

A Discursive Concern on Pollution in Kathmandu Valley and Its Consequences¹

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Abstract

I find this dialogue meaningful here.

A gentleman: *Hello sir, what are the three remarkable things you find in Nepal?*

Tourist: *Oh! I find that every man is a doctor; every man is a politician; and Kathmandu is a big toilet.* (Source: Personal talk)

“Kathmandu is a big toilet”. What a joke! What a satire! Is Kathmandu so? Interesting! This paper explores the discursive concern about pollution in Kathmandu, the study area, and its consequences. The previous mayors of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) solved this problem partially. The city dwellers could not have breathed fresh air for about two decades despite several attempts by environmentalists and awareness articles written by national and international writers. The findings of the study show that Kathmandu is one of the dirtiest cities in the world and there is a possibility of lung cancer, respiratory problems, and many more. These adverse impacts of pollution are beyond prediction. This metropolitan city now has a new young energetic Mayor, Balendra Shah. The Kathmanduites have woven a big dream over him. I think he will come up with good new plans to address the discursive concern on the pollution problem. There are limited scholarly research papers published on this issue. The study sheds light on, “When will the day of crystal clean Kathmandu come?” and attempts to make the KMC people commit to strictly monitoring waste management. Pollution means the natural environment deterioration: air pollution, water pollution, land pollution, light

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pollution and noise pollution. This paper focuses on the strict implementation of strict rules to curb the pollution crisis. This provision mitigates the pollution problem so that people breathe fresh air and enhance the environmental literature. The mixed methods of cause and effect, document analysis and qualitative research were used in the study.

Keywords: Cause and effect, discursive, Kathmandu, overpopulation, pollution

Introduction

This paper explores the discursive concern of the pollution problem of Kathmandu Valley and its adverse consequences like lung cancer and respiratory problems. The overpopulation and their negligence cause the adverse impacts of pollution. The study analyzes air pollution, water pollution, land pollution, light pollution and noise pollution in brief. The main purpose of this paper is to find the ultimate solution to the pollution problem and regular water supply in Kathmandu. The pollution problem has innumerable global impacts on humans, plants, and other creatures who share this planet earth. This deteriorates the natural beauty as the plants and creatures get affected and their natural growth becomes otherwise. Nature is the source of literature. The Romantic poets composed poems based on natural beauty. So, if the pollution is controlled, plants will be healthy and they will bear flowers and fruits—the sources of natural beauties, poetic creation—the creation of literature.

How did the tourist dare to say Kathmandu is a big toilet? What a shameful comment he passed! Sometimes, this saying makes us feel so in Kathmandu when the drain was jammed for a month and the road was covered with toilet materials spilled all over the road as it happened at old Baneshwar for two months about seven years ago (Niraula, 2021). The drainage problem in Kathmandu is the usual problem and the fast-action trend is no more in practice. Despite this entire adversity, Kathmandu, the capital city of the country, is the center of attraction for those people who are living out of the valley. About more than 90% of people from outside the valley come to Kathmandu and want to settle here by hook and crook. Shrestha, et al. (2022) make clear, “Water quality of rivers within Kathmandu is deteriorating due to overpopulation and its consequent stress on the environment. Water resources are being increasingly polluted by domestic, agricultural, and industrial wastes” (p. 2). The water problem is common and ongoing in Kathmandu. The water from Bagmati, Bisnumati, Tukucha, and Dhobikhola is not drinkable now. These rivers have been badly polluted and contaminated with the waste thrown by the public (Shrestha, 2022). Including kitchen waste, people throw agricultural

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and industrial waste into these rivers at night. The main drinking water source of Kathmandu is not the rivers but “Groundwater is the drinking water source” (Warren, 1997, p. 8) for Kathmanduites. This water is not enough for the city dwellers. So, because of the scarcity of water, cleaning is suspended or left unclean which causes the pollution problem. This paper analyzes these discursive issues. Since you are doing discourse analysis, first you need to posit the discourse properly

