

Climate Change: Today and Tomorrow

Climate Change and Global Warming – terms that any average third grader would be familiar with. And yet, in today's political atmosphere, it seems like those topics seem to be more divisive than ever. With active "climate change denial" slowly inching towards the mainstream, it points to a worrying place. Science has been reframed as being part of a broader political agenda instead of a tool for the truth. Facts have been pushed aside that could prove a vital instrument into reshaping our path to the future – to the planet's future.

Let's start with the basics. What is Climate Change all about? What's in store for us? Climate Change, in this context, refers to the rising temperatures inspired by the heat trapped in earth's atmosphere by the Greenhouse effect and increased production of polluting gases like carbon dioxide, methane etc. thanks to the increased industrialisation. Scientists have spent a lot of time studying the consequences of different levels of temperature rise.

A recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on the Climate Change (IPCC) talked about how if we, as humans, don't take immediate, deliberate change to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees within the next forty years, we might reach a point of no return, in terms of the planet's future. That 1.5 degrees is significant – it was the target that almost all the world governments agreed to at the 2015 Paris Agreement. Even going to as much as a two degree rise, parts of Southwest Asia, including well-populated areas of the Persian Gulf and Yemen may get so hot that they become literally uninhabitable without air conditioning.

Even the agreed upon 1.5 degree rise may prove inadequate in certain respects. By some calculations, however, this limit could help prevent the predicted melting of the Siberian Tundra releasing the greenhouse gas methane from its depths. It could limit the sea level rising to levels significantly less than the two degree predictions. Today, we have to account for the future in terms of every half degree.

It is true that these calculations have been made by extrapolating certain factors, and maybe the "20 years or nothing" claim might be a bit reductionist. However, it is undeniable that the track we are on is not a great one. The extreme weather and natural disasters we've seen recently seem to indicate that. They might just continue to increase in number. Earth has been through five mass extinctions and we might be inspiring a sixth. Deadline or not, it's high-time we do something about the whole fiasco. We simply cannot put this off any longer.

Today, the top 20 countries emitting countries in the world are responsible for 80 per cent of the global emissions. Just seven countries emit more than a gigaton annually (vox.com). A good place to start with Climate Change policy would then be these seven countries. If we get these countries to agree on sustainable energy and resource management, that would be a good step forward, and more importantly, it is much more attainable than getting 200 countries to agree upon a singular climate change policy.

We can't achieve the results we want just with ordinary recycling and odd and even politics. The onus must be placed on the bigger corporations and companies that can undo all the good collective citizens do in a single emission. Renewable energy must be encouraged and made the order of the day.

In a time when we need to band up together, climate change denial becomes much more than some innocuous, uneducated conspiracy. Climate change denial becomes an active fear mongering that takes away from the hard work that most scientists have done. The cynicism of climate change denial is much more profound than its rejection of science. Climate change denial just shows how people would rather help corporations achieve profits than actively help the planet's future – humanity's future. It is a limited view of the world, that is unable to see how people actually do have the future of the environment in mind.

It's not all bad news. The greatest thing about humanity is its ability to innovate and constantly keep moving. The most crucial turning points of our development as a species have come from our greatest inventions. My personal favourite example of this has to be Jonas Salk and the invention of the polio vaccine. Today, polio is almost entirely eradicated globally. Salk never patented his vaccine or made any money from his invention. It was a discovery that served the sole purpose of helping humanity. Mankind has always pulled through in the last minute in inspiring ways.

Today, what we need is to produce a conducive environment for these innovations and changes. What we need is not politics vs science, but using the both complementarily to bring the whole world together on this global issue. We need to combat the fear mongering that is climate change denial, and instead put our efforts into properly streamlining our efforts into a plan that could help ensure the future – both of our planet, and humanity as a whole.