

PLASTIC FREE ENVIRONMENT- A GIFT TO THE SOCIETY

Dr.S.SANGEETHA

Assistant Professor of Commerce
Pachaiyappa's College
Chennai – 600 030

Abstract

This paper explores the plastic free environment and the steps taken by the government. Eco friendly environment is important for us to live healthily. Clean environment promotes healthy atmosphere and it also saves energy. Pollution is the major cause for the adverse change in the natural environment. Every year the government organizing awareness programmes on the World Environment Day. But in this year 2019 our government has taken New Year resolution to bring a plastic free environment. Plastic waste is one of the biggest environmental problems across the world. The entire business family is struggling to find alternatives to plastics. Though government and several organizations have undertaking many steps and initiatives to make India plastic free, what the country really needs is every individual to contribute in their own way. The objectives of the paper are: to bring the plastic free environment in green India; to create awareness among people about plastic pollution; to find out the impact of plastic ban towards manufacturers of plastic; to skip plastic with cleaner and greener substitutes; to protect India from harmful environment; and to provide measures to promote healthy environment. Plastic bags playing major role when, carrying groceries from shop to home and getting take-away from favorite restaurant. Plastic plays indispensable role in our lives and society. Unfortunately, the development of non-biodegradable plastics causes injuries to our lives. It is a time to create awareness among people about plastic pollution and the aim of our government is to form a green and clean India. Now the government banned non-biodegradable plastic covers, plates, cups, water packets, straws and bags. However, plastic sachets used to pack milk, curd and oil, besides those used to wrap medical products will be exempted from the ban. The steps taken by the government is appreciable and plastic free society is a gift for us and future generations.

Key words: Eco friendly environment, non-biodegradable plastic, plastic pollution, plastic sachets, greener and cleaner substitutes.

1. Introduction

Eco friendly environment is important for us to live healthily. Clean environment promotes healthy atmosphere and it also saves our energy. Pollution is the major cause for the adverse change in the natural environment. Environmental pollution occurs in different forms. Major forms of pollution includes, air pollution, light pollution, littering, noise pollution, soil contamination, radioactive contamination, thermal pollution, visual pollution and water pollution. Among this plastic pollution plays a major role in creating harmful effect on environment. Plastic waste is one of the biggest environmental problems in the present scenario. Every year the government organizing awareness programmes on the World Environment Day. But in this year 2019 our government has taken New Year resolution to bring a plastic free environment. The entire business family is struggling to find alternatives to plastics. At present, the world's plastic production has increased twenty folds since 1964. If the current trend continues, output will double in twenty years and it will further double again by 2050. Nearly 25990 tonnes of plastic per day is produced by

India alone. According to the Central Pollution Control Board report, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad were the biggest contributors of plastic.

On the occasion of world environment day, various Indian states and other countries are working to solve plastic pollution. In Tamilnadu plastic banning was successfully implemented and they banned plastic bags, plates and cups. Instead of plastic they recommended that traditional items such as plantain leaves, plate made of palm leaves, etc. The ban is brought under Environment Protection Act of 1986. Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board has issued notices to 1400 units asking them not to manufacture any of the banned items and the Board has also announced if the manufacturers violating the rules of plastic ban then the government will take action. Though government and several organizations have undertaking many steps and initiatives to make India plastic free, what the country really needs is every individual to contribute in their own way.

2. Objective of this paper

1. To bring the plastic free environment in green India.
2. To create awareness among people about plastic pollution.
3. To find out the impact of plastic ban towards manufacturers of plastic.
4. To skip plastic with cleaner and greener substitutes.
5. To protect India from harmful environment.
6. To provide measures to promote healthy environment.

