

CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT A HOAX

'Northeast India sizzles as heatwave sweeps several states.' **'81 dead in rain fury in Himachal, Uttarakhand; flashfloods in Punjab.'** **'Arabian Sea emerging as a cyclone hotspot.'** **'Dimapur witnesses surge in dengue, conjunctivitis cases.'** These are the headlines which made it to the front pages of the leading national and local newspapers this year. And what do all of them have in common?

These are the evidences of what **Climate Change** is doing to the state, to the country, to the world and to the people. Climate Change has been a subject of discussions and debates for many years. For the proponents and environmental activists, it has been an impending disaster; while for the opponents, they brush it aside calling it a hoax. But with all these climatic pattern changes and disasters happening right in front of us and with us bearing the brunt, we ought to ask, "Is Climate change really a Hoax"? And the answer is an absolute 'No'. Climate change is happening in this present day and age where all of us are affected either directly or indirectly. As a revision for those who are 'unaware', climate change is described as a change from the average weather conditions — such as temperature and rainfall — in a region over a long period of time. Our Earth is now about 1.1°C warmer than it was in the late 1800s. Many people think climate change mainly means warmer temperatures. But temperature rise is only the beginning of the story. With it comes extreme weather conditions such as increased intensity of cyclones, extreme rainfall events such as frequent cloudbursts which induce flash floods, landslides, dust and hailstorms, cold waves, heatwaves with wildfires, etc..

Nagaland, a small hilly state like ours has also been going through spells of erratic weather patterns due to climate change over the recent years and this is becoming a phenomena. The state is experiencing changes in rainfall pattern alongside heat spells, frequently occurring drought-like situations; rivers, streams and springs are drying up at a faster rate which in turn severely affects the livelihood of our people who mainly depend on agriculture. An increase in the diseases and pests which affects livestock and agricultural produce has been observed as well. There is also a rise in the outbreak of seasonal diseases in the state; the latest one being the eye flu 'conjunctivitis', and dengue, with the former being mainly aggravated by hot and humid weather, as well the floods caused by incessant rain occurring in the state.

So, who is responsible for this climate change? Is it the government, the rich industrialized nations or citizens like you and I? Scientists say that climate change is inevitable as it is a natural phenomenon and the earth has undergone several phases of climate change since its existence. However, man-made activities have sped up the crisis of climate change and it is growing at a much faster rate than was anticipated. So, how can the crisis be mitigated? Is there a possibility that we can still undo the damages? The answer is a 'Yes' but it is not as straightforward as it seems. In my view, it can happen at five levels – the global level, the national level, the state level, grassroots level, individual level. For the first three levels we know that heads of countries (rich and poor nations), governments, world bodies, meet to work out various means and strategies to mitigate climate change. The talks, negotiations and deals are however not easy to be put into action because, for poor nations climate change policies will slow down their economic development.

My area of emphasis is what we can do at the last two levels, i.e., the individual level and grassroots level. Because this is where you and I as responsible citizens, as conscious communities, can and should drive in all possible ways to do our bit in arresting the crisis of climate change. Many of us may be unsure as to how we can make a difference. Let me tell you, it is simple and yet challenging. But if we do our bit consciously and consistently, we will begin to see the difference. We will bring about awareness among those around us and we can urge them to do the same; keep the message alive and going. We can also lend our support to those communities which encourage green living. Support can come in any form – be a part of their campaign, donate items which can be reused and recycled, carry our own shopping bag and refuse plastic bags, carry our own drinking water bottle instead of buying those packaged drinking water, dispose off waste properly by not dumping in streams and rivers, do not misuse water or energy (electricity), reduce the use of personal vehicle and carpool instead, take a walk to nearby destinations, use public transport, learn from our elders the traditional knowledge of climate resilience especially with agriculture. These things are actually quite doable and it is not rocket science.

We all know that climate change is a problem now. It is high time for every individual to bring solutions and to fix it in all possible ways. Climate change will not vanish with waving of the magic wand. But we can slow it down with simple practices and simple living as mentioned. As a student, I consciously practice switching off lights and fans whenever I leave the rooms, ensure water taps don't leak, try my best to practice the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle), plant trees and urge others to do the same. As individuals, every little but positive act will add up to create a huge impact in how we combat climate change. We might think that our contribution towards arresting climate change is insignificant but as Julia A.F. Carney has famously quoted "Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land". Therefore, it is very much doable my dear fellow citizens, we are still not too late. Our role may be small but let us not forget that it is significant. If you have not thought about it, then let us start taking actions now. Climate change is not a HOAX. We owe so much to this planet and to the other living beings. Let us not destroy it. Let us take good care of it and pass a healthy planet to our future generations. 'IT'S NOW OR NEVER!'

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