

Waste Free Communities: New Culture for New Century

Er. Badan L Nyachhyon¹, August, 2008

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Kathmandu valley turned into a dumping site from its identity of cultural valley after trucks were again stopped from dumping the city waste in the Sisdol landfill site by the locals despite an agreement they reached with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City KMC and Young Communist League (YCL). This time the people from Sisdol area demanded that Kathmandu Municipality should immediately compensate a patient, with failed kidneys, who was assured of a financial support some months back. The Solid Waste problem remains a perennial problem for Kathmandu Municipality since last 20 years or over.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

The streets of Kathmandu are flooded with dumped solid waste (photo 1) and sting has spread over the neighbourhood. The streets are encroached with solid waste dumps and disturbed the traffic flow. The loss of tree plantation along Satdobato-Gwarko section of the Ring Road in Lalitpur (photo 2) is a glaring example of solid waste mismanagement. The major river systems of Kathmandu Valley as Bagmati and Bishnumati (Photo 3) are now permanently polluted with solid waste dumps on their banks and contributing to Global Warming with emission of methane from the solid waste roads constructed by Kathmandu Municipality. Aggravated with wastewater discharge, all aquatic life in these rivers has been destroyed for ever.

The Solid Waste Hazard is persistent all over the country from Himalayas to Terai, from villages to cities. Many think, the solid waste hazard will go away if it is thrown away from the houses but they do not realise that it comes back through the air we breathe, water we drink and food we eat through the chain of food, water and air.

Though the Solid Waste issues were undertaken into consideration since 1978 with donors support but the sector practically failed in the absence of acceptable methods being utilised. The donors support mostly limited to supply of equipments. As a result, Kathmandu municipality was compelled to dump wherever possible. July 24, 2006 was the day when the disparate Kathmandu Municipality dump the solid waste in the Tundikhel in front of Bir Hospital and Electricity Authority (Photo 4 and Photo 5). This scenario was predicted by the author back in 2000 during a meeting in Lalitpur Municipality. Today, the common citizens are forced forced to walk over the hips of solid waste dumped in the streets. The filthy odour from decaying waste mass, infestation of neighbourhood with flies and insects, traffic congestion, street dogs and stay animals feeding on waste, waste worker children and women digging waste materials for high valued items for earning living (photo 6) are common scenario that a civilised society cannot afford to see.

Certainly, these events are adequate for the European TV channels and media to declare Nepal as unsafe tourism destination. The tourism industry of Nepal virtually collapsed and the tourists arrivals declined from 500,000 to 120,000 in a year, and many hotels were forced to close down.



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

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The quest for finding the rational solution to the solid waste problem forced to look back towards the people who generate the waste and who are instrumental to create the current scenario of solid waste mismanagement. The lessons learned in Solid Waste Management from the last 20 years became the foundation for the birth of a new concept which is based on community initiatives and Zero Waste principles.

The Zero Waste Concept requires developing a new attitude and behaviour of people towards handling waste and converting the existing practice based on “Throw Away” culture to “Don’t Throw Away” culture that will ultimately lead to “Zero Waste Culture”. Many people think Zero Waste is a long term perspective, but they forget that the every “long term activity” starts from today. We should not forget that, in long run we are all dead and we will not be in position to bring any new change, if we don’t start today. Certainly, Solid Waste Management requires taking care from today without losing further time with initiatives to change the mind set and realizing the responsibility at the personal and corporate levels.

The WFC Program starts with practicing “Waste Management at Source” with participation of all stakeholders and resuming responsibility for care of the home we live in and the Environment. WFC program encourages the households and the corporate bodies to initiate the community based waste management and demonstrating the effectiveness in waste management. The program follows the Zero Waste Concept and is based on the mobilization of grass root stakeholders following very simple steps: **“Don’t Throw Away, Don’t Burn, Don’t Bury, Send Back”**, and composting organic materials at home and separating plastics and paper (Photo 7). The Only prerequisite is your willingness to take initiatives and be environmentally conscious.

कसिङ्गर मुक्त समाजको लागि
For A Waste-Free Community . . .

