

No. 1 The turning point of human civilization

In the years 2000s an important species is rapidly heading toward extinction involving all the other living species with it. That's the human species. Its ability to change the nature made humankind a superior species, hence taking a dominant role on this planet. The origin of human can go back to 2 million years, which seems to be nothing in comparison to 3.5 billion years history of living organism on earth. For last 4 thousands years, the human being has refined its unique trait of adapting ability that hit the highest point at the Industrial Revolution. The industrial revolution, which first got its start in local areas in the late 19th century, marks a turning point for the changes on a global scale. It was the energy revolution brought about by the discovery of fossil fuels that supported the industrial revolution.

"The humans' ability to change" has come to turning point following the release of this vast fossil energy kept intact over a period of more than three billion years since the advent of the life that appeared on three and a half billion years ago and has since then has undergone a lot of changes.

It took over 3 billion years that the living organisms went through various stages of evolution and then fossil fuels were formed from such decayed plants and animals. While it became great sources of energy, burning fossil fuels caused pollution and other environmental changes. In addition, the technological advancement stemmed from the human nature to change, produced an enormous amount of chemicals or synthetic materials that cannot be decomposed in the natural environment.

Consequently, accumulation of these wastes indeed started threatening lives of many species including humans. This is mainly due to the philosophy emerged in the modern civilization, where the materialism took place. A materialistic view of the world is grounded in the concept that the human being rules the earth. Based on this belief, the first priority is placed on oneself with an effort to preserve own tribes, religions or countries, and eliminate others. Individuals tend to only care about their own prosperity.

Technological innovations enabled humans to reduce fatality ratio, and therefore prolonged our life span. As a result, human population soared to unsustainable levels, putting significant stresses on an environment. With only a limited amount of resources available, the earth simply cannot allow for it.

Besides population expansion, the materialistic society derived from the

industrialization generated great threats on earth. The economic growth in the early 19th century was within the tolerable extent, yet the market economy system emerged in the late 20th century started disrupting the balance of the ecosystem. The market economy works in which the need for material possessions is satisfied through investment of capital. Accumulation of capital is to reinvest for greater return, and such system affords no room for ecological consideration. In general, capital is invested to acquire profits and for pursuits of personal welfare.

If we continue to live as we have, it is certain that the 21st century will have to live through an unprecedented catastrophe for the consequences of our evolution with no point of return.

“What we can leave behind to our next generation?” *2000/04/05

It is simple; ‘earth’ or in another word, ‘nature’. We need to protect the ecosystem that allows us to sustain a comfortable living. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you exactly what and how to do, but it is important that we learn to control.

* The copyright of this article belongs to Creature National Institute for Environmental Studies.