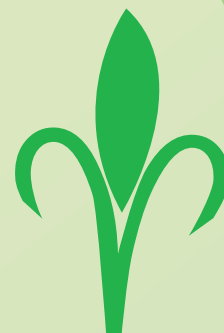




Slash Greenhouse Emissions Today!



Let us learn in detail about the phenomenon called the greenhouse effect and how we can save our planet from an impending disaster through some simple changes in our lifestyle.

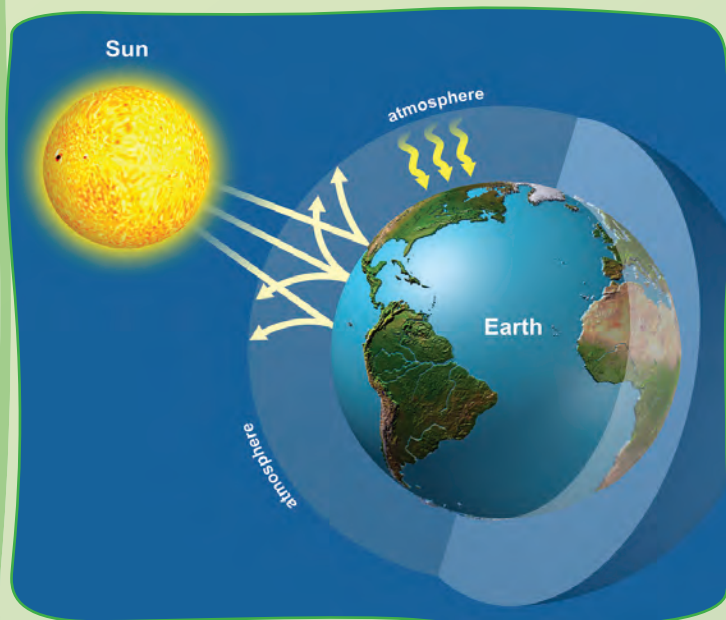
Arundhati Nath

Have you ever seen a greenhouse or wondered what it is? For those who haven't come across one, a greenhouse is a building with glass walls and a glass roof, used for keeping plants warm, especially in the cold regions. The glass walls of the greenhouse trap the sunlight passing through them so that the air and plants inside stay warm and the plants flourish and grow well.



THE EARTH TOO IS A GREENHOUSE!

Actually, it is the atmosphere that is just like a greenhouse, except that there are no glass walls around it. The thick blanket of gases forming the atmosphere also includes 'greenhouse' gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and water vapour.



Here's how it works. During the daytime, the sun releases heat, which warms our atmosphere and passes through it into Earth. At night, Earth cools and releases the heat back into the atmosphere. However, the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere absorb some of the solar heat and retain it.

Due to this natural greenhouse effect, Earth is a warm and pleasant planet on which life can thrive. In the absence of this phenomenon, Earth would have been a very cold place, perhaps too cold to sustain any form of life.

IF WE NEED GREENHOUSE GASES FOR SURVIVAL, THEN HOW ARE THEY DANGEROUS?

It's true that Earth would not have been able to support life without the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. However, research has shown that emission of excessive amounts of carbon dioxide or methane into the atmosphere can be very harmful. If they are more than the normal limits, the greenhouse gases trap more heat than required, which can:

- ✦ Increase Earth's temperature abnormally
- ✦ Cause a rise in sea and ocean levels
- ✦ Bring about unfavourable changes in climate and rainfall patterns
- ✦ Have a negative impact on crop yields



- ✦ Increase the occurrence of hazards such as floods, fires, droughts and storms
- ✦ Affect energy supply adversely
- ✦ Harm all life forms, including marine life
- ✦ Result in the acidification of oceans and depletion of life-sustaining oxygen



responsible for the increase in greenhouse gases.

This dangerous rise in the level of greenhouse gases has drawn serious concern from all over the world. The phenomena of global warming and climate change are a result of this effect. In terms of sources, greenhouse emissions mainly arise from energy supply, industries, change in land-use patterns, agriculture, transportation, commercial and residential buildings,

and waste and wastewater.

The greenhouse effect has threatened the very existence of life on Earth. If immediate and effective measures are taken by each one of us, we can surely help in saving our planet from a major disaster.

If collective effort is taken by all of us, we can surely bring about some positive changes in our ecology and environment. This will, in turn, help Mother Nature flourish at her natural best for a long, long time. 

WHY ARE WE TO BLAME?

In our fast-paced lives, we tend to unwittingly contribute to the large-scale emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The combustion of fuels such as petrol and diesel during transportation, large-scale cutting of trees, spraying of aerosols, rampant use of fertilisers and pesticides in farming activities, and use of refrigerators and air conditioners, among others, are seen to be

HOW WE CAN DO OUR BIT

Some simple changes in our daily lifestyle can decrease the negative impact of greenhouse gases. Here are a few easy steps we can take:

- ✦ Use energy-saving devices such as tube lights and compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) instead of regular light bulbs.
- ✦ Reduce the use of petrochemical fuels by walking or cycling for short distances. Using the public transport and carpooling are very good options for covering long distances without wasting precious fossil fuels.
- ✦ Use as less hot water and air conditioning as possible.
- ✦ Instead of the dryer, use a clothes line or rope to hang clothes on to dry in the sunlight.
- ✦ Buy energy-efficient appliances and do not waste energy by keeping electronic devices switched on or on standby mode when not in use.
- ✦ Reduce, reuse and recycle waste as far as possible.
- ✦ Avoid heavily packaged foods and consume more of locally produced items, which are both healthy and environment-friendly.
- ✦ Do not waste water or electricity.
- ✦ Make natural manure by composting household waste in the backyard or elsewhere. This reduces the total garbage generated and benefits your plants and flowers too.
- ✦ Try to use cleaner energy resources such as solar cells, biogas and biodiesel.
- ✦ Spread awareness about the harmful effects of greenhouse emissions by talking to your friends at school and in the neighbourhood and making and distributing small pamphlets and posters.
- ✦ Teachers and educators should enlighten students and other associates about greenhouse emissions and their negative impact on the environment.

