

Fukushima's Fallout on My Soul

Greenrevolutionary

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For two months now massive plumes of radiative particles have been spewing into the atmosphere from the crippled nuclear power plant in Fukushima. These particles have been carried through the jetstream across the northern Pacific ocean, to the west coast of north america, to the east coast and then finally across the Atlantic to Europe and eventually, if it hasn't already, the atmosphere of the entire global north will be contaminated by the radioactive particles produced by the multiple reactor meltdowns in Fukushima.

The Japanese government and the company responsible for managing the plant; Tepco, have been pouring massive amounts of water onto the nuclear reactors but have been unable to raise the water level at all within the reactors; which are designed to be full of water at all times. The coolant systems which have now failed were supposed to supply 1 million gallons of water per minute to each of Fukushima's six reactors [according to Dr. Helen Caldicott youtube.com; apparently they had no backup plan in case they were unable to permanently supply this preposterous amount of water to the reactors.

There has been no real progress made in Fukushima since the beginning of the accident; in fact things have only gotten much worse. Tepco and the government's attempts to raise the water levels in reactors 1 and 2 have totally failed either because there is massive leaking of radioactive water into the ground and surrounding environment, or because they are unable to provide water at the rate necessary to cool the reactors enough for water to exist in their vicinity. Either way, the reactors are still exposed to the air, still releasing massive amounts of radiation into the atmosphere, and still at risk of hydrogen explosions.

Additionally, we know that Tepco and the government have been intentionally dumping massive amounts of radioactive water directly into the ocean; because

they simply have nowhere else to store it all. This radioactive water will travel the major ocean currents of the Pacific and eventually will flow down the west coast of North America. In the center will be the Great Pacific Garbage Gyre being bathed in radioactive rain. All ocean systems are ultimately connected and it is possible that the dumping of so much nuclear waste into the ocean could contaminate the seas worldwide.

And the radiation won't stop coming out of the reactors for an estimated 6 to 9 months according to Tepco and the government; a timetable which many scientists seem to think is extremely optimistic. So radiation will continue to pour out of the plant until then.

But wait a minute, I'm not sick yet. What does exposure to radiation actually do to the human body?

Well, radiation exposure can effect one in a few different ways depending on the type and amount of exposure. Let's explore what the future holds for our species.

First, there is Acute Radiation Syndrome. This occurs when a person is exposed to a source of ionizing radiation, and refers to health effects which appear quickly [within several months of exposure] rather than over the long term [years or decades after exposure]. This is when someone is exposed to an external source of radiation, rather than ingesting a radioactive particle into one's body through the lungs or digestive tract. In other words, this is what people in Japan and nearby the plant have to worry about. The speed of the onset of symptoms usually indicates the severity of the dose.

Acute radiation sickness normally indicates a large dose. The average dose of radiation administered to a person by a medical x-ray device is something like 0.1 Gy, and people begin to get acute radiation sickness at doses of 1-2 Gy. Though there have been exposures of more than 30Gy, 8 Gy is more than sufficient to kill 100% of those exposed, whether they receive medical care or not.

An exposure of 6-8 Gy kills between 95-100% of those who do not receive care, an between 50-100% of those who do. Exposures of 2-6 Gy kill between 5-50% of those who receive care and between 5-100% of those who do not.

Now the fun part; the symptoms!

1. Nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite
2. Bleeding from Orifices
3. Massive infections
4. Anemia
5. Loss of white blood cells (Leukopenia)
6. Hair loss
7. Central Nervous Systems ranging from cognitive impairment to seizures, tremor and ataxia (severe lack of coordination of muscle movements)
8. Etc.

Furthermore, if you are lucky enough to have a small enough exposure to survive the Acute Radiation Syndrome, you also have to deal with the long-term cancer risks associated with accumulated radiation exposure. Every particle of radioactive dust or fallout you breath in or ingest adds to your risk of getting cancer and will irradiate you from the inside out until it is removed, expelled or decays. This causes cancer. Exposures are cumulative; so every dose one gets adds to one's chance of getting cancer.

