

Plastic and its Nightmare

Plastic is one of humankind's greatest invention. Plastic was invented in 1850's. Since 1950's, plastic's had started be produced in large numbers. It is popular in all nations because it is strong, affordable, easy to use and need no maintenance. Plastics are mainly used for carrier bags and packaging. PET'S are used for making plastic containers and bottles.

Many countries have started to see the bad effects of plastic after seeing the condition of marine life when plastics are seen thrown in seas, oceans and other water bodies. Plastics cause harm to the man as well as the human beings. Human bodies absorb chemicals added to plastic. These chemicals are found to alter hormones and cause effect to our health. These chemicals are known as Carcinogens. Deep buried plastics in landfills can release chemicals into the groundwater.

Also plastic trash in landfills which can survive there for thousands of years, release poisonous gases, which gets absorbed in the atmosphere.

Returning to the ill effects of plastic in the marine life, it is surveyed that around 79% of our waste plastic ends up in landfill or in oceans. In ocean it ends up forming garbage products [i.e., Great Pacific Garbage Patch] and affects the animals. Plastic break up in micro-plastics, very small particles of plastic, which are eaten up by the fish. It is said that about 5 billion of microplastics are formed in our oceans. They have entered our food chain as well when we consume seafood.

We shall look at some case studies of the following countries:

Japan

One of the biggest plastic consumers, its plastic pollution has caused damage to its marine life.

Japanese people prefer plastics a lot as it shows the economic growth of the country. They prefer to wrap a lot of plastic around their products as it is in the tradition of 'gift giving'. The government of Japan is currently trying to encourage people to use less plastic. Separate bins have been made to segregate waste. Plastic manufacturing companies are told by the government to make the plastics more recyclable. Those who abide by this are given funds.

2) UK

The British government has found a huge amount of waste plastic in its seashores and Estuaries. It has got into such an amount that it has ended up in the habitats of seabirds. This can result in death of birds as they eat the plastic mistaking it for food. Same goes for the condition of the marine life. The government has announced a plan called a 25 year plan last year to combat the plastic pollution in UK.

The plan aims to eradicate by 2042:

The plan has the following decisions like

- 1) Banning Microbeads in toothpaste, face wash etc.
- 2) Plastic free Aisles in supermarkets
- 3) Extending Sp on carrier bags
- 4) Banning cottonbuds and straws made of plastic
- 5) Banning Plastic Bottles
- 6) Getting rid of disposable coffee cups to encourage people to carry reusable cups
- 7) Making industries take more responsibility like -

Making their products more recyclable and also to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products

- 8) Getting young people engaged in learning the bad effect of plastics in the environment and also to raise awareness among them

The plan includes £7 billion research and development pot to inject new funding for plastic recycling.

UAE

A resident of UAE uses 450 plastic

(5)

water bottles in a year, making the country one of the highest bottle water consumers in the world.

70% of litters on beaches comprise plastic with items such as straw, cups and stirrers making up 20%. 8 million tonnes of plastic products end up in the ocean every year. Beach cleanup around Dubai are calling for urgent action to reduce plastic waste that is mainly a result of people's distrust in drinking tap water. The ministry is working currently on creating a fundamental shift in public mindset and behaviour towards reducing, reusing and recycling plastic products. People are given discounts for returning plastic bag to the supermarkets. Separate garbage bins for waste products.

The government has issued a decision obliging manufacturers and suppliers of plastic products to register biodegradable plastic products according to ECA's and also adhere the list of requirements and conditions for registering biodegradable plastics in accordance with Emirati specification standards.

India

Plastics are very popular in India but besides its popularity. There are many outrageous scenes in the Indian scenario. Along with the common effects of plastic on land in water and in the atmosphere, there are others like,

- 1) The animals may swallow the food along with the polythene bags lying at roadsides which so many times becomes fatal.
- 2) Plastics clog the drains due to improper disposal habits of inhabitants resulting in waterlogs during rains.

Plastics ban has been implemented by the governments but it is still being used on a daily basis in most of the towns and cities. The problem persists at grassroots level. One major problem is the use of plastic spoons, glasses and plates for small small gatherings where huge amount of plastic waste is generated. Therefore several startups have also come up with the idea of organic cutlery. The glass, spoon, plates and even containers are made of organic materials which are biodegradable and edible.

Some of the steps, to stop reuse and recycle

- 1) Recycle plastic bottles
 - 2) Do not use plastic bags.
 - 3) Promote the use of jute bags (the industry is dying a slow death in India) cloth and nylon bags
- The Indian capital generates almost 250,000 tonnes of plastic waste every year. By the Indian Government's own estimates over 10 million plastic bags are used and discarded daily by 16 million residents in New Delhi and its suburbs

USA

The throw away consumer culture in the United States is a far bigger contributor to ocean plastic pollution. Researchers found that the sea turtle nesting areas in Florida and the rest of the Gulf Coast are so inundated with small bits of plastics that it could be heating up those beaches and threatening sea turtles. Last year testing found microplastic in 83% of Tap water samples taken.

A more recent study found tiny pieces of plastic in 90% of bottled water with some bottles containing as many as 10,000 pieces of plastic per litre.

Last year, China took a decision called "Close up Bantai". This decision was taken to stop the import of various types of waste plastic from other countries in China. This decision has caused big effect on all the countries who exported their waste plastic to China. Now the countries have to look for alternative solutions to these problems. Scientist researches bacterial plastic which would replace plastic. They are biodegradable. It will be hard to change people's notion towards plastics as we are grown dependent upon it. Therefore, various campaigns can be done to change the notion. Plastics are dangerous and we look forward for the eradication of the plastics.

SAY NO TO PLASTICS