



How Ecoware became the largest manufacturer of compostable tableware in India

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When weighing the benefits of plastic disposables vs washed and reused utensils, Ecoware is for you. It is India's first and largest manufacturer of compostable tableware.

Francis May 4, 2015

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We all know that plastics are harmful but when we have a party or order take out, it seems so much simpler to just use plastic disposables than worry about washing up.

Well, we don't have parties or eat out every day, so it's okay right?

Think again. All that disposable plastic either languishes in landfills forever (5000 years sure sounds like eternity) or **makes it way to the ocean, killing wildlife** and adding to the increasing amount of micro-plastics in the ocean. Plastics also leach chemicals into food it stores, and **storing food in plastics** is not a good idea.



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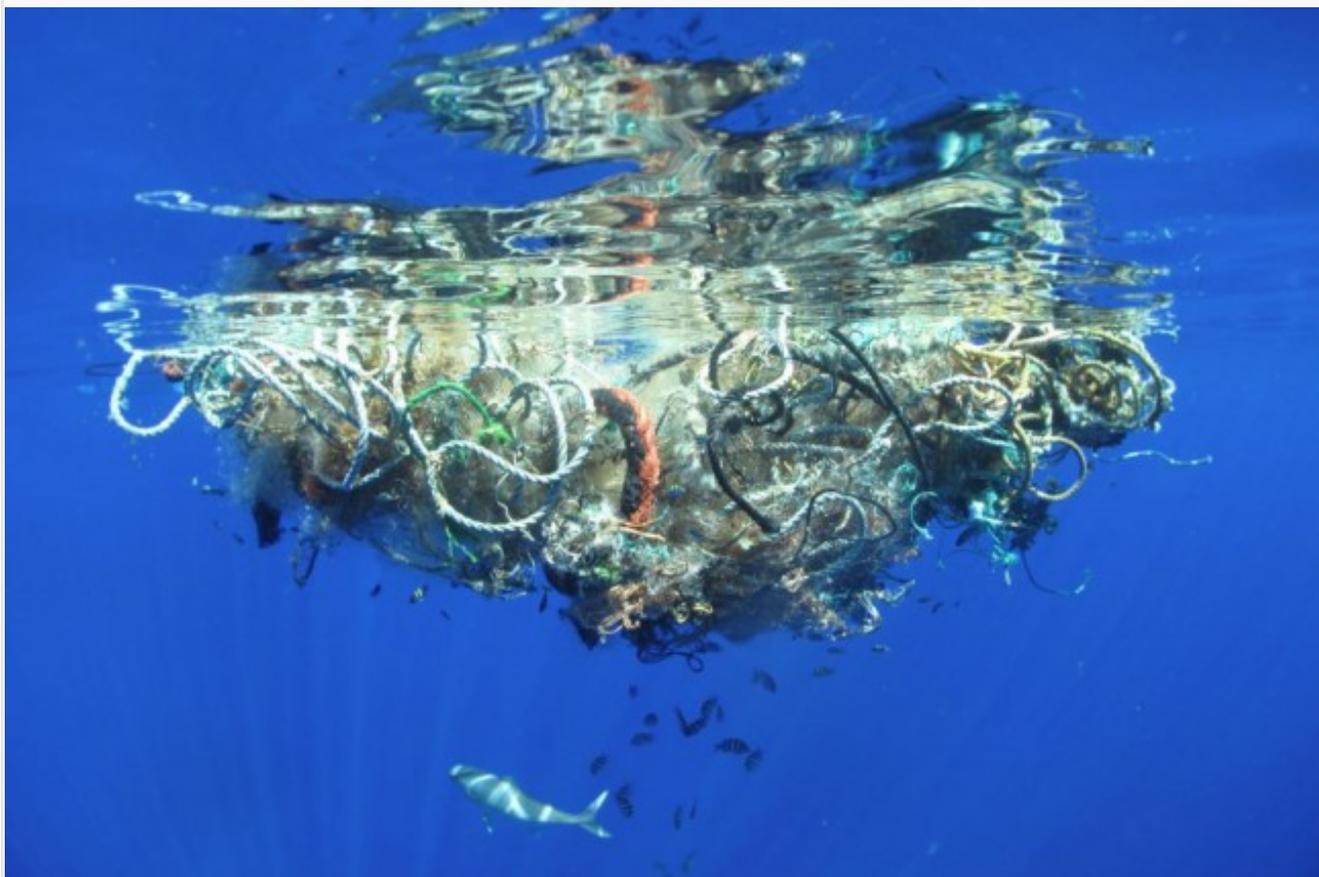
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Garbage patches in the ocean like this one result in the deaths of millions of oceanic wildlife each year, as the plastic particulates become deeply imbedded in the plankton population, the food source for many marine animals. Photo author: Lindsey Hoshaw.



