

## COMPASSIONATE EARTH MANIFESTO

As humans, we usually think that we are separate from the natural world and entitled to use it for our own ends. When we ourselves are treated this way – objectified, exploited – we object strongly: witness the Arab spring, revolutions throughout history, and significant support for the aims of the Occupy movement (*Time* poll, 10/2011). Yet the few people who suggest not exploiting animals, plants, or ecosystems are usually ridiculed or trivialized. Even Buddhists rarely live in accordance with the very clear teachings of their religion on this subject.

The direct results of this alienation, central to human civilization, include the present financial crisis, the loss of 200 animal species every day, the degradation of soils, air, water and human health along with them, peak oil, and a forced march toward a cliff known as climate catastrophe. The subtler results are loneliness, ennui, and attempts to fill our empty hearts by consuming – which is very good for business.

Yet ancient humans lived well as part of the planet for hundreds of thousands of years, much longer than our 6-10,000 years as its supposed masters. We do not know what fear or greed once caused us to invent agriculture, cities, and industry, but we must notice that it is time to change again. Have you noticed the weather? Some people can look directly at a shrinking glacier and still deny global warming. Most people whose family members have cancer, degenerative disease, or neurological disorders assume it is random bad luck – but environmental connection to illness has been proved time and again, with Love Canal perhaps the most famous.

On climate change (global warming) we were warned forty years ago by the Club of Rome; eight years ago by Pentagon research; in 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2007 by the IPCC (international scientists' group), and quite a few other people. Our governments, most of them, do nothing – except provide handouts to the businesses doing the damage (oil, industrial agriculture, chemicals etc) and offer a pittance to alternatives, while worshiping jobs and growth.

In the twenty years since the first Rio climate summit, annual world carbon emissions have risen by 48%. Giant corporations pursue short-term profits with no visible awareness that the future will be different. It is obvious that individual lifestyle changes are pathetically inadequate. Most active environmentalists are either petitioning the government or are attempting to prepare for disaster through permaculture, the Transition Movement or the locavore movement. A few people are counting on extraterrestrials or the end of the age. A very few are seeking to change the locus of power, to end the ability of the powerful to destroy everyone else in our name for the god of profit and “standard of living.”

Even now, if all of industrial agriculture were immediately converted to sustainable farming, if use of fossil fuels immediately stopped worldwide, if wars were ended for their ecocide (not to mention their insanity), if every possible step were taken, without magic or techno-fixes, we could begin sequestering carbon and start walking away from the cliff.

***The only reason catastrophe is inevitable is because we prioritize industrial civilization over survival. As long as we are consumers rather than citizens, we are consenting to our own demise, participating in global murder-suicide.***

It is time to wake up, take responsibility for our collective human power, and rejoin the family of life as participants rather than owners. Ask where is your alliance: to a culture of advertising, material consumption, inequality and war, or to the culture of home, family, friendship, leisure, art, contentment, equality – and a viable future for your grandchildren. Then ask what's stopping you.

For those who want to do nothing, it's easy to glibly say it's too late. If so, are you preparing your children and grandchildren for the world they will have to live in? Are you ready to answer the questions they'll ask in 20 years? Maybe it would be easier to take some responsibility now for how that world turns out.

*“If we will have the wisdom to survive... asking not too much of earth or heaven, then a long time after we are dead.... The river will run clear, as we will never know it, and over it, birdsong like a canopy... This is no paradisaal dream. Its hardship is its possibility.”* from Wendell Berry, “A Vision,” 1977

There is no promise of what we can do if we begin now. There is only a certainty of what will happen if we do not.

This is titled “Compassionate Earth” because the Earth has never abandoned us; it is we who have left. There is a whole world of beings who will welcome us if we come back.

Love,  
Shodo Spring