3. Plastic bags: An overview

Patent applications that are pertain to the manufacturing of plastic bags date back to the early 1950s. These bags were used to industrial purpose especially for composite construction. In the present modern marketing, the number of shopping bags available to satisfy the consumers. Shopping bag was invented in the early 1960s by Sten Gustaf Thulin who was a Swedish engineer. He created and developed these plastic bags for Swedish Packaging Company, Celloplast which consisted of folding, welding and die-cutting a tube of plastic. He was introduced a simple, tough and with a good carrying capacity bag to the world in 1965 by the same company he developed it for. Celloplast was a renowned manufacturing company of Cellulose acetate film which was situated in the city of Norrkoping. It is also known as safety film and it is a pioneer in the techniques of plastic processing. The growth and strong position of the company gave it a virtual monopoly on the production of plastic bags due to which manufacturing plants were set up by the company across the US and Europe. After that many other companies realized the potential of the plastic bags, and Celloplast's patent run in the US was overturned by its leading petrochemicals

company, Mobil in 1977. In the 1980s, the plastic bags reached great heights with companies such as Capital Poly, Houston Poly Bag and the Dixie Bag Company playing vital roles. Moreover, several leading grocery chains, such as Kroger and Safeway started replacing their paper bags with plastic shopping bags. Later, Celloplast loosed its monopoly on the production of plastic bags and faced declining stage in business, which led to the company being split up in the 1990s. The site in Norrkoping is still a major production site for plastic in Sweden, but is now headed by the company Milijosack who as the name states is a manufacturer of waste sacks. Since the mid 1980s, the plastic bags used for numerous purposes and has become quite common in countries all around the world. Plastic plays indispensable role in our lives and society. Unfortunately, the development of non-biodegradable plastics causes injuries to our lives. It is a time to create awareness among people about plastic pollution and the aim and dream of our government is to form a green and clean India.

4. Environment and plastic pollution

Due to the hectic growth of population, people produced more garbage and pollute the environment. On the day to day life they require easily disposable products such as soda cans, plastic carry bags and bottles of water. But, unfortunately accumulation of these products has led to increasing amounts of plastic pollution around the world. Plastic is less expensive and most widely available item in world today. When disposed, it does not decompose easily and pollutes land and air when it is burnt. Plastic consists of major toxic pollutants and it has the tendency to cause great harm to the environment in the form of air, water and land pollution. Plastic pollution promotes negative impact on natural environment and creates problem for plants, wild life and human population.

A walk on bank of any river, lake and beach is sufficient to know the consequences of this ubiquitous ugliness floating. According to Ocean Crusaders, an organization dedicated to fighting plastic pollution 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean. According to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, plastic debris kills an estimated 100000 marine mammals annually, as well as millions of birds and fishes. The following are the factors of plastic pollution: Plain old trash, plastic is overused, plastic made fishing nets, disposing of plastic and garbage, and burning plastic is highly toxic. In the light of the above, it is clear that plastic spoils the entire society. We should take the responsibility to avoid use of plastics in day to day life. The major long-term effects of plastic are given below: Plastic upsets the food chain, ground water pollution, land pollution, air pollution, plastics kills animals as well as human being, plastic is poisonous, and spend more to clean affected areas. At present the government has taken steps to eradicate non-biodegradable plastic products mainly polythene covers, which affect the environment impeding, water flow. Plastic burning also causes problem of air, land and water pollution. Now the government banned non-biodegradable plastic covers, plates, cups water packets, straws and bags. However, plastic sachets used to pack milk, curd and oil, besides those used to wrap medical products will be exempted from the ban. The steps taken by the government is appreciable and plastic free society is a gift for us and future generations.

5. Impact of plastic ban towards plastic manufacturers

On World Environment Day this year, with a view to curb the effects of plastic on the environment, the Tamil Nadu Government has banned plastic items including non-biodegradable bags and single-use plastics from January 2019 in the interest of the environment and to “gift a plastic free” state to next generations. But, most of the manufacturers and retailers of plastic industry got reluctant due to this ban. Moreover, the government imposing a ban on plastic products without any national policy is not a practical one. This process may affect consumers as well as the industry. Majority of the plastic manufacturers and retailers are suffered due to this sudden ban. Owners of micro, small and medium enterprises got a loan from banks and started businesses. The reimbursement of loan is very tough for them. If the plastic manufacturing factories closed, the state government will suffer Rs.2500 crores loss every year. Traders working on small margins expressed that the alternatives to plastic are fewer, not easily available, worse and too expensive. The higher cost of alternatives will reduce the profit or force them to increase price which may affect their sales. Most of the shop owners had started shifting to using non-woven bags. The traders pointed out the price of plastic bag and non-woven bag are not same and these price deviations leads losses to them. Food industry especially restaurant is considered one of the largest users of single-use plastics. After the implementation of ban, many food outlets across the state have attempted promoting reusable alternatives to plastic products. In most of the hotels they find substitutes to create healthy environment. MSME department is supporting entrepreneurs to manufacture eco friendly alternatives. Some of the fruit sellers felt that they should have supplied alternatives to us before the ban began. Now, most of the shop keepers, restaurants and vegetable sellers displayed messages about the ban and asked customers to bring their own bag. An initiative towards plastic ban is successful in most of the places and it promotes positive impact among people.

