

## America's Wildfire Crisis: Failure, Conspiracy, and the Climate Change Storm

**By Dr. Santhosh Mathew**

The author is Associate Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University

Wildfires in California and across the United States have become a yearly disaster, devastating landscapes, communities, and ecosystems. Despite the increasing frequency and intensity of these fires, America's response to them seems to be faltering on multiple fronts, from the failure of disaster management systems to the spreading of conspiracy theories about the fires' causes. The technology that was supposed to mitigate these fires often fails when it is needed most, and the real culprit behind these escalating fires—climate change—continues to be downplayed by some quarters. In the early days of wildfire seasons, Americans can expect warnings of the impending destruction. However, year after year, these fires break out in increasing frequency and strength, claiming lives and property. So, what's gone wrong? Is it an issue of climate change? Or have other factors played a significant role in amplifying these fires? The truth is, wildfires in the U.S. are not just a natural disaster—they're a systemic failure. From misguided disaster management strategies to climate change denial, America's inability to effectively deal with these fires is a manifestation of a larger, structural problem that ties together technology failures, environmental negligence, and political obfuscation.

One of the most glaring failures in America's approach to wildfires is the inadequate and outdated disaster management systems in place. Every year, local, state, and federal authorities scramble to deal with the damage, often coming up short. Despite years of technological advancements, fire management systems, and government spending, much of the planning remains reactive rather than proactive. A large part of this failure lies in the persistent lack of coordination between federal and state agencies. The U.S. is home to over 200,000 wildfires annually, but the resources available to tackle them are stretched thin. Firefighting equipment is often insufficient, and the personnel needed to battle these fires are undertrained, underpaid, and exhausted by the time wildfires hit peak intensity. Moreover, the current disaster response mechanism often waits too long to deploy resources, thus increasing the devastation.

While the technology to predict fires and track them in real time exists, it is frequently underutilized or poorly integrated into coordinated disaster management systems. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), satellite imaging, and AI-based algorithms can help predict fire outbreaks and assess ongoing fires, but the scale at which these tools operate is still not up to par to handle a national crisis. Thus, local firefighting units are often left to fight fires with outdated equipment, limited training, and a lack of real-time data. The federal government's failure to implement national-level disaster management strategies only adds to the problem. Although the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plays a key role in coordinating fire relief, political infighting often stymies much-needed action.

There is little bipartisan agreement on how to adequately prepare for the increasing number of wildfires, and many resources are funnelled into other areas of concern, leaving wildfire management as a secondary issue in national politics.

The link between wildfires and climate change is undeniable. Record-breaking heatwaves, prolonged droughts, and shifting precipitation patterns—fuelled by global warming—have created a perfect storm for wildfires. As temperatures rise, the risk of wildfires increases, with dry landscapes providing ample fuel for the fires to spread rapidly. In states like California, the situation is especially dire, as wildfires are increasingly being fuelled by hotter and drier conditions. The Sierra Nevada Mountain range, for instance, has seen an increase in extreme heat events, making it an ideal place for fires to spark and rage uncontrollably. The number of days with extreme fire conditions has doubled in the past 50 years, and in some areas, fires are now burning for months rather than weeks.

Despite the mounting evidence linking wildfires to climate change, there are still segments of the political spectrum that refuse to acknowledge the role of global warming in exacerbating fire risks. Climate change denial has led to policies that prioritize short-term economic interests—such as deregulation of industries that contribute to carbon emissions—over long-term environmental sustainability. Furthermore, local governments and federal agencies have often failed to implement climate mitigation strategies that would reduce wildfire risks. Instead of tackling the root causes of the problem—climate change—policy makers are focused on temporary measures like the use of fire retardants or the promotion of fire-resistant buildings. These methods have yielded limited success, especially when the fires are supercharged by rising temperatures and increased dryness. Perhaps one of the most damaging elements in the fight against wildfires is the rise of conspiracy theories. In recent years, fringe groups have perpetuated the belief that some wildfires are intentionally set, either as a means of population control or by shadowy figures with hidden agendas. These theories have been debunked by experts time and again, yet they persist in some circles, particularly on social media platforms.

