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ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION - A CONSUMER'S PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Pollution is an inevitable by-product of a variety of economic activities including agriculture, industry and the provision of services. As such, the responsibility of generating pollution and therefore mitigating the same, lies with the firms functioning in an economy. Hence, efforts to combat pollution always focus on solutions that refer to technology, policy and regulatory measures. However, one of the main reasons for the generation of pollution is the is socio-cultural practices prevalent across communities in the whole world (GoI and UNDP, 2022). However, any economic activity is the result of a demand for products and services made by the consumers. In this sense, imprudent and unregulated consumption is the fountainhead of all economic activities that generate pollution of natural resources and result in wastage, damage or loss in the quality of productive natural resources. Sustainable consumption happens when the consumption needs of the present generation are met without reducing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, it discourages 'over-consumption'. It is rightly said that, "*ati sarvatra varjayet*" meaning, 'excess of anything is bad'.

Sustainable consumption includes not only to the use of various goods and services, but also to their recycling and disposal by individuals and households, governments, businesses and other organizations. A sustainable lifestyle minimizes ecological impacts of human consumption while enabling a flourishing life for individuals, households, communities and the entire bio-diversity. It could be prompted through propagating individual and collective choices for adopting products, services and practices that are environment-friendly. However, individual and collective choices are often conditioned, facilitated and constrained by societal norms, political institutions, public policies, infrastructures, markets, and culture (Vergragt, 2016). In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also referred to as the Earth Summit, suggested that 'sustainable consumption' rather than 'sustainable development' ought to be the focus of policy measures in order to regulate environmental pollution.

Sustainable consumption could be achieved through an increase in the efficiency of consumption, as well as a change in consumption patterns so that the ecological footprints of peoles' lifestyles do not damage the environment. Where and when feasible, there should be a net reduction in consumption levels, particularly among the rich and elite classes living in the industrialized and the rich and middle classes from the developing countries.

Sustainable consumption is closely related to sustainable production and sustainable lifestyles. "A sustainable lifestyle minimizes ecological impacts while enabling a flourishing life for individuals, households, communities, and beyond. It is the product of individual and collective decisions about aspirations and about satisfying needs and adopting practices, which are in turn conditioned, facilitated, and constrained by societal norms, political institutions, public policies, infrastructures, markets, and culture (Vergragt, 2016). Technological improvements and eco-efficiency support a reduction in resource consumption. However, social and economic dimensions such as of consumer welfare, societal and personal risk-mitigation, availability and price of alternative and supplementary public services that could support the changes in personal choices and lifestyle of consumers are also equally important in making consumption choices sustainable.

Many consumers are well-aware of the importance of their consumption choices and care about environmental issues, however most do not translate their concerns into their consumption patterns. This is because the purchase decision process is complicated and relies on e.g. social, political, and psychological factors. Young et al. identified a lack of time for research, high prices, a lack of information, and the cognitive effort needed as the main barriers when it comes to green consumption choices (Young, et.al., 2009) This gap between consumer attitudes towards the environment and their actual behaviour as well as the gap between the values and morals that promote environmental conservation and behaviour and actions in real life, is known as the "attitudes-behaviour gap" and the "values-action gap". It explains the difficulties and obstacles faced by the consumers in changing their consumption patterns in favour of environment-friendly lifestyle.

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Traditional Indian Lifestyle and value systems could reduce the wastage of resources and prevent environmental pollution. An environmentally conscious consumer is the need of the day. The measures that consumers could take for adopting an environment-friendly lifestyle are discussed as follows:

EFFICIENCY IN CONSUMPTION OF WATER

The medieval step-wells or *baolis* seen in the western parts of India were constructed to serve as underground water resources and played a significant role in water conservation. They provided with water for drinking, washing, bathing and irrigation, especially during seasonal water shortages. Moreover, the shaded pavilions inside the baolis functioned as retreat rooms in the summers. The oldest example of water management in India is found from the proto-historic era in different Harappan sites. The various tanks, interconnected chains of reservoirs, cisterns, drainage channels, public and private wells, baths, dams, and dock (in Lothal) seen in various sites, such as Dholavira, Banawali, Kalibangan, etc., exemplify the excellence of the water management system of those times. The Harappans were also expert builders of raised hydraulic structures of various types, and were the first to start using the ground water resources by digging wells (Singh, 2021).

