

**“Plastic Ban in India – An Effort to Reduce Environmental Pollution”**

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**If u can't REUSE it, REFUSE it!<sup>1</sup>**

Environment pollution is one of the major problems we are facing in the technological world. Plastic is a contemporary term which becomes threat to the society now-a-days and results in banning by amending world's toughest Anti Plastic Laws in India. Plastics become indispensable and versatile in the day to day life of the human being because of its flexibility and comfort. Some of the plastics are organic which occur in nature like tree rubber. Even though, there are crucial harms faced by manmade plastics which are rigid, eco unfriendliness, it does have certain advantages. Single use plastics are hard and consume heavy funds from the government to recycle. By working together with the industries, Government needs to provide social awareness and to promote eco-friendly alternatives.

Plastic surfing onto the Indonesian beaches, settles onto the ocean floor at the North Pole, and the rising through the food chain onto our dinner tables. We have stood by too long as the problem has gotten worse. Micro plastics have already been found in table salts. Many of our food items are packed in foamed plastic box. It must be stopped.

This research focuses on the plastics and their impacts socially, economically and health-wise and the efforts taken by the UN to control the usage of several kinds of plastics and a brief discussion about the 2019s single use plastic ban in TN<sup>2</sup>.

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Is this whole single use plastic ban concept with motive to protect the environment? Or simply is it politics? Doesn't the common man throw the thrashes in dustbin? Or the Municipal Corporation who hasn't has the efficient system for recycling plastics? Reusable plastics and disposable plastics are cool to the society until the disposable effort is taken by every individual correctly. Right from home the responsibility starts. Parents should give awareness to their children about the plastic and no one should hesitate to throw them in the correct dustbin. So there starts the effort of recycling them. Then the Municipal Corporation should follow the whole process with service motive. Absence of this we are pushed to this situation to complete ban of single use plastic. Plastic productions upsurge is mainly because of single-use plastics consumption or disposable applications. In India, official statistics says that our country generates 26000 tones (approx.) of plastic waste daily and 80% of total plastic consumption is discarded as waste where 40% are not collected. For every minute statistics has traced the purchase of 1 million plastic bottles around the world. Plastic waste takes up to 1000 years to decompose completely. We are already blessed with green environment why are we polluting them. Lets discuss the why, how and the efforts taken to this ban.

## **PLASTIC AND THEIR EVOLUTION:**

Plastic is any synthetic or semi synthetic organic polymer. In other words, while other elements may be present, plastics always include carbon and hydrogen. While plastics may be made from just about any organic polymer, most industrial plastic is made from petro chemicals. Thermoplastics and thermosetting polymers are the two types of plastic. The name "plastic" refers to the property of plasticity, which is the ability to deform without breaking<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Marie Helmenstine.(2018).What is Plastic? Definition in Chemistry. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/plastic-chemical-composition-608930>

Initially, plastics are natural products made from starch, wheat, maize and potatoes which is completely biodegradable and totally dissolves in water. An extra addition of biodegradable ingredients which help plastic to withstand in rain and hemp fibers made plastics as a stronger material. Historically, Horns have been considered as a natural plastic which is universally used for making essential items for day to day life like combs, spoon, knife, and tool handles horn cups and objects of beauty. There is another type of plastic made by bacteria converted the fat in rapeseed oil to polyesters which is suitable for making bottles, beakers and packing pharmaceuticals. Later, many other plastics has been designated which can be used only once becomes single use plastics which cannot be recycled but has the advantage of consumers benefit. Initially, the paper bags were introduced by cutting trees and later become efficient.

### **SINGLE-USE PLASTICS:**

Single use plastics are used only once before throwing and cannot be recycled. Eg. Plastic made of petroleum is not biodegradable and usually goes into the landfill as thrown by the people without proper disposal buried into the soil or gets its way to into the water releases toxic chemicals results in mixing into our food and water. Now the research found that toxic chemical is mixed in our bloodstream and disrupt the endocrine system which may cause cancer, infertility, impaired immunity and many other ailments.

