

50 FAQS ON CLIMATE CHANGE



From the desk of Dr R K Pachauri

Over half the population of the world today lives in urban areas, and even though in India we still have almost two thirds of our population living in villages, in the next few decades we would also have a majority of our citizens living in towns and cities. One of the realities of urban life is its remoteness with the pristine existence of all things natural. Urban children in North America when asked where milk comes from generally respond that it comes from plastic bottles or cardboard cartons. They have no knowledge that cows provide us with milk that we drink.

A good psychologist friend of mine who is a professor at Yale University, Paul Bloom, has been researching for years now on what provides human beings joy and happiness. His research reveals that the greatest pleasure human beings experience is derived from being in the company of nature and indulging in the delights that we sense when we are in the midst of beautiful scenery or in the company of animals, birds, plants and flowers. The richness of the environment around us is a source of joy that many of us living in urban areas miss greatly, day in and day out.

Children in particular need to see and feel the benefit of life that exists in the kingdom of plants, birds, animals and insects. It is only when they touch, feel and smell the environment in open areas that they realize the richness of our natural heritage.



R K Pachauri

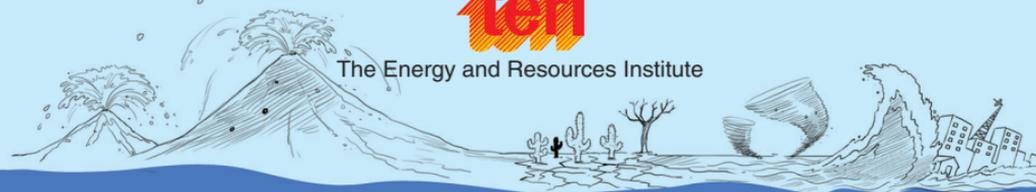
Director-General, TERI

Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

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India +91 ■ Delhi (0)11

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Publishing Head: Anupama Jauhry

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Prelude

Climate change – what’s that? Our world is constantly changing – you will see the weather change, you will see the seasons change. As the Earth is getting warmer, its climate is changing too and not necessarily for the better.

So what has caused this Climate Change? The answers are threefold – solar emissions or slow changes in the Earth’s orbit due to natural external factors, volcanic activity caused due to natural internal processes of the earth system, and human activity since the advent of industrial revolution. Needless to say that all this has changed the composition of the atmosphere, due to air, water, and land pollution, resulting in changes of the earth’s climate.

We have no control over the first two reasons that have led to Climate Change. However, by limiting human activities that emit greenhouse gases, such as combustion of fossil fuels, clearing of forests for agriculture, deforestation, soil tillage, and land degradation, we can make a difference.

Find out more about it through *50 FAQs on Climate Change*, so that you can also make a difference.



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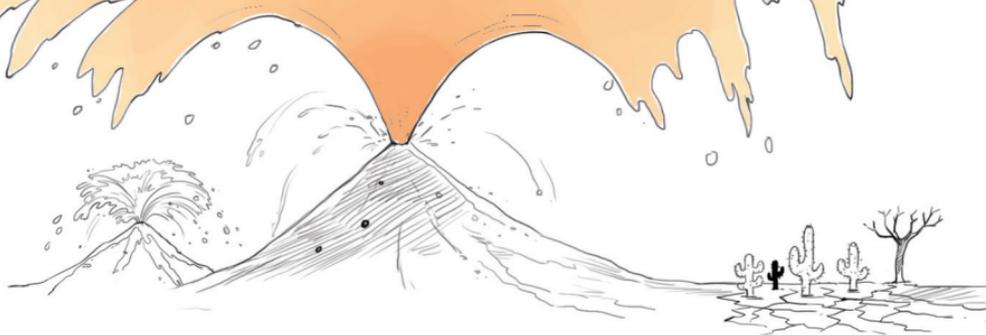
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What is meant by “climate change”?

