

SURVEY ARTICLE

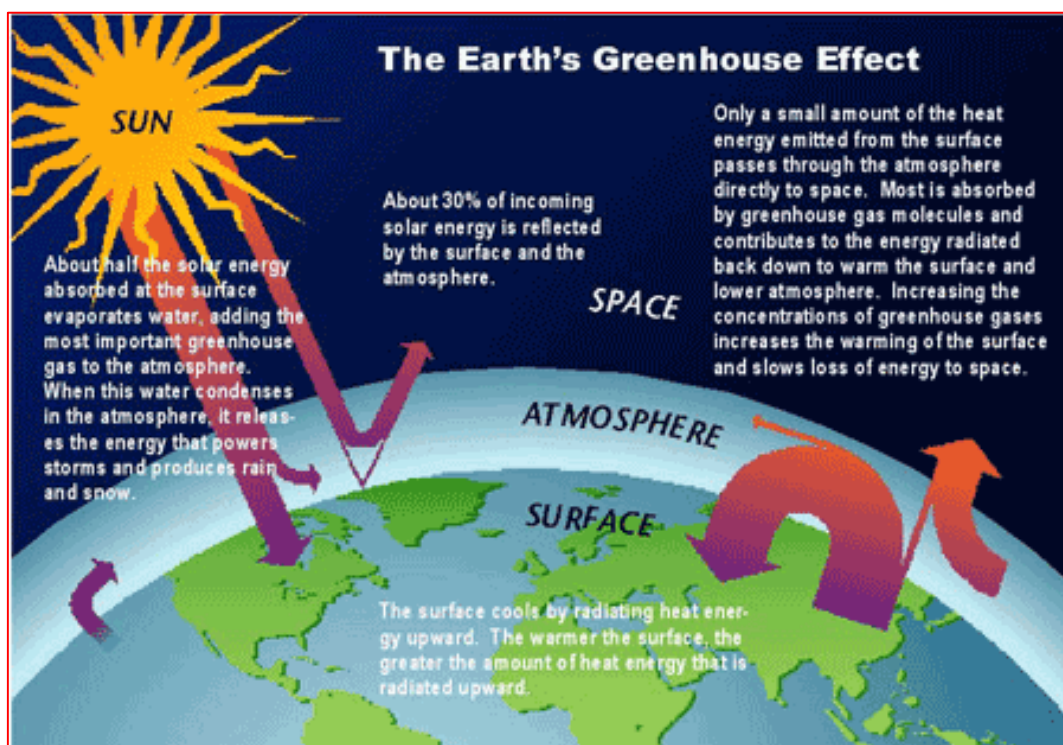
Inadequate Global Warming Information among the Populace: A Survey

Raaz Maheshwari, Bina Rani*

Department of Chemistry, SBRMGC, Nagaur, Rajasthan, India

*Department of Engineering Chemistry & Environmental Engineering, PCE, Sitapura, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Because of natural and engineered gases omitted in the atmosphere the ozone layer of our planet is diminishing. the ozone layer protects us from the powerful sun light that hits us. since that protection is leaving us, the planet is heating up due to more rays of light breaking through. Global warming also known as climate crisis is a serious issue that deals with the average measured temperature. Global warming is an effect in the earth's average atmospheric temperature that causes corresponding changes in climate. There are many effects caused by global warming. Global Warming is a serious crisis right now. Not a lot of people are taking any notice to what's going on around them. People take for granted to the things they have and don't take care of the Earth. Global Warming is a global issue that involves everything and everyone. The main reason for global warming is something that is called the Greenhouse effect, which is when a gas called CO₂ or also known as carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere and with that the sun's rays can't escape causing the Earth to warm up. One major affect is that natural disasters will worsen such as hurricanes and droughts will become deadly. If people don't react soon and take action the world will suffer. Some things that people are doing are looking for energy substitutes such hydro power



and wind power for cleaner energy instead of using fossil fuels. Former United States vice president Al Gore brought the issue and the threat of Global Warming to a larger audience, with the film *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2006. The film emphasizes the threat of the horrible world we could live in if we don't take action, but encourages people to take action by making small changes in their everyday lives.

