

# ABOUT ZERO WASTE

*Zero Waste isn't about not generating any waste in your home, office or school. It's actually about ending waste in the entire material cycle because, for each product we use, about 87 times more waste has already been created in the production cycle. So yes, that completely useless and broken bucket you must throw away is the tip of the waste-berg.*

According to the Zero Waste International Alliance, "Zero Waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary, to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use.

Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health."

But, as we all know, very few communities or cities are able to be totally zero waste. At Chintan, we find that multi-layered packaging, diapers, sanitary waste, batteries, sequins, balloons, synthetic fabrics and fabrics with lycra-all these are left-over after composting, recycling and even, reusing. Agreed, it isn't possible for consumers to control what the manufacturers do. It's, however, possible for manufacturers to get a lot done: design so their products don't become obsolete easily, design such that many other spare parts-not only their own-can be used to repair the object, and design so it's easy and affordable to repair things. And not the least-manufacture in ways that use non-toxic technologies and don't



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dump their waste in the commons, i.e. our water, soil, and air. You might ask: why do we need a new charger for each cell phone, and why don't cell phones look cool for longer than they do? And of course, why do we read so much about the toxicity of cellphone manufacturing, the impact on workers, its toxic plastics and several metals that are dubiously procured? Well, someone did and invented the Fairphone.

Sometimes, manufacturers won't do this, unless strict rules force them to do so. We need government, therefore, to help us move to zero waste. The United States, for example, has stopped manufacturers from selling mercury thermometers, since it was hard, if not impossible, to handle mercury safely from old thermometers. We also need the government to be firm in implementing Extended Producer Responsibility in India- where manufacturers, particularly of toxic products or non-recyclable products, must take responsibility for the end-life of their products. This includes plastic packaging, particularly multi-layered plastics, and the many batteries we use. Perhaps, someone can create another way to transport goods-one

which doesn't need packaging to this extent?

Zero waste is not only about what we directly consume. It should be a part of our indirect consumption-can we build following zero waste principles, for example? Can the films we love to watch be shot and produced using fewer materials and waste less? Can set props be reused, for example?

Who will make this change? Consumers are key. You and your friends, family, and colleagues are totally key. We are the people who push for change, catch what's wrong on the ground as we move around, tell the stories we see, amplify other people's stories, refuse toxic goods and bring around the mind-shift that results in change. That's how even global giants are talking about reducing plastics. And that's why, it's important to take action, even if only at home as a first step. Walking the talk is a great start.

But don't stop there. Campaign for less consumption by the middle class. Remember, in many aspects, the poor need to consume more- better and more food, better homes.

Close the gap.

Let us know what you've been upto at [info@chintan-india.org](mailto:info@chintan-india.org)



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