Each region in India developed its own systems and methods for water conservation and usage as well as rainwater harvesting methods. For instance, in the old city of Ahmedabad, traditional *'taankas'* for rainwater harvesting maintained by every household made them self-sufficient in terms of drinking water all the year round (Amiraly et.al., 2024). Around 10,000 houses in the city of Ahmedabad have large underground tanks or 'taankaas' that can each store 25,000 litres of rainwater (Padre, Shree, 2014, Gujaratina neera tijori: Taankaa, on https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/gujaratina-neera-tijori-taankaa). Similarly, traditional water conservation techniques such as *bundhis* (small embankments) *johads* (small check dams) *nadi*s (small channels) in Rajasthan, step wells knowns as *vav* or *baoli* (Gujarat and Rajasthan), *tanka* (Tamil Nadu), *zebo* (Nagaland) were used in various regions for storage of water for dryer months (GoI, MoEF, 2015,). Community-based water management with the help of temple tanks (Biswas, 2024), ponds and earthen embarkments were used during ancient period, while in hilly trans-Himalayan region, water from melting ice was stored by way of traditional circular tanks known as *khuls (Himachal Pradesh), kuhls* (Jammu and Kashmir) and *zings* (Ladakh). Rajasthan had temporary lakes known as *khadeen* to store rain water (GoI, MoEF, 2015). It is essential to revisit these ancient practices and adapt them with the requirements of the present times.

In India, 135 LPD (liters per capita per day) is supplied in urban areas and 55 LPD is supplied in rural areas. However, the water footprint estimated to be a staggering 1.2 million LPD because water is required also in the production of food, fodder as well as other raw materials and energy (GoI, MoEF, 2015). It is essential to monitor and regulate household water consumption and use natural cleaners such as cloth and filtration methods such as potassium alum (*phitkari*) for drinking water. Consumers could avoid the overuse, wastage of water in their homes by installing rain-water harvesting system on their terraces and open spaces. Similarly, common areas such as playgrounds, clubhouses and parking lots in residential colonies could also adopt water harvesting practices. It would be helpful in times of drought for providing drinking water security, and also reduce the issue of flooding and water-logging in urban localities. Homes could be installed with facilities for recycling household water from the bathrooms, toilets, kitchen etc. and using them in the kitchen gardens for growing vegetables etc. or beautifying barren spaces. Using water-saving faucets and fixtures such as vacuum flush systems and showers instead of bath-tubs could go a long way in reducing household water consumption and wastage.

Prevention of Air pollution by consumers:

Use of aerosols, household pesticides and perfumes and inferior fuels for cooking creates indoor pollution, that has a detrimental effect on health. More importantly, it deprives small insects in and around the surroundings from their food and endangers the existence of endangers common household species such as sparrows, frogs, lizards etc. and interferes with the food chain. Instead of resorting to harmful chemical products as insect repellents, consumers should try to keep surroundings clean and wherever needed, use natural pesticides such as neem leaves, camphor, salt, cloves etc. and use mosquito nets on windows and beds. Also, natural cleaning material such as tamarind, rock salt, stone and brick pieces could be used as alternatives to chemical-based cleaning material.

Efficiency in energy consumption:

Maintaining Energy-efficient homes is possible with the adoption of household appliances powered by solar power or electricity. Energy efficient devices such as LED lights, compact florescent lights (CFL), solar heaters, cookers, coolers, lights and fans should be popularized. In rural households, energy efficient and less smoke-emanating gas stoves could be adopted as also *gobar-gas* plants using methane for cooking purposes, wherever feasible. Household should save electricity as much as possible. A simple step of switching off the lights, fans and ACs when one leaves a room, could go a long way in energy conservation. Consumers should practice cycling, walking or using public transport at least for their non-priority commutes. For longer trips, car-pooling, sharing rides or taxis, using geared bicycles and clubbing many activities in a single trip could be small

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but significant steps. A pledge of 'no vehicle use once a week' could be taken. Private vehicles that are imperative for priority travel, could also be made energy-efficient by maintaining their ideal air pressure and servicing them regularly for maximum mileage. Energy-inefficient vehicles should be periodically scrapped. Using a hand pump to draw water could be a good form of exercise for the old and a form of recreating for the young. Additionally, it could also lead to savings on the electricity bill. to custom use direct solar energy to drying clothes and preservation of food such as pickles, potato chips, *aam papad* etc. (GoI and UNDP, 2022). These practices are non-polluting and do not contribute GHG emissions. In addition, India's traditional diet system is high on plant and vegetable produce that generally uses less water and energy and hence has a lower carbon footprint (GoI, MoEF, 2015). Indians have mastered the art of fermentation of food that uses lesser energy for cooking and is at the same time, easier on the palate. Traditional stone grinders known as mortar and pestle called *dheki* were used in Assam whereas wooden churners called '*mathani*' were used to extract butter from butter-milk in Punjab. '*Kangri*' was the traditional room-heater of Kashmir made of wood (GoI, MoEF, 2015).

