

PLASTIC : A NIGHTMARE

Plastic, a material most of us are familiar with, started off as a boon to humankind, but has now become a curse. What was created to help us has now begun to harm us in ways we aren't even aware of.

Plastic has many advantages which have made it popular. It is long-lasting, easy to use and store, easily accessible and cheap. However, using plastic has disastrous consequences. Plastic pollutes our environment, is perhaps the most harmful of trash dumped by mariners and sea-goers in the sea because it does not readily break down in nature. In fact, the plastic that goes over the side today may still be around in hundreds of years to foul up the beaches of future generations. Pollution caused by plastic is not only harmful for marine life but it is also affecting the health of humans. The harmful chemicals which get absorbed in the plastic debris that floats in the sea water, have a varied and harmful range of chronic effects like endocrine disorders.

Because plastic is cheap, it gets discarded easily and its persistence in the environment can do great harm. Urbanization has added to the plastic pollution in concentrated form in cities. Plastic thrown on land can

enter the drainage lines and choke them resulting into floods in local areas in cities as was experienced in Mumbai, India in 1998. It was claimed in one of the programmes on TV that eating plastic bags results in the death of 100 cattle per day in Uttar Pradesh in India. Because plastic does not decompose, and requires high-energy ultra-violet light to break down, the amount of plastic waste in our oceans is steadily increasing. According to the World Economic forum study, which was done on plastic pollution, if plastic pollution continues to rise, then oceans will have more plastic than fish by 2050. India's contribution to plastic waste that is dumped into the world's oceans every year is a massive 60%. To reduce the plastic menace, the National Green Tribunal suggested a ban on disposable plastic, however, no law has been put in place to implement the same.

Meanwhile, the throwaway consumer culture in the United States is a far bigger contributor to ocean plastic pollution, which has become so pervasive that plastic is expected to outweigh all the fish in the sea. Researchers just discovered that sea turtle nesting areas in Florida and the rest of the Gulf coast are so inundated with small bits of plastic that studies found record levels of plastic frozen in the Arctic sea ice. Today, plastic ~~is~~ one of the gravest pollutants threatening us, but the flow of plastic waste created in the United States is poised

to dramatically increase in the coming years .

Waste from plastic is damaging the environment and choking animals, but the United Kingdom's recent plan to implement a deposit-return scheme offers a solution to the crisis . Experts believe this can be emulated by other countries, including the UAE . According to Abdul Majeed Sifaie, the Director of Waste Management department of the Dubai municipality, each emirate is doing its bit to reduce waste . However, a common plan is important to combat the problem as the country's residents use a whopping 1.3 billion plastic bags in a year , and use almost 450 bottles per person per year on an average . Microbeads and chipped plastic waste from grocery bags and cups often end up in the world's oceans, contributing to a build-up of plastic that is choking marine creatures and damaging the environment . A team of researchers last year found 40% of fish caught in a survey across Japan had micro-plastic in their digestive systems

Although there are commendable endeavours to mitigate the risk of plastic overconsumption, it remains only a monocular initiative . Finally, many questions remain unanswered : To what extent, are we nations, responsible for the ongoing crisis ? Between producers and consumers, under who does the ethical responsibility mostly fall ? To what extent do we have to take a serio

global action to cut down plastic waste in the oceans.

In December, nearly 200 countries including the US, China and India signed a United Nations resolution to eliminate ocean plastic pollution. A draft of the resolution had included legally binding, specific pollution reduction targets, but the US reportedly led the way on rejecting that draft.

On January 16th, 2018, the European Commission adopted the first-ever European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy. The plan seeks to eliminate plastic pollution and change the way plastics are produced and consumed in the EU, with a focus on plastic bags, other single-use plastics and fishing materials.

The Japanese industry has started taking measures to address concerns about microplastics, with major manufacturers already ending the use of microbeads.

When Mani Vijay quit a lucrative job in the US to form a plastic waste recycling company in India, he started with strong notions of superiority over other nations. According to him, India had one of the best recycling habits in the world, and he considered his job was to strengthen it.

The United Nations Environment Programme includes the following :

- * #CleanSeas campaign : UNEP launched the CleanSeas campaign in 2017 to engage stakeholders from all sectors to fight pollution of plastics in the ocean.
- * #BeatPlasticPollution Campaign : The #BeatPlasticPollution is the focus of the 2018 World Environment Day organized by the UN.

Beat Plastic Pollution, which overlaps with the Clean Seas campaign, also targets single-use plastics and pushes consumers to follow the motto : "If you can't reuse it, refuse it."

From the mentioned facts, our existing knowledge and general awareness, we can conclude by saying that plastic is an inseparable part of our society but it needs to be stopped as soon as possible. We, as the youth of our nations, need to understand the gravity of the situation and solve the issue by adopting greener and plastic free habits.

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By : Group 1 : Roll number 1 to 14