

The Ugly Face Of Plastic Bags

Did you know that the amount of plastic produced in the last decade is more than that produced over the last century?

A whopping 500 billion plastic bags are used every year. This means that over 100 plastic bags are being used every year by a single person. The facts and figures are mind-boggling, but not as much when you consider the fact that only a mere 5% of the plastic produced is recovered. 95% of the plastic that is manufactured every year is considered as "non-biodegradable waste"

Careless Discarding: A Costly Journey

Let's pause for a moment and look at the damage, shall we?

Aquatic life

According to statistical reports, around 300 million plastic bags end up in the Atlantic Ocean every year. Aquatic animals such as porpoises and other mammals mistake the plastic bag for its meal.

The result?

They end up trying to consume the bag. The bag either ends up choking them by blocking their airway path or leads to intestinal blockage.

Soil

Plastic does not break down and get decomposed. This means that plastic bags take literally hundreds and hundreds of years to even start breaking down. When these bags are dumped on wastelands, the soil is stripped off its nutrients because of the toxic chemicals that are

present in the plastic bags. With time, that soil will be completely stripped of all its fertility and nutrients, making it unfit for any form of cultivation.

Land animals

Statistics show that roughly 1.5 million to 3 million plastic bags are littered on the land every year, depending on the location. This land litter has the potential to kill living organisms to the extent that one bag can unintentionally kill one animal every 3 months. Animals assume that the plastic bag contains food, or in some cases, is food. Unintentional digestion or inhalation of the microplastics present in the bag leads to blockage in the intestines of the animal and eventually causes death.

What are we doing to prevent this catastrophe?

Though awareness about plastic and the harm that it can cause to life and property is talked about at length at schools, colleges, and even workplaces, what are we doing about it as individuals? How are we contributing to a plastic-free planet?

If you have to really think hard about this question, then the answer is nothing. Because there is only one way to prevent this - by taking full responsibility for your actions and being a responsible human being.

Start by educating yourself about the threat that plastic bags pose to the world. Educate your family, friends and even your neighbours about the ghastly impacts that using plastic bags can have on the world. They say "Each one, teach one" and this is ever so true in this case.

Use reusable shopping bags. These bags are generally made of cloth, jute or even paper. Use these bags instead of plastic bags. If you do have plastic bags lying around, start to reuse them as well and use them for as long as you can. Start counting the number of plastic bags that you use in a week. Start making a conscious effort to cut down on that number until you reach a day when that number is zero.

Most importantly, spread the word. Remember that it is your planet and your home and it is your responsibility and duty to ensure that it is a safe and healthy place to live in.