Prevention of Wastage of Food:

A third of the food intended for human consumption – around 1.3 billion tons – is wasted or lost, that could have fed 3 billion people. While in developing countries, 40% of food waste occurs at the post-harvest and processing levels; in developed countries, 40% of food waste occurs at the retail and consumer levels. For instance, in the US, more than 50% of all produce thrown away because it is deemed to be "too ugly" to be sold to consumers. This amounts to about 60 million tons of fruits and vegetables per year. Animal-based foods, especially red meat, dairy and farmed shrimp are generally associated with the highest emissions because dairy and meat production require extensive grasslands and quite often forests are destroyed to create pastures for grazing (GoI, MoEF, 2015).

In Indian culture, food is given Godly status. With a little forward planning, one can cook only as per requirement, so that food is not wasted. Similarly, when we serve our plates, we must be mindful so as to not take more than what we could finish. Excess food should be promptly given to those in need. As far as possible, food should be prepared using only local and seasonal produce. Aerated drinks could be replaced with natural drinks, packages snacks with homemade snacks and non-vegetarian food with vegetarian or vegan items. Kitchen waste could be dealt with in an efficient and clean manner if compost pits are created in every kitchen garden to tackle solid organic waste from the kitchen. It could have an added advantage of providing fresh ingredients for the kitchen too. In public functions such as weddings, parties etc. food and drinks can be served in mud utensils (*kulhads*) or grass leaves that are cheaper, biodegradable, do not require water to be cleaned; and at the same time generate employment for labour. A simple method of separating organic and inorganic waste by way of separate dustbins used in the house could go a long way in streamlining solid waste collection and management by the civic authorities. Reducing the intake of sutured fats found in dairy, meat and palm oil. Composting food and vegetable waste. In ancient or Indian tradition particular eastern India, any cook rise that is not consumed is often left to ferment overnight to e had a breakfast following day. In north India, leftover lentils are mixed with wheat flour to prepare breakfast. The famous Gujarati snack '*khakhra*' is made by roasting leftover *rotis* (GoI, MoEF, 2015).

Eco-friendly household products:

Consumers mostly use plastic products for packaging and household storage. However, these are non-biodegradable, but have been gaining popularity since wooden furniture became costlier due to dwindling forests. In comparison furniture made of plastic is found to be cheaper and light-weight and easier to move and handle. However, if the plastic goods are of inferior quality, they break very soon and add to plastic waste. Every year, 8 million tons of plastic enters our ocean and pollute marine ecosystem and the global food chain. Besides, electronic waste world's fastest growing waste stream, with 53.6 million metric tons generated in 2019 and predicted to reach 74 metric tons by 2030. Only 17.4 percent of this waste was recycled in 2019. These generate waste pollutes our water and soil resources (GoI, MoEF, 2015).

A better alternative to plastic could be to use furniture and household articles made of PVC, cane, jute or rubber. For instance, jute, paper and cloth bags for packaging, jute household articles are attractive, durable, cheap and also generate employment for labour. Coconut fibre, also known as coir, is used for making coir ropes. These are strong, water resistant and long-lasting. Traditionally they were used to tie boats to the anchor. They are very suitable for making doormats, brushes, mattress, pot holders etc.

Both men and women have been fascinated with fashionable products since time immemorial. However, many fashion choices that were tolerable in the past, have become unsustainable and damaging to the environment in the present. For instance, clothes made of silk, tiger skin, crocodile leather, artefacts made of ivory, stuffed animals used as show-pieces, caged birds etc. are no longer to be seen as a sign of a classy lifestyle but as one's insensitivity towards the environment and lack of compassion for other living beings.

