



### The Five Turbidities

One of the most discussed topics in the world today is climate change and global warming. Disasters are springing up everywhere. Many scientists from around the world have come to the conclusion that the culprit is the buildup of carbon dioxide. It has polluted the Earth's atmosphere, bringing about a continual rise of temperature. Global warming is causing glacial ice to melt faster, with a corresponding rise in sea levels. People are sounding an urgent call for everyone to be more prudent and aware. This is the advice from scientists around the world. We continually witness the unfolding of disasters in different parts of the world.

I still remember when we were in Africa, where people were suffering from drought; a ceasefire was just declared between militant forces in Ethiopia and Somalia. But, no sooner had human bloodshed ended, than the fury of elements unleashed itself as rainfall dropped to nearly nil, killing harvests and causing starvation in a nation already in dire straits. People struggled to survive amid wars and natural disasters.

When we set foot on their soil, it seemed as if we were no longer on Earth, but in some other realm. Sometimes we wondered if it was a living hell. There was simply too much suffering. This was in 1996. At the time, those images seemed worlds away from us. But each year we see more of the same. Disasters beget more disasters, and we see no end in sight. As information becomes readily available from different corners of the globe, we are constantly bombarded with news that concern us greatly. This only serves as vindication of the Great Enlightened One, the Buddha, who predicted that Five Turbidities shall befall us. He predicted this in His time, long ago.

The Five Turbidities of the Evil Era are the turbidities of **Views, Sentient Beings, Life, Afflictions and Kalpa**. These Five Turbidities are impure and embody defilements. Let us trace back the root cause of this catastrophe. Where did we go wrong? All the polluted air comes from highly industrialized regions. For the sake of development, they engage in oil drilling, mining, and heavy logging. This is



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common in developed countries, causing weather abnormalities and the greenhouse effect, etc.

On the other side, in the affected areas, such as Africa, there is so much grief and suffering. What karma did they commit to deserve such retribution? I do not think they are even capable of committing negative karma in this life. They are only suffering. In extreme hardship, one is creating neither good nor bad karma. Then why do they end up in a place with so much suffering? It is from their Circumstantial and Direct Retributions. They had no choice. Their birth place was surely not their choosing. However, their past negative karma unquestionably took them there. This is the reason we say, "Only karma follows us when we die." Bad karma plunges one into living hells. To be born in a place like that is pain beyond what words can describe. Some may doubt whether karma actually works that way. What about those evildoers who apparently are having a good life? If they created enough merits in their past lives to be born human, they may still enjoy a good life, without having to pay the price now. Merits from past lives can bear fruit in this one, allowing them to create more karma.

Will these blessings last forever? No. When good merits are exhausted, bad retributions will surface. Let us look at the United States. For a number of years now, they have sustained quite a few calamities. But have they come to any realizations? Alas, people seldom change. They suffer from the Turbidities of Sentient Beings and Views. Everyone had the view that industrial development was good for the economy. Is this always the right view? As mounting evidence has shown, it is not so. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate change is a legally-binding environmental treaty, calling for reduction of greenhouse gases. But the U.S. failed to ratify it, because it depends on manufacturing. It is views like these that cause global warming. Mother Earth is not well, but there is still no definite plan of action. People do not see far enough ahead, but instead focus on immediate return, further exacerbating the problem. This is due to Turbidity of Views, which leads to Turbidity of Sentient Beings, who live unwholesome lives.

With the spike in population growth, there is a corresponding moral decline. Conflicts among people have intensified and worsened. So manmade disasters are



more severe than before.

People my age went through World War II. I was young at the time, but the memory of it is still fresh, as if it just happened. It was a horrendous war, especially right before the end when the atomic bomb was dropped. The atomic weapons we have now are tens of times more powerful and destructive. The fallout from World War II still contaminates our Earth. The radioactive dust has not totally dissipated yet. It is still in the air. Think about the future. If there is another world war what sort of warfare will it be? What will become of human beings? It is truly frightening. This is why Turbidities of Views, Sentient Beings and Afflictions will cause Turbidity of Life.