### **UN'S ROLE:**

UN plays a major role to beat the plastics as it plays a crucial role which becomes threat to the society. United nations have taken various measures to create awareness among the people and make recommendation to stop single use plastic waste. As it affects environment at large becomes dreadful threat to human being, animals and plant life. The UN made resolution to ban single use plastics have been made by all the nations. UN every year June 5<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as world environment day.

Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi launched the report with Solheim in New Delhi and said India host country for World Environment Day on 05.06.2018 taking place “Beat Plastic Pollution”, which was established by UN in 1972 and first celebrated in 1974. On honoring the

occasion UN released the first ever “State Of Plastics” report. Erik Solheim, head of UN Environment said recently the plastic problem has become worsen, rising through the food chain onto our dinner tables. United Nation Secretary-General Atonio Guterres issued a statement “we all have a role to play in protecting our only home” and our world is swamped by harmful plastic waste”<sup>4</sup>. The economist world ocean summit in Bali, the countries which joined in the Clean Seas Campaign has been initiated as it urges the government to pass plastic reduction policies targeting the industries to minimize plastic packing and throw the plastics with proper throwaway habits<sup>5</sup>.

After the establishment made by the UN Environment experts on plastic pollution, the Government across the world are starting to take action against plastic. The report named cigarette butts, plastic bottles, caps, food wrappers, grocery bags and lids as the main single use plastics which need to be banned to make a better difference.

From January 1, 2019, the Government of Tamil Nadu implements a limited ban on certain plastic consumer goods. There is also few more steps taken like tax ‘carbon’ that necessary to present and future generations.

The UN made serious recommendations to make plastic ban more effective. It encourages society and seeks for co-operations from various business to offering business. The U.N. also called for the "biggest-ever worldwide cleanup" of plastic pollution, experts are focused on Southeast Asia,



Fig.1<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Josh Gabbatiss,(2018).World environment day: Planet is being ‘swamped’ by plastic waste. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.independent.co.uk/environemtn/world-environemtn-day-un-plastic-pollution-waste-ban-bags-recycling-a8384311.html%3famp>

<sup>5</sup>United nations environment programme(UNEP). Retrieved from [Web.unep.org/unepmap/un-declares-war-ocean-plastic](http://Web.unep.org/unepmap/un-declares-war-ocean-plastic)

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Merigala. (2019). TN Govt. enforces ban on single-use plastic products. Retrieved from [www.newindianexpress.com/states//tamil-nadu/2019/jan/01/goodbye-plastic-1918908.html](http://www.newindianexpress.com/states//tamil-nadu/2019/jan/01/goodbye-plastic-1918908.html)

home to four of the world's top marine plastic polluters. Ms Elisa Tonda, who leads UN Environment's sustainable lifestyle program said more than 60 countries had bans or charges on single-use plastics such as bags or polystyrene containers.<sup>7</sup> The United not only concentrates on land plastic pollution but also the pollution in ocean. In Nairobi held an UN Environment Assembly where the United Nations have set up an universally accepting the agreement to tackle plastic waste in our oceans which has been rejected by the US and Asian countries like China and India to include in the resolution a call on nations to adopt any reduction targets.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The UN Environment Assembly meeting held in Nairobi on December 14, 2017, passes 13 non-binding resolutions on marine litter and micro-plastics to prevent and reduce air pollution meeting . The draft resolution passed on marine litter and plastic waste seeks, to “prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”. The drafting includes, to create awareness among human long-term elimination of discharge of litter and micro plastics to the oceans and of avoiding detriment to marine ecosystems and the human activities.
- Urging all the supporters to step up into actions to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution.
- Encourage all Member States on best available knowledge on sources and levels to save environment.
- Giving importance to the policies and measures to avoid marine litter and micro-plastics.

