

THE GREEN VEIL: Unmasking The Illusion

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*"Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice."
Robert Frost*

Introduction

Humans have long been celebrated for their ability to think, reason, and innovate. We pride ourselves on our intelligence, our capacity to solve problems with efficiency, and our role as pioneers of creation and discovery. Yet, despite these admirable qualities, we have also developed an undeniable sense of superiority over other living beings on this planet. Our thirst for innovation, once rooted in the pursuit of progress, has gradually morphed into an insatiable greed—one that prioritizes power, recognition, and wealth over sustainability and balance.

This relentless hunger for more has blurred the lines between necessity and desire, driving us to exploit resources without restraint. In our pursuit of advancement, we have ignored the repercussions of our actions, failing to recognize the damage inflicted upon our own home—Earth. Generations of humans have chosen convenience over consciousness, turning a blind eye to the warning signs that nature has persistently presented. From rising temperatures to vanishing ecosystems, from polluted waters to dying species, the planet has spoken time and again, urging us to reconsider our ways. Yet, we have continued down this reckless path, disregarding the consequences of our own making.

If intelligence is what sets us apart, why do we continue to act in ways that jeopardize our very existence? True wisdom is not merely in thinking but in understanding, in acknowledging the impact of our choices and taking responsibility for the future we shape. The question remains—will we finally listen, or will we wait until it is too late? At this moment, we seem to be heading in that very direction, and the outlook is anything but promising.

Past Warnings, Present Perils

The emergence of AI has upended one of the As mentioned earlier, humans have overlooked the timeless warnings passed down by previous generations. Nothing in this universe is meant to last forever, and this truth applies to the great empires that have risen throughout history since the dawn of our planet. Everything that has a beginning is destined to have an end. It is a natural cycle that every living being and thing must experience. Natural calamities, as we have named them today, were said to be a result of god's wrath on his people, however, they are a culmination of all the atrocities that humans have committed on Earth in the name of innovation and expansion. Our ignorance and obliviousness would be the sole reason for our demise since, we are doing the opposite of learning from our past mistakes.

Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero in his work *De Oratore* (On the Orator), expresses a sentiment similar to the idea of disregarding the lessons of the past:

"Not to know what happened before you were born is to remain a child."

Chapter 34, Section 120

We, as humans have always told ourselves to never look back at the past and to always look forward to the future. Future is built on the remnants of the past that one once experienced, so, what we are building right now

is not the future—it's a recipe for disaster. It has been brewing on since generations and at least every other major thinker throughout the history has warned us of the same. Many of these stories, once seen as myths, are now being revisited by historians and scientists for their striking parallels to real climate shifts and environmental mismanagement.

One of the oldest literary works, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (c. 2100 BCE), tells of King Gilgamesh cutting down the sacred Cedar Forest, angering the gods and triggering a great flood. This may reflect early fears of deforestation and its consequences in Mesopotamia, where resource overuse led to environmental decline. Similarly, Plato's tale of Atlantis (4th century BCE) describes a great civilization collapsing due to greed and overexploitation of resources, wiped out by floods and earthquakes—an allegory for real-world societies that suffered due to environmental mismanagement.

Unlike Atlantis, the fall of the Mayan civilization (c. 800–900 CE) was real, with evidence linking prolonged droughts, deforestation, and unsustainable farming to its decline. Mayan records reference “years without rain,” famine, and societal unrest, warning of what happens when civilizations push nature beyond its limits. Hindu texts like the *Mahabharata* and *Vishnu Purana* describe Kali Yuga, a dark age marked by polluted air and rivers, extreme weather, and mass extinctions—eerily reflecting modern fears of climate collapse.

Norse mythology's Ragnarok warns of a world-ending series of natural disasters, including Fimbulwinter (a relentless winter), rising seas, and massive wildfires. Some scholars link this imagery to real climate events, like the volcanic winter of 536 CE, which caused global cooling and famine. These myths, though ancient, share a common theme: civilizations that fail to respect nature eventually fall.