The deterioration of the natural environment hampers the whole natural activities. Nature is the source of literature from an environmental literature point of view. Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Byron, Keats, and Shelley have created beautiful poems. They were inspired and influenced by the beauty of nature. The beauty of nature is the source of the new creation of literature. Therefore, the whole planet Earth has to be pollution-free so that there will be a chance of creation of great literature. Therefore, the study sheds light on generating sustainable insights into its underlying power dynamics and real-world consequences of KMC. The most concerning but seemingly ignored subject is light pollution of which a negligible number of people are aware. “In contrast to odour, glare, and airborne particles, light pollution is rarely addressed since its effects are not immediately apparent” (Ghimire, 2023). This problem helps enhance the eye cataract.

Research Questions

The study focuses on the health issues because of these pollution problems. Those who have been living in Kathmandu often suffer from high fever, diarrhoea, common cold, and respiratory problems. What is the ultimate solution for waste management so that Kathmandu will be crystal clean? How to provide a sufficient water supply to the city dwellers and control them from throwing waste on the roads and into the rivers? The research attempts to answer these questions.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were: to find the ultimate solution to waste management and regular water supply in Kathmandu Valley and to make it clean; to control the city dwellers from throwing waste on the roads and into the rivers by making an active authoritative monitoring mobile team to penalize on the spot.

The major source of waste is the overpopulation and the mismanagement. If every house consciously manages the waste it will be easier for the local government. Land pollution seems to be a major problem as everybody experiences it although other

pollution cannot be overlooked. The effects are fatal and harmful to public health. Settling all five kinds of pollution has been a must.

Statements of Problem

There are no regular research works carried out on pollution in Kathmandu Valley and the local government cannot have strictly implemented the measures and suggestions given by the researchers. Various types of research about overall natural environment deterioration seem to have been carried out. Among them, very few studies have been done on discursive concerns about pollution and water supply in Kathmandu Valley and its consequences. Regular journal articles about the adverse effects of pollution problems can make city dwellers do something to settle the problems. Close investigation to identify the causes and effects of domestic wastes and insufficient water supply has not been sincerely done. This paper might be the key to opening a kind of deadlock. Kathmandu, the capital city, has not become Kathmandu as expected it to be. This is a city of the most selected high-class people but it is always unsafe from a natural environment point of view. Why? High-class people mean highly qualified and dignified people, high government officials, and big business people. Still, the stinking smell, the badly polluted air, the contaminated water, and the traffic jams because of piles of waste on the roads as such cannot be ignored. The sky of Kathmandu is full of poisonous smog and the people are suffering from respiratory problems. The lungs of people in Kathmandu are badly contaminated. Who will compensate for this? Hundreds of skyscrapers are there and the people who have been living there are not illiterate and laymen. The pollution problem cannot have been solved for several reasons. The over-politicalized activities are also responsible for these mismanagements that must be discouraged if the task force has not been strictly implemented.

Methodology

The methods of qualitative research, document analysis, and cause and effect were used to do the discursive analysis of the study. The health issue of Kathmandu people is the adverse effect, the cause is the pollution, and overpopulation and their unawareness is the reason. Similarly, “Everything happens for a reason; for every effect, there is a specific cause. . . . Aristotle asserted that we live in a world governed by law, not chance. He stated that everything happens for a reason, whether or not we know what it is.” (Tracy, 2012). We live in a world governed by law that people violate time and again as a result, everyone has to suffer. It is just like, “a chair’s material cause is wood and nails”

(Omidvar, 2017). The wood and nails help make a chair. Unlikely, people's unaware nature helps make the city polluted. The related information was collected from different journal articles and books as well as websites. They were analyzed and interpreted so that they could make the people of Kathmandu feel the urgency of doing something for the ultimate solution of environmental pollution and its adverse consequences. Pollution is directly related to the public health issues. To browse the articles from websites, the keywords: cause and effect, air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, land pollution, natural environment, waste management, and so on were used. Two people's experiences were also included though I discussed with a lot of scholars informally on the issue. There were not any categorical thematic codes applied to the discussion. They were randomly discussed. The major focus of the paper was to find the ultimate solution to waste management and water supply.