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB), a member of the “Rethink Plastic campaign” in Europe, insist and urge governments to implement measures to prevent plastic

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<sup>7</sup>Istanbul.(2018).UN urges more resolve in implementing plastics.<https://www.dailysabah.com/environment/2018/06/05/un-urges-more-resolve-in-implementing-plastic-bans>

waste and the steps to be taken to reuse and recycle the products. In UN agenda plastic pollution is a new phenomenon which is initiated in the motive to have Paris Agreement at the end, which is in force to control the use of unnecessary plastic and boost the reuse and recycling of plastics<sup>8</sup>.

**WORLD’S TOUGHEST ANTI-PLASTIC LAWS IN INDIA:**

India is one of the developing countries which consumes more plastics and needs efficient laws to control and prevent plastic waste pollution. Implementing toughest laws in the country enable to control plastic waste and measures to recycle and reuse the plastic which helps to safeguard the environment to remain one of the wonderful tourist countries. The laws regulated by the legislators to be followed by the plastic production industries to improve good production system. Recycled plastic products become more harmful than before due to its additions. Being toughest law it imposes taxes, imprisonment and fine for using banned plastics.

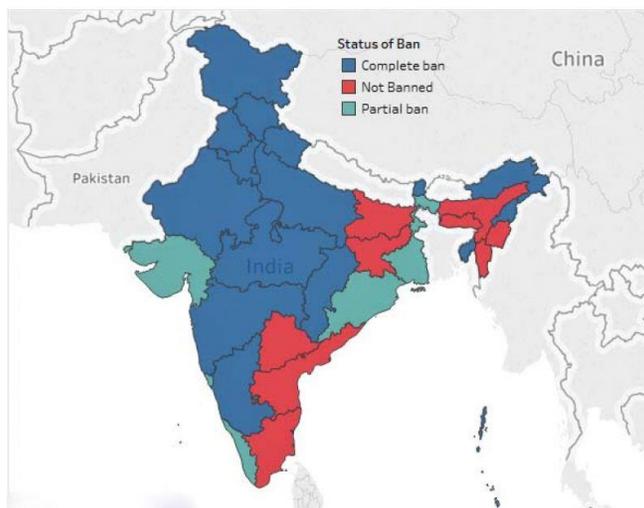


Fig.2<sup>9</sup>

Sikkim is the first state to ban plastic in India on 1998 and targets to ban use packaged drinking water and to styrofoam and thermacol disposal to cut down toxic pollution and garbage disposal.

<sup>8</sup>Ben Messenger.(2017).UN Environment assembly resolution to tackle marine litter and plastic waste. Retrieved from <https://waste-management-world.com/a/un-environment-assembly-resolution-to-tackle-plastic-waste-marine-litter>

<sup>9</sup> Kathelene Anthony, (2018). Plastic pollution rises regardless of Ban. Retrieved from [www.google.com/amp/s/www.deccanchronicle.com/amp/nation/current-affairs/100618/plastic-pollution-rises-regardless-of-ban.html](http://www.google.com/amp/s/www.deccanchronicle.com/amp/nation/current-affairs/100618/plastic-pollution-rises-regardless-of-ban.html)

This has been succeeded by the Swachh Bharath Campaign (Clean India Campaign) Programme. Major responsibility for implementing the rules is within the hands of Central Pollution Control Board and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) or Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) and also with the State Departments of Environment.

Maharashtra became the 26th Indian state to ban the use of plastics. It also became the second state to ban the use of single use, disposable plastics. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) in January 2017 had imposed a ban on the use of disposable plastic, such as glasses, plates, forks, spoons besides bags which were less than 50 microns in Delhi<sup>10</sup>. Maharashtra, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, the agency for implementing environment regulation is planning to ask implementing agencies such as the Brihanmumbai municipal corporation (BMC) to take action against use of three main plastic items such as plastic bags, one-time use plastic items and one-time use thermacol items. This is to bring more clarity among citizens and retailers on what exactly is banned. The state government is already under high pressure from the retailers association over relaxing the plastic ban introduced new technology to produce a biodegradable polythene alternative called “Sonali Bag” by mixing polymer and jute<sup>11</sup>. Many Dhaka entrepreneurs have employing more unemployed to produce jute, cotton and paper bags.

