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STUDY MATERIAL SCIENCE

CLASS-VIII

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▸ Synthetic Fibre & plastics

Plastics and the environment :

Plastics have several advantages, but also certain disadvantages. Their durability also makes them almost indestructible, which poses a threat to the environment. If thrown into the garbage, plastics do not decompose as most other material such as paper, cloth and vegetable wastes do. Most materials when buried in soil break down into simpler materials by microbes present in it. Such materials are called biodegradable. However, materials, such as plastics, are not easily decomposed by bacteria and are hence termed non-biodegradable. As a result, plastic waste remains in the environment much longer than biodegradable material. The volume of plastic waste generated every year has been increasing steadily. This growing volume of non-biodegradable waste poses a great risk to humans and animals.

Many plastics, especially thermoplastics, can be recycled and reused. But collecting waste plastic for recycling is a complex process because discarded plastic bags or objects are simply thrown in the garbage bins. Although, large

quantities of waste plastic is collected by rag-pickers and recycled, a large number of plastic bags end up in drains, rivers and seashores, choking drains and posing serious risk to aquatic life. Cattle and other animals often swallow polythene bags and plastic packaging material along with food waste thrown in the garbage and die due to choking. Water birds are also known to have died after swallowing plastic bags thrown carelessly into ponds and lakes. Avoid the use of plastic bags and packaging wrappers. Waste management is the only way to save the environment.

It is often suggested that the best way to save the environment from pollution is to follow the **4R principle-reduce, reuse, recycle and recover**. Plastics are useful materials with many advantageous properties. We can prevent them from becoming a threat to the environment by being careful when using them. The use of cotton or jute bags instead of disposable plastic bags and glass bottles instead of plastic bottles wherever possible, is an environment-friendly habit.