Review of literature

The study focuses on the discursive concern of pollution in Kathmandu Valley. It attempts to explore the causes and effects of natural environmental decline. As a result, ozone layer depletion and global warming, respiratory problems, skin cataracts, and eye cataract problems have become challenging and life-threatening. The oxygen-producing capacity of the plants has been decreasing. It is needless to say that every change in nature is irreversible and nonrenewable. The study reviewed these major articles and book chapters: "The Law of Cause and Effect" by Tracy (2012), "An analysis of Aristotle's theories of causation" by Omidvar (2017), "Water Pollution and Health" by Pandey (2022), "Air Pollution in Nepal" by Joshi (2022), "What Does "Noise Pollution" Mean?" by Gonzalez (2022), "The Threat of Ambient Air Pollution in Kathmandu, Nepal" by Saud and Paudel (2022), "Current Status of Water Environment in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal" by Srestha et al., "Two Long-Term Problems: Too Many People, Too Few Trees" by Nissani(2009) and "Environmental Ethics: Catalyst for Human/ Nature Relationship in "A White Heron"." by Chaulagain(2020) for the discussion. There are some other articles and books, too, according to their relevancy of discussion.

Result and Discussion

The study focuses on changing the mentality of the public. "Perceptions on environment problems including public opinion and preferences as established by the political process shift quickly over time, and it seems that the policymaker is tempted to follow such shifts quickly" (Siebert, 2008, p. 167). The people from Kathmandu are not

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unaware of such challenges but because of their negligence and carelessness, the pollution is as usual. Most of them knowingly throw the waste on the roads and into the nearby rivers. So, there is still a lack of civic sense. And “[s]oil is a finite resource, meaning its loss and degradation is not recoverable within a human lifespan. Soils affect the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, our health, and the health of all organisms on the planet” (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2022). Thousands of researches have worked on this issue but reform is unnoticeable. It is because of the lack of strict monitoring law and its weak implementation. The paper discusses on mainly four types of pollution: air, water, land, light pollution and noise in brief. Among the five, the air pollution problem is the most sensitive one that is globally connected. Until and unless the air is clean, human health is always at a higher risk. The unnoticeable problem is, that “human beings are denying the importance of the life forms of other creatures in the world” (Chaulagain 161). Humans prioritize only humans, not other creatures. They do not account for the importance of insects, ants, birds, and animals. Their contribution to the whole is of higher importance.

Anuradha Chaudhary (2006) points out that “CFCs may account for some 20% of the greenhouse effect . . . the dislocation of millions of human beings, and perhaps, even, the extinction of life on earth” (p.182). What a treat! The extinction of life on earth! Can we ever imagine? What a big challenge! Despite big threats and challenges, the man doesn’t seem to be aware. This is what is happening to our health. The air is getting polluter day by day. The sky of Kathmandu is full of contaminated smog.

Moreover, the pollution as Nissani (2009) points out, “We are uneasy about poisons in our food and drinks; in our homes and workplaces; in our air, water, and soil; in our brains and livers; in our pets, domestic animals, lawns, and farms” (30). This quote shows that nothing around us is poison free, everything is contaminated either because of over-chemical aggression. Nissani (2009) again makes aware that “60,000 Americans die each year from respiratory diseases” (31). This number has not been calculated in third-world countries. They are more than this. He suggests, “The situation could be considerably improved by controlling pollution and population” (31). Nissani focuses on controlling the population to control the pollution.

The water pollution is the second most burning problem in Kathmandu. Bagmati, Bisnumati, Tukucha, Dhobikhola, and many other small rivers were the sources of water. Not only the water pollution of these rivers has been regarded as the most serious

environmental problem, but also the “[s]urface and ground water pollution have been regarded as the most serious environmental problem in the Kathmandu urban areas” (Pandey, 2022). Water pollution in Kathmandu has been a matter of great concern although hundreds of projects, that is, national and international, have worked for the betterment, although Kathmandu metropolitan city has been allocating a big budget, Kathmanduites have been suffering from the water pollution. The “urban water quality in Kathmandu valley is not good enough to sustain healthy water ecosystem” (Shrestha, et al. 2022) but the people are compelled to drink that water by treating it with medicines although jar water suppliers and mineral water suppliers have been serving.

