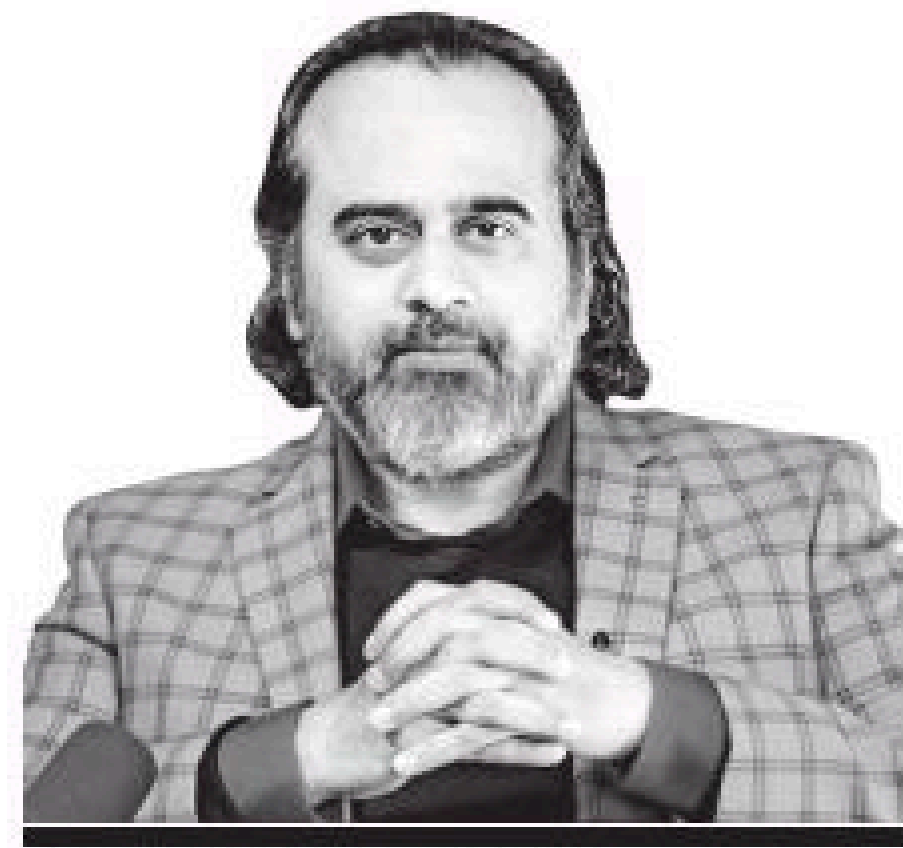


How India pays the price for America's climate negligence



ACHARYA PRASHANT

As wildfires rage, glaciers melt, cities drown, and farmlands crack under unrelenting drought, climate change is no longer a distant catastrophe—it is here, unfolding before our eyes. Every season brings fresh devastation, yet we continue down a path of environmental neglect. The signs are clear, the science is irrefutable, and yet we deny.

The devastating wildfires in Los Angeles are a direct consequence of climate change. Excessive rainfall led to an overgrowth of vegetation, which later dried up due to an extreme drought, creating a highly flammable environment. The Santa Ana winds, made fiercer by global warming, fanned the flames, burning thousands of acres, displacing countless people, and causing billions in damage. This is not just nature taking its course; it is nature responding to human-induced climate change. Despite the clear connection between such disasters and our actions, the response from world leaders, particularly the United States under the Trump administration, has been destructive.

Under the Trump administration, the U.S. withdrew from the Paris Agreement and other international climate treaties, signaling a blatant disregard for the environment. Instead of investing in sustainable en-

ergy, policies were enacted to boost fossil fuel production aggressively. Subsidies for solar and wind energy were revoked, and even the Arctic—one of Earth's most fragile ecosystems—was opened for drilling. These actions are not just short-sighted; they are a direct assault on the planet's future. Rather than addressing the root causes of climate disasters, the government's stance has amplified the crisis, prioritizing short-term economic gains over long-term planetary survival.

If the United States, responsible for 25% of excess carbon emissions despite having just 4% of the world's population, refuses to act, how can we expect other nations to take climate action seriously? The precedent is dangerous—if America abandons its role in climate leadership, nations like China and Russia may follow suit. And if global superpowers continue to compete for dominance without regard for the planet, we may find ourselves not just in a climate crisis but on the brink of a new world war.

In such a scenario, climate change will become an even greater crisis, as wars contribute significantly to carbon emissions. A full-scale war lasting just 15 days can emit as much carbon as an entire year of industrial activity. If these conflicts escalate, the efforts to curb climate change will become futile, accelerating global warming at an unprecedented rate.