Regulations to control production, plastic waste and recycling measures in India:

1. The Environment (Protection) Act of 1986.
2. The first government rule on Plastics waste in India was the Recycled Plastics (Manufacture & Usage) Rules, 1999.
3. The Hazardous Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989, amended in 2000.
4. Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 1989, amended in 2000 and further in 3<sup>rd</sup> may 2003.

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<sup>10</sup>Sandip sen.(2018).Ban isn't enough , sin tax is needed to curb use of plastic.Retrieved from <https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-ban-isn-t-enough-sin-tax-is-needed-to-curb-use-of-plastic-2635589>

<sup>11</sup>Masum Molla. (2019).In the rains, plastic bags are worsening the flooding on Bangladesh's cities. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/883236/in-the-rains-plastic-bags-are-worsening-the-flooding-in-bangladeshs-cities>,

5. Plastic Manufacture, Sale and Usage Rules, 1999, which was amended in 2003.
6. The Plastics (Manufacture, Usage and Waste Management) Rules, 2009.
7. Plastic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2011.
8. Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016<sup>12</sup>.

### **TAXES ON PLASTICS: THE SIN TAX<sup>13</sup>**

In Anti plastic laws imposing tax is the initiative and becomes the important method to reduce the use of plastics comes into existence from January 1 2019 in Tamil Nadu, being Maharashtra the 26<sup>th</sup> state in India on imposing tax. As the polluters must pay heavy tax which covers both polluters is polluting the environment and producers compensating the disposal waste rate and as it becomes sin because of polluting. Likewise, the lower consumption of cigarettes today shows that it works worldwide. We need a heavy taxation on plastics to ensure that it is not dirt cheap and so convenient. That it gives alternate materials a chance to compete.

The current rate of GST on plastics is 18 per cent or lower. The additional revenues earned by GST on plastics is raised to 28 per cent could be around Rs 20,000 crore per annum. It would be sufficient for the Centre and states to start creating a scalable program to manage plastic waste by such funds. The Swachh Bharat program introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is largely focused on building of toilets because it is the first step towards cleanliness. The tax payable on plastics is considered as a 'sin tax' on which would help in creating a fund base for managing that huge solid waste that we produce today.

The tax on OC (GST or excise/VAT on plastics) should be increased. Consumer plastic products those containing carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen (such as polyester, PET and nylon) can be taxed at the lowest, as they cause much less harm and their potential to biodegrade. Then,

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<sup>12</sup>(2014) Regulation relating plastic production, plastic waste and recycling in India, Retrieved from [https://chemycal.com/news/df3592f8-9345-4f7e-8510d7f660d88c42/Regulations\\_controlling\\_plastics\\_production\\_plastics\\_waste\\_and\\_recycling\\_in\\_India](https://chemycal.com/news/df3592f8-9345-4f7e-8510d7f660d88c42/Regulations_controlling_plastics_production_plastics_waste_and_recycling_in_India)

<sup>13</sup>The Professor of Chemistry IIT Madras(2018)Tax harmful plastics.Retrieved from <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/tax-harmful-plastics/article25394238.ece>

polyethylene and isotactic polypropylene could be taxed at moderate level, as source separating and burning of these plastics under oxygen-rich conditions can be used to produce energy which constitutes 50 per cent of the plastics because of its production and consumption. Plastics containing halogen as their base must be taxed heavily because of the damage it causes and their non-degradability in nature. Plastics can also be taxed based on ingredients used to make them, including additives made and which are established to be harmful.