Land pollution is the third concern of the study. Nissani (2009) points out that the major cause of pollution is overpopulation. He argues, “[a]s the population goes up, so does pollution of rivers, lakes, air, drinking water and soil” (p. 32). The main source of overpopulation in Kathmandu is outsiders. Many people come to the capital with different purposes and almost all of them do not go back to their villages. It is all because Kathmandu has become an opportunity hunting centre. The big problem is the negligence of the public and the loose monitoring system. Elliff, et al. (2020) pointed out, “This petition indicated that the level of noise pollution in the vicinity of airports in Hungary is too high” (9). So is the reality of all the airports of the world. The people living in Kathmandu Valley are not free from this noise pollution. It is clear that “[n]oise is invisible; it does not smell; it disappears when the source is turned off and leaves no traces in the environment” (Gonzalez 2). But its adverse effects on the hearers are hear loss, hypertension, and blood pressure. There have not been serious studies in this field.

The major concern of this paper is to enhance the environmental literature. The polluted environment pollutes the literary creation. In the case of a sound natural environment, there can be sound literary creation. No doubt. Wordsworth would not compose a poem, ‘Tintern Abbey’, Shelley would not compose ‘Skylark’, Keats would not compose ‘Odes on Grecian Urn’, and so on. Several romantic poets have composed wonderful poems about the beauty of natural phenomena. But because of over-pollution, the natural phenomena are on the verge of extinction. Not only has human health, whole health of the universe has been in critical condition. The city dwellers of Kathmandu are the victims of all four kinds of pollution: air, water, land, and noise. Their health issue has not been seriously realized by the concerned bodies, like local as well as central government. Even the public does not seem to be very serious about the pollution

problems as the major problem. This awareness is a must but there is no strict monitoring from the government nor does the general public raise the voice effectively. They do it once in a blue moon. The consequences of air pollution are respiratory problems, lung problems, and so on. The water pollution causes dysentery and worms. Land pollution contaminates the arable land and that affects the food chain that goes to the human body and all the creatures and plants. Similarly, the consequence of sound pollution is heart loss, heart disease, and hypertension.

Air pollution

Figure 1

Adverse effects of smoke and smog



The air pollution problem is the first and most sensitive problem concerning health issues. The effect of “air pollution may reduce the growth rate of trees or may even lead

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to their destruction” (Siebert, 2008, p. 11). The trees cannot grow well in case of polluted air. Gradually, the plants get dried and destroyed, and the number of trees will go down. Pollution equally helps deteriorate the natural environment and global warming is a big threat in the present-day world. Similarly, Saud & Paudel (2022) point out that “Nepal, especially Kathmandu, in the current situation, is observing rapid urbanization and various infrastructure development projects” (1). The number of houses is increasing in Kathmandu. Sunil Kumar Joshi (2022) says that “[r]apid progress in industrialization and mechanization has resulted in unlimited exploitation of natural resources. Thus, air pollution is a gift of industrial civilization” (231). Industries are necessary for producing machines, food, tools equipment, and devices. They generate employment opportunities because of more population and more consumption. In the name of urbanization and modernization, there has been unexpected exploitation of natural resources. Industrial civilization has been very popular but its environmental effect or impact is beyond our imagination. Saud & Paudel (2022) point out that “[t]he city of temples is now clad in dust and smoke. The pristine blue hills and the crisp blue sky that covered the valley just about two decades ago now appear grey and hazy due to the stagnant smog that hovers over them” (1). It is all because of overpopulation in Kathmandu Valley that many people from out of the valley are coming in for better opportunities.

