

# India Pays as the West Neglects: The Price of Global Warming

As wildfires rage and floods rise, climate change is no longer a future threat — it's our lived reality. There is global imbalance, India's unjust burden and the urgent need for an inner transformation to truly heal our planet

**FIRST Column**

We hear news at regular intervals about burning wildfires, shrinking glaciers, drowning cities and farms turning to dust. It should be very obvious that climate change no longer remains a distant threat; it's here, undoubtedly. Each season, we are seeing climate excesses. The signs are clear, the science undeniable, yet for some reason we keep looking away.



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The recent floods in Texas didn't come out of nowhere. The Gulf waters had been warming quietly for months, feeding storms with unusual strength. At the same time, cities kept expanding, pouring concrete over wetlands and choking the land's natural breathing space.

Drains were rerouted, soft earth was buried, and when the rains finally came, the water had nowhere left to go. Streets turned to rivers, homes vanished, and life came to a standstill. This wasn't nature acting blindly; it was nature responding, almost patiently, to years of human excess. Yet even now, as the connection between our ways and these disasters grows clearer, the world's most powerful nations continue to choose convenience over conscience, just when wisdom is most needed.

The restart of the US presidency earlier this year began with a withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, signalling a step back from global climate efforts. It wasn't just a policy shift; it sent a clear message: the planet could wait if politics or profit got in the way. Digging deeper for oil and gas took precedence over lower emission alternatives.

One of the most vulnerable areas of the planet, the Arctic, was not exempt. Short-term gain took precedence at a time when the world needed direction and care, which exacerbated the crisis.

The US holds just 4 per cent of the world's population but is behind around 25 per cent of excess carbon in the atmosphere. When a nation with that kind of power turns to a wrong direction, the whole world feels it. And it's not just the US, nations like China, Russia, Gulf Countries and many European countries too are emitting far more per capita than they should.

When these powerful nations step back from responsibility, climate change becomes an even greater crisis. And the danger isn't just rising temperatures from regular industrial activity.

As nations chase control of territory over ecological balance, climate breakdown and wars begin to feed each other. War harms the planet too; two weeks of conflict can emit a year's worth of carbon. In such a world, climate goals become dis-



tant, and global warming moves faster than we can keep up.

### Powerful nations refuse to act

Even with the facts of such disproportionate emissions being clear, the powerful nations often turn a blind eye to this disparity. This silence is not ignorance; it is calculation. We often assume that people at the top don't act because they don't understand. But that's rarely the case.

They understand, perhaps even better than most, but their interests are tied to the very structures that fuel the crisis. Climate change today is not just a planetary emergency; it's also an economy, a career path, and an institution.

Massive funds are channelled into both climate

action and denial, and entire industries survive on keeping things just the way they are either by promising high-tech solutions or by denying there's a problem at all. When you try to speak truth into such a world, it often feels like no one is listening. But it's not that they can't hear, it's that they've chosen not to. Because to truly listen would mean letting go of the very things they're clinging to. And the weight of this denial by the rich nations is mostly carried by the poor ones.

### India's Climate Struggle

In India too, climate change isn't a distant worry; it's happening now. Heatwaves last for weeks during summers, and lives are lost every year. Rain, once predictable, has lost its rhythm.

Sometimes it all comes at once, flooding fields and sometimes it doesn't come at all. Farmers now gaze at the sky with uncertainty, unsure when to plant or harvest. By the coast, families who've spent lifetimes by the sea are quietly preparing to leave as the water inches closer.

Up north, the glaciers shrink quietly, changing the flow of rivers that once sustained millions. And in our cities, the air grows heavier, the weather harder to read. What was rare has become routine, and somewhere deep down, we've begun to accept it. The land, the climate, and the people, they're all being reshaped, not slowly, but abruptly.

What makes this even harder is a simple truth: India isn't the one driving it. The carbon burden causing today's crisis comes mostly from richer

nations with long industrial pasts.

On average, the world emits 4.8 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide per person each year. The US emits almost 14 tons, while India with more than 4 times the population of the US emits just 2 tonnes. Yet we face some of the harshest impacts of climate change.

India's deep economic divide makes the crisis harder still. The top 1 per cent hold over 40 per cent of the wealth — enough to stock up on water, run air conditioners, or quietly relocate if needed.

But for the farmer in the sun or the family in a crowded slum, there's no buffer. This isn't about numbers, it's about people.

It's about the widening gap between those who can protect themselves and those who cannot. If this gap keeps growing, climate change won't just shift the weather, it will quietly begin deciding who survives and who doesn't.

### Beyond Carbon: The Crisis Within

While we've rightly questioned powerful nations, and their Governments, perhaps it's now time to turn the focus inward. This crisis didn't begin only in policy rooms; it began with our belief that fulfillment lies somewhere outside.

We keep reaching for more things to own, consume and achieve, hoping it will fill some void within us. We consume not because we need to, but because we've grown used to the chase. We hardly pause to question the chase. And in that restless search, the planet has silently borne the cost.

We often frame the climate crisis as something 'caused by human activity'. But the truth runs even deeper: humans themselves are the crisis. The real crisis is our restless need to consume without pausing to understand. Until we begin to look at that inner hunger, no policy or global agreement will truly be enough.

Hence the solution isn't just about using clean technology or using 'eco-friendly' products. Real change begins with an inner shift within us and our awareness of the inner void that drives us to consume. Without this awareness, we will keep taking more from a planet that's already stretched thin.

Most efforts to repair the damage we've caused to the environment today only seem to add to it. Because the real solution isn't just out there in the world; it's within us.

The Earth has its limits, and the climate crisis is not some far-off danger, it is our daily reality. And the real solution won't come from policies alone, but from a deeper sense of self awareness about ourselves.

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