



AIR POLLUTION- WITH EVERY CAUSE AND EFFECT DRILLED INTO OUR MINDS, IT STILL DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ENOUGH.

The world is now touching unfathomable levels of air pollution. When it comes to expressing our opinions, we all suddenly transform into great environmentalists. However, when it comes to actually doing something constructive, we have a very lackadaisical attitude and hate leaving our comfort zone. At present, according to the WHO, China is the world's deadliest country in air pollution, followed closely by India and Russia. Air pollution is an issue that knows no physical, territorial or social boundaries; it is something that each citizen of the world has experienced and is responsible for.

Mankind constitutes of two categories of people: those who hold power, our policy makers and politicians, and the other, the common citizens. The first kind, turn a blind eye to all environmental concerns, also referred to as 'externalities,' and continue to chase monetary goals and gains. This is because progress measurement of any country is carried out on the basis of the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which fail to include any ecological aspects, and this is one of its greatest shortcoming. So how can we blame them, when all yardsticks of progress have no mention of the state of our environment?

Our second category of the common man, show complete indifference towards the environment. How often has the problem of air pollution crossed our minds? Maybe when we see garbage dumps set on fire or toxic fumes coming out of cars. How much do we ponder over it or act on it? Most of us, rarely ever do (while this is a generalization, there are a few environmentalists amongst us who continue to struggle to make a difference everyday).

It is important to delve deeper to ascertain the reason for this apathy- two of the most common heuristics guiding human behavior are incentives and fear. It's only personal profits and direct involvement with the issue that propels us forward. Logically thinking, the prospect of polluted air and critical illnesses for us and our future generations should be enough to awaken this fear. However, majority of us aren't that farsighted and make an effort only when we see short-term gains. It is only when we are personally in a position of peril or loss that our fight and hopefully not flight instinct is triggered.



When one says air pollution, the first thing that pops into our minds is toxic gas emissions from vehicles. While teleportation is unfortunately fiction, we do need means of transport. While vehicular pollution can be monitored and assessed and countries have made it mandatory for vehicle owners to carry a pollution certificate, the lack of stringent action against the violators dilutes all efforts. In addition, the authorities should consider offering incentives to conscientious citizens in the form of tax waiver or rewards. The same principle should be applied to larger cooperates as well. Companies setting up factories, domestically or internationally, should be incentivized to reduce their carbon and pollution index with subsidies, cash drawbacks etc. specially for those using renewable sources of energy like solar panels and wind energy.

With the ever increasing population, there is a concurrent increase in the usage of all kinds of transport. In such situations, the Government should make the metros, and other forms of non-polluting public transport, so convenient, accessible and rewarding that in comparison, the usage of personal vehicles should seem disadvantageous. In addition, the progressive use of public transport should be rewarded with discounts on subsequent recharges.

Environment at large and the quality of air in particular, should be made an important criteria for the measurement, comparison and ranking of the progress of countries. The GDI and HDI should be proportionate to environment friendly measures adopted by the countries. This will definitely promote pollution controlling initiatives and save our planet from air and environmental degradation.

Most importantly, each one of these measures involve a simultaneous strengthening of government policies and laws. It seems easy, obvious even, but it is this simplicity that highlights its absolute necessity for the success of any step taken to combat these issues.

While some entrepreneurs might make a fortune with their bottled-air from Wales or the **Bondi Beach in Australia**, I'm certain that this isn't the solution. Clean air and environment is something that all citizens of the world are entitled to. Globally, we have now reached a stage where air purifiers are attached to bicycles, and oxygen masks will probably be in vogue for 2017, it is time to not just spread awareness, but to actually do something constructive about it.

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