



## Building A Sustainable World One Decision At A Time

There is little disagreement that our global situation is unsustainable, that we are in need of dramatic transformation. There is much disagreement about what that transformation should be and how best to accomplish it. How can we galvanize our efforts into coherent action that will effectively address our global challenges? Our current situation is the result of billions of individual and diverse decisions made each moment. Amid this chaotic immensity, what impact can one person have?

The largest volcanic eruption on which we have firm data happened in Iceland during 1783-85. When Mt. Laki blew, 565 square miles were covered with a cloud of ash. Sunlight was unable to reach the ground for months. Sulphur plumes displaced the oxygen. All of the plants died. Soon after, all of the animals and humans starved to death. I live in a world where I can easily walk to a store and get something to eat in the middle of the night during a snow storm. My senses report no imminent threat to my food supply, my safety seems secure.

We can go several weeks without food, several days without water, and only a few minutes without air. The perception that we are separate from the earth is an illusion, a deadly illusion. As Alan Watts said: "We grow out of this earth in much the same way an apple grows out of a tree".

Without plants burrowing their roots into the soil and sending their photon collectors - leaves - into the sky, we would all be dead. Our survival is dependent on the sun, a nonstop thermal nuclear reactor located a convenient ninety-three-million miles away. Any closer and it would fry us; any further away and we would freeze. The energy it releases provides the sustenance upon which all earthly life depends. Plants have learned how to store that energy in clusters of carbon and hydrogen. When we eat, our blood carries those carbo-hydrates to our cells where their captured energy is released, fueling our very existence.

Back in 1969, who would have predicted that the most profound impact resulting from our journey to the moon was the view of the earth as seen from space! This visually sensual input drove home, as never before, the fact that there is only one Earth, that if we blow it here there is nowhere else to go. The emergence of a global identity began with these pictures of earth from space. This marks when we first recognized that we do indeed live on "spaceship earth", to quote Buckminster Fuller.

Decisions are made, actions are taken, by individuals. Change and transformation flows through us. Remembering our connection to the earth, our dependence on food, water, and air, provides an effective guide for our decisions. It brings coherence to our actions. It provides a basis for us to pool our resources that we can accomplish the truly miraculous. It reminds us that we must nurture our community so that our community can support us. We are a part of the earth as much as it is a part of us. When we remember this we thrive!

An endless cycle,  
A graceful arc,  
The earth  
She glides  
Beneath the stars  
Ever drawn toward  
Yet fleeting by  
The all consuming yellow fire,  
Giver glorious of golden light,  
Bestower of the warmth  
That feeds all life;  
And so on earth we have ever marked  
With endless cycle,  
With graceful arc,  
The unfolding dramas  
That texture our lives,  
Intricate rhythms  
Living inside  
The steady pulse of time's unrelenting tides:

springtimes  
ever vigorous and lush  
enthusiasm endless rejuvenates  
anticipates

summertimes  
patience long and calm  
steadfast fertile strength  
awaits

autumntimes  
welcome abundance secure  
life's yearning matures  
endures

wintertimes  
slow retrospective gestation  
temperance preceding innovation  
regenerates

And thus and so the seasons weave  
Times of joy, times of grief,  
Times of turmoil, times of peace,  
Life advances, life recedes,  
All are born, all must die,  
And still steadily flow those scrumptious seasons by  
Gifts from the timekeeper in the sky!