With an overall rise in prosperity all over the world, particularly in the developed countries, the global demand for fashion and clothing has risen at an unprecedented rate and the fashion industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions, which is more than both the aviation and shipping sectors combined. Besides, nearly 20% of

global wastewater (around 93 BCM) is produced from textile dyeing according to the UNEP, which estimates the worldwide generation of 92 million tonnes of textiles waste every year; which is expected to soar up to 134 million tonnes a year by 2030 (https://earth.org/what-is-the-united-nations-charter-for-climate-action/). Discarded clothing and textile waste ends up in landfills, while microplastics from clothing materials such as polyester, nylon, polyamide, acrylic and other synthetic materials is leeched into soil and nearby water sources. UN Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action (United Nations, 2018) was directed at the 'fast fashion' business model which relies on cheap and speedy production of low-quality clothing to meet the latest and newest trends. Consumers could combat this trend by resisting the over-marketing efforts by the 'fast-fashion' companies. In India, consumers should go back to traditional lifestyle and ethos, that stressed on 'simple living and high-thinking'. According to a famous anecdote about Swami Vivekananda, once a Britisher asked Swami Vivekananda -" Why can't you wear proper clothes to look like a gentleman? "Swami Vivekananda smiled and said-" In your culture, a tailor makes a gentleman; but, in our culture, Character makes gentleman" (https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/anecdotesweb/30.html).

Consumers should choose weather-friendly fabrics such as cotton that use natural dyes for colour. Similarly, office and formal dressing also need not be western wear, which is unsuitable for Indian weather. Instead, formal Indian wear such as sarees and kurta-pyjama should be the accepted office-wear. Gujarat's Kutch region uses kale cotton for cloth which is produced without irrigation, chemical fertilizers or pesticides. It has a small carbon footprint and is considered as the most energy efficient and carbon-neutral crop in the world (GoI, MoEF, 2015).

India has a rich variety of textiles, embroidery, dyeing techniques, patterns and designs that are unique to each region of the country. By using these, one could not only encourage local artisans but also reduce the cost of transportation of goods.

Indian consumers have traditionally been price-sensitive and given to thrift. Recycling, reuse or upcycling clothes and household articles has always been an accepted social practice. When a garment or cloth outlived its function, it was skilfully converted into a new product with an artistic twist, such as turning sarees into blankets and garments into bags. Hand-made rugs from old blankets (Jammu and Kashmir), embroidered items with traditional *kantha* work (Bengal), *godadi* or *gudri* stitched by women using old sarees (Maharastra, Gujarat and Goa), *chakhdo* (wall-piece from Gujarat) etc, as well as shopping bags, place mats, office folder and runners made of mirror-work, household articles made of bamboo (Tripura) have been famous since ages (GoI and UNDP, 2022).

However, as income levels rise, traditional social structures break down and families become nuclear, the need to recycle, upcycle or re-use gets reduced. Hence, consumers, especially the new generation think it below their dignity to use such goods. We need to stop looking down upon re-use, up-cycling and re-cycling. Donating things that we do not need is a good way to de-clutter one's home and at the same time, free up resources for others who need it. As Marie Kondo, the renowned home-organising expert says, "Hold each item in your hands. If it "sparks joy," keep it. If not, get rid of it" (Lowe, Lindsey, 2019).

Eco-friendly housing:

Our homes, office and entertainment spaces account for 38 percent of all energy related Co_2 emission (GoI, MoEF, 2015)). Construction of buildings that use cement concrete generate severe pollution during the production process. Massive amount of sand mining from river-beds results in formation of sinkholes on the river-banks and a danger of inundation of cultivated land and residential area (GoI and UNDP, 2022). Often, construction material is transported from long distances leading to vehicular and dust pollution.

Traditional Indian architecture based on *Vāstu-Śastra* (Dutt, 1925) explained how villages, towns and kingdoms integrated temples, water bodies and gardens and open spaces within them to encourage the flow of air and achieve harmony with nature (Vasudev, 2001). It considered factors like the direction of prevailing winds, solar orientation, and thermal properties of building materials to achieve natural cooling and energy efficiency. It stressed on architecture with strong and sustainable foundations and construction techniques that integrated water management and sewage systems. The houses included features such as courtyards that acted as natural ventilation shafts allowing the flow of air and maintaining a cooler indoor environment. Water bodies such as pools and fountains were integrated into the architecture in order to create a cooling effect through evaporative cooling. The presence of water also enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the surroundings. Indo-Saracenic architecture incorporated *jaalis* that were intricately carved stone or wooden screens with geometric patterns built on windows and walls to allow natural ventilation while providing privacy and shading from direct sunlight. Similarly, *chajjas* or overhanging eaves (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Saracenic_architecture) were used to shade windows and facades from the intense sun. Many buildings had high ceilings to allow hot air to rise and accumulate away from the occupants. In regions with extreme heat, cave architecture was adopted, utilizing natural rock formations to create dwellings, monasteries, and temples. These caves provided a naturally insulated and cool living environment. In colder regions, roofs were often insulated using materials like straw, grass or clay tiles, which helped reduce heat absorption and maintained cooler interiors.