So, the new infrastructure development projects have been responsible for all kinds of pollution. This is a scientific explanation. How many effects of air pollution have been given like this? “Air pollution is a complex mixture of thousands of components, the majority of which include airborne Particulate Matter (PM) and gaseous pollutants like ozone (O₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), volatile organic compounds (like benzene), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO₂)” (qtd. in Saud & Paudel, 2022). The air contamination in the valley is too much. All these components mentioned here are poisonous and deteriorate human health and other plants and creatures. Likewise, “[w]hile the presence of garbage all over the city and the toxic Bagmati River are both major concerns, it’s the poor air quality that has been gaining the most attention in the last couple of years. Visitors to Kathmandu often get sick within a few days of arrival” (Saud & Paudel, 2022, n. p). Therefore, air is very sensitive and it matters a lot. The smog or dirty air makes the ozone layer thinner or depleted and it hampers all the living things on the earth when the violet rays pass through but it has not been well calculated.

Water pollution

Figure 2

Unmanaged drain water from people's houses into the local rivers of Kathmandu



Air pollution and water pollution are other major threats in Kathmandu. Bagmati, Bishnumati, Tukucha, Dhobikhola, and Manohara rivers were the source of water in Kathmandu long ago but they have been contaminated in such a way that the water from these rivers has been undrinkable. If you touch the water you will have an allergy. People used to take a bath, swim, and drink water from these rivers but now it has been a myth. Therefore, “[s]ince none of the samples are free of pollution (mainly microbial contamination), the water requires treatment before use for drinking purposes” (Devkota & Watanabe, 2005). To fulfil the demand for water supply, there has been a serious step:

In the absence of a specific policy on urban water supply and sanitation, the Kathmandu Valley Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Policy and the Kathmandu Valley Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Strategies were approved by the Government in BS 2057 (AD 2000) to facilitate the implementation of Melamchi Water Supply Project under ADB assistance. It was only in BS 2066 (AD 2009) that the Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Policy was approved by the Government. (Government 7)

This Melamchi Water Supply Project under ADB assistance is the cheapest project to fulfil the drinking water supply to the residents of Kathmandu. Although there is no regular supply, the city dwellers are hopeful of solving the problems of water and pollution. “The Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS) has the overall responsibility for environmental monitoring of all water supply” (*Initial 69*) but the public does not feel the presence of such institutes.

Land pollution

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Figure 3

Waste materials dumped in unmanaged way in the city



Land pollution in Kathmandu is almost a kind of unsolved problem. Clean water is needed to make the land clean and fertile, but this is not a requirement. Kathmandu's lack of open space is beyond imagination and new infrastructures have occupied the remaining land. The open space land is nominal and it is badly polluted. Land pollution or soil pollution is a matter of concern. Keeping the land clean is so important but it has not been so. The use of chemical fertilizer, the chemical aggression, has reduced the fertility rate of land. Factory and industry sewages are the challenging problems that pollute the land. The land is the source of food and other agricultural products. Some study claims that about 90% of the products humans need are from land. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2018 (FAO) (2022) points out:

Soil pollution is devastating to the environment and has consequences for all forms of life that encounter it. Unsustainable agricultural practices that reduce soil organic matter can facilitate the transfer of pollutants into the food chain. For example, polluted soil can release contaminants into the groundwater, which goes on to accumulate in plant tissue, and is then passed to grazing animals, birds, and finally to the humans that eat the plants and animals. (n.p.)

Soil pollution can facilitate the transfer of pollutants into the food chain. This affects human health as the polluted soil can release contaminants into the water and it affects the plants, animals, birds and all the creatures. When a human consumes them they pass to the human body. People in Kathmandu Valley are not untouched by it. Similarly, “WORLD Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2015 was celebrated on June 17 with the recognition that land is critical more than ever” (Guyana n. p.). This shows that the land is in critical condition. The condition of land in Kathmandu is more critical.