There are newer plastics which are natural as well as synthetic that are biodegradable. Although they are relatively expensive compared to synthetic plastics that do not biodegrade, promoting them would offer long-term benefits. Given that people have gotten used to the advantages of plastics it may be more convenient to provide no-tax incentives for biodegradable polymers to begin with<sup>14</sup>.

#### **ECO-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVES:**

- Paper
- Jute
- Cotton
- Recyclable Plastic Bag

#### **PROS AND CONS OF SINGLE USE PLASTIC BAN**

Single use plastic ban is entirely healthy yet it has some disadvantages, like every argument has two sides, right? Starting from the word ban there isn't a very good reason to oppose the ban of disposable plastic materials and we can't utterly ban plastic from our lives so easily. Everything is made of plastic from wires to 4G phones. Let's see the pros and cons briefly.

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<sup>14</sup>The Professor of chemistry.(2018).harmful plastics ,promote newer plastic which is degradable. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/tax-harmful-plastics/article25394238.ece,Tax>

**PROS:**



Fig.3<sup>15</sup>

**Economic Enhancement:**

By ban of single use plastic we need more alternatives to the society’s convenience. Like cloth bags, paper straws, paper cups, silver cups etc. So as to increase its production more employment opportunities will be made available. Many new entrepreneurs open new businesses by using this opportunity for current demand for alternatives where supply is needed abundantly.

**Health benefits:**

When plastic junks become litter, they pollute human life and animal’s life in land and in marine. Plastic bags contaminate the marine life. Those litters in the ocean are often misunderstood by the sea animals as jelly fish or plankton and that consumption leads to death or illness. This ban eliminates single use plastic which reduces litters and pollution. Many litters in the roadside are also the result of forming new micro organisms which is threat to new diseases. Being very thin and air tight infants often block their mouths and nostrils in them which lead to suffocation that sometimes end up losing their life. So by banning plastic bags we can save both marine life and human life.

<sup>15</sup> Reasons to refuse single-use plastic. Retrieved from [www.lessplastic.co.uk](http://www.lessplastic.co.uk)

**Reduces cost of goods:**

Normally all stores includes the disposable bags prices in their goods price. Now it will not be added so it reduces the cost of goods.

**Saving tax money:**

Workers who pick litters are given wages/salaries from the tax money by banning it this section of the tax money can be used for other useful welfare purposes.

**Efficient drainage system:**

Plastic junk causes drainage clogs, which leads to floods etc. To remove this though they are banned they do manual scavenging which leads to death. By banning this people can live without unnecessary fears.

**Burning fumes:**

Plastic bags are non-biodegradable as it takes long time to decay the only way to get rid of it soon is by burning them by fire. It is so dangerous compared to the common advantages. It creates toxic gases (like dioxins, Furans, Mercury& Polychlorinated Biphenyls into the atmosphere, which settles on Plants, water, Land and enter our food systems) into the environment because of them and the air pollution increases. If no single use plastics there are no burns with any additional pollution.



Fig 4

**Environmental Damage:**

Plastic bags have been known to cause a lot of environmental damage. The proved fact is that a single plastic bag to decay completely it takes up to 1000 years. This makes a single bag to stay in environments much longer, in turn leading to great build-up on the natural landscape (much more than degradable materials like paper). The plastic litters prevent the rain water to seep into the ground which also affects the fertility of the soil. Simply, the more plastic bags we use, the greater the chances of environmental damage.

**CONS:**

**Retailers and consumers convenience:**

Plastic became very convenient to us in many ways, like package food items, vegetables, milk, meat, and water bottles etc, which were available anywhere at any time. Retailers normally buy plastic bags in bulk which is comparatively lesser in price than reusable cloth bags which is now widely needed as the environment sustainability so it costs few more bucks extra than the normal rate. Now consumers have to carry a bag from home mandatorily though they don't go out for

shopping. So by this way neither retailers don't get to charge extra bucks on the bags nor have consumers to pay. Normally by the fridge way storages, these bags were very convenient for people to wrap up the vegetables and fruits inside those bags to store them so most of the house makers are in trouble.