Innovation's Illusion

The United Nations defines climate change as “long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns.” Historically, such shifts were attributed to natural phenomena like variations in solar activity or significant volcanic eruptions. However, since the 1800s, human activities have become the primary drivers of climate change, chiefly

through the combustion of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas. This process releases substantial amounts of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O), into the atmosphere, enhancing the natural greenhouse effect and leading to a rise in Earth's average surface temperature.

The accumulation of these greenhouse gases has far-reaching consequences. Rising global temperatures contribute to the melting of polar ice caps and glaciers, resulting in sea-level rise that threatens coastal communities worldwide. Additionally, elevated temperatures can lead to more frequent and severe heatwaves, droughts, and altered precipitation patterns, adversely affecting agriculture and water resources. These climatic changes disrupt ecosystems, leading to biodiversity loss and increased vulnerability of many species. Furthermore, the increased heat and altered weather patterns have been linked to the intensification of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and heavy rainfall, causing significant damage to infrastructure and livelihoods.

The scientific consensus underscores the urgency of addressing climate change. Approximately 97% of climate scientists agree that human-induced climate change is occurring, emphasizing the need for immediate and sustained action to mitigate its impacts. Strategies include transitioning to renewable energy sources, enhancing energy efficiency, implementing sustainable land-use practices, and developing policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation measures are equally crucial to prepare for and respond to the changes already set in motion, ensuring the resilience of communities and ecosystems in the face of a warming planet.

In our relentless pursuit of progress, we have often mistaken innovation for true advancement. While we celebrate technological breakthroughs and industrial revolutions, we have been blind to the destruction they leave in their wake. Our greed for

more has led us to exploit the planet without foresight, much like how the Kauravas in the Mahabharata were blinded by their hunger for power, only to face their downfall. As Krishna wisely states in the epic, “A man is made by his beliefs. As he believes, so he becomes.” If we continue to believe that endless consumption and unchecked growth define success, we are paving the way for our own demise.

Like the illusion of wealth and power that deceived many before us, our illusion of innovation blinds us to the deeper reality—true progress is not about taking from the Earth but living in harmony with it. If we do not shift our beliefs and actions soon, we may find ourselves echoing the fate of fallen empires, realizing too late that what we called “progress” was merely a mirage leading us toward destruction.

Greenwashing: Repackaging the Coveted Climate Dream

For decades, humanity has chased the coveted utopian climate dream—a world where progress and preservation walk hand in hand. Yet, our history tells a different story, one of repeated wake-up calls that we hit the snooze button on. The first Earth Day in 1970 saw millions rally for change, but did we listen? The Stockholm Conference (1972) gave us a global stage to act, yet pollution still choked our skies. In 1988, James Hansen rang the alarm in Congress, declaring that climate change was no longer a distant theory but a present reality—yet fossil fuels remained king. The Earth Summit (1992) and the birth of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) were hailed as turning points, yet emissions soared. Even when Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth” (2006) made climate change dinner-table conversation, denial persisted. And now, with Greta Thunberg’s Fridays for Future (2018), the next generation demands action, tired of inheriting a crisis they didn’t create.

The truth? We’ve spent more time making promises than keeping them. We hail innovation yet ignore its cost. We envision a green utopia yet cling to the industries that burn it

down. If history has taught us anything, it’s that the climate dream remains just that—a dream—unless we finally wake up and act. While we have the power to make and innovate new solutions, we also have a tendency to repackage ‘change’ as a capitalistic product. The same has happened with climate change and activism. While countries did put some sort of tariffs and taxes on big corporations and MNCs in order to get them to adopt climate friendly practices. As complicated as each policy of the government is, it is as easy to manipulate it for the people- the masses. The same was done by these corporations. What was supposed to be termed as a pioneer in greengrowth has now turned into greenwashing.

