

Important

Unknown words

Surprising Info

thoughts/  
gave impact

### Excerpt from "An Unrealistic Dreamer"

by Haruki Murakami

As you surely know, at 2:46 pm on March 11, a massive earthquake struck the northeast area of Japan. The force of this quake was so great that the earth spun faster on its axis, and the day was shortened by 1.8 millionth of a second.

The damage caused by the earthquake itself was quite extensive, but the tsunami triggered by the earthquake caused much greater devastation. In some places, the tsunami wave reached a height of 39 metres. In the face of such an enormous wave, even the tenth storey of normal buildings would not provide refuge for those caught in its path. People living near the coast had no time to escape, and about 24,000 people lost their lives – some 9,000 of whom are still reported missing. The great wave that broke the barriers carried them away, and we've not yet been able to find their bodies. Many were most likely lost in the depths of the icy sea. When I stop to think about this and imagine that I too could suffer such a terrible fate, my chest tightens. Many survivors lost their families, friends, houses, properties, communities and the very foundations of their lives. Entire villages were destroyed completely. Many people have lost all hope for living.

one of my greatest  
Fear is to  
experience  
disastrous  
calamities.

I think that being Japanese means living with natural disasters. From summer to autumn, typhoons pass through much of Japan. Every year they cause extensive damage, and many lives are lost. There are many active volcanoes in every region. And of course, there are many earthquakes. Japan sits precariously on the four tectonic plates at the eastern extremity of the Asian continent.

It is as if we are living on a very nest of earthquakes.

We can predict the timing and route of typhoons to a greater or lesser extent, but we can't predict when and where an earthquake will occur. All that we do know is that this was not the last great earthquake, and that another will surely happen in the near future. Many specialists predict that a magnitude 8 earthquake will strike the Tokyo area within the next twenty or thirty years. It may happen in ten years time, or it may strike tomorrow afternoon. No one can predict with any certitude the extent of the damage that would follow if an inland earthquake were to strike such a densely populated city as Tokyo.

Even  
→ Beauty comes  
with chaos.  
EARTH ☹️

BEING  
CERTAIN →

Despite this fact, there are 13 million people living "ordinary" lives in the Tokyo area alone. They take crowded commuter trains to go to their offices, and they work in skyscrapers. Even after this earthquake, I haven't heard that the population of Tokyo is on the decline.

Why? You might ask. How can so many people go about their daily lives in such a terrible place? Don't they go out of their minds with fear?

In Japanese, we have the word "mujo (無常)". It means that everything is ephemeral. Everything born into this world changes, and will ultimately disappear. There is nothing that can be considered eternal or immutable. This view of the world was derived from Buddhism, but the idea of "mujo" was burned into the spirit of Japanese people beyond the strictly religious context, taking root in the common ethnic consciousness from ancient times.

SHORT  
LIVED

The idea that all things are transient is an expression of resignation. We believe that it serves no purpose to go against nature. On the

contrary, Japanese people have found positive expressions of beauty in this resignation.

If we think about nature, for example, we cherish the cherry blossoms of spring, the fireflies of summer and the red leaves of autumn. For us, it is natural to observe them passionately, collectively and as a tradition. It can be difficult to find a hotel room near the best known sites of cherry blossoms, fireflies and red leaves in their respective seasons, as such places are invariably milling with visitors.

*CALWAYS*

*MOVING AROUND IN  
A LARGE GROUP*

Why is this so?

The answer may be found in the fact that cherry blossoms, fireflies and red leaves all lose their beauty within a very short space of time. We travel from afar to witness this glorious moment. And we are somehow relieved to confirm that they are not merely beautiful, but are already beginning to fall to the ground, to lose their small lights or their vivid beauty. We find peace of mind in the fact that the peak of beauty has been reached and is already starting to fade.

