

Biodegradable Sanitary Pads: A Reality Check

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Dr. Chandra Shekhar Sharma,
Associate Professor
Department of Chemical Engineering,
Creative & Advanced Research Based On
Nanomaterials (CARBON) Laboratory,
IIT Hyderabad

Approximately 350 million is the number of menstruating women in India at present. Given the increased awareness due to several factors and Government's efforts on menstrual hygiene by providing affordable sanitary napkins in schools and rural areas, more number of women now have access to these products, although there is still a lot to be done. This has resulted in several new products in the market in the last 3-4 years.

Further focus on environment, and a mad-rush to ban plastic, most of these new brands claim their sanitary napkin product as 'bio-degradable' and 'eco-friendly'



Figure: Different layers of a typical sanitary pad
(Source: www.scienceandsamosa.com)

A sanitary pad does not contain only bleached wood pulp or cotton, which is now being replaced with natural fibers like more commonly used banana fibers in these new products; however, there are other plastic laminates and fabric layers to offer the feel of dryness and making these pads leak-proof. These include superabsorbent polymers (SAP) paper, release paper, breathable polyurethane film and polyester film which are essentially plastics and non-biodegradable. Then, we need hot melt glue as an adhesive which is also non-biodegradable.

Therefore, as a consumer, we must be aware of such false claims of 100% biodegradable sanitary napkins.

There is no, I repeat, and I mean it, absolutely no 100% biodegradable sanitary pads in the market as of date. Even the idea of using bio-SAPs and bio-degradable adhesives in these products while without compromising the performance is still in its infancy. Even the claims of composability by some of these new brands in the name of justifying higher prices, saving the environment and innovation is unrealistic until there is a separate segregation and collection chain of used product

Potable and Palatable: Perspectives of Water

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Ms. Kanaka Himabindu ,
Ph.D. Student
Department of Liberal Arts
IIT Hyderabad

Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety (Clyde Kluckhohn). The project is a part of the centre for sustainable development at IITH, supported by MHRD. The civil engineering faculty Dr K.V.L.Subramanyam head it, and Dr Haripriya Narasimhan give an anthropological perspective in it. Ms Kanaka Himabindu Pottumuthu is a doctoral student, pursuing research in it. Under the sustainability and smart cities umbrella, the topic was taken forward with an assured ethnographic background of the researchers.

The pilot study involving multi-disciplinary experts in Hyderabad gave a panoramic social science perspective. Furthered the research from 2016 by collecting ethnographic narratives. It gave an understanding that domestic water management amongst middle-class residents was crucial and that people have ways to combat the necessity in light of shortages. The contemporary new Indian middle class is always anxious about environmental 'purity' and 'pollution', about air, water, or food. This study highlights the concerns about people's distrust of the quality and taste of state-supplied water. Apart from the citizen's discourse, the researchers have also explored sustainable water management practices of heritage sites in Hyderabad. It is essential to understand heritage sites because things were made accessible by understanding geographical space, and with merely available technology, they created incredible structures. Also, an anthropological understanding of such spaces explains the cultural meanings attached to them. Also, the study of the newly declared smart city of Kakinada has been included in this research. To bring out the contrast on sustainability and smartness, as a part of the development discourse. This contrasting mix of residents' understanding about the development with Kakinada Smart City Corporation's perspective explained a lot of interesting facts. Finally, this work intends to contribute to the policy implications of sustainable and smart water management in urban space. Hence, addressing the more significant smart city development issues with ethnographic data would enlighten policy developers.