The threat of climate change has galvanized the Indian government and industry into action. Every corporate worth its salt is proclaiming that it is doing something to fight climate change. A cursory

glance at corporate web pages gives us an idea of its importance. The Tata page says: "The Tata group is facing up to the challenge of climate change and making it integral to its processes," while Infosys claims that it is "one of the top 25 performers in Caring for Climate Initiative." On the sustainability review page of Mahindra, climate change is linked to productivity and competitiveness. The Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC) created the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) which has eight missions, everything from energy to agriculture to water and Himalayan ecosystems. Besides the initiatives of the private sector and the government are those undertaken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The study

So it is interesting to note the results of a study done in India on Climate Change in November-December 2011 and released in August this year. Titled "Climate Change in the Indian Mind," the survey sampled 4,031 adults from rural and urban India with the intention of investigating "the current state of public climate change awareness, beliefs, attitudes, policy support, and behaviours, as well as public observations of changes in local weather and climate patterns and self-reported vulnerability to extreme weather events." The survey found that only seven per cent of those sampled knew a lot about global warming while 41 per cent said they had never heard of it or replied "I don't know." In a follow-up question, when respondents were given a brief explanation of what global warming was, 72 per cent of the total believed it was happening.

A basic question that arises from this data is the role of information dissemination and concomitantly engaging with the population in fighting climate change. And if there is any information sharing, its quality needs to be ascertained for its retention ability in public mind space. Does leaving the population in the dark have a feudal basis? Not divulging information is one way of retaining power and maintaining status quo; it also prevents panic among the populace. Could the lack of information on climate change in the public domain be giving the private sector and the government carte blanche to proceed with their plans unhindered — increasing the number of coal-fired thermal power plants, pushing sales of sport utility vehicles and diesel cars, etc? Fifty-six per cent of the respondents pointed the finger at human activities when asked about the cause of global warming. This figure indicates that people make the connection between current energy production systems, consumption choices and climate change.

Another interesting number from this survey is about the percentage of 70 per cent — the number of respondents favouring a national programme to inform citizens about global warming. This desire to be informed points to an information deficit between those working on the issue and the rest of the public. It also questions whether it is enough to switch off lights globally in an annual event or sign petitions or use energy efficient lighting without understanding the rationale. There seems to be a distinct lack of causal evidence put forth in the public arena, indicated by respondents acknowledging changes in weather patterns but unable to define it as a scientific phenomena that threatens the planet. Causal evidence can greatly impact consumer behaviour and also force governments to change their policies and companies to manufacture products that have less impact on the climate. Government and industry need to make note of the findings of the survey because 41 per cent of the respondents felt that the government should be doing more to address global warming. To another question on when India should reduce emissions, 38 per cent were in favour of India unilaterally reducing emissions without waiting for other countries. This suggests that Indians want the government to play a more proactive and positive role in the climate negotiations.

Other findings

To another question on whether they were worried about climate change, 20 per cent claimed to be "very worried" while 41 per cent said they were "somewhat worried." This worry can then be directed towards creating more informed consumption choices. Products come with a list of ingredients for consumers to make a purchase decision. There are already vegetarian, child-friendly and chlorofluorocarbon free labels that are prominently displayed on many products. Giving information on a product's impact on the climate is another avenue to share information on climate change and making the consumer responsible for his choice. The recently approved draft 12th Five Year Plan should not only take cognisance of this report but also a relook at its emphasis on climate adaptation. The numbers speak for themselves; people recognize the human causes of climate change and want the government to act more proactively. Can the fight against climate

change be successful without involving or informing the larger public? The challenge that lies before us is manifold; first is understanding the predicament of being in the same boat, then appreciating the fact that many hands make light work and, finally, finding ways to involve everyone. Putting out more information in the public domain gives more people an opportunity to act collectively to save themselves — a fact that the government should recognize. [Nazareth S: 2012, *The Hindu*, Vol. 135, No. 251, p. 9]