नफ्याकौ,
नबालौ, नगाडौ,
फर्काऔ, फिर्ता लगी

**Don't Throw Away,
Don't Burn, Don't Bury,
Send back / Take Back**

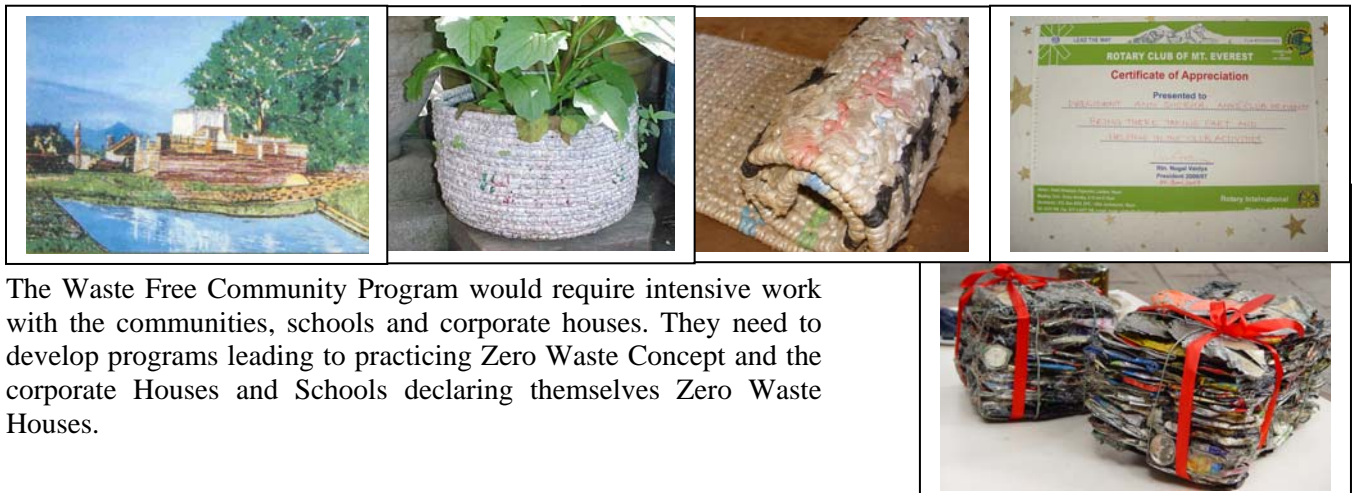
घरेलु मल बन्दाउने तरिका
१ कचारा वा पातको एक तह राख्ने
२ भुप वा कचारेको चुलो १५ सेमी राख्ने
३ बैबिक कसिङ्गर (अनिकति मात्र चिरेको)
४ तयारि मल, टुप्रा लुने र भुपले छोप्ने
५ हेम्का, पराल, कागज, कपडा राख्ने
६ केश, पङ्, प्याख, जन्डाको बोक्रा राख्ने

**30 C: 1N
T = 35-65°C
Rh 25%**

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Photo 7

The waste generated in Kathmandu comprises 70% of organic waste, 15 % of Market waste and 15% of Inert Waste. Practically, the organic waste and market waste could be sent for composting and recycling, and making recycled products. Here are some examples how the waste materials had been reused for making products for household uses including waste thread painting by artist Mr. Ram Chandra Shrestha and sculptures by Artists Mr. Baikuntha Shrestha and friends.



The Waste Free Community Program would require intensive work with the communities, schools and corporate houses. They need to develop programs leading to practicing Zero Waste Concept and the corporate Houses and Schools declaring themselves Zero Waste Houses.

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Some of the activities to be included in the WFC program are listed herewith:

Proposed Activities:

1. Displaying “Waste Free Communities” Banner at Prominent Places (Photo 7)
2. Conducting Awareness Campaigns with the members of the house and neighbourhood communities
3. Encouraging Composting at Home using compost bins, if required
4. Collecting Plastics and Paper for recycling and sending to Recycle Enterprises
5. Encouraging Eco-Clubs in Schools to adopt Waste Free Community Program as their major activity and declaring Zero Waste Schools, carry out various contests and capability development programs (orientation, information dissemination, Quiz Contest, Painting Competition, Essay Competition, Waste Sculpture Competition, Clean Community Competition)
6. Developing incentive schemes for encouraging communities and private sector enterprises for composting, recycling of waste and Capacity Building.

**If you are not for Zero Waste
How much you are for ?**

Zero Waste Please ...

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