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To the extent possible, consumers should insist upon using locally available and weather-complaint building materials, structures and designs while constructing their houses and buildings for common use. Clay, dung, mud-bricks, ash-bricks, limestone, stones, marble, sandstone and timber could be a better construction material in hotter climates such as in India owing to their excellent thermal properties, which helped regulate indoor temperatures. These materials absorbed heat during the day and released it slowly at night, providing natural cooling. These traditional houses required lesser amount of energy (Biswas, 2024). Flat roof-tops and angular or slanting windows, dark curtains that regulate sunlight; with an abundance of trees planted all around the house could regulate indoor temperature and cut out noise and air pollution from outside and reduce the need for artificial lighting or air conditioning. Additionally, they could also reduce vulnerability to natural disasters. Solar energy could be harnessed for household electricity needs including water heaters and kitchen appliances. In the colder and wetter areas, wooden or bamboo building material, large glass windows, thick curtains, slanting roof and thick outer walls reduce the need for heating.

Residential colonies should be planned in such a way that there is adequate distance between houses which helps in maintaining unhindered flow of air and sun-light as well as reduce the risk of a spread in fire. Apart from parking spaces, provision should also be made for ample public spaces for socializing, sports, gardens, jogging tracks, fountains etc. for clean and green surroundings.

Privately held open spaces are often lined with cemented floors. However, cement blocks could be a much better alternative that would allow the seepage of rainwater into the ground and at the same time maintain cleanliness.

Resource use efficiency in the work-place:

Our workspaces are energy-guzzlers, but not always equally productive and often, needlessly wasteful. Creating paper-less offices, digital record-keeping, creative use of digital means of communication and conferencing, printing on both sides of the paper, not using the printer unless absolutely essential etc. are practices that save a lot of energy and paper use in the office. On-line meetings, working-from-home, flexible working hours, shared transport for employees, adjusting the office timings according to changing natural daylight hours every season etc. could be environment-friendly practices that could be emulated in many offices (https://ecobnb.com/blog/2023/08/green-office-ideas-sustainable/ . Office workers should do their bit by either cycling, walking or using public transport for work as much as possible.

Eco-friendly tourism:

More and more consumers are engaging in luxury tourism. The Value of the luxury hospitality market worldwide was 213 billion USD in 2023 (https://www.statista.com/topics/11552/luxury-travel-and-tourism-worldwide/#topicOverview). Even as expansion in tourism brings benefits for the economy, eco-friendly tourism practices must be encouraged. Eco-friendly green hotels that practice saving energy and recycling of resources wherever possible by rain-water harvesting, installing solar geysers, heaters and cookers; reducing the need for air conditioning by simple measures such as adjusting the height of the ceiling, cooking from home grown vegetables, using home-grown flowers for decoration, using environment-friendly architecture and design, serving local dishes, reducing food wastage and donating unused food to the needy should be patronized. Forests could be best explored by participating in nature camps, forest camps, ayurvedic or yoga retreats, bird-watching, nature photography, river rafting, trekking, bicycle trips, mountaineering, forest walks etc. Tent accommodations with eco-friendly sanitation facilities eliminates the need for constructing permanent structures for hotels in environmentally sensitive areas.

A tourist place could be best explored through walking tours, heritage walks, travelling in local public transport or visiting local markets and public parks. Tourists should not litter, damage or over-draw from local resources. They should not damage historical or heritage structures, holy rivers or other water bodies.

Eco-friendly celebrations:

As per capita incomes rise, there is an urgent need to revisit how we spend our incomes, especially in celebrations of various occasions, events, festivals and public gatherings.

Tree plantation is the best way to commemorate any special events such as birth, inauguration, wedding, housewarming etc. Religious acts must comprise of self-discipline, abstinence and fasting, feeding to the needy, abstaining from consuming addictive goods, showing compassion and protecting animals, birds and trees and walking pilgrimages *(pad-yatra)* to places of worship. Tree-worship in Indian culture is encouraged in the form of nurturing more trees and medicinal plants such as *peepul, tulsi*, mango etc.

India is a land of festivals with myriad festive celebrations in some or the other part of the country, all the year round. However, in recent years, our festival celebrations are endangering the environment (https://indien.ahk.de/news/news-details/impact-of-festivals-on-the-environment).

