

Children's Corner

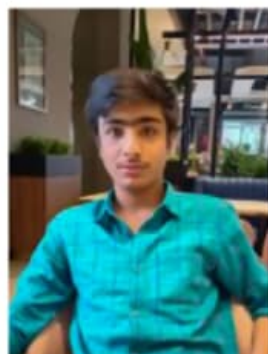
Are We Ready For The Upcoming Sweltering Years?

Being a student in tenth grade, and attending my school on these hot summer days has been very challenging. The month of April has been unexpectedly hotter than in the past. Morning at the bus stop itself I see many young children from class one or three, sweating and by the afternoon, they are haggard, including me. The masks that are compulsory, make it more difficult for us. The other day a small girl in my bus was crying as she had no water left in her water bottle and was very thirsty. Nobody noticed the frail exhausted girl. I was standing near the bus gate as I was to get down at the next bus stop. I was also thirsty, but I gave her water from my bottle, thinking that I would reach my home in another ten minutes and quench my thirst with the *nimbu paani* that my mother makes for me every day. This little girl might have to wait for another half an hour to reach home. After having water, she, with a tired smile, waved me bye. The next day this girl offered me candy, saying thank you for sharing water with her. She told that she shared about this with her mother and *daadiji*, that one senior *bhaiya* had helped her. This episode made me think about two things; one is offering water to the thirsty and the other is the heatwave. Reaching home, I told my mother about this episode, and she said she was proud of me.

My mother and I usually discuss climate change, rising temperatures, water shortage, forest fires, and melting glaciers. In school, we have regular classes where we are told that future generations will have to struggle

with this issue and that even a small rise in temperature would change the whole ecological landscape. Is my generation equipped to tackle a situation, where water would be scarce and nobody would share?

And a discussion with my *Naani* tells me that water was shared with everyone. In Hindu scriptures and the *Panchatantra* tales, I always read that you should always offer water to the thirsty. My *Naaniji* once shared that, in their days, whosoever came to their home was offered water and *gur* (jaggery). It was believed that the guests who came must have travelled on foot or a horse or bullock cart and must have been drained by the hot sun. So water from a *matka* (an earthen pot) and *gur* from a brass container would be offered.



The heatwave has immensely affected the lives of children. Many students are missing classes because they have been affected by the heatstroke. I was affected by the same thing two weeks ago. Most of the schools are not air-conditioned. This is also hampering the concentration power of students as many

find it challenging to study on these hot days. Numerous children in remote areas attend school in tin-roofed shelters, which would be unbearably hot in the summer. The poor in the country are adversely affected, as they are not financially strong enough to buy cooling appliances like a refrigerator, water coolers and air conditioners. The government announces school closing on intense summer days to save children from heatstroke. But the question remains: Are we doing enough to reverse this climate change? I often say that making posters on Earth Day might create awareness, but do we really follow what we preach? We waste water, we use plastic rampantly, and the AC's are kept on the whole day. Witnessing this often petrifies me and I worry about our future. The only solution is the judicious use of our natural resources, minimizing the use of appliances that release harmful gasses like Chlorofluorocarbons. Can we develop technology that keeps our homes cooler? Few considerate people have made architectural changes to make their homes cooler, even without a fan. Can we encash our rainwater and Sun's energy? I know we are already doing this, but it has to be made a norm and compulsory for us to Save our Planet. Else, we have to be ready for more sweltering days and less water in our water bottles.

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