*We sometimes see  
beauty on its  
process and  
how it ends. We  
crave for  
satisfaction*

*The fact that  
he described  
it in those  
words gave  
me a thought  
on how it  
actually makes  
sense.*

I don't know if natural disasters have affected such a mentality. I'm sure, however, that in some sense we have been able to collectively overcome successive natural disasters and to accept the unavoidable by virtue of this mentality. Perhaps such experiences have also shaped our notion of the aesthetic.

The overwhelming majority of Japanese people were deeply shocked by this earthquake. While we may be accustomed to earthquakes, we still have not been able to come to terms with the scale of the destruction. We feel helpless, and are anxious about the future of our country.

Ultimately, we'll summon up the necessary mental energy, pick ourselves up and rebuild. In this regard, I have no particular worries.

This is how we have survived throughout our long history. This time as well, we certainly will not remain frozen and in a state of shock forever. Broken houses can be rebuilt, and broken roads can be restored.

You might say that we are living as uninvited guests on planet earth. Planet earth never asked us to live here. If she shakes a little, we can't complain, because shaking from time to time is just one of the earth's natural behaviours. Whether we like it or not, we must live with nature.

What I want to talk about here isn't something like buildings or roads, which can be rebuilt; but rather about things which can't be reconstructed easily, such as ethics and values. Such things are not physically tangible. Once they are broken, it's difficult to restore them, as this cannot be achieved with machines, labour and materials.

What I'm talking about concretely is the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

As you probably know, at least three of the six nuclear reactors damaged by the earthquake and tsunami have not yet been restored, and continue to leak radiation around them.

Meltdowns occurred, and the surrounding soil has been contaminated. Water that probably contains high levels of radioactivity has been dispersed in the surrounding ocean, and the wind is carrying radiation to more distant areas.

Hundreds of thousands of people have had to evacuate their homes. Farms, ranches, factories, commercial centres and ports are now deserted, having been completely abandoned. Those who lived there may not ever

Disasters  
are inevitable

Even Moon has  
a MOONQUAKE!  
And the other  
planets too.

be able to return. It also grieves me to say that the damage from this accident is not limited to Japan, but will spread to neighbouring countries as well.

The reason why such a tragic accident occurred is more or less clear. The people who built these nuclear plants had not imagined that such a large tsunami would strike them. Some experts pointed out that tsunami of similar scale had struck these regions previously, and insisted that the safety standards should be revised. The electrical power companies, however, ignored them. As commercial ventures, these companies did not want to invest massively in preparing for a tsunami which may occur only once every few hundred years.

It seems to me that the government, which is supposed to ensure the strictest possible safety and security measures for nuclear plants, downgraded these safety standards in order to promote nuclear power generation.

We should investigate this situation, and if mistakes are found they should be rectified. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to leave their land, and have seen their lives turned upside down. We are angry about this; such anger is only natural.

— put right

For some reason, Japanese people seldom get angry. We know how to be patient, but aren't very good at showing our anger. We are surely different from the people of Barcelona in this respect. But this time, even the Japanese people have become seriously angry.

At the same time, we must be critical of ourselves for having tolerated and allowed these corrupted systems to exist until now.

This accident cannot be dissociated from our ethics and values.

As you know, we, the Japanese people, are unique in having experienced nuclear attacks.

In August 1945, US military aircraft dropped atomic bombs on the two major cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resulting in the deaths of more than two hundred thousand people. Most of the victims were unarmed, ordinary people. Now, however, is not the moment for me to consider the rights and wrongs of this.

What I want to point out here is not only that two hundred thousand people died in the immediate aftermath of the nuclear bombing, but also that many survivors would subsequently die from the effects of radiation over a prolonged period of time. It was the suffering of these victims that showed us the terrible destruction that radioactivity has brought to the world and to the lives of ordinary people.

We had two fundamental policies after World War II. One was economic recovery; the other was the renunciation of war. We would forego the use of armed force, we would grow more prosperous, and we would pursue peace. These ideas became the new policies of post-war Japan.

The following words are carved on the memorial for the victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima:

"Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil."

FORMAL  
REJECTION

it may be  
useful for  
some sort,  
however, there  
will always  
be a great  
consequence for  
this.