

Our Highly Contradictory Aspirations

The week of 26 Nov. 2012, all international news media had their focus riveted on two current phenomena:

Phenomenon 1: The sales in the US this season has reportedly gone up by about 11%. This “Sales growth rate” is a prime component in the “Growth Rate” (commonly used abbreviation for the “Economic Growth Rate”) in the US which consequently has gone up significantly too. Everyone has been cheering and dancing wildly about it.

Phenomenon 2: A large worldwide team of eminent scientists has gone very carefully over all the evidence and reached the firm conclusion that Polar Ice Caps (both North and South) are melting at an ever increasing annual rate, leading to a raising ocean level, which will result in coastal cities worldwide, where majority of human population lives, becoming submerged fairly soon. The Team of Scientists attributed this to the increasing level of CO₂ in the atmosphere. No human being likes this, particularly those living near the coasts.

The annual growth of a country depends on the growth of increased manufacturing and other economic activities in the country, all of which use increasing amounts of fossil fuels; and hence contribute to the growth in the amount of CO₂ released into the atmosphere. So our unbridled joy at the occurrence of Phenomenon 1 over time, is leading to the increased intensity with which Phenomenon 2 is occurring.

The very sad part of all this is that the Team of Eminent Scientists who studied Phenomenon 2, either did not realize its connection to economic (and population) growth; or lacked the guts to mention it in their final report.

Katta G. Murty.
3 December 2012
murty@umich.edu