

50
FAQS
ON
WASTE
MANAGEMENT



European

From the desk of Dr R K Pachauri

Over half the population of the world today lives in urban areas, and even though in India we still have almost two thirds of our population living in villages, in the next few decades we would also have a majority of our citizens living in towns and cities. One of the realities of urban life is its remoteness with the pristine existence of all things natural. Urban children in North America when asked where milk comes from generally respond that it comes from plastic bottles or cardboard cartons. They have no knowledge that cows provide us with milk that we drink.

A good psychologist friend of mine who is a professor at Yale University, Paul Bloom, has been researching for years now on what provides human beings joy and happiness. His research reveals that the greatest pleasure human beings experience is derived from being in the company of nature and indulging in the delights that we sense when we are in the midst of beautiful scenery or in the company of animals, birds, plants and flowers. The richness of the environment around us is a source of joy that many of us living in urban areas miss greatly, day in and day out.

Children in particular need to see and feel the benefit of life that exists in the kingdom of plants, birds, animals and insects. It is only when they touch, feel and smell the environment in open areas that they realize the richness of our natural heritage.



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Preface

Waste for one may be wealth for another, but how many of us consider this before discarding a lot of things? This question is important because senseless throwing of objects has a negative bearing on the environment and our health. However, when put to the right use, waste could be of great use.

Our planet is slowly turning into a giant dumpyard, and this is a matter of serious concern. While nations across the world are trying to find solutions to the problem of waste disposal, we can contribute at the individual level too. And the best way to begin is to get hold of the old, green mantra of the three Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

Considering the times that we are living in, it is virtually impossible to go back to the basics; however, we could still take inspiration from the traditional way of living. It will help us develop an insight and we would think twice before buying useless items and throwing reusable stuff.

Find out more about it through *50 FAQs on Waste Management*, so that you can also make a difference.

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What is waste and what are its different types?

Waste is anything that is no longer useful to people, and is therefore discarded or thrown away. Waste also includes those items that should be disposed of because they are hazardous in nature.

There are different types and forms of waste depending on the nature of constituents. Examples include solid waste, biodegradable waste, non-biodegradable waste, electronic waste (e-waste), industrial waste, chemical waste, toxic waste, and so on.

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What is waste segregation?

Waste segregation, also known as waste sorting, is the process by which various types of waste are separated from each other before they are handed over for disposal. A common example of this is when we separate used glass bottles, paper, and metal cans and sell these to the scrap dealer. Waste segregation is done so that biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste materials, including recyclable waste, can be separated from each other before being processed. This is because some waste materials, such as glass, paper, metal cans, and certain types of plastic can be recycled and made into new products.

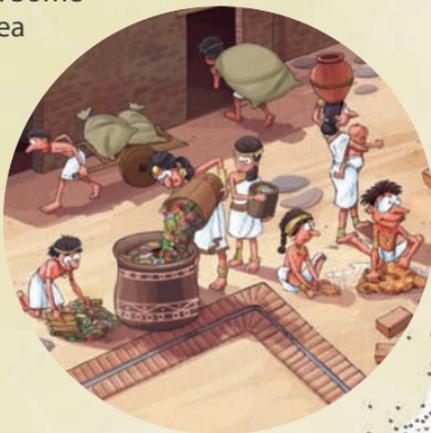
In other words, waste segregation allows us to separate materials that are biodegradable, non-biodegradable, and recyclable, so that we can manage our waste more efficiently and sustainably.



Which are some of the earliest examples of waste management?

The earliest instances of waste management involved human sewage in some of the world's first cities. The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were amongst the first to have an extensive system of sewers and drains. Every house had a drainpipe, which would carry household waste into the main drainpipe under the street outside, which, in turn, would connect with pipes from other streets and dump the waste outside the city. The sewers were always covered and replicated the road plan of the city above them.

In Ancient Greece, Athens had the western world's first municipal dump. It was required, by law, for every Athenian to throw garbage at least one mile away from the city limits of Athens. Jerusalem also had a municipal dump, called *Gehenna*, in a deep valley outside the city. Due to the build-up of methane in the dump, there were periodic fires and explosions, in addition to a horrible smell. Some scholars believe that the idea of hell originated from this garbage dump. The Islamic word for Hell – *Jahannam* – is an Arabic version of the Hebrew word *Gehenna*.



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50 FAQs on Waste Management : know all about waste management and do your bit to limit the waste on earth



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