

## **Kaze, February 2019**

### **Will we see “Apocalypse” soon?**

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These days, I cannot shake the feeling that our civil society will eventually face catastrophic consequences/apocalypse not so far in the future IF the current serious economic, social and political situations continues.

Of course, I am not at all waiting for the apocalypse, but I cannot remove the image of catastrophic collapse of our civilization especially when we recall that the current civil society was developed consuming such powerful fossil fuels as coal, petroleum and natural gas in a relatively short period of time.

In fact, it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when we started to use a large amount of fossil fuels. Since then the powerful energy generated by fossil fuels have been a driving force of growing industries of the world. Science and technology have been sophisticated to meet the needs of industries. Backed by ideological support of Liberalism, Democracy and Globalism, they have been spurring the “growth”, which has resulted in continuous development and transformation of global environment both in ecosystem and human habitation. The human population on this globe was almost quintupled from 1,600 million in early 20<sup>th</sup> century to 7,600 million now in 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the growing population have been and is still seeking for ever-expanding economy for their living.

Those energetic economic activities are heavily relied on natural resources including fossil fuels and/or metals. We have enormously consumed those earth’s finite resources so far and are still consuming them, leaving almost no room for additional development for the future generation. It is clear that the Spaceship Earth has reached a breaking point and is now going beyond its capacity, screaming under the pressure of excessive development. So called “climatic catastrophe” observed in various parts of the world would be one of the symptoms. Moreover, biological species have been decreasing in number and deteriorated in quality under the human pressure. Despite these SOSs signals from the Nature, we have been and still are in a frenzy to woo wealth and comfort, and keep our eyes closed to those signals.

Having seen the blind attachment to “growth” for decades, I cannot but wipe out the nightmare that, in the midst of our desperate struggle for wealth and happiness, our industrial civilization would collapse not so far in the future. By the way, my image of the collapse of the Earth would be that we lose control of our social system, and hundreds of millions of people are suffered, if not extinguished, under the following situations.

## 1) Natural environment

Extreme climate syndrome frequently takes place all over the world; concentrated downpours and resulting floods/mudslides will take many lives and seriously damage public infrastructure, frequent wildfires caused by drought and heatwaves, deterioration of fauna and flora, and overall decline of natural environment.

## 2) Daily life

Our daily life will be disturbed by climate disasters, food and water supply will become unstable, transportation system will be frequently cut off, and heatstroke and various infectious diseases will be spreading all over the world. Under these difficult situation, rich people will be able to survive for the time being using their financial power, but poor people will be losing their ways of living. This will be a cause of serious social instability with frequent demonstrations. It may even lead to terrorism.

## 3) Business and industries

Social instability will negatively affect business and industries for sure. Commuting of company employees will be frequently disturbed, and business activities will be suspended for a long time due to collapse of roads, bridges and highways. As we have already experienced, tourism will be heavily damaged, which will seriously prevent normal and stable business activities.

## 4) Politics

The increasing cost for disaster recovery will press the budget of national and local governments. It will become enormous and may cause financial difficulties if devastating natural disasters occur every year. If the restoration costs 5-10% of GDP every year, the national budget will be heavily pressed and the government will have no choice but to cut public services to avoid financial collapse. This will, after all, lead to social instability and may trigger the rise of populism or fascism, claiming for elimination of the gap between the rich and the poor.

## 5) Cultural activities

Such concepts as *liberalism*, *democracy*, *basic human rights*, and *fairness and equity* have been recognized as basic and important values of human beings and have been taken for granted in many years. However, these values could be lost once we are cornered by environmental destruction and suffered from resulting food shortage. We have already seen the desperate efforts of people in mid-East, Africa and South

America moving to rich and developed Europe and the US. We never know what will happen if things become more serious in the near future.

To avoid catastrophic end of the earth, following two points should be fully recognized, not only by politicians but also many citizens of the world.

Firstly, we have to keep in mind that the global environment is finite. We are already about 70% beyond its capacity. We need to put this fact as a basis of our economic, political activities and also our daily lives.

Secondly, we have to stop a GDP-first policy that we so far have stuck to. We believed that the growth of GDP will bring us happiness forever. Such convenient gadgets as bullet trains, highways, flights, air conditioning, PCs, smart phones, etc. have been introduced into the market, and we have been racing for their consumption. Nowadays, it would be almost impossible to give up those convenient gadgets. It is time we change our mind and learn to satisfy with a reasonable level of convenience in order to lead a comfortable life far in the future.