

## Addressing the elephant in the room, or rather the dumping ground outside your room! - Adithi Muralidhar (Resident, Deonar village road)

Mumbai houses roughly around 15 million people and the recent Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (2013-14) report says that Mumbai generates around 14,500 metric tonnes of waste EVERY DAY! Currently we follow the landfill methods of waste disposal. Mumbai has three major dumping grounds (apart from numerous illegal dumping sites, at Deonar, Mulund and Gorai (now closed). Of these, Deonar dumping ground (DDG) receives the major chunk (an estimated 70% of the total waste) as it is the largest of all the three dumping sites. Since all the three dumping grounds are brimming with excess waste, the BMC had to turn to the newly-opened Kanjur Marg dumping ground but this one keeps intermittently shutting down.

Without a doubt, it is DDG that bears the brunt of the city's waste production. Residents of Govandi (particularly west) and Mankhurd have been the worst affected by the presence of the dumping ground in their midst. Even most of the areas in Govandi east (coming under pincode 88) get a whiff of the dumping ground

at least once a day, particularly during the evening or when wind directions change. No one wants to live close to a toxic dumping ground and we would not blink an eye lid to call for its shut-down. Yet, the reason it exists is US, the waste producers.

One of the main reasons why the dumping grounds are brimming in the city is due to non-segregation of waste. This has led to more waste being dumped in the grounds as opposed to rechanneling waste into different lines of upcycling and/or recycling. It is estimated that we can reduce almost 50% of the waste that goes to these dumping grounds if we segregate our waste. Out of an estimated 10,000 tonnes (numbers vary from 8000 to 10000 tonnes in reports) of waste per day, produced each day, around 8,000 tonnes is supposed to be mixed waste (bio-degradable and recyclable) while 2,000 tonnes is supposed to be debris and silt. The simplest way to tackle this issue is of course segregate your waste. But this is easier said than done. Numerous hindrances stop us from

segregating our waste. No systemic support, lack of coordination and/or communication between housing societies, our own lack of interest and motivation to do so - these are just the tip of the ice-berg. But things are changing and various citizen groups are actively trying to address the issue of wet waste management.

The second main reason for overflowing dumping grounds is that we are *producing too much* garbage. Numerous studies indicate that the middle-class sector in India has grown to over 600 million and with an increase in disposable income, we are now buying things at an ever-accelerated rate. And buying more things means producing more trash. In this series "Talking Trash", I will try and break down the issue of urban waste management and discuss the nuances surrounding it. Hopefully, thinking aloud through this forum will help me and all the readers better understand the complexity of issues related to waste, an inevitable by-product of our daily lives.

**"One of the main reasons why the dumping grounds are brimming in the city is due to non-segregation of waste."**



Picture courtesy:

<http://www.planetcustodian.com/2016/03/09/8758/mumbais-alarming-air-quality-in-the-wake-of-deonar-dump-site-fire-captured-by-nasa-satellites.html>  
<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/news/deonar-wont-shut-down/article8216897.ece>  
<http://images.mid-day.com/images/2016/jul/26-Deonar-dumping-ground-l.jpg>



Deonar Dumping Ground

For additional information, refer

Joshi et al. (2013). Solid waste management on dumping ground in Mumbai region – A study *International Journal of Computer Applications* (0975 – 8887), pp 18-22. Paper presented at the *International conference on Green Computing and Technology*, 2013. Online: <http://research.ijcaonline.org/icgct/number3/icgct1327.pdf>

Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB, 2014). Report on "Status of municipal solid waste management in municipal corporations- Maharashtra". Online version: <http://mpcb.gov.in/ereports/pdf/Mumbai%20Booklet%20Final%20All%20171%20Pages%20new%201%20to%2084.pdf>

Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (n.d). Gorai dumpsite closure: A success story. Online: [http://www.mcgm.gov.in/irj/portalapps/com.mcgm.solidwastemanagement/images/gorai\\_presentation\\_addition.pdf](http://www.mcgm.gov.in/irj/portalapps/com.mcgm.solidwastemanagement/images/gorai_presentation_addition.pdf)