²⁹ world, there is no reason as to why our consciousness will not evolve to help us navigate the future. Such perspectives, however, are admittedly in the avant-garde of our thinking on climate change, and as always, in the evolutionary adventure of consciousness, the first, tentative steps by individuals towards a higher consciousness are merely precarious footholds that may or may not serve as stepping stones for humanity to follow. In keeping with the tenets of Integral Yoga that espouses the need for integrating our thoughts, emotions, and actions, I would argue that such footholds need to be secured by embodied actions that preserve the biosphere. We need to consciously reject neoliberal capitalistic values and have the courage and integrity, “to walk our talk” and live by the values we espouse. Such footholds may well collapse against a widespread movement of fear or massive social unrest. As Maslow’s hierarchy of needs³⁰ predicts, if confronted with basic survival needs, self-actualized and post-rational values such as global solidarity is likely to disintegrate and instead give rise to its very converse, xenophobia. Indeed, worldwide, since 2010, consciousness seems not to be evolving towards the post-secular and post-rational worldviews but, as reported by the World Values Survey, devolving from secular-rational values towards traditional or conservative values.³¹ The contemporary emergence of right-wing fundamentalism worldwide is not surprising: Every change toward a greater universality, such as the end of slavery or colonization, has always been achieved a hard and bitter battle with those who benefitted from and hence wanted to maintain the status quo. Evolution, biological or socio-cultural, is an adventure, and as with any adventure, there is no guarantee of “a happy ending.”

To be radically honest, a part of me does not foresee a fairytale ending to the nightmare that we find ourselves engulfed in. I recognize that we need a multi-dimensional approach to climate action: At the internal, subjective, level, we need to collectively embrace values such as solidarity, environmental and social justice, and at an external, objective, level, we need to immediately replace our political and economic systems with more earth-centered systems of governance and production. Already in the sixties, at the beginning of the environmental movement, social ecologist Murray Bookchin had advocated direct democratic assemblies and decentralization of the means of production as an alternative to the nation-state and globalized capitalism, but even after all these decades viable alternatives do not seem to be in sight. Also, globalized capitalism has entrenched itself within the structures of our nation-states so thoroughly that a systemic change is unforeseeable, barring a relapse to xenophobic nation-sates that aggressively seeks to protect its economic interests. I would like to believe

²⁸ Marshall, G. (2014). *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*. Bloomsbury USA, New York.

²⁹ I follow Jem Bendell in his use of the term “post-sustainable.” Given the climate emergency, Bendell believes that the era of “sustainable development” is no longer compelling as a unifying goal and is consequently developing post-sustainability frameworks to deal with our contemporary social and environmental dilemmas. For more details, see Bendell, J. (2018). “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy.” IFLAS Occasional Paper 2. Retrieved from <https://mahb.stanford.edu/library-item/deep-adaptation-map-navigating-climate-tragedy/> and Bendell, J., Sutherland, N. and Little, R. (2017). “Beyond unsustainable leadership: critical social theory for sustainable leadership,” Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal. 8 (4), pp. 418-444. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-08-2016-0048>.

³⁰ Maslow, A.H. (1943). “A theory of human motivation.” Psychological Review. 50 (4), pp. 370–96. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>

³¹ World Values Survey. (2016). “Findings and Insights.” Retrieved from <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>

that in the course of a few centuries, the human species would have eventually evolved. But given the narrow window of time that of a decade that we have to set the carbon balance of the atmosphere right, we may, in the end, gloriously fail. We may fail in every respect, from safeguarding our biosphere to living up to our self-termed epithet of “the wise ones.” But still perhaps as the philosopher activist Joanna Macy, citing a Korean monk, says: “‘Sunsets are beautiful too, not just sunrises’ . . . If we are going to go out, then we can do it with some nobility, generosity and beauty.”³²

But, in the face of societal collapse, do we even dare to hope that we will retain our capacity for nobility and generosity, love and humor? Perhaps yes, for “hope” itself is an ability unique to our species. Hope is underpinned by our singular ability to have a sense of the progression of time and of the future. And, as with other values, we can consciously choose to live with this feeling, without being naively optimistic or succumbing to facile religious beliefs. Hope is closely linked to the other uniquely human trait that we are meaning-making creatures. As the only species that has to deal with the knowledge of the inevitability of our own death, we tend to, as Viktor Frankl famously points out, search for meaning in our lives.³³ Václav Havel (1986/1990) relates these two uniquely human traits when he says, “[Hope] transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons. . . . Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”³⁴ The sense of despair and hopelessness arises from the fact that generally speaking, we all harbour a naïve optimism about the future. The inevitability of our death and any fear associated with it is often mitigated by comforting thoughts that our kith and kin will live in a better world due to our life’s work. Today, we can no longer take comfort in such thoughts. The future is not likely to be better. And we are forced to contemplate not just on our death or the death of our loved ones, but the death of innumerable species of animals and perhaps of the planet as a biosphere. In the face of such unprecedented calamity, can we still find within the stillness of our innermost self, a ray of hope? Can we still imbue our lives with a sense of meaning and purpose? To me, these are the spiritual questions of our times that we will have to ponder on, individually and collectively. And, we should not comfort ourselves with quick, easy answers but live these questions with integrity and with the acceptance that there will be periods of loneliness and quiet despair, of unease and discombobulation, for the views we hold and the values we choose may not be mirrored back to us in the societies we live in.

Personally, I find myself, of necessity, embracing the Hindu wisdom of *nisakarma dharma*, that is selfless work. I know that all my individual efforts towards voluntary simplicity, a carbon neutral lifestyle, and working for social and environmental justice, may come to naught. But by making conscious choices about my thoughts, acts, and feelings, I give a sense of meaning and purpose to my own life and a sense of integrity and dignity of living by my values. And who knows, perhaps just perhaps, the growing and unprecedented global movement for climate justice may well tilt the balance in the favour of the planet, especially if each and every individual, starting now, were to take the step not to exceed the estimated per capita annual carbon budget of 2.1 tons, or offset any excess in carbon-capture initiatives. I allow myself to indulge in a ray of hope here.

³² Retrieved from <https://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/joanna-macy-on-how-to-prepare-internally-for-whatever-comes-next/>

³³ Frankl, V. (1959/2006). *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Boston MA, Beacon Press

³⁴ Havel, V. (1986/1990). *Disturbing the Peace: A conversation with Karel Hvíždala*. (Translated from the Czech by Paul Wilson). New York, Knopf.

In the end, regardless of whether or not the #FridaysforFuture movement succeeds in its mission to curb global carbon emissions, our world has been changed forever due to the action, the courage, and the commitment of one teenager. For her action, along with similar actions of innumerable others have helped in the evolution of human consciousness on this planet.

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