These conspiracy theories often frame the government's response to wildfires as part of a broader "deep state" agenda. One of the most widely circulated theories suggests that the fires are being deliberately started by "directed energy weapons" or other high-tech means, designed to create panic or push forward some hidden political agenda. This harmful rhetoric distracts from the real issues at hand—such as climate change, resource mismanagement, and a lack of effective disaster response. While conspiracy theories may seem far-fetched, they have gained a disturbing level of traction in the U.S., fuelled by distrust in government institutions and a penchant for sensationalism. These false narratives not only waste valuable time but also divide public opinion, making it harder to address the pressing need for climate action and comprehensive disaster management reform.

Despite having some of the world's best technology at its disposal, the U.S. still struggles to tackle wildfires effectively. A key technology in firefighting efforts has been fire retardants, which have been used for decades to slow the spread of wildfires. However, a new generation of "pink fire retardants" has shown promise in improving fire control, yet there are concerns about their environmental impact. The very technology designed to combat fires may, in some cases, harm the environment in the long run. Moreover, firefighting drones and satellite imagery can offer precise insights into the size and movement of fires, but these tools are often limited by data gaps, miscommunication, and a lack of real-time coordination. While firefighting crews on the ground are battling the blaze, they often lack up-to-date information about shifting winds or the fire's growth, leading to mistakes in strategy that could potentially save lives and property. Despite the advent of cutting-edge technologies, such as AI-powered simulations and predictive models, these tools have not yet reached the level of efficiency and reliability needed to manage large-scale wildfire disasters. Fire departments are often forced to rely on traditional, less effective methods to fight fires, resulting in delayed responses and worse outcomes.

The U.S. must recognize that wildfires are not just a natural occurrence—they are a systemic problem exacerbated by climate change, technological gaps, and poor disaster management. To curb the increasing threat of wildfires, America needs to take bold action on climate change, invest in modern disaster management systems, and ensure that technology is used to its full potential in both prevention and response efforts. While conspiracy theories may cloud the discussion, the solution to America’s wildfire crisis lies not in fear-mongering or misinformation but in real, systemic change. By addressing the root causes of wildfires and building a more resilient infrastructure, the U.S. can hope to minimize the destruction caused by these fiery disasters in the future.

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## What Will Kash Patel Do as FBI Director?

**By Vappala Balachandran**

The author is Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat.

US President elect Donald Trump’s nomination of Kash Patel to the post of FBI Director has elicited severe adverse comments. The New York Times said that “Kash Patel has plan to remake the FBI into a tool of Trump”. The Hill, which has the 2nd largest readership in US for online politics, said that Kash Patel’s nomination “sparks fear over retribution against media”.

Part of the historical reason for FBI’s independence is that it works under the Attorney General, created by the Judiciary Act of 1789 while the US constitution was fully ratified only on 29 May 1790. Thus, Attorney General precedes even US constitution.

The 1789 Act says that the duty of attorney-general shall be “to prosecute and conduct all suits in the Supreme Court” and to “give his advice and opinion upon questions of law when required by the President”. Note that the “advisory” function to the president is listed below the duty to the Supreme Court.

This is because the founding fathers of American democracy felt that the Justice Department must be independent of the executive and legislature and be answerable only to law to be adjudicated by the Supreme Court.

The tradition of FBI’s independence even from the president was exemplified by an incident in September 2013 quoted by James Comey in his book “A higher Loyalty”. Comey was appointed by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the Senate. Before he took over on 4 September 2013, he had gone to call on Obama who told him: “Once you are director, we won’t be able to talk like this”.

An incident during Bill Clinton’s presidency (1993-2001) is relevant why Obama said so. On occasions FBI and Department of Justice (DOJ) might have to investigate even the president and his establishment. In the 1993 “Travelgate” ethics controversy, Hillary Clinton, then First Lady was investigated by the Justice Department and FBI. Although she was not charged, Independent Counsel Robert Ray concluded that “Hillary Rodham Clinton gave ‘factually inaccurate’ testimony about her role in the firings of seven White House travel office employees”.

Comey who should have ordinarily served as Director till 2023, was fired by President Trump on 9 May 2017. In his book published in 2018 he mentions how Trump flouted this convention by inviting him to an exclusive dinner on 27 January 2017 merely to tell him that he expected “loyalty” from him. Following this, Trump requested Comey on 14 February 2017 to “let go Mike Flynn”.

In May this year Reuters reported that Trump wanted to bring the entire Justice Department under the White House. It may be mentioned the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) who heads the 16 member US intelligence group, is designated as “adviser” to the president.

Experts have pointed out that this would be difficult since DOJ mission statement clearly states that the “Justice Department works each day to earn the public’s trust by following the facts and the law wherever they may lead, without prejudice or improper influence”. Also, this arrangement would need an amendment to the 1789 Act, which the Congress might be loath to do.

