

# PLASTIC USE: A MAJOR ISSUE

## SAY NO TO PLASTIC

As you step out of your home you will probably take or use plastic bags, chips packet, biscuits and after their use you throw it on the streets/roads. All over the street, in the drains and on the pavements, there are discarded plastic packets and bottles, used packaging and numerous packets with wasted food from the surrounding eateries.

The reason why plastic is hazard for the environment is because it is non-biodegradable. Polyethylene, polyvinyl chloride, and polystyrene are the composition base in the manufacture of plastics. These synthetic polymers are easily moulded into complex shapes and have high chemical resistance. Because of these properties they are used to manufacture several durable or disposable goods and for packaging materials.

However, plastic is resistant to biodegradation, Plastic bags take hundreds of years to decompose and have started affecting the biodiversity of our planet. The easy convenience of plastic bags is now harming and causing unnatural deaths among wild animals and aquatic species. A discarded plastic bottle can remain in a land fill for millions of years, so just consider the thousands of plastic bottles we discard on a daily basis.

Bangalore alone generates roughly 40 tons of plastic waste per day, so is the city headed for environmental disaster

Shalini of KKPKP (Kagad Kach Patra Kashtaka Panchayat), Pune, says: "The average human in India uses three kg of plastic per person per year. That's far lower than the European who consumes 60 kg per year, and the American who consumes 80 kg. Because we are so populous, the amount of plastic consumed is mindboggling and our disposal habits make it a health hazard. As long as our homes are clean, we are fine; throw all the plastic waste on the road for the corporation sweeper to clean. If they do not, we just sit back and grumble that the municipality is doing nothing."

That's one reason why drains get clogged in Bangalore during the rains. Look into the open storm water drains which are invariably filled with all sorts of junked plastic. Milk sachets, plastic water bottles, grocery bags, and containers.

You always plan to trip to Goa and Ooty with your friends because it a very beautiful destination for trips in your holidays. Earlier, both holiday destinations had waste plastic clogging everything from lakes, where tourists took boat rides, to beaches, where even a sea bath meant bringing up discarded fishermen's nets around your ankles.

Today, both cities have a very strict ban on plastic and the results are clearly obvious. What makes it a workable solution is the local population too have enforced the ban, taking personal pride in keeping their cities and market areas free from plastic. If you buy fish from the local fisherwoman in the market in Goa and if you have not carried your own cloth bag, she will wrap your fish or prawns in newspaper and thrust it in your hands! Ooty has stylish-looking newspaper bags in which your tea, chocolates and spices will be handed over.

We have also aped the disposable culture of the West and over the last decade use everything from disposable razors and pens to large quantities of fancy packaging. Apples or pears are pushed into honeycomb plastic packing to keep them from getting damaged in transit.

What happened to filling our pens with ink or the biscuits that we bought from the baker sans plastic trapping? Maybe we need to take a step back in time and go back a decade to when we did not need the fancy packing.

We all need to take responsibility for this pollution. Some simple steps we can take to stop this major issue.

- Carry a shopping bag like we did in the old days or put a basket into the dickey of your car into which you can fill a whole shopping cart.
- Stop buying bottled water; instead, buy a food grade plastic water bottle and carry your own water.
- Leave packaging behind in the shop, especially of large white goods, so it can be recycled rather than carry it home.

We should cultivate eco-friendly habits and say no to plastics.

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