### **Shipping, Packaging and storage:**

While ship packaging polythene packages are light weighted where extra packaging like cardboard boxes and envelope, other wasteful packaging are not necessary. They are durable than cloth bags. They don't easily tear and easy to carry those in rain too i.e. waterproof and resistance to some chemicals. Coming to storing it can be stored efficiently on compact distributive rolls. Now this convenience is in question.

### **Employment and livelihood:**

Employment opportunities were increased in producing plastics that is absolute concern for Government. It also leads to closing of plastic manufacturing business which leads the employers working in the company to unemployed. The livelihood of people around the company premises are mostly employed there and some people should have migrated there from their own place for the employment everything is spoiled because of the ban.

### **Plastic bags are environment friendly:**

The major focus on single use plastic ban is reusable plastic. How the reusable alternatives are eco friendly than plastics? A study by the Environmental Agency of England showed that a reusable cotton shopping bag must be used 173 times before it's as environmentally friendly as a plastic shopping bag and producing the cotton for these bags can generate 300 times the amount of water pollution compared to plastic bag production<sup>16</sup>. Fertilizers used for growing cottons runs off into the rivers which contaminates the water there pops out the potential contamination. They cut down trees and plenty of water is needed abundantly to make the production for current

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<sup>16</sup> Rossignol, Kevin. (2017). Pros and Cons of the Plastic Bag Ban Debate. Dumpsters.com. Retrieved from <https://www.dumpsters.com/blog/plastic-bag-bans>

demand for alternatives like paper. So banning this single use plastic there increases global warming. We can also generate electricity from the recycled plastic with 1% residue we lose this too.

## **CONCLUSION:**

For the past few decades plastics are used more than other things in the world. Due to its non-biodegradable nature and toxic ingredients here comes the time to their end. Though, its use makes people flexible both in carrying and disposing it has their vicious development from ocean floor to dining table. Human life, wildlife, plant life and marine are getting polluted because of their non-degradable nature which becomes threat to the environment worldwide. The United Nations made various steps, measures and recommendation to all the countries which was refused by India initially to protect the environment by concentrating in banning plastic. India has adopted one of the toughest laws in the world that is Anti-Plastic Law; this is adopted by 26 states and union territories which impose penalty, tax and imprisonment for the use of banned plastics. It also imposes responsibility over the plastic producing industries to produce plastics with social responsibility and insist them to avoid plastic which is harmful in nature. This is not the first legislation to control plastic waste, but various legislations have been made but ineffective. Due to the lack of effective awareness, it is passed by the legislators but not followed yet.

Why the legal fraternity does wants to ban this first and are not ready to look their convenience to common people. But there are many things should be banned primarily. Mobiles are first in the list. It has made everything easy likewise it also taken our mental peace and patience in the same 4G speed. It made distance in relationships. It obviously creates e-wastes. This is as more dangerous as plastics. When we have laws to regulate the use of mobile phones, their frequencies and other electronic items which affects the living beings why can't we make laws to regulate plastics to use effectively as an eco-friendly? Follows by, Bikes, cars, and other vehicles emit carbon dioxide which affects the environment as well? Likewise air conditioners, hazardous chemicals which used in agriculture are all creating cancer and sometimes it leads to death

slowly. Same we are regulating them and not banning them. And if so many things are to be banned in spite of their advantages we can go back our old centuries. Then why the scientific research and development departments are functioning? Why not the concerned department takes steps to control their production in bad qualities? Why the Government allows such products to be produced by the industries with cheap quality though they know the fact that it causes harm to the society? The problem is not plastic only when the plastic wastes were not properly collected. This doesn't mean that it doesn't have disadvantages. The answers for these questions will be the conclusion to our problems.