

Let's chuck the plastic bag

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I am standing at the grocery store waiting for my things to be billed — mutely watching an endless number of plastic bags being used to pack items for every customer. Even after all the hue and cry about the environment, we go about our usual routine and think it is someone else's problem, not realising that we are contributing very much to it. I helplessly hand out the cloth bags that I brought from my house.

With global warming on the rise, we have to do every bit that we can to save the environment. The little that we can do without much effort from our side is to say "no" to plastic bags. It does not cost us anything, just a small practice of carrying our own bags to the shopping malls/grocery stores. We would contribute much by just not using plastic bags.

Many countries and States are debating a ban on plastic bags or taxing their use. China and Bangladesh have both banned plastic bags, while Ireland has reduced consumption by 90 per cent by levying a fee on each bag. San Francisco is the first city in U.S. which has banned plastic bags. In India, Rajasthan is the first State to have banned plastic bags.

Carry a cloth bag

Our lifestyle is such that we go unprepared for any shopping, as every shop provides us with easy-to-use plastic bags. The best alternative would be to always take our own cloth bags whenever we go out. Or even re-use the plastic bags that are piling up at our house. If we really give a try, very little effort is required.

Most of us have the excuse of saying that we need the plastic bags to line our trash cans. Every house has a good store of unused plastic bags, which only keeps increasing by the day (even after the use for the trash cans). There are many alternatives for the garbage, if we really think about it. Ninety per cent of the time, it is only dry waste that we throw away. We can use paper bags or cardboard boxes that come with some groceries, like cornflakes, cereals, etc.

Another option would be to re-use the plastic bags that are used for packing rice, wheat, bread, dal, etc. What would we do if every plastic bag was charged at, say, Rs.10 or if plastic bags were banned by the government? Would we not seriously think of alternatives and find our way through?

As a common man, there is much more to be done to protect the environment — compost your waste, reduce your carbon footprint, say 'no' to plastic bottles and other plastic products, plant more trees, plan for rainwater harvesting and so on. The list can go on. But let us take the first step.

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