

Where are we heading?

In recent times I've been reading a lot about climate change in the newspapers. *"Global warming: Start acting now", "Melting snow & ice", "Cameras to monitor melting Everest", "Saving Himalayas from climate catastrophe", "Nepal's first climate refugee village in Mustang", "Marathon to raise environmental awareness", "SAARC summit ends with climate change declaration", "Apa to continue climate change campaign", "Climate Change: What Is The Truth?", "1.3 billion life at stake", "No more Himalayan glaciers by 2035"*. These are the topic I normally see in them these days with views, interviews, opinions, discussions, conclusions of climate scientists, economics, politicians, business persons and etc.

Now, the question in my mind is – where are we heading? And probably this may be the question of all the people like me reading these newspapers. And by coincidence, I got a chance to go to Annapurna Base Camp, and there I got the answer of my question. We are destined to doom, if we don't act from today.

Even though leaving in the country of mountains, this was my first experience of mountains at first hand. I had seen mountains in pictures and movies only, and now I am getting to see with my own eyes. My mind had drawn the pictures of the mountains with full of snow, I will be standing in the middle of snow capped mountains. With this in mind, we walked for three days uphill's and downhill's, along the streams, across the streams, in shade and in sun. We reached there at dark so could not see anything, so we all slept with the dream of snow and mountains for the next day.

Next day, the day when I got the answer, yes indeed, we are destined to doom slowly but surely if we don't act now. We were right on the foot of Annapurna range. We were supposed to see snow and ice everywhere. But that was not the case with us. Let alone the foothills, even the high mountains above 8000m didn't have significant amount of snow on



them. Where there were supposed to be great mighty glaciers, there were rubbles of stones, sand and dusts eroded from mountains. We could just imagine that there used to be a glacier many years back.

We talked with some of the peoples who have grown up in the mountains their entire lives. Every single person spoke with sadness at how quickly the glaciers have receded in their lifetime. There used to be snow all year round in the base camp, but it's even hard to get snow in winter. Some mentioned to me how many of them have had to move homes in search of better soil, because the melting glaciers have meant changes in water access and there for loss of agricultural productivity. And for some the newly formed glacier lakes are the problem as they are very unstable and may break any time. So you get in view about the climate refugees, the newspapers always talking about.

I remember, in UN Climate Change Conference held at Copenhagen, Denmark, our Prime Minister, Madhav Kumar Nepal, spoke about the Himalaya's melting around Nepal: "The snows are melting. Glaciers, many of the glaciers, Himalaya glaciers, has evaporated, has disappeared. Many glacial lakes are emerging. We have seen many landslides there and no regular land or rainfall there. Droughts and all these problems relating to the health of the people have been seen. And the impact on the mountainous region is much more in the downstream, where 1.3 billion of the population lives in India, in Bangladesh whose major rivers are dependent on the Himalayas. So the problem of Nepal is not only the problem of Nepal's people, rather the problem of at least 1.3 billion of population." And he stressed on the need of an alliance of the mountainous countries to fight the impact of climate change as this is not just the problem of a single country but a global problem.

It's easy to ignore the world around us, especially when we're sitting in the comfort of our homes in front of our television or computer, thousands of miles away from the people that suffer. I understand that the idea of a world without computer and electricity is scary to many people; because that is the world we've grown up in. However we can't go back to questioning the existence of climate change when so many have already died and suffered. Humans are the same all over the world, we all have red-blood, we all have families, we all have hearts, and we all grieve when we lose our homes, our livelihood and our loved ones. And that is what climate change is doing. It is destroying families, destroying earth.

Have compassion for those families who have already suffered from glacier melt, and those who face such threats. This is not the time to ask questions, this is not the time to blame and this is not the time to fight. This is the time to act, be strong, think big, and work in cooperation. There is nothing in this world that is impossible, even the word itself spells i-m-possible. So let's work hand in hand from today to protect our planet for tomorrow.