

## WHEN HASTE MAKES WASTE, THEN, WHY WASTE IN HASTE

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**Abstract:** *It has been seen that life on all parts of the globe is changing at a very fast pace. New modes to cope up with the changing scenario are coming up. This gives rise to new requirements, new problems and new solutions. One such issue is the fast consumption of resources. Some resources are of single time use, whereas, some others can be repurposed and used many times. The current article reflects on the reduced use, reuse and reprocessing of waste material to mitigate exhaustion of resources. The concept behind it should be understood by each and every global citizen. There are ways in which each one of us can contribute to the world production by sensible repurposing or recycling of existing natural and manmade products. Multiple use of a single commodity is a very concrete option which will help future generations. All major aspects of this concept are being taken into account in this paper. Suggestions for better recycling attitude are also on the anvil.*

**Keywords:** Consumption, Reduce, Reuse, Reprocess, Repurpose, Recycle, Exhaust

### Introduction

We have been thinking on these lines for some time past. There is a chain of logical arguments to be considered as regards our hasty lifestyle and the waste caused thereby. We are submerged neck-deep into a way of life that catapults our activities at a supersonic speed and affects our society and surroundings. When we do not pay attention, it endures itself. Gradually the detrimental effects begin to harm us manifestly. Once we are endangered, it becomes incumbent to pay attention to the problem and resolve it. This issue has been addressed time and again by thinkers, environmentalists, politicians etc. President Theodore Roosevelt, remarked at the *Conference on Conservation of Natural Resources*, "It is time for us now as a nation to exercise the same reasonable foresight in dealing with our great natural resources that would be shown by any prudent man in conserving and widely using the property which contains the assurance of well-being for himself and his children" (Roosevelt 1908). Therefore, the idea of reducing, reusing, reprocessing, recycling and repurposing becomes essential to be discussed globally.

### Conception of Reprocessing

We who are born on this earth are the blessed ones who have been given a huge support system by nature, consisting of almost all things that we need to live a lavish life. Along with that, we have produced many things artificially. If we go on living thoughtlessly, like we do now, we may end up consuming all the resources and leave little or nothing for our children. Our needs are unlimited. Many things we use can be used only once. This means, they can be consumed one single time and are over forever. On the other hand, there are many other things which can be put to further use by changing the form or mode of usage. This method is called reprocessing, recycling or repurposing. It is a very important notion of multiplying the value of available resources many times. It can be used in many new ways for many new purposes. In *Manmade Closed Ecological Systems* it has been rightly said, "The paradox of life lies exactly in this: its resources are finite, but it itself is endless. Such a contradictory state of affairs is feasible only because the resources accessible to life can be used over and over

again.” (Gitelson 2003) This is why we should consider the prospects of reprocessing things which are outworn in their present physical state.

### **Significance of Reprocessing**

Reprocessing is a very significant option for today’s world. We are not authorized to consume all the available natural resources and leave nothing for our descendants. So, we must reprocess the unused or reusable goods. It is very beneficial for the eco-system, given the fact that those things which are of no use in their current state can be improved and re-used. Many things can be converted into a new form of substance or even a new form of energy. We ought not to dispose of our old things, rather change their form and increase their utility value. Neil Seldman from Institute for Local Self-Reliance said that, “We are recycling not only to protect the environment, but for economic reasons as well. Disposal is simply too costly and too dangerous. The challenge is to redirect the flow of raw materials going to landfill into strengthening our declining local economies. The solution to pollution is self-reliant cities and counties.” (Seldman 1990) The basic idea should be that of, “reduce, reuse and recycle”. For this we have to transform our thoughts as well as actions. We have to endorse the utility and significance of reprocessing unused or out-of-use things from our household and offices.