Thus, the only possibility seems to be mass firing in the Justice Department and filling the slots with persons “loyal” to Trump, if the Senate agrees. There is a precedent here. In what is known as the “Halloween massacre”, Admiral Stansfield Turner, NSA of President Jimmy Carter, fired 20% of the CIA’s “Clandestine Services” personnel in 1977.

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## **Not Just a Change of Regime, Trump is Reshaping Post-War America**

**By C Raja Mohan**

The writer is contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

*Like all revolutions, Trump's movement carries internal contradictions and external opposition. If he can successfully navigate these, Trump could succeed in building a lasting domestic political coalition with policies that significantly diverge from the post-War liberal hegemony in America and the world.*

As the world reflects on the implications of US policies during Donald Trump’s second term as president, it’s crucial to examine the domestic origins of the sweeping policy agenda he presented in his inaugural speech and his subsequent actions.

What is unfolding in the US is not merely a change of regime; it is a revolution aimed at fundamentally reshaping post-War America. Trump refers to it as a “revolution of common sense”. Liberals might label it a “counter-revolution” across various domains, including social, political, economic, and geopolitical spheres. Conversely, conservatives might see it as a “counter-counter-revolution” aimed at thwarting the destabilisation of Trump’s transformative agenda from his first term (2017-2021) by the so-called deep state.

The American revolt against the liberal order has been brewing for some time in the 21st century. This growing discontent helped Trump, an outsider, defeat established political dynasties like the Clintons (Democratic) and Bushes (Republican) to win the White House in the 2016 elections.

The establishment and liberal media launched a relentless campaign against Trump, branding him a “Russian agent” and seeking to undermine his presidency at every turn. Thanks to his inexperience and many missteps, Trump lost the presidency in 2020. However, the establishment continued its assault, using the full power of the state to push Trump out of politics during Joe Biden’s presidency.

The 2024 elections represented a decisive rejection of the liberal establishment’s anti-Trump politics. While the establishment labelled Trump a “felon”, his supporters viewed the campaign as a political witch hunt that stretched legal boundaries to convict him. This situation reflects a significant and deep divide within American society.

If one is charitable, they might forgive Trump for claiming that “God saved him” from an assassination attempt on July 13, 2024, “for a purpose” — to reorient American politics at home and abroad. Many of his supporters believe this was indeed a miracle, and they were ready to give Trump another chance to pursue his revolution. For them, Trump is certainly the “chosen one” to challenge the establishment. Regardless of the question of “divine influence”, Trump is emerging as a key figure in a major effort to radically overhaul America’s social, political, and economic systems.

It is fitting that Trump was sworn in at the Capitol, the site of the January 6, 2021, protests against Biden’s election. While the establishment termed these protests an “insurrection”, Trump and his supporters viewed the participants as “hostages” of the establishment.

One of Trump’s first actions was to pardon approximately 1,500 protesters still incarcerated. While Trump rescued his “political family”, Biden pardoned his own family members in the final moments of his presidency. The contrast has not gone unnoticed.

Trump’s revolution challenges four key aspects of entrenched liberal hegemony in America, with significant implications for the global order centred around Washington as the leading power.

First, the liberal belief in imposing its “superior values” on society — covering gender identity, permissible speech, education, and the relationship between individuals and God — has faced backlash. Trump has promised to restore free speech, reverse gender-identity politics, dismantle diversity regulations, and reintroduce traditional values into civic life. Unlike Biden, Trump does not categorise the world into “democracies” and “autocracies”, nor does he seek to promote human rights globally.

Second, the liberal notion that borders are irrelevant and that America should welcome all migrants has sparked significant political opposition. Trump’s focus on reclaiming control over US borders and deporting illegal aliens emphasises US territorial sovereignty, a term previously dismissed by liberals. His presidency may reintroduce sovereignty, which has great currency outside the West, as a central theme in global political discourse.

Third, the liberal idea that America can indefinitely absorb global exports has lost support within the US political class. The current debate centres on the necessary measures to rebalance US trade with the world. Both Republicans and Democrats oppose the global trade framework centred around the World Trade Organization that was organised at the turn of the millennium.