Ganesh Chaturthi is typically celebrated with a giant idol made of POP paint and plastic material, noise from blaring music systems and hours of traffic congestion followed by pollution of local water bodies by immersing the idols in them. Similar practices are followed during Durga Puja in Bengal. It does not necessarily add to our virtues. On the contrary, it displeases the Supreme being by damaging nature in its diverse forms. POP idols

could take several months to years to fully dissolve. It also reduces the oxygen levels in the water, killing fish and other aquatic organisms. The paints contain heavy metals such as mercury and lead, which dissolve in water as the idol dissolves. The acid content of the water also increases. Several accessories used during the puja such as plastic flowers, cloth, incense, camphor, ad more stain to the already polluted rivers an lakes (https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/ganesh-chaturthi-338428-2016-09-15). Ganesh Chaturthi and Durga Puja could be better cerebrated by creating small, purely mud idols and engaging in group chants, bhajans and arti (without the loud speakers) in a peaceful, joyous congregation.

Similarly, Deepawali, the festival of lights, is also a time when air pollution levels rise to record levels. Chanchpara et.al. (2023) studied the pre-Diwali and post-Diwali air pollution levels in Bhavnagar city of western coastal India and reported maximum pollution on the day of Diwali with significantly higher average 24-h concentration of PM10, PM2.5, and SPM. The concentrations of SO_2 and NO_2 were also high and so was the noise level on Diwali night. Metals like Zn, Al, Pb, and Mn were observed from PM10 in higher concentrations during the study. The AQI value observed to be 348, was the maximum on Diwali, indicating air quality to be of "very poor" category. They recommended that it was time to implement regulations on burning firecrackers for pollution reduction, aiming to achieve a sustainable atmosphere. Deepawali should be celebrated by lighting up the surroundings by electric lights, cleaning and decorating the surroundings inside and outside the house, sharing whatever we have with those who have little; and by opening our hearts and minds to new experiences, renewing our relations and spreading joy around us.

Holi, the Indian festival of spring colours, is preceded by Holika Dahan (lighting a fire to mark the victory of good over evil). This fire leads to the burning of firewood and the resultant smoke and pollution. Therefore, only a single 'holika-dahan' ceremony should be organized per village, town, or city. should be organised. The next day of Holi is marked with a lot of fun and frolic as people spray each other with colours. In the past, these used to be natural colours made of 'palash' flower, that emanates orange colour when soaked in water. In recent times, people use artificial powdered colours and chemical-based sprays to play Holi. These colours are highly structured polymers and are very difficult to decompose biologically (Garner and Lal, 2023) and therefore impose grave ecological damage. This results in a lot of land and water pollution. Consumers should revert to using natural colours, water-sprays and flower petals on each other during Holi.

Uttarayan is a very popular festival among youngsters who enjoy the impending spring by flying kites. Kite-wars are a healthy replacement for aggressive arguments or fights amidst the pubic. However, enjoyment for one, spells death for he other, when glass-infused kite-string which does not break easily, is used to fly kites. These strings injure birds flying in the sky as birds may not see the strings soaring in the air along with the kites. Every year, scores of birds are injured due to kite strings and fall on the ground to die or fall prey to animals like cats and dogs. During Uttarayan in January 2024, in Surat city alone a total of 1,121 birds were found injured. 75 of the injured birds died while 1,046 were under treatment (ToI, January 16, 2924). If only we would stop using glass-infused kite strings, and suspend our kite-flying in the early mornings and around sunset in the evenings, we could prevent this injury to birds.

Bakri Eid is a Muslim festival marked by a religious slaughter (*kurbaani*) of animals as an offering in the name of God. This practice could be made environment-friendly by allowing the slaughter only at the community level and not at the household level. This way, the number of animals slaughtered could be minimized.

Navratri is celebrated with much gaiety, song, dance and fanfare all over India, particularly in the state of Gujarat. However, of late, its impact in terms of noise pollution in the night hours and air pollution and congestion due to movement of traffic have come under scrutiny. Sharma et.al. (2018) monitored of noise pollution at various locations of Jabalpur city during Naratri festival and found that the noise levels of all the testing locations were higher than the prescribed limits.

CONCLUSION

In essence, our modern lifestyle, consumption of goods and services, our working and celebrations damage the environment inadvertently. We need to go back to our traditional way of life and re-discover our environment-friendly customs, traditions and celebrations in harmony with nature. Consumers need to be more mindful of their environmental footprint and take conscious measures to make their lifestyle environment-friendly and contribute towards environmental conservation.

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