### **Advocating Reprocessing**

We should reprocess our old things for many significant reasons. The main being:

- Those things which are capable of being reused should be judiciously reused rather than being thrown away. This way their optimum value is derived before they are totally discarded.
- The new form, in which many recycled things are introduced, is very valuable.
- Material that becomes trash is conserved as valuable commodity by reprocessing. This reduces the amount of dirt spread around our living places.
- Substantial energy is saved by this process. Recycled matter is a source of greater energy in comparison to the initial one.
- Reuse of things saves the value and energy that would have been spent in making a fresh commodity of the same type. The quantity of new products will also be reduced.
- Garbage heaps and landfills pollute the environment. Water and air are directly affected. Recycling reduces the amount of garbage and increases the amount of valuable commodity.
- Great amounts of energy are used when making products from raw materials. Recycling requires much less energy and therefore helps to preserve natural resources. Recycling helps to save a lot of money. Many products get recycled cheaper than making their virgin form. If they are prepared via the reprocessing form, they will save a lot of money and enhance our economy.
- Reprocessing and recycling generate employment as well as revenue.
- Reprocessing is indirect patriotism. It is a way of serving the nation. Citizens have a moral duty to help the nation in whatever way they can. By saving the natural resources, money and energy we can contribute to the growth of our nation.
- Reducing the toxicity caused to the environment means we are leaving a cleaner atmosphere for our children. We can raise our heads in pride.
- Habits of recycling are spontaneously transferred from one generation to the other. If we practice this process regularly, our children will adopt this habit automatically. Hence, it is an automatic cultural improvement.

### **The Garbage Havoc**

Most commonly, the things used for modern life style create the maximum amount of garbage and need to be recycled. Among these, mainly paper used as wrappers, plastic sheets used

as covering material and disposable cups, plates and containers, glass used for fancy things, aluminium cans made for drinks and liquid supplies, bottles used for mineral water, containers used for packing food, paper napkins etc need to be considered with utmost urgency. The first and foremost step in this direction is that if we do not need something, we should not bring it home. This is the idea behind “reduce”. Unnecessary accumulation leads to abundant production which results in abundant trash. If at all something is to be brought home, it should be in a position to be reused after washing or maintaining. The material used in making the things we purchase, determines how much less or more garbage we produce. If every citizen takes care of reducing the amount of garbage, the atmosphere will be a lot cleaner than expected. Less garbage leads to lesser pollution, thereby lesser misuse of global resources. David C. Korten has rightly advocated the cause of havoc created by scattered garbage. He says, ‘To achieve true sustainability, we must reduce our 'garbage index' - that which we permanently throw away into the environment that will not be naturally recycled for reuse - to near zero. Productive activities must be organized as closed systems. Minerals and other non-biodegradable resources, once taken from the ground, must become a part of society's permanent capital stock and be recycled in perpetuity. Organic materials may be disposed into the natural ecosystems, but only in ways that assure that they are absorbed back into the natural production system.’ The same has been repeated in *A Not So Radical Agenda for a Sustainable Global Future: A feature of the People-Centered Development Forum*, “Perhaps one of the best indicators of sustainability is the "garbage index." In a full world, sustainability requires the virtual elimination of waste, i.e., zero garbage (including pollution). This requires that all productive activities be organized as closed systems. All non-biological resources, once taken from the ground, should become a part of society's permanent capital stock and be recycled in perpetuity. Organic materials may be disposed into the natural ecosystem, but only in ways that facilitate their natural reprocessing and productive use.” (Korten 1995) It has also been seen that handling garbage for reuse is also a technical issue. All types of garbage can not be mixed into a heap. Very often problems arise from the type of garbage too. Katherine Boo, in her work, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Under city*, has taken up the concern thus, “Rich people’s garbage was every year more complex, rife with hybrid materials, impurities, impostors. Planks that looked like wood were shot through with plastic. How was he to classify a loofah? The owners of the recycling plants demanded waste that was all one thing, pure.” (Boo 2012) We should note that collecting and disposing of garbage is also a big and systematic task. Also, that, when garbage is controlled, better options will flow by themselves. This can be converted as organized employment which is a positive aspect of the garbage havoc.

### **Lifestyle Matters a Lot**

- Our lifestyle has a direct effect on the use of global resources. We can contribute immensely by monitoring our ways and habits.
- There are many local recycling centres round the corner. All reprocess-able material which is out of use can be taken to such places and be converted for better use.
- The use of polythene bags is very detrimental for the environment. They create pollution and clog the drains. Discouraging their use in shopping is a healthy practice.
- A single newspaper circulated round the nation, entails felling down of trees in abundance. We can calculate the number of newspapers being printed every day and the proportionate felling of trees. If it is replaced by e-paper, trees can be saved in thousands every day.
- Purchasing re-cycled or re-processed products can encourage the system and help reduce wastage. Every day manufacturers are finding new ways to create items that are recyclable including paper towels, cardboard boxes, plastic containers, crayons, ink cartridges, paint, garden supplies such as hoses, furniture, wallpaper, and even garbage cans.