While Trump did not announce specific tariffs in his inaugural speech or initial executive orders, he reaffirmed his commitment to using tariffs to achieve various political and economic goals. The Trump administration has initiated an internal review of tariff strategies, with potential actions against specific countries forthcoming. The discourse on American policy will increasingly focus on “fair trade” and “reciprocity” as opposed to free trade and non-reciprocal commerce.

Fourth, since World War II, liberal internationalists in Washington have insisted that Americans must “bear any burden and pay any price” to sustain US global leadership. Trump has tapped into a movement that detests the “globalists” with some passion and demands first priority for US interests over foreign conflicts and presumed imperatives of American leadership.

Throughout his first term and beyond, Trump has criticised America’s endless wars and emphasised the need for good relations with all powers, including Russia and China. Although he did not elaborate on foreign policy in his inaugural address, he expressed a desire to be a “peacemaker”, which could signal a reluctance to engage in conflict with China or Russia to uphold a “liberal international order”. How this plays out will have a great bearing on the global order and the geopolitics of Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific.

Trump's cabinet comprises members with diverse views on America's role abroad, ranging from advocates of restraint to those favouring a more muscular foreign policy. It remains to be seen how Trump will navigate these internal debates on issues like Gaza, Taiwan, Ukraine, and North Korea. What is evident, though, is that Trump is bringing a distinctly different approach to foreign policy — assertive on core interests, which may become fewer, while negotiating deals on other matters.

Like all revolutions, Trump's movement carries internal contradictions and generates external opposition. If he can successfully navigate these competing imperatives within his movement and neutralise the hostility of his opponents, Trump could succeed in building a lasting domestic political coalition with policies that significantly diverge from the post-War liberal hegemony in America and the world.

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## India Joins Elite Club of Nations as ISRO Successfully Executes SpaDeX Docking Operation

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New Delhi [India], January 16 (ANI): India has joined the elite club of nations (/topic/nations) capable of executing space docking operation (/topic/docking-operation)s, with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) completing the SpaDeX docking operation(/topic/docking-operation).

This historic achievement marks India's entry into a group of only four countries - after the USA, Russia, and China - to have demonstrated this capability.

The SpaDeX mission, launched on December 30, aimed to showcase India's technological prowess in spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking. The docking process was executed with exceptional precision, with the spacecraft manoeuvring seamlessly to initiate docking and capture.

The docking process was executed with exceptional precision. The spacecraft manoeuvred seamlessly from the 15-metre to the 3-meter hold point, initiating docking with accuracy and leading to successful spacecraft capture.

After this, retraction was completed smoothly, followed by rigidisation for stability. Post-docking, the integrated control of the two satellites as a single object has been successfully achieved, showcasing India's technological expertise.

SpaDeX is a cost-effective technology demonstrator mission designed to showcase in-space docking using two small spacecraft launched by the 62nd PSLV flight.

This mission is pivotal for India's future space ambitions, including lunar missions, sample returns, and the development of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS).

The main goals of the SpaDeX mission are to develop and demonstrate technology for rendezvous and docking using two small spacecrafts, showcase controllability in the docked condition, demonstrate the potential for extending the life of the target spacecraft and test power transfer between docked spacecraft.

The SpaDeX mission involves two small satellites, SDX01, which is the Chaser and SDX02, the Target, each weighing approximately 220 kilograms. These spacecrafts are androgynous i.e. either of the spacecraft can act as chasers (active spacecraft) during docking.

They are equipped with solar panels, lithium-ion batteries, and a robust power management system. The Attitude and Orbit Control System (AOCS) includes sensors such as star sensors, sun sensors, magnetometers and actuators like reaction wheels, magnetic torques and thrusters.

The satellites will execute a series of complex manoeuvres to demonstrate the docking process in orbit. Post-docking, the two satellites will operate as a single spacecraft. Electrical power will be transferred from one satellite to the other to confirm the success of the docking. After successful docking and undocking, the spacecraft will separate and be used for application missions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday morning extended his wishes as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a historic feat by successfully concluding the docking process of two satellites.

He said that the success of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) project was a stepping stone for future space missions.

"Congratulations to our scientists at ISRO and the entire space fraternity for the successful demonstration of space docking of satellites. It is a significant stepping stone for India's ambitious space missions in the years to come," PM Modi posted on X.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh said this paves the way for the smooth conduct of ambitious future missions including the Bharatiya Antriksha Station and Chandrayaan 4.