Fallout comes down in the rain. It has been raining where I live for six days, and at first I was mostly avoiding it and staying inside. I looked on in sadness as the radioactive rain fell down on the plants and animals and the soil outside. I have no Gieger counter, but I have a basic understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. I know the jetstream is bringing radioactive fallout down in the rain where I live. I know this will be happening for a very long time. They won't have the situation even remotely under control until next year at the earliest.

Sitting in the garden the day before yesterday I came to this realization; there are over 440 nuclear reactors in the world. There are over 100 in my own country; the majority of which seem to be concentrated in the Northeast, where I live. There will be more accidents. Eventually, as the grid comes down, there will be no one left with the ability to entomb reactors and there will be massive radiation leakage, almost certainly, whatever we do.

I sat down on the wet grass under a small peach tree and surrounded by flowers and plants yet to bloom. The pair of cardinals who've built their nest in an ever-green next to the house used the time in between rain showers to gather food. The robins who are moving in to an adjacent shrub shuttled in and out of their new home, each time returning to the nest with a beakful of small twigs. Pollinators swarm the flowers during the lull in the rain.

And then, the rain began to fall again. Lightly at first, and I did not move. Why should I. What is the point? I'm virtually guaranteed cancer at this point anyway, even before this accident. All this does is help me let go of the denial. If I live long enough, I will get cancer. I guess in my heart I've always sort of known we'd reach that point in my lifetime; the point at which the environment is so contaminated with carcinogens that virtually 100% of humans will get cancer in their lifetimes.

As it began to pour harder I looked at all of the living things around me. The living world in the place where I live and love enduring baptism by nuclear fallout. Large heavy drops fall on my head, my shoulders, my back, my arms, my legs. My shoulders and back are soon wet through my now moist shirt. The robins continue shuttling. The male cardinal hops from branch to branch low to the ground in the woods, hunting. I do not see the female. I lift my face to the sky and open my mouth, and tears escape from the corners of my eyes to run down my cheeks and mix with the radioactive rain on their way down to the ground.

And there was peace. There was calm. This is where I live. This is my landbase. This is my rain. Our fates are fused. If there is fallout in the rain, and there may not be today but there certainly will be plenty of times before they get this disaster under control, then there will be fallout in my body. So be it. That makes it all the easier to fight for this place while there is still some fight left in me. The years go on; entire ecosystems die — last year the Gulf of Mexico. The year before the discovery of the Great Pacific Garbage Gyre. This year the entire north Pacific Ocean.

A personal future in this world becomes easier and easier to sacrifice. A personal future filled with low white blood cell counts, dying of massive infections in a similar manner to aids patients. Or a personal future with low platelet counts; which are responsible for the clotting of blood and without which the body may bleed profusely and unexpectedly from the nose, rectum or the simplest of skin abrasions. Or dying of bone cancer — or perhaps bone necrosis; where the bone inside a part of one's body dies; and the dead tissue decomposes and causes surrounding tissue to die. Tissue necrosis often leads to gangrene. A personal future watching everything I love die. That's what waiting leads to. That's what the kind of denial that would have me go hide inside from the rain leads to.

I'd rather a personal future spent fighting fiercely for that which is left of what I love; fighting fiercely for life. I don't want to witness the death of the world. I don't want to witness the total and complete unraveling of the web of life. I won't be one of those left at the end who can only leave the house in protective gear for ten minutes at a time to look at the last remaining tree in town before it too dies of radiation poisoning.

No, instead I'll fight for what's left of the web of life, while anything at all still remains of it. I will put everything I am into this fight while I still can. I will fight because there's no better future I'd rather hold out for. I will fight for the right of future generations not just of human beings but of all species to exist on this planet, our home, if we can defend it from those who would participate in omnicide in exchange for a little cash in their pocket. It's time to wake up to reality, time to wake up to responsibility and time to kick the rabid, psychopathic leaders of government and industry off of the fucking planet once and for all.

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