6. Skip plastic with cleaner and greener substitutes

Plastic has trickled in every aspect of human life. Plastic waste is one of the biggest environmental problems across the world. Land, air and water are the important sources of healthy environment. We should keep the environment with cleaner and greener substitutes. Tamil Nadu government has been encouraging to bring alternatives for plastics. There are so many small scale workers and business owners abide the government rules and given platform to alternatives. A few larger businesses have started slowly to shift on alternatives for which they begins search for alternatives to plastics. With an aim to protect the society the government eliminated the use of 14 types of plastic goods below 50 micron of sizes. The big dream of the government is to bring plastic free environment and protect the society from harmful events. But, the government has given exemptions for some plastic products: plastic water bottles and pet bottles; plastic pots, buckets and mugs; packaging for milk, oil and grocery items; plastic office folders; plastic wrappers for school note books and text books; plastic banners/board; plastic spoon, plastic oven sack; packed grocery

items; compostable carry bag of any thickness/garbage bags; tetra pack and plastic containers; and plastic sachets and stationeries.

To promote such pleasant environment shops have started using traditional methods of packaging. The sellers expressed that the prices of banana leaves shoot up from Rs.2 to Rs.15 a piece and that of cloth bags from Rs.3 to Rs.50 each. To lighten the loads of Mother Nature skip plastic with the following cleaner and greener substitutes: wooden/edible cutleries; muslin pouches; glass bottles; stainless steel water bottles; canvas bags/cloth, paper and jute bags; metal/paper straw; plantain leaves, areca nut plates; aluminium foil to pack food; paper rolls; lotus leaves; glass/metal tumblers; bamboo, wooden products; paper/ cloth flags; ceramic wares; and earthen pots. The existence of the above eco-friendly alternatives may create a plastic free nature and protect us from the toxic environment.

7. Measures to promote the healthy environment

At present, this plastic ban does not allow people to use any of the 14 items. But, if there is any plastic bags containing vegetables or fruits from supermarket it should be properly disposed. Residents advised to handover them to conservancy workers and not to throw away banned plastics in bins. Residents should keep these wastages separately and later it will be cleaned by conservancy workers. The following measures can be undertaken to promote healthy environment: Carry reusable bag to shop friendly; get rid of bottled water; avoid plastic food containers; educate businesses to skip plastic with harmless substitutes; get involvement to make plastic free environment; and recycle everything and it saves energy. This is the time to replace plastic with eco friendly products. All of us join together to fight this menace and preserve our green environment.

8. Conclusion

In the present economic scenario, the usage of plastic everywhere and it pollutes the entire environment. To promote green environment the government has banned plastic and conducting awareness programme to public. Everyone should contribute and initiative to bring plastic free India. The government can start units for making bio-degradable bags or at least help plastic manufacturers convert to these eco-friendly materials. Residents on their part should ensure minimum use of plastics, and maximum reuse as well as safe disposal. People should reduce, refuse, reuse and recycle plastic bags. We can eradicate the plastic pollution by reusable beverage mugs, reusable cloth shopping bags, avoid drinking water or juice in plastic bottles, shopping for organic clothes, swap sponges, use candle or incense sticks for fresher air, avoid to use straw, reduce use of electronics, use cloth diapers instead of plastic one, look away from packaged foods and use of knowledge. The government should take steps to promote awareness about plastic free environment among students community. Banning manufacture of plastic is not a solution for green

environment. The government may campaign for reduction in consumption through education and awareness programmes.

9. Reference

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