

Blr Mirror Article

13.4.16 sent to Correspondt atulchaturvedi29@gmail.com 94804 65900

11.4.16 “Hi madam ou can write as much as you can and we will play back the copy to you before it is published. Please send the mail once you are done. Thanks.”

13.4.16 Dear Atul, Thanks for agreeing to play back my copy before it is published. Here is my 950 word article below. Please print it exactly as it is, without shortening or editing and preferably with the same title. If you want to make any changes, I will consider and do it myself. One more thing. Be very very careful with the exact printing of the Guidebook link in the last line. Please check that you can open it okay. Thanks and regards, Almitra

A CLEAN STREET IS IN YOUR HANDS

Few today know or remember that till the seventies, farmers bringing produce into the city competed for emptying cement-ring dustbins to take the pure kitchen waste contents back to their farms to enrich the soil, as Indians have done since Vedic times. Home discards were a resource, hence there was no need for land to manage it.

Once the plastic yug began, unwanted plastics also were discarded into food-waste bins, making both unusable. Today, packaging is more than 55% by volume of the waste piles seen lying on our streets, though less than 15% by weight. If uncollected garbage piles are a painful sight for you,

Hold It Back !

It is nuisance-free to collect all plastic and other packaging in one jumbo bag and drop it off weekly or even monthly at the nearest kabadi shop or one of the 190 Dry Waste Collection Centres in your area. Or give them a call to come collect it. Surf www.igotgarbage.com or <https://www.facebook.com/IGotGarbage> or SMS Priya on 99011 94242 for help from ‘I Got Garbage’.

Are waste-collectors and contractors mixing the wet and dry waste you are handing over separately? Hold Back your dry waste and donate it to a deserving waste-picker raising her family through such work. You will be reducing your waste volume, and the city’s, by 55%. And you will not be dumping your waste on some hapless villagers who suffer the brunt of indifferent waste management.

At least in this time of crisis, when waste has nowhere to go, hold back your dry waste.

If you can start a terrace garden, using your kitchen scraps as organic manure, you can feed your family pesticide-free greens and cool your home as well. If every concrete rooftop were covered with a garden, it would cool the city's climate as well, the same way that trees do.

Until you can do that, just give your food-fruit-flower waste unmixed with anything else to your waste collectors. Then it can go to Bangalore's six new compost plants, which are converting such biodegradable waste into compost to restore vitality to farm soils damaged by overuse of highly-subsidised urea.

Some news reports claim that the BBMP's Expert Committee on waste management has recommended dumping mixed waste into abandoned quarry-pits. Not true at all! Quite the opposite! They have in fact advised BBMP that no wet waste, mixed or otherwise, should go into any pits below ground. Untreated raw waste releases leachate, a polluting liquid produced in airless conditions, like a tomato rotting and liquefying in a plastic bag instead of drying to powder in the sun. Biodegradable wet waste put into a quarry-pit will release leachate out of sight, entering groundwater and ruining the wells from where many in the city buy tanker water today, from unknown sources. That is why the EU has stopped all below-ground landfills and now form only land-hills, so that leachate flowing out at ground level is visible and can be captured for recirculation or treatment.

What the Expert Committee has advised is to quickly fill the shallowest edges of quarry-pits with debris and construction waste up to ground level. Then this newly created area can be used for stabilizing low waste heaps by four weekly turnings. In a month, all food waste given sufficient air like this stops releasing leachate or methane gas which causes dumpsite fires in airless heaps. This very simple low-cost method has been endorsed by the hon. Supreme Court in July 1997, but is rarely done, because cities just dump their waste outside their city limits and neglect its management.

This inflicts misery on surrounding villagers whose protests have caused waste to pile up in our city streets as a wake-up call. Such polluting dumps do need closure, but it would have been wiser to wait until KUIDFC has completed all infrastructure at our six new compost plants to enable them to accept and process wet waste to full capacity.

A village blockade of Pune's dump happened some years ago, with waste piled up in the city streets. During the crisis, Pune briefly collected only wet food wastes, unmixed with plastics, and postponed collection of dry waste. This pure wet waste was readily accepted by surrounding farmers to whom it was delivered free. They converted it to compost on their farms as a welcome source of organic manure. Today, all of Pune's waste collection is done by self-help groups trained in collecting wet and dry waste unmixed from homes, shops and offices. The dry waste, clean and free from food

contamination, is more easily recycled and fetches better value and extra income to the waste collection groups.

Bangalore plans to solve the current problem by calling for fresh tenders for waste collection from large contractors owning heavy vehicles. This is a model that has not worked here for the past decade of steadily deteriorating civic services to a ballooning population. Instead, Primary Collection from doorstep upto large vehicles should be given only to small local self-help groups using non-motorised pushcarts equipped with drums for pure wet waste and several bags hung between a double-handle, for different categories of recyclables. This model is working since almost two years in Kolar, pop 1.5 lakhs. Only the Secondary Transport, carrying segregated primary-collected waste to compost plants, can be tendered out to large transport contractors.

The Swachh Bharat website has a very useful Guidebook on waste management. Those who would like to know more about practical solutions for managing waste in villages, towns and cities can browse it on

<http://swachhbharaturban.gov.in/writereaddata/sbm-newsletter-Nov.pdf>

The author is a member of the BBMP Expert Committee on solid waste management.