

WHY SHOULD I RECYCLE?

A smart kid's guide to a green world



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From the Desk of Dr R K Pachauri

The global population is increasing at a rapid rate. Demographers predict that India will become the most populous country in the world by 2030. In the midst of this population explosion, waste management has become a matter of great concern. Rising population not only means an increase in the demand for resources, but an extra load of dump on the Earth as well.

Considering the times we are living in, it is practically impossible to return to the bygone era when people lived within their means and practised the mantra of reuse and recycle. Modern technology has transformed life beyond comprehension and increase in per capita income levels has led to widespread consumerism across the world. Today, necessity and luxury seem to be two sides of the same coin, and replacement rather than repair has become the rule. Moreover, we are constantly competing with one another to keep ourselves updated with technological innovations and new products in the market – indulgence as distinct from necessity is what governs our actions. We tend to conveniently ignore the fact that the process of production, consumption, dissemination, and disposal of goods has a bearing on our environment, society, and individuals. In the words of US physicist and theologian, Ian G Barbour, “Consumerism is addictive, and like all addictions it involves the denial of its consequences”.

The degree at which we consume is directly proportional to waste production. A recent article in the Hindustan Times mentioned that 9,000 tonnes of garbage and 35 tonnes of e-waste are generated per day in Delhi. Landfills are dumped with this massive supply of waste, and we are quickly running out of space.

Waste in general and landfills in particular pose several environmental problems, such as air, water, and land pollution. Heavy metals and other harmful chemicals present in the waste seep underground, leading to ground water pollution. Animals and birds that feed on waste suffer painful deaths due to chemical contamination – the extinction of vultures from Delhi is one such example. Rotting organic matter produces methane, a harmful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. The combustible nature of methane causes frequent landfill fires. To add to these woes, ugly visual sites and pungent smells are other aspects of landfills.

To ensure a sustainable future, it is imperative that we change our attitudes and reduce what we aimlessly purchase and recklessly throw away. In this regard, the old green mantra of the 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle – holds strong today as ever.

Recycling reduces landfills, saves energy, and controls pollution – it's the need of the hour. *Why Should I Recycle?* throws light on remarkable facts about recycling with fun-to-do activities. I hope this book will inspire young readers to shoulder the responsibility of saving the environment by reducing the load from our over-burdened planet!



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