In today’s eco-conscious marketplace, greenwashing—the art of painting a company’s image greener than its practices—has become the corporate wolf in sustainable sheep’s clothing. This deceptive marketing tactic misleads consumers into believing that a company’s products or policies are environmentally friendly when, in reality, they fall short of genuine sustainability.

Greenwashing isn’t just a harmless PR spin; it’s a significant roadblock on the path to authentic green growth. By diverting attention with eco-friendly facades, companies delay concrete and credible environmental actions, allowing pollution to persist under a verdant veneer. This charade not only stalls progress but also erodes public trust, making consumers skeptical of environmental claims and hindering the momentum toward sustainable development. In an era where climate urgency is at its peak, deception disguised as progress is more dangerous than outright denial.

In the capitalist theater, greenwashing is the costume change that allows businesses to appear eco-friendly without altering their environmentally detrimental scripts. Companies invest more in marketing their green image than in implementing practices that reduce their ecological footprint. This illusion of sustainability enables them to capitalize on the growing demand for green products while continuing business as usual. The result? A world where corporations sell the dream of

sustainability while fueling the very crisis they claim to combat.

Greenwashing's tendrils extend into politics and policymaking, where it can undermine environmental regulations and initiatives. When corporations feign compliance with sustainability standards, they may influence policymakers to adopt lenient regulations, believing that industries are self-regulating effectively. This deception can lead to watered-down policies that fail to enforce real environmental change. Moreover, public demand for government intervention may wane if citizens are misled into thinking that corporate actions are sufficiently addressing environmental concerns. Greenwashing isn't just an economic issue—it's a political tool, one that allows industries to navigate the regulatory landscape with a convenient, leafy disguise. One of the most infamous examples of greenwashing is BP's 2000 rebranding campaign, where the oil giant introduced the slogan "Beyond Petroleum" alongside a sunburst logo to appear eco-conscious while still investing overwhelmingly in fossil fuels. Similarly, Volkswagen's 2015 emissions scandal exposed how the company marketed its diesel cars as environmentally friendly while secretly installing software to cheat emissions tests, allowing them to emit up to 40 times the legal pollution limit. The fashion industry is no different—brands like H&M's Conscious Collection claim to offer sustainable clothing, yet investigations revealed that many fabrics used were no greener than their regular lines, and the company failed to disclose its full environmental impact. These cases prove that greenwashing isn't just misleading marketing—it's a tool corporations use to manipulate consumers, dodge regulations, and maximize profits, all while real environmental action remains an afterthought. It's a stark reminder that in a world obsessed with sustainability, not all that glitters is green.

Conclusion: The Green Mirage—Where Do We Draw the Line?

At its core, greenwashing thrives because true sustainability demands sacrifices that mod-

ern society is unwilling to make. The reality is that unless we return to minimal resource consumption, greenwashing will never fully disappear. But is that even possible? Humanity has evolved beyond a lifestyle of limited consumption, and the damage already done to the environment is irreversible. Even space, once the final frontier of discovery, has now become a corporate playground for unchecked expansion, where satellite congestion and orbital debris are marketed under the banner of "progress." Just as Earth suffers from deforestation and pollution, space is becoming cluttered with abandoned satellites and debris, all while tech giants claim they are pioneering a brighter future. In this age of unchecked industrial growth, development must be sustainable, not just profitable. So how do we fight greenwashing? The answer lies in transparency, accountability, and consumer awareness. Stricter regulations, independent audits, and genuine corporate responsibility must replace the empty promises that flood advertisements. But before pointing fingers at corporations alone, there's a much tougher question we all must answer—are we willing to sacrifice our own comforts for the planet? Posting about climate change on Instagram is easy, but would you give up the very phone you use to spread awareness, knowing the e-waste crisis it contributes to? Would you trade your air-conditioned comfort for a natural, less energy-intensive alternative? If not, then you, too, are just another internet climate ranger, riding the wave of activism without truly embracing change. The battle against greenwashing isn't just about calling out corporations—it's about challenging our own hypocrisy in the face of climate reality.