Climate change implies a significant shift in the state (long-term averages) of climate that can be identified (using statistical tests). For instance, in many parts of the world, spring is now arriving earlier than the time at which it occurred just 30 years ago. Also, summers appear to be a lot hotter and winters colder.

That the global climate is changing is obvious from the fact that the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have been the warmest, as temperatures began to be recorded from the mid-nineteenth century.

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What is the difference between weather and climate?

The essential difference between the two lies in a measure of time. Weather implies atmospheric conditions over a short period of time, while climate is the “behaviour” of the atmosphere over relatively longer periods (usually more than 30 years). The climate of a region can also be defined as its average weather pattern.

Generally weather is associated with temperature, humidity, precipitation, cloudiness, brightness, visibility, wind, and atmospheric pressure (high or low). In other words, it includes sunshine, rain, cloud cover, winds, hail, snow, sleet, ice storms, thunderstorms, heat waves, and so on.

On the other hand, climate is associated with averages of precipitation, temperature, humidity, sunshine, wind velocity, and other measures of weather that occur over a long period in a particular place.



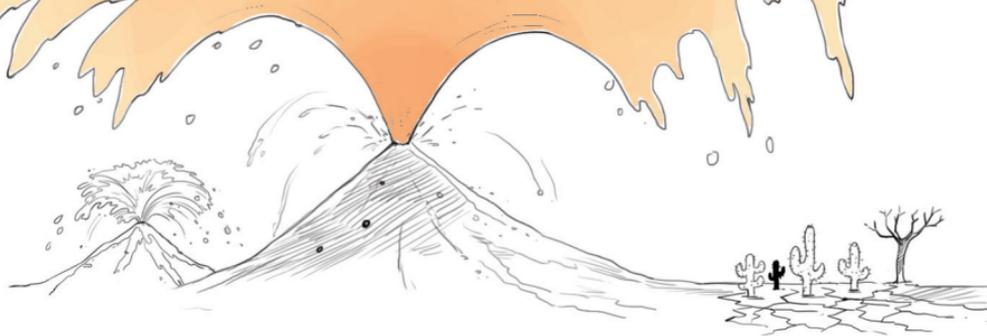
When did the issue of climate change come into prominence?

Historical evidence suggests that as far back as the third century BC, the Greeks were delving on this topic. Theophrastus, a student of the great Greek philosopher Aristotle, concluded that cutting down trees could bring about changes in the weather. This idea of deforestation and its link with climate change resurfaced in the seventeenth century when it was claimed that felling of forests definitely led to rise in temperatures of both Europe and North America.

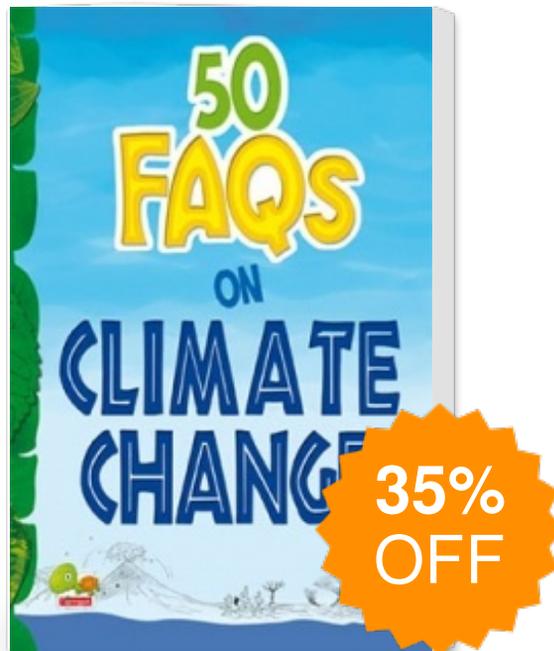
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Theophrastus, depicted as a medieval scholar



50 FAQs on Climate Change : know all about climate change and do your bit to limit it



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