

NO WAKE UP CALL BUT A SCREAMING SIREN

-Aman Malik (New Delhi, India)



Picture this. . . A blue planet protected by a thin layer of atmosphere, that keeps temperature, air, water in perfect balance to maintain life. In the cold depth of space this planet is a virtual paradise, the only one known of its kind and it's our planet "earth". This, in fact, was a reality many centuries ago. But in the present times it looks like the depiction of a fairy tale. The life sustaining system of this planet is breaking down. What has happened? It's "US".

Our Home (Earth) is in danger. What is at risk of being destroyed is not the planet itself, but the conditions that have made it hospitable for human life. Indiscriminate usage of the earth resources has fundamentally changed and destroyed whole eco systems. Without realizing the consequences of our actions, we have begun to put so much Co2 into the thin shell of air surrounding our world that we have literally changed the heat balance of Earth. We have dumped over 700 billion tones of carbon pollution in the atmosphere as if it was a sewer. This causes the atmosphere to trap more of the sun's heat and raise the surface temperature of the earth. This is global warming. It is not only the most threatening environmental problem but one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. The UN gives us only eight years to do something until the effect of global warming becomes irreversible.

There are fewer resources to share. Food is becoming scarce. Extinction rate of species is increasing. There is continuous loss of fertile land. The amount of land per capita is about a quarter of what it was a century ago. It is expected to fall to about one-fifth of the 1900's level by 2050! These and other similar problems are a by-product of population explosion. There are more diseases than ever before. It is estimated that environmental exposure causes almost a quarter of all diseases. Not only this, our consumption of resources has been increasing faster than population, but unequally. This is particularly true of developed countries.

When the real affects of climate change do 'actually' start to influence us perhaps it will be too late. Unless we do something concrete, the generations to come will never forgive us. Today we have much better tools, technologies, science, well informed public and a

more pro active private sector to tackle some of the global challenges. But regretfully we have not made any headway towards sustainable development. We need to act fast. We can't wait. Nations have been making efforts to save the earth. International organisations have been debating and coming forward with resolutions after resolutions seeking meaningful solutions. The problem is more severe for poor countries. They still lack the basic necessities of life. There is still lack of resources for survival, as poor countries are still grappling with the issues of providing food, clothing and shelter to their sizeable population. Rich countries have to prove their efforts in letter and spirit to protect the interest of under-developed and developing nations.

In matters which concern not blacks, not whites, neither developed nor underdeveloped countries, but the whole human race, the solution can only be arrived at, if and only if, we as together work towards contributing in our very small ways for a better and safer world to live in. For if we call the earth as "mother earth" it is our soul responsibility to give something in return too.

I would like to end in the words of Al Gore, and I quote:

"The struggle to save the global environment is in one-way much more difficult than the struggle to vanquish Hitler, for this time the war is with ourselves. We are the enemy, just as we have only ourselves as allies."