

The climate crisis begins within: Lessons from Kancha Gachibowli

The real change begins with personal responsibility, ecological awareness, and conscious, self-driven action. The climate crisis stems from unchecked consumption and inner emptiness.



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There was a time, not so long ago, when I would confront and agitate people by asking them how they would justify their inaction on the climate crisis to future generations. I no longer ask that question. The truth is painfully clear: we may not have too many future generations to answer to. The question is no longer when the effect of climate change will hit us—it's already here, and the most vulnerable communities of the world are already reeling under its horrendous consequences.

What we call as climate change is not just about rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, intensifying wildfires, prolonged droughts, loss of biodiversity, or collapsing ecosystems. It is rather the inevitable consequence of a deeper disorder: a compulsive, collective urge to consume without restraint. This endless consumption is not merely a lifestyle preference; it reveals a profound ignorance in the human psyche. At the root of ecological collapse is this inner emptiness we try to fill through consumption.

Our blind but insatiable

hunger doesn't just destroy forests or ecosystems, it also drives all kinds of exploitation, including child abuse, human trafficking, and deepening income inequalities throughout the world. When we don't understand our desires, everything becomes a target to consume: forests, animals, and even fellow human beings. Each personal choice—what we eat, wear, and buy, feeds into this larger narrative of inner hollowness and external consumption.

KANCHA GACHIBOWLI: A TURN TOWARD RESPONSIBILITY

The student-led protest at Kancha Gachibowli, which opposed mass deforestation, offers a powerful and timely reminder. While public figures and celebrities remained silent, young people rose to the occasion. Anonymous students became the voice of the movement - a decentralized but determined force for change.

In today's polarized world, relying on celebrities or prominent individuals is risky. Leaders can be silenced, co-opted, or threatened—bringing entire movements down with them. This moment in history demands a shift from seeking heroes to sharing responsibility. When leadership is distributed, no single person can be targeted or taken down. The age of the heroic savior of helpless and voiceless masses is behind us; now is the era of individual agency. Waiting for someone else to lead us is no longer an option.

The crisis we face is not just ecological, it is civilizational. Our political, economic, educational, and religious institutions have not only failed to protect us but have often played a role in deepening the crisis. To expect rescue from the same systems that have contributed to the problem is both unrealistic and unwise.

So, what's needed? It starts with self-awareness and clear, fact-based information—not slogans, not borrowed beliefs. The information is available, but the will to seek it is lacking. We must pursue understanding actively and allow it to shape our values, habits, and decisions. Equally important is discarding the illusion that someone else will save us. No government, no institution, no celebrity is coming. The responsibility—and the potential—lies with us. Real change begins with personal clarity, inner honesty, and commitment.

ECOLOGICAL ILLITERACY AND THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS

True responsibility demands ecological awareness and a conscious outlook. Our education system does little to highlight the depth of environmental interconnectedness. While terms like 'climate change' and 'biodiversity' appear in textbooks, their profound interdependence and deeper significance are rarely understood. For example, very few graduates from our formal education system would know the meaning and significance of climate



feedback loops, or terms like sixth mass extinction, or anthropocene.

We need to be awakened to the fact that our very survival depends on delicate planetary conditions: the Earth's precise distance from the sun, the atmosphere's ability to retain heat, the movement of ocean currents. Even something as personal as blood pressure depends on atmospheric pressure. If the environmental balance is disturbed, the body struggles—just as it would in the sudden pressure loss of an unpressurized aircraft cabin.

Yet modern culture remains blind to this fragile balance. We continue to celebrate excess—luxury cars, private jets, extravagant lifestyles—while ignoring the damage they cause. Ironically, these symbols of "success" are speeding up ecological collapse. True greatness doesn't come from indulgence, but from recognizing that no amount of consumption can fill what's missing inside. Without self-awareness, that empti-

ness only deepens, and the real problem remains untouched.

WHY FORESTS FALL FOR WHAT'S ON OUR PLATES

A few decades ago, atmospheric carbon dioxide level hovered around 250 ppm. Today, it has surged past 430 ppm—and continues to rise at an accelerating rate. Every tree felled stops absorbing carbon and begins releasing the carbon it stored—through decomposition or burning, adding to the heat-trapping gases that envelop our planet.

What's less known is how directly deforestation is linked to our diets. After fossil fuels, animal agriculture is one of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. Forests, including large parts of the Amazon, are cleared not to feed humans directly but to grow soy and corn for livestock.

Around 60% of the world's cereals, by weight, are used to feed animals. And these animals are

raised for meat, dairy, and eggs. This system produces massive emissions, especially methane and nitrous oxide, which are far more potent than carbon dioxide. According to the United Nations FAO, animal agriculture contributes more to global emissions than all forms of transport combined. Yet, it remains a topic rarely discussed. Each meal we eat is not just a personal decision, it has planetary consequences.

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: YOU ARE THE FIREFIGHTER

The truth is that the Earth is not separate from you. Your bones, blood, and breath are made from the same elements as the planet. To pollute the Earth is to poison your own body. To heal the Earth is to heal yourself.

Let this realization shape how you live, what you eat, how you shop, how you engage with the world. The house is already on fire, and no one else is coming. We must act, not as bystanders, but as conscious participants. Each of us must become a leader, not to gather followers, but to spread clarity. Act—not because you are told to, but because you understand. Let your actions come from clarity, not from influence.

Begin now. Begin here. Begin alone, if need be—but begin.

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