

Reflections on the State of the World — 1

The Kali-Yuga Is Here. What Now?

by Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D.

There is no doubt in my mind that we live in decisive times. Ever since the 1960s, I have been reading about how our era is crucial. I realized early on that all eras tend to consider themselves as such. Objectively speaking, however, there is to our era a quality that is unlike any other. Many people even think that we live in what they call “end time.” With something like 135-150 plant and animal species becoming extinct every day, they could be right.

Nothing less than the survival of all sentient species on planet Earth is at stake today. When we recognize and also acknowledge this fact, it hits us at the gut level. I have had a philosophical bent of mind all my life. You could say that I have never been a very practical person, though I consider myself more practical than most of the philosophers and academics with whom I have been in contact.

Still, when I finally acknowledged the drastic environmental evidence, I experienced something of an emotional shock, a trauma. Perhaps this is what has to happen with everyone before people will make significant changes in their personal life. Perhaps when we really understand that unless humankind is going to stop the senseless destruction of the biosphere, life on Earth as we know it will become extinct; and it won't even take centuries for this to happen.

I wrote *Green Yoga* and *Green Dharma* with Brenda, because we both felt a deep obligation to warn our fellow practitioners in the Yoga and Buddhist communities and to urge them to reorient their life drastically. Without Brenda's background in the environmental field and her deep-felt concern, I know I would not have found my way so quickly to a green personal orientation. I am grateful to her for her gentle persistence in drawing my attention to environmental issues and sharing her sound perspective with me.

Once I comprehended the severity of the situation, I decided to make a huge leap of faith: I resolved to stop my indological/historical/philosophical career as an author in order to free up time for delving deeply into critical environmental issues. When I then saw the indifference of my publishers to the environmental plight, I even concluded that there was no point in wasting more paper on the kind of publications I had produced since the late 1960s. I realized that my career as a writer of books on Yoga and related matters had become pointless. This was not an easy thing to conclude, nor is it an easy thing to state publicly now.

While some readers of my various books have been helped by them—at least according to the personal testimony of a few of them—most, I daresay, have perhaps been stimulated intellectually but have been left untransformed. Whatever books I did write and had publish, especially on Yoga, ought to suffice: *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of*

Yoga, The Yoga Tradition, Yoga Morality, Tantra, Holy Madness, and others. I have created and still tutor two distance-learning courses on Yoga and am in the process of preparing others, which will be made available as electronic downloads. This ought to suffice as well.

I now consider myself in semi-retirement. I will continue to champion the environment in various ways, particularly via the Internet, but I do not envision myself traveling from place to place to convert the reluctant or to talk to the already convinced. Brenda feels the same way.

Neither of us understands how environmental spokespeople can justify publishing their books and articles on nonrecycled paper or traveling—often by jet plane—from country to country thus contributing to the further destruction of the environment. We are looking for consistency and integrity in all this.

Years ago, a friend told Brenda that working in the environmental field is likely to bring one a harvest of negativity or indifference. We have found this to be true thus far.

Coming from years of research into Hindu systems of thought, including but not limited to Yoga, I regard the present global situation as a manifestation of the Kali-Yuga, the eon of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual decline, written about in the Sanskrit scriptures of long ago. I find it difficult to understand how otherwise educated, intelligent people can demonstrate such density when it comes to the environmental crisis.

I have in fact come to believe that humankind is suicidal. This idea is far from reassuring and even farther from being tolerable to most people. But we must look around and as objectively as possible regard what is unfolding before our very eyes. Researchers from diverse disciplines tell us that the biosphere is in threat of collapsing, yet individuals and governments have yet to demonstrate awareness and understanding of this vital message.

What will it take for humans to take note of the warnings of a growing chorus of credible scientists? How long will they hide their heads in sand? Where are the foresightful folk who will take remedial action now? Will you step forward to green your own life and help save the biosphere?

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