"Congrats ISRO. Finally made it. SPADEX has accomplished the unbelievable docking complete and it is all indigenous 'Bharatiya Docking System'. This paves the way for smooth conduct of ambitious future missions including the Bharatiya Antriksha Station and Chandrayaan 4 and Gaganyaan. PM Sh@narendramodi's continuous patronage keeps the spirits soaring. here at Bengaluru," the Union Minister of State (MoS) for Earth Sciences posted on X.

Earlier, SpaDeX project director N Surendran said that this experiment would prove fruitful for future assignments like the Bharatiya Antariksha Station and the Chandrayaan-4 mission since the docking mechanism was becoming necessary.

President Droupadi Murmu also congratulated ISRO on Thursday for making India the fourth nation to demonstrate space docking capability, as it successfully docked two satellites launched under SpaDeX. In chorus with her were other prominent political figures.

Taking to X, the President of India through Rashtrapati Bhavan's official handle, expressed: "India's space programme achieves a historic milestone with the successful docking of the two satellites launched under Space Docking Experiment, SpaDeX! India is the fourth nation to have demonstrated space docking capability."

"This achievement paves the way for India's future endeavours in space exploration such as Chandrayaan-4, India's planned space station and Gaganyaan. Congratulations to ISRO and the entire scientists and engineers communities of the country for boosting India's space capabilities," she added.

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# India-Taliban Talks — Realism in Acting West

**By Shri. Sujan R Chinoy**

The Author is the director general of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

*The Taliban is here to stay and with India capitalising on traditional friendship, there is scope for Afghanistan to figure even more prominently in Delhi's "Act West" policy.*

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's meeting with the Taliban's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai on January 8 is not just part of the engagement of the regime in Kabul but a significant elevation in the level of dialogue. India, like the rest of the international community, has yet to accord formal recognition to the Taliban regime which saw off US forces from Kabul in August 2021 amidst chaotic scenes reminiscent of the helicopter evacuation of thousands from Saigon in 1975, only much worse.

Since the transition in Kabul, India has kept alive channels of communication with the Taliban at the functional level. Misri's meeting took place against the backdrop of considerable geopolitical ferment. Two days earlier, the Indian foreign ministry spokesman had roundly condemned the Pakistani airstrikes against Afghanistan that resulted in the loss of "several precious lives", including women and children.

Pakistan's claim that the target was the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) camps has not cut ice with Kabul, which has labelled these brazen acts as "aggression against Afghanistan". The TTP is fighting to evict all Pakistani forces from Pashtun tribal lands across the so-called Durand Line. Mortimer Durand's eponymous line of 1893, a colonial cartographic caper, is regarded as an "imaginary line" by the Taliban, whose sympathy for the TTP's pan-Pashtun ambitions has set Pakistan's teeth on edge. In February 2024, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, Taliban's acting deputy minister of foreign affairs, categorically stated that Afghanistan will never recognise the Durand Line. Pakistani demands for "border" crossings using consular documents have also been dismissed.

In Pakistan's case, there are some ironies. First, Pakistan has always considered Afghanistan to be a weak and vulnerable hinterland to be exploited and dominated in order to achieve "strategic depth" against India. Now, an emboldened Taliban is threatening Pakistan's western flank, which it has always taken for granted. According to a UN Security Council report, there are an estimated 6,000-6,500 TTP fighters waging war against Pakistan, operating from Afghanistan. The Taliban's support for the TTP remains strong amidst mounting instances of TTP attacks against Pakistan.

Second, as the saying goes "as you sow, so shall you reap". Pakistan has harboured many terrorist groups as part of its insidious policy towards India. It was a key progenitor of the Taliban during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Now, the chickens have come home to roost. The TTP's Pashtun nationalism haunts Islamabad.

Links between the Taliban, TTP and al-Qaeda remain resilient. The Taliban and al-Qaeda make common cause in dealing with the virulent Islamic State (Khorasan Province). Just as the Taliban's return had proved a boost for terrorist networks, not far away, Syria has recently been overrun by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), still regarded by the UN and US as a terrorist organisation. The revocation of the \$10 million bounty on the head of HTS leader Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa on grounds of expediency gives rise to the question of whether there is scope for similar rehabilitation of the current regime in Afghanistan.

Top UN, US, EU, Turkish and Jordanian diplomats, as well as the foreign ministers of Germany and France, are dealing with the new regime in Damascus but not with the Taliban. This is despite the fact that the Syrian groups that have come together under the HTS umbrella have also been egregious in their violation of human rights and the treatment of minorities.