For a long time now I have been teaching about the Turbidity of Afflictions. There are afflictive emotions. Wrong views are also afflictions. The conflicts between sentient beings are also caused by afflictive emotions such as greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt. These emotions lead to chaos and disasters, and are endangering people's lives. So we call them Turbidities. The Buddha taught that wrong views, afflictive emotions, unwholesome beings and short life spans together become the Turbidity of Kalpa, a Kalpa of decay. These make up the Five Turbidities. When we reach the Kalpa of Decay, which we are actually in now, there are many conflicting views, strained human relations and afflictive emotions. They all become a threat to human life. This is where we are now.

A Kalpa is a long period of time. In that period of time, many things accumulate. Scientists around the world now clearly see that the problem lies with industrial pollution and waste, and massive human consumption.

**Turbidity of Views: Worldly people hold misguided views, do not abide by the right path, and are divided by differences.**

**Turbidity of Sentient Beings:**

**Worldly people are afflicted and evil. They are impure in body and mind, do not know truth and principles.**

**Turbidity of Affliction:**

**Worldly people are greedy and attached to personal love and desire. They are**



**full anger, vanity, hypocrisy and in constant conflict.**

**Turbidity of life:**

**with accumulating affliction, sentient beings are ill in body and mind, causing their lives to be shorter.**

**Turbidity of Kalpa :**

**Born in the Dharma-ending Age, with Major and Minor Three Calamities, sentient beings are without a day of peace.**

So, “in this Turbid Kalpa, Dharma is disappearing and living beings are heavily defiled.” This is the era of degeneracy. Ethics and morality are neglected and, in essence, ignored. So now we are in the decay of the Turbid Kalpa. There is a near total disregard of morality. So, “living beings are heavily defiled”, the defilements in their minds are getting worse. This sickness of the mind is spreading throughout the world. Mother Earth is not well. We are not well. From Beginningless Time until now, no one knows how long it has been. The Buddha, the Great Enlightened One, saw the world in cycles of growth and decay. When the Earth began to support life many sentient beings appeared. This went on for some time. Then as the human population grew, there was more destruction. This destruction comes from the Five Turbidities. Over a period of time, the first four Turbidities together form the Turbidities of kalpa. We are now in the midst of this kalpa.

The Buddha warned us about it. In the Turbid Kalpa, Dharma is neglected. For the past 2,000-plus years everything has continued to worsen. The magnitude of chaos and destruction is increasing. We are filled with worries and trepidation. Since time immemorial we have become more and more wasteful.

Before, we drank filtered water from the river. Now we just turn on the faucet and pay no heed to conserving it. We went from torch, candle and oil lamp to electric light, and use air conditioning and heat. This is massive consumption of our available resources. When we deplete nature resources, we upset the balance of the Four Elements. We have been talking about the gradual imbalance of Earth, water, fire and wind. The Four Elements are not balanced. The future we talked about is actually here now. There is drought, flood and epidemics of infectious



diseases. This is just no end in sight.

According to news sources, in 2007 there were 2.6 billion people who did not have access to clean water. We watched video footage from Ethiopia that is still our archive. We still have much footage of the calamities and hardship endured by many people around the world. We are witnesses to these events. Whom we watched the footage I wondered how many people in Africa were without clean water. In 2007, we learned from the world census that over 2.6 billion people were without clean water. This troubles me greatly. Let us think about it. What if we had no clean water? Just think about it. If you wanted to brush your teeth, wash your face, or take a shower, what would you do? We are not just talking about water for drinking or washing vegetables. We need water for everything.

If the water is not clean, germs, will proliferate, and diseases can spread easily. If there is a shortage of water there will be more insects and bacteria that spread disease. There Three Minor Calamities include war, famine and disease. Famine is brought on by drought. When drought makes farms barren, of course there will be no food. War and violence, famine, and infectious diseases are the Three Minor Calamities. But are these three the only problems? Bigger calamities having to do with water, fire and wind occur as well.

Everyone, we must understand suffering. As we continue this discussion. I would like you to know more about suffering. Life is suffering. This is why we need to have awareness, so that we can gradually alleviate this suffering. This depends on all of us. We are also sentient beings and are part of the problem. When we are enjoying the comforts of life, we are also responsible. Recently, I have always been very concerned about the Buddha's prediction of what will happen in our era. This is why we need to be vigilant and know that everything happening around us is our responsibility. So, please always be mindful.