



Yes, the planet is overpopulated!

Overpopulation is not only an environmental statistic; it is a measure of how unconsciously we have lived. A planet, where a million species are near extinction and wildlife has fallen by two-thirds, cannot host more of the same mind. The solution is not panic or cruelty but inner revolution supported by just policy

FIRST Column



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Eight billion of us on this planet, nearly triple the number in 1960, yet we are told the real crisis is that there are too few of us. In 1960, humanity numbered three billion; today it is 8.2 and may reach ten by 2050. India alone holds nearly 18 per cent. Each new human adds not just a body but a lifetime of consumption: food, water, energy, metals, plastics, housing, devices. Overpopulation is not about how many can stand on land; it is about how many lifestyles the Earth can sustain.

Fertility has indeed fallen across most of the world, from nearly five children per woman in 1960 to about 2.3 today. The UN projects a peak below eleven billion around 2085, then a slow decline. Growth is ending, yet because of demographic momentum and the spread of high-consumption living, our footprint will keep rising for decades even if every country reached replacement fertility tomorrow.

Yet denial persists. While scientists warn that the human footprint has pushed the planet into existential emergency, celebrity billionaires, jingoists and zealots insist the “real” crisis is too few babies. They urge women to reproduce more, and glamour drowns out science.

Overpopulated with people, overpopulated with desire

They say, “Only five per cent of land is densely settled; the rest is open.” They refuse to see that the question is not about space but whether enough forests, rivers, soil, and climate remain to support how eight billion of us want to live.

The IPBES warns that up to a million species face extinction; WWF reports a 69 per cent fall in vertebrate populations since 1970. This is not fluctuation but a civilisation-scale collapse of life. The planet is overpopulated not only with people but with desires, with high-consumption lifestyles and the ideals that glorify them. Every birth now means another wound to forests and rivers, another burden for the rest of existence to bear.

The cost is not shared equally. The richest ten per cent produce about half of global emissions, the richest one per cent sixteen, while the poorest half barely ten.



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problem is not just how many bodies exist, but what they consume, aspire to, and imitate. A child born into affluence in Shanghai or Dallas will consume dozens of times more than one in rural Bihar or Chad. The planet is not overrun merely by people but also by lifestyles that people rush to copy. The planet is overpopulated with people and with wrong ideals. When a billionaire with mansions, jets, and many children preaches “more babies,” he means “multiply, and live like me.” Multiply such consumption, and tragedy follows.

Many countries now see birth rates far below replacement, Japan, South Korea, Italy, and China. They feel concerned, but if the cure is adding more high-consuming bodies to an exhausted planet, the cure is worse than the disease. Real solutions must redesign economies within ecological limits, not sacrifice the planet for misplaced nationalism or affluence.

Yet those lamenting “baby busts” rarely pair their plea with restraint. One of the reasons fertility rates have fallen is the explosion in urban material excesses. But the same excess drives irreversible and cataclysmic planetary overshoot. Wanting

endless growth and consumption while asking women to keep supplying the numbers is not a responsibility; it is evasion.

Two arguments of the many-child world

At both extremes, the reasoning repeats itself. Among the poor: “More children mean more hands to earn.” It is harsh logic where pensions or healthcare do not exist, and it perpetuates the poverty it seeks to escape.

Among the rich: “We can afford many children.” Children become trophies of affluence. When questioned, they reply that they are saving the world from population decline. It is a fig leaf.

Both motives ignore the planet’s limits. The over consumer is not only the billionaire but also the imitator who worships the same god of buying and display. The damage begins in the mind and threatens to end only with the end of the planet itself.

Overpopulation is a crime against women

When women are educated, healthy, and economically free, fertility falls. India’s

rate is 1.9 births per woman, though Kerala is near 1.5 and Bihar is above 3. Where women are freer, families shrink. Runaway population growth, therefore, is a symptom of bondage.

When society declares a woman’s highest duty is to bear and raise many children, often at the cost of her education, health, and inner life, it commits violence. Motherhood can be joyful if the mother is a conscious individual and the child is raised in nourishing conditions. But forcing motherhood as a duty and destiny is theft of potential. A woman may or may not choose to become a mother; what must end is coercion by family, religion, or state. No one, woman or man, is born merely to reproduce and serve. We are born to awaken, to know ourselves, to live fully.

In a generation, Iran fell from seven children per woman to under two through universal education and free contraception. Bangladesh, Tunisia, Thailand, and Costa Rica achieved similar results without coercion. Wherever women experience better conditions for conscious choice, fertility drops swiftly and sustainably.

The common man’s punishment

There is another kind of injustice that comes with overpopulation: environmental apartheid.

Clean nature, pure air, and green spaces are rapidly becoming a limited asset. Just as money and good food were once scarce, now clean air and clean water are becoming scarce.

And what becomes scarce is captured by the powerful. Parks reserve hours for VIPs; beaches and hills are priced beyond reach. The poor are told: you are dirty, stay away. Who roams freely? The very people whose consumption ruined it.

Extend this to the planet, and you see the final obscenity: rockets to Mars carrying billionaires while the burning Earth is left for the rest. The crowd below is still asking for selfies from those who are fleeing: “Sir, I am your biggest fan!”

A sane response

Step 1: Secure reproductive freedom. Make contraception free and universal. Educate girls through secondary school. Build old-age security so parents do not need children as a pension.

But knowing is not doing; political will is lacking because population growth feeds markets and electorates.

Step 2: Make excess expansive

Impose high carbon and luxury taxes on planes, multiple residences, and activities that waste resources. Invest in clean energy, circular economies, and sustainable farming so that living with less impact is easier. Use the money to pay for health care, education, and retirement. Policy should begin with those who have power, the over-consumers, not those who are over-burdened.

Step 3: Redefine success itself. Look beyond GDP as a measure of progress. Use scorecards to measure ecological health, mental health, and community strength. Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness and New Zealand’s Well-Being Budget show governments can value what sustains life. Nations that paired such reforms with women’s education saw fertility fall without coercion.

Women given real freedom choose smaller families naturally. Policy without inner change is coercion disguised as planning.

Challenge the belief that procreation is life’s purpose. Literacy is a decent contraceptive; wisdom is a better one. Only an awakened mind sees we are not born to extend a bloodline but to know what we truly are.

The real population control

Overpopulation is not only an environmental statistic; it is a measure of how unconsciously we have lived. A planet where a million species are near extinction and wildlife has fallen by two-thirds cannot host more of the same mind.

The solution is not panic or cruelty but inner revolution supported by just policy. Without education that ends the consumption-driven ego, no law can save us; with it, both population and greed fall together.

The need is immediate. The wealthy must be legally compelled to shrink their footprint through carbon fees and limits on private flights, water waste, and property sprawl. Law can restrain outer excess while a bigger change awakens within.

If women are free, if men are less afraid, if success is not defined by consumption and if self-knowledge replaces conditioning, the population will stabilise and then fall. If the inner world stays dark, no demographic chart will save us.

The question is no longer whether the Earth can carry more of us. The question is whether we can become the kind of species this Earth can bear, even one more of.