India has done well to engage the Taliban at a senior level. China and others such as Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Pakistan were quick to interact with Taliban 2.0 including through their local diplomatic missions. After the Taliban's takeover, India had recalled all its personnel but later restituted its presence in Kabul by dispatching a "technical team" to its embassy in 2022.

The "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" yearns for recognition. The UN Credentials Committee has turned down its request for the fourth consecutive year. However, the current situation does provide an opportunity for India to deploy a new modus vivendi in its dealings with the Taliban even if international recognition, for now, remains a chimera. The Afghan cricket team's dizzying rise has led to players like Rashid Khan being auctioned for hefty sums in the Indian Premier League (IPL). It augurs well that India has also offered to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the popular game of cricket, which is a way of reaching out to the Afghan youth.

Following the Misri-Muttaqi tête-à-tête, India has committed to "provide further material support in the first instance to the health sector and for the rehabilitation of refugees" by way of humanitarian assistance. Pakistan has expelled more than 5,00,000 refugees, creating a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Given that Iran too has had border skirmishes with Pakistan on account of the latter providing sanctuaries to separatists, this is an opportune moment to work in tandem with Iran, using Chabahar Port to expand trade and send assistance to the refugees. India could benefit by involving Tehran more closely in meeting Afghanistan's humanitarian needs. Iran still has regional sway in some quarters and has recently offered to help mediate with Yemen to secure clemency for Nimisha Priya, an Indian nurse on death row.

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## **India is Proud of: Shipra Pathak Water Woman of India**



As seen over the past few decades, water scarcity has become a global issue. Scientists and experts all around the world are putting dates on when water will not be available in certain areas. Now more than ever is the time to step up and collectively work towards conserving the planet's water resources.

To bring this change across the globe and in India, Glojal (Global Water Mission) Foundation is dedicating their entire life. Ambassador of the organization is Shipra Pathak or colloquially known as the WATER WOMAN. She is revered as the Global Water Ambassador owing to her selfless dedication towards the cause.

Shipra Pathak actively leads the 'Ek Thali, Ek Thaila' campaign for water and environmental conservation at Mahakumbh. Under her campaign, lakhs of eco-friendly bags and plates have been distributed at the Mahakumbh with the support of various organizations.

In November last year, she walked from Ayodhya to Rameswaram.

Shipra Pathak has walked 13,000 kilometres to promote water and environmental conservation. Her organization, Panchtatva, boasts 15 lakh members and has facilitated the planting of 25 lakh saplings along riverbanks. At Mahakumbh, she is actively raising awareness about cleanliness through her campaign.

She elaborated, "To ensure a clean Kumbh, we distributed bags, plates, glasses, and spoons to Akharas. If we noticed a devotee carrying a plastic bag, we provided them with an eco-friendly alternative. While we strive to keep our rivers clean, it is essential to preserve our culture. Rivers can be cleaned with machines and commercialization, but without cultural preservation, there will be no Mahakumbh on the riverbanks in the future."

Shipra Pathak left her business and job to dedicate herself to saving rivers and forests.

She got very actively involved in the campaign to make Kumbh Mela area neat and clean. She says "It is not just an ordinary festival or occasion. People from all classes, communities, and ideologies come together to take a dip at the Triveni Sangam, creating a unique and powerful vibration. Taking a dip here by countless people from all over the world is something which cannot be explained in few words. She elaborates about her work - for the past year, we've been working to ensure that those who come to take a dip in the Sangam find clean and uninterrupted water. Through environmental conservation, we've united 100 organizations that support this mission.

Reflecting on her journey to becoming the 'Water Woman,' Shipra shared, "Since childhood, I've had a deep connection with water. My parents named me Shipra, after the river. While traveling abroad for work, I noticed how clean the rivers there were, despite not being worshipped as goddesses. It made me wonder why our rivers couldn't be the same."

She added, "The Narmada Parikrama was a turning point for me. I observed that where Maa Narmada flows cleanly and uninterrupted, people's finances, health, and development thrive. But where the river is polluted, lives are adversely affected. This realization led to my renunciation. I travelled along the Shipra, the Gomti, and journeyed from Ayodhya to Rameswaram. Our aim is not to imagine a new India, but to preserve the essence of ancient India and pass our cultural heritage to the next generation."

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Write to us at:

**[bulletin@finsindia.org](mailto:bulletin@finsindia.org)**

**OFFICE :4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu Road,  
Dadar (East), MUMBAI - 400014  
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