- It is a good habit to carry a cloth bag for shopping groceries. This will reduce the use of polythene bags and unnecessary paper bags.
- Small packings mean many types of packing. They release many polythene covers and outer glossy covers. In contrast, large packing or bulk packing help reduce waste.
- Documents and receipts can be had as a soft copy instead of a paper one.
- Paper packing and cardboard packing help avoiding Styrofoam or plastic packing
- Instead of packing gifts, we can give them in reusable cloth bags
- Composting kitchen waste is a useful way of recycling biodegradable waste
- Saving money by buying recycled products adds to the family economy in a positive way.

### **Reprocessing as an Employment Generator**

While it is true that reprocessing helps in maintaining the environment, it has other multifarious benefits too. The process itself demands a lot of manual labour. Generally, all waste like paper, plastic, aluminium etc are put in dustbins in a mixed form. Man power is needed to separate different types of waste. This is one type of occupation. After that men are needed to process them into different new forms. This way, a lot of employment is created which helps the families of the poor and contributes to the economy of the nation. Also, the process of recycling is a great threat for the climate. Measures have to be taken to balance the effect on the climate. The governing bodies and responsible agencies have to take measures to get the work done properly. For this, huge numbers of people are required to work and bring the required results. By reprocessing, the final amount of waste created is mitigated. David Morris, co-founder and vice president of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance has advocated this cause in this manner, "The case for recycling is strong. The bottom line is clear. Recycling requires a trivial amount of our time. Recycling saves money and reduces pollution. Recycling creates more jobs than land filling or incineration. And a largely ignored but very important consideration, recycling reduces our need to dump our garbage in someone else's backyard". It is important to note here that, David Morris has served as an advisor to the energy departments of Presidents Ford, Carter, Clinton and George W. Bush. He has worked a lot on "Waste to Wealth" signifying the importance of recycling. His ideas of generating employment from garbage issues have been appreciated world-wide. Hence we agree that employment and environment both get a benefit.

### **Specifications and Truth about Reprocessing**

- The matter which is thrown as waste is not actually all waste. More than half of it can be reprocessed and reused.
- Packing things in attractive packing material is only a fashion, not a requirement. This results in unnecessary waste. If it is curtailed, the product will virtually cost less and pollution will also be reduced.
- Studies have shown that of all the automobile parts, 80 percent are reusable.
- Many metals have a tendency to be easily reused. Aluminium cans are very readily recycled and reused.
- Glass in the form of bottles, jars, drinking tumblers, jugs and other household crockery get broken or damaged out of use every day. The total amount of discarded glass per day goes in tonnes. This glass is 100 percent reusable after reprocessing.
- Since glass does not decompose, it creates a lot of waste. Reprocessing and reusing it is the only way of reducing its quantity as garbage.
- Paper industry consumes a lot of wood resulting in the heavy felling of trees. If recycled paper is used instead of the fresh one, a magical contribution can be made to avoid deforestation. This is directly favourable for mitigating pollution also, so, it has a direct and multi-dimensional advantage.

- Decomposition of plastic is also very time-taking, so, it pollutes land on a large scale and for a longer time. That is why polythene bags lie scattered in landfills, because they do not decompose soon. It is advisable to reprocess and use them, rather than allow them to create dirt.
- Metals and glass, when recycled, can also be used as energy resources. It's better to use them in this form, rather than allow them to pollute the atmosphere.

### **Social Welfare Aspect of Reprocessing**

Creating new products is not the only advantage. All unwanted but reusable things in the household can be used by other needy people. Many charitable institutions, trusts and individuals collect things from people who do not want to use them further and distribute them among the poor and less privileged groups. Household appliances, clothes, woollens, eatables, gadgets, stationary, furniture, electronic items, old automobiles etc have many non-profit organizations as takers. They pay a token amount and use the things for welfare. This way, unutilized things are given a new life. Moreover, it adds to the moral values and quality of civic and social life. Some welfare communities become so advanced that they become a life changer for people who are sitting idle and for things which are lying as junk in the unattended corners of our houses. We can say that, "Reprocessing in a way, reprocesses our lives too".

