

# Caught Between Before and Beyond

Australia, April 2020

More than a pause in the cultural status quo that moved humanity onward, faster and in many ways crazier post-industrialisation, it seems the Coronavirus outbreak is forcing a mind reset on the grandest scale imaginable.

It has become our separate and collective trial by fire towards a better and healthier version of ourselves and, by proxy, towards a better, healthier world – a better, healthier planet for all that was intended to exist on it and within it.



Like any dire, unexpected circumstance that hits us ‘personally’, the Covid-19 pandemic is pushing many of us to reassess our personal potential and our absolute priorities.

By 2019, discontentment with life as we knew it was wide-spread.



We were sighing and ranting in the face of fractured politics and the lack of planetarian and humanitarian priorities from our leaders.

Climatologists were clamouring that the amount of carbon, heat, and greenhouse gases emitted every day was equivalent to 400,000 Hiroshima bombs going off - every day.

Australia, where I live, had been burning for months.

A miserable life fraught with recurring climate-induced disasters and slow poisoning from heightened toxicity in the air was the legacy we would be leaving our grandchildren.

Various scientific bodies warned that humanity had reached a tipping point.

That’s despite the recurring bursts of kindness, solidarity and cooperation that, each time, for a moment, show us a blueprint of life as it is intended, led from the heart, across neighbourhoods, cities and nations.



Some social inequalities had become more glaring than in previous decades.

More than ever, our area/zip code was influencing what foods we could access; therefore, buying power - or lack of - influenced our health as well as our potential longevity.

The more entrenched we, in the West, were in lives that had become ever more comfortable and safe over the past 40 years, the more unhappy many had become – the more disconnected we had become - the more at risk we put ourselves.

Even when we were financially independent of any government subsidies.

We cringed at the rise of extremists, of hyper-nationalist rulers and of xenophobia, even in our relatively safe democracies.



Along with the presence of disastrous industries, our relentless push for more than we actually need, accessed cheaper and faster than is reasonable has created farming systems, processed foods and drinks that have manufactured our diseases. Seriously, we already had so much on our plate what with daily food spiked with too much oil, sugar and salt being our #1 killers and the happiness index declining further as each decade had passed by!



For quite some time already, experts in various fields had been saying that we were living in times of extremes.

Already then, we knew we were in the midst of uncertain, heightened times.

Clearly, what was called Progress had reached the critical point where it imperilled future life on Earth.



We ruminated about a disappointing life.

Many of us felt overwhelmed by the demands of our day-to-day.

Many of us felt cheated by life.

Anxiety-inducing complications seemed to spring from all corners, and our responses tended to make them worse for ourselves.

Chronic anxiety, we were told, had reached an epidemic spread.

The rate of self-harm and suicide was spiking across all ages and gender groups.



According to statistics, 6 months into the global pandemic, the most vulnerable are teenagers.

Raised for the most part in indulgent democracies and by entitled parents, young persons in particular struggle in times of uncertainty and social restrictions.

In Australia where I live, there has already been a 33 per cent increase in youngsters taken to emergency departments for intentional self-harm over the past six weeks compared to same time in 2019.



### **Back to 2019.**

Then, we had freedom of movement and free choice, yet our breath was constricted, and millions of us suffered from chronic sleep deprivation.

Our social groups were 'social' but seldom sustaining.

Our friendships were often conditional.

Our families were fragmented.

Our loved ones, our friends, our colleagues, bosses and politicians hired to regulate our output at work and at home - even strangers near and far - took turns doing their bit to freak us out.

Or so we felt.

It was no wonder that, despite our freedom of movement and of choices, social surveys showed that more than 50% of us (and rising every couple of years) struggled with feelings of loneliness, isolation and the often-overwhelming sense of unworthiness and the dread of tomorrow.

**Reality check:** We accepted the popular consciousness that supported the belief that we were as helpless as we were blameless when it came to our successes and failures.

For the former, we credited good luck and excellent timing.

For the later, we blamed lousy luck and unfair treatment.

We had long ago forfeited our karmic obligation of self-responsibility.

We forgot the Golden Rule which Isocrates declaimed circa 330 BC: *Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you.*

Our understanding of thoughtfulness had become increasingly hazy.

As a result, too often, we forgot to think before we acted and reacted and spontaneity became a double-edged sword.



Social media and TV news provided a constant stream of unpredictable happenings that affected human lives both at local and global levels.

Some were happy news events.

Most were dire.

Already then, experts were telling us that being of service to others was one way to stimulate the reward centre of our brains.

They said kindness promoted feel-good chemicals.

But where to find time, motivation, tolerance and compassion to put to the service of others when we already had too little to be of real service to those who shared our day-to-day – let alone to be of service to our individual, inner selves?

Either blessed with the power of reframing past realities or feeling lost in the face of uncertainty, there is always a multitude of people hankering for a return to their familiar past.

That said, now, April 2020, when those in the know tell us that returning to 'pre-Covid normal' is not going to happen, one can ponder whether that is such a bad thing.



Regardless, one of the main questions of such moments is whether the old ways of doing, feeling and being will bounce back once 'life' settles again into habitual or predictable patterns.



The second question in this era of the pandemic is whether humanity will know how to usher in a yet unknown but stimulating way of 'doing life – of being in it' within their own circle of influence.

One that favours individual and collective wellbeing.

One that has a focus on more egalitarian principles.



Another question in this era of social upheaval goes along those lines: will a rising mass of critical influence know how to work its way, hand-on-heart, to positions from which it will become easier for everyone to treat all human and non-human life with respect and help each other thrive?

All answers shall reveal themselves in the fullness of time but if one thing is for sure, it is only our ability to respect and cooperate with each other near and far that will create a sustainable trajectory beyond today - the point of reset.

Warriors for the higher good, our own and that of those near and far, we should be.  
We must be.



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