
The Boiling Divide: One Sun, Two Realities



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The sun is spitting fire, the streets are deserted, and even the birds are hiding. We used to say that changing seasons bring color to Pakistan. Now, they just bring dread. By the time June rolls around, it feels as if someone has opened the hatch of a blast furnace directly over our heads. You don't need a thermometer to tell you this; the melting, shimmering asphalt on the roads of Lahore, Karachi, Sukkur, and Nawabshah is proof enough that we are standing on the edge of an annual disaster.

Every year, the headlines are splashed with terms like 'heatwave', 'heatstroke', and 'heat exhaustion.' But let's be clear: these are not just medical jargon or dry statistics. They are the bloody, painful stories of human beings breathing their last in overcrowded emergency wards and filling up local mortuaries. It is a tragedy we witness every single year, weep over for a week, and promptly forget.

As a nation, we suffer from a strange blindness. Until the disaster knocks on our own front door, or until one of our own family members collapses, we treat it as "just another news story" and flip the

page.

We complain bitterly when the mercury touches 45°C or 50°C, but we conveniently ignore our own guilt. In the name of progress and “modernization,” we have paved over our cities, turning them into concrete jungles. Where dense, shady trees once stood, we built housing societies and commercial plazas. We axed the trees, filled the canals with dirt, and now that the earth is baking, we sit in our air-conditioned rooms wondering why it’s so hot outside. This is nature’s whip, punishing us for our own greed. Climate change is no longer a textbook debate. It is standing on our doorstep, and it’s furious.

Every summer, doctors scream the same warnings into the void: learn the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It is quite literally a matter of life and death.

Heat exhaustion is your body’s final warning. When you work for hours in the blinding heat, losing water and salt through sweat, your head throbs, you get dizzy, and your body turns to lead. If you stop, move to the shade, and drink water or ORS, you survive. But if you keep pushing, you enter the kill zone: heat stroke. This is where your internal cooling system completely breaks down. You stop sweating. Your temperature shoots up past 104°F. Your brain short-circuits, and you collapse. At that point, you have minutes to live before your organs fail.

But as a columnist, I cannot look at this purely as a medical crisis. There is a dark, ugly class divide hidden behind this heatwave.

The sun is supposed to be the ultimate equalizer—it shines on everyone. But the reality on the ground is brutally unequal. For those privileged enough to sit inside insulated homes or offices, this weather is just an annoyance, a reason to complain about the electricity bill. But for those who earn their bread under the open sky, it is a daily battle for survival.

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The easiest targets for this scorching afternoon are the daily wage laborers, swinging heavy iron tools by the roadside just to feed their kids tonight. It targets the delivery riders, weaving through traffic on roads that feel like ovens, just so someone can get a hot meal delivered to a cold room. The security guard standing at attention in a thick uniform, the pushcart vendor, the laborers baking at brick kilns—these are the front-line soldiers of this disaster, and they are always the first to die.

Meanwhile, our administration does what it always does: nothing, until the bodies start piling up. Only when the hospitals are overflowing do the authorities scramble to hold “emergency meetings”—which are always too little, too late. To make matters worse, unannounced load-

shedding becomes even more brutal in the peak of summer, and the lack of clean drinking water in poor neighborhoods remains a permanent curse.

But can the rest of us wash our hands of this? Do we have no moral backbone left? We spend thousands on superficial luxuries every day. Can we not put out a simple clay pot (matka) of cold water outside our gates for passersby and birds? Can we not tell our security guards, maids, and drivers to sit down and rest between noon and 4:00 PM? Humanity demands that we lighten their load, but our collective apathy has become far deadlier than the sun.

We need to stop treating this as a passing season. This heat is our permanent reality, and we have to fight it.

Our municipal corporate bodies need to stop issuing meaningless press releases and actually set up functional, fully equipped heatstroke centers in every hospital, stocked with ice, water, and emergency meds.

More than that, we have to look out for each other. Handing a glass of cold water to a sweating laborer or offering a patch of shade to someone who has none isn't just charity—right now, it is the highest form of worship.

Until we realize that shade and clean water are fundamental human rights, and not luxuries reserved for the rich, these heatwaves will keep filling our graveyards. It is time to tear down the concrete and bring back the green. If we don't act now to save our land and our poorest citizens, nature's revenge next year will be even worse—and we won't even have the time left to regret it.