### **Reprocessing of E-Waste for better taste**

General things are easily considered for re-use, but, we must pay attention to another fact. These days, electronic gadgets are very much in use. A quick turnover is very much in fashion especially by the younger generation. So, many types of equipment which are yet functional but out of trend get discarded. We should pay attention towards such electrical and electronic junk. This is known as e-waste and has a poisonous chemical nature. For lack of decomposition, it creates a lot of pollution. By reprocessing we can convert it into secondary raw material which can be used for making better products. Some recycled things can also be converted into energy. The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment should be used rather than dumped to create health and environmental hazards. They can also be repurposed to their elemental state by dismantling into metal, plastic, fibre, wood, rubber etc. They can then be reused in some other form. A sustainable way of life is today's requirement and we can very well espouse such advantageous changes in our daily life.

### **How to Become a Part of the Mega Reprocessing Effort**

Reprocessing can easily be done on an individual scale. It calls for a little contemplation and consideration. One has to make very small efforts in this direction with genuine inventiveness.

- There is no universal rule. It depends a lot on what are the things that can be reprocessed in case of an individual. A very small step initiated from the household items can be a great beginning. One has to look around at the surroundings and mark things for recycling. Then, start as an individual. Once this method works successfully, it can be shared with other members of the family and neighbourhood. In this manner, domestic goods can easily be recycled and the practice shared with more members.
- Another important guideline for reprocessing is, reducing consumption. If we accumulate less and consume less, we will waste yet lesser. Only essential things should be accumulated. Also, those things which can be reused, should be used so. Many things can be shared within the family, neighbourhood, and colleagues. This will reduce the requirement for more production hence reduces wastage at many levels.
- Using recycled things is also a healthy practice. Many products have a symbol indicating that it is recycled. We should encourage the use of these. Many other virgin products have a symbol indicating that the thing need not be disposed of as waste after a single use, it is recyclable. An attentive look at these factors can help a lot in reusing them.

- We should also be very conscious about what things can be reprocessed. Very commonly used things like metal, aluminium, glass, paper, plastic, electronic items, spare parts of automobiles and machines etc are scattered all around us. We can collect and deliver them to the recycle centres. This way, a lot of garbage will turn out to be reusable.
- The knowledge of what to recycle and which are the agencies to be approached for recycling is very important. This is common information which should be used very often to help get things recycled.
- Our grocery is a big source of waste because all things purchased from market come in multiple packaging. We generally throw the outer packaging. We should collect them and reuse or send for recycling.
- Composting is another very important factor. Each household throws, peels, leftovers and other parts of food in the garbage. This rots and creates dirt and foul smell in the atmosphere. If this is used for composting, it will provide a healthy resource for plants and also save the atmosphere from stinking by reducing pollution.
- At workplace there are many things discarded every day. Somewhere paper is thrown, somewhere plastic and Styrofoam is thrown, at some places, disposable cups and plates are thrown. All individual waste has its own reprocessing place and value. We should underline the nature of our waste and make efforts to reuse and recycle it.
- Traditional and much publicized methods are not the only ones to be used. Each one of us has the capacity to think about new ways and methods. We can create our own strategy of reprocessing things and contributing to the society.
- Individual contributions are as important as the institutional or customary ones. We all have a role to play on our own level. We should contribute freely in this regard.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen the morphology and anatomy of garbage and talked about reprocessing it for multiple reasons. It is true that if we endorse this cause on a large scale, it will be of great advantage to the individuals as well as society. Many countries have been very particular about the proper dealing of garbage. The award winning author Tristram Stuart, has campaigned a lot through his speeches and environmental campaigning. He says, "In Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, the government in a matter of years has put a lot of energy behind recycling food waste as livestock feed. It's environmentally friendly, it provides cheap livestock feed for the farmers in those parts of the world, and it avoids sending the food waste to landfill." Repurposing is a noble deed. If we spread this message in the society on a large scale and glorify the concept, we may be able to introduce this idea amongst more people who are in a state of civic slumber and who need to know that they can change their own life and that of others by adopting this practice. We owe it to our children that we leave ample resources for them and our grandchildren as well.

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