CLIMATE INJUSTICE: THE RICH POLLUTE, THE POOR SUFFER

One of the most alarming aspects of the climate crisis is the profound inequality

in how its consequences are distributed. This disparity, known as climate injustice, means that the wealthiest nations have contributed the most to climate change, yet it is the poorest countries that suffer the worst consequences. Nations in the Global South, including India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are facing rising sea levels, extreme heatwaves, and unpredictable monsoons that threaten millions of lives. Within countries, the divide is even more evident—the affluent can insulate themselves from the worst effects, while the poor, particularly farmers and laborers, are left at the mercy of nature's wrath. This injustice does not even count what has happened to flora and fauna.

INDIA ON THE FRONTLINES: THE UNFAIR BURDEN OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In the heart of rural India, a farmer stands in his barren field, staring at the cracked earth beneath his feet. His crops have failed—not once, but year after year—as the monsoons, once predictable, now arrive late or not at all. With no water left in the well and no savings to fall back on, his children go to bed hungry. Across the country, a mother in Mumbai's slums watches the water rise, creeping into her one-room home, soaking everything she owns. She grips her child's hand, unsure of where to go, knowing that tomorrow she might have to start over—again.

These are not isolated stories. They are the harsh reality for millions as India stands on the frontlines of climate change. With over 1.4 billion people, the country's survival depends heav-



Adding to the injustice is an undeniable truth—India is not the one causing this crisis. The carbon emissions that have pushed the planet to the brink are largely the legacy of wealthy nations like the U.S. and European countries. The global average per capita carbon dioxide emissions stand at approximately 4.8 metric tons per person per year. However, the United States far exceeds this, emitting around 17.6 metric tons per person annually, while India, despite its vast population, emits only about 2.5 metric tons per person. Yet, it is India that faces the harshest consequences. Rising sea levels threaten to swallow coastal cities like Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, displacing millions. In the north and central regions, heatwaves will turn entire towns into furnaces, where stepping outside could mean death for those forced to work in the open.

ily on agriculture, a sector that thrives on predictable monsoon cycles. But climate change is rewriting the script. Erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and devastating floods are becoming the new normal, making food security a daily battle.

The crisis extends beyond the fields. Himalayan glaciers are melting, reducing the flow of life-giving rivers like the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Yamuna. These rivers do not just quench thirst; they irrigate farms, generate electricity, and sustain

entire ecosystems. As their waters dwindle, conflicts over resources will grow, straining relations not only within communities but also between nations. Families will be forced to leave their homes, becoming climate refugees in their own land. The burden of this crisis will not be shared equally. The poor will suffer the most.

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Meanwhile, India's economic divide only worsens the crisis. The top 1% of the population controls more than 40% of the country's wealth, securing luxuries that shield them from climate disasters. They can install private water systems, live in air-conditioned homes, and, if necessary, relocate to safer places. But what happens to the construction worker laboring under the burning sun? The daily wage earner who depends on the very fields that are turning to dust? The slum dwellers who have nowhere else to go when the floods rise?

The climate crisis is not just about rising temperatures—it is about lives lost and a growing gap between those who can escape and those who are left behind. Unless urgent action is taken, climate change will not just alter weather patterns—it will rewrite the fate of millions, leaving the most vulnerable with nothing but uncertainty and despair.

MORE THAN JUST CARBON: A CRISIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Let's step back from blaming governments and industries for a moment. This crisis is not just about politics or policies—it is about human nature itself. We consume mindlessly, not because we need to, but because we are conditioned to. We chase more wealth, more possessions, more growth, without questioning why. We have been taught to look outward

for fulfillment, never inward. And in that restless search for satisfaction, we are devouring our planet.

We often hear the term "man-made climate change," but I propose something even deeper: *Man himself is climate change.* It is not just our industries, our emissions, or our policies—it is our compulsive desire to consume without understanding. Until we confront the deeper roots of our insatiable desires, no policy, no renewable energy, and no treaty will be enough.

On an individual level, the solution to climate change is not just in planting more trees or switching to electric cars, the real solution lies in a fundamental shift in human consciousness. Until we recognize that our endless pursuit of consumption is a reflection of our inner void, we will continue to consume recklessly. Until we are not self-aware, we will continue to wage war on the planet.

Right now, every attempt to save the Earth is like trying to fill a bottomless pit. Because the real pit is not in the ground—it is in our minds. It is time to wake up. The Earth is not an infinite resource. The climate crisis is not a distant threat. And the solution is not just in better policies—it is in becoming self-aware.

Acharya Prashant is a Vedanta exegete, philosopher, social reformer, columnist and a national bestselling author. Besides being a prolific author of over 150 books, he is the world's most-followed spiritual leader with 54 million subscribers on YouTube. He is also an alumnus of IIT-D & IIM-A and an Ex-Civil Services Officer. To read more thought-provoking articles by Acharya Prashant, visit askap.in