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Remains of an adult albatross – “The plastic goes down the gullet quite easily. But since it is not digested, it gets stuck before exiting the stomach. There it sits to block the entry and digestion of legitimate food. Even the tiniest of pieces can cause blockages.”

from [Plastic in the Sea](#). flickr cc [gramarye](#)

If you are weighing the benefits of plastic disposables vs. washed and reused utensils, [Ecoware](#) is for you. Ecoware is India's first and largest manufacturer of compostable tableware.

We spoke with Rhea Singhal, CEO of Ecoware about her entrepreneurial journey. When Rhea moved from the UK to Delhi she was struck by how poorly garbage was managed – by the same people who created it! There was no segregation and there were just piles of waste being sent to landfill. She saw that people were talking about health and safety of food but ignoring the very plastic that their steaming food was stored in. The most important question for her was...



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“Shouldn’t we care as much for what we eat out of as we do with what we eat?”

The solution she had in mind involved using plant biomass to create disposable tableware that is strong, water resistant, and aesthetic. Her company, Ecoware started using bagasse (not the edible parts of any plant) to make a range of disposable dishes that are certified by the [USDA](#) as being compostable. Today, her products are used in several restaurants, institutions and schools.



Ecoware's 100% biodegradable and compostable bowl

What does ‘compostable’ mean?

Rhea says it makes more sense to use the term ‘compostable’ than ‘biodegradable’ because



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technically everything is biodegradable (a banana peel takes 2 to 5 weeks while a plastic beverage bottle takes 450 years to decompose). “When we say compostable, it means that if you put it back into the soil or household compost, it will degrade in a maximum of 90 days,” she says. Rhea, a self confessed fan of composting loves composting kitchen waste with her children. However, her larger aim is to work with bulk generators – large institutions and QSRs (Quick Service Restaurants) – where tableware is used in bulk and washing up is not always possible.

Getting ready with R & D

Ecoware invested a lot in Research & Development spending nearly a year fine-tuning the product into what it is today. They have stringent quality control markers throughout the entire production making sure that the end product is free of any pesticides or chemical residues. “I don’t think R&D ever ends, I don’t think it ever should. We still keep experimenting with shapes and sizes and the components”, says Rhea.



Ecoware's Burger box

Creating demand for compostable tableware in India

When Ecoware started 6 years ago, the idea of biodegradable, compostable tableware was rather alien. Most people did not know what Rhea was talking about or could not comprehend how something biodegradable could also be sturdy and water-proof.

From a business point of view, they have had to create business channels for wholesale and retail (both online and offline). This meant spending a lot of time on the ground pitching their product and spreading awareness about plastic use and the garbage crisis. "When Ecoware had just started out, I tested our products with a large group including mothers, vendors and various end consumers." Ecoware has worked with wholesalers in the heart of old Delhi, Chandni Chowk and has been able to bring about behavioural change in them. "They now understand what they should do when someone comes asking for biodegradable or eco-friendly plates", says Rhea.

Today, their tableware is used by Haldiram's outlets in Delhi and NCR, Cinnabon, Delhi Airport, schools across the country and is even available on Amazon and Snapdeal. She fondly talks of how they worked with caterers of the Commonwealth Games in Delhi to make sure all food was served in compostable, non-plastic alternatives.

Is Ecoware looking for government intervention?

"Forget tax breaks, I would be content with better enforcement of waste management and plastic usage directives. I would love to go down the road and not see people throw waste out of their cars. I would love to see people put the right waste in the right bin. If we don't, Swachh Bharat will remain just a slogan," says Rhea.

Growth of Ecoware

Ecoware which started out in Haridwar, now has a production facility in UP as well. Their factories, Rhea says, provide year round employment to a thousand people who otherwise

worked as casual labourers in sugarcane mills. Going forward, she would like Ecoware to be associated with responsible living and launch compostable cutlery and garbage bags in the near future.

On how to make a difference

Rhea says she enjoys composting at home, and is happy that this habit is spreading in the community. She has been successful in getting rid of all the plastic from her home and office. "If we can educate even five people around us, we can start to believe that we are making a difference".

For product enquiries or to place an order, visit www.ecoware.in

All photos courtesy ecoware

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Must watch the Story of Three Bottles! A careless swing to the landfill or a unsegregated accumulation of plastic junk, dispersed thoughtlessly harm the tiniest fauna of the environment. But do we really need all these to be reminded?? Where is our Sanity!

However, finally Ecoware came with a 100% bio-degradable table-wares - a promise to a cleaner surrounding after a gathering! Perhaps this we can afford!

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