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Likewise, “[l]and is our natural ally. But the natural conditions of land and soils are not eternal, and must be protected” (*Guyana* n.p.). There has not been an attempt to protect the land from both the public and the government. Blamires (1991) opines that “the mind cannot conceive or bring forth its offspring unless it is washed by a vast river of literature” (21). Offspring means new creation. A vast river of literature cannot survive unless a vast ocean of forests is conserved; a vast ocean of forests cannot be conserved unless environmental pollution is controlled. Likewise, controlling pollution must be monitored for the betterment of the natural environment and ecology. The most unnoticeable and seemingly unconcerned pollution is light pollution.

Light pollution

Figure 4

The electric lights which are neither eye-friendly nor eco-friendly



The light pollution seems to have been an ignored subject though its adverse effects like eye cataracts, prostate, breast cancer and many more as research shows cannot be ignored. Only on the field of light pollution, thousands of theses can be written but this is just a brief description and explanation of its causes, effects and reasons respectively. About ninety percent infrastructures are not sunlight friendly where the electric lights are used all day long even at a day time. This is the reason. Eye cataracts or other related diseases are the effects that light causes. “The invention of electrical light bulbs created more opportunities for work and leisure. However, exposure to artificial light at night (LAN) affects our biological clock” (Haim, &Portnov, 2013). For easy work, science has invented several tools and devices which are not eco-friendly for a number of reasons

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though we are bound to use it for our livelihood. Electric light is the artificial light which hampers human health.

Noise pollution

Figure 5

Sound pollution around Koteswar, Kathmandu



Noise pollution is also known as sound pollution. Its adverse effect is beyond prediction. It might not be as harsh as air pollution and water pollution. The study has shown that it not only makes the person's hearing loss but it also makes the heart beat faster. This is the effect. The noise source is the traffic, aeroplanes or airports, metal industries, hammer workers, amplifiers sound boxes, brass bands, and musical bands. Moreover, cocks, dog barks, and some birds also produce high sounds. We just account the human concerns, not animals, plants, ants, and insects. They are directly related to

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humans; if they are not in good condition, they will damage human health. “Land use planning and zoning are the most ancient measures to manage noise troubles. About 600 B.C., the regulations of Sibaris city, Calabria, stated that no one could have cocks at home, and the “hammer workers” had to live outside of the city” (Gonzalez,2022). In Kathmandu, land use planning is not well managed. There are a lot of metal factories and hammer works inside the ring road areas.

Conclusion

The study was carried out to explore the ultimate solution of waste management and regular water supply in Kathmandu Valley. The study aimed to warn the public and fuel the municipal council mechanism. The slogan of this paper was to: Say No, “Kathmandu is a big toilet”, and Say yes, “Kathmandu is clean and a crystal clear ideal city”, and “Kathmandu is a Cultural City.”The methods of cause and effect, document analysis and qualitative research were used in the study. The researcher studied about two dozen articles to analyze the issue. In the cause and effect, there is a reason, too. Eye cataracts, skin cataracts, global warming, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, carbon production, CFC, premature hearing loss, lung cancer, and worryingly low human sperm, are the major effects of pollution. The impossibility of discarding chemical aggression is its main reason. On the other hand, overpopulation causes pollution, and the reason is unmanageable infrastructures of the city (Ason). To discourage overpopulation, decentralization is the best solution. The big hospitals, good colleges, and other offices are to be out of Valley, too. The municipal executive has a major role in curbing this pollution crisis. The young and most energetic mayor, Balendra Shah is working hard to settle the problem.

The municipal council has to be rigid either by rewarding or punishing. Continuous water supply from Melamchi is necessary to reduce pollution. They can monitor through CCTV camera surveillance in the local river corridors. Community forest, reforestation and afforestation projects should be strictly implemented as deforestation is a worldwide problem. All the smoke-producing brick factories are to be shifted to open places. Simultaneously, alternative energy from waste is to be generated to address the energy crisis. The biogas plants from the kitchen wastes, and recycled plants should be established in non-residence areas. Recycling and reusing waste materials saves our money from buying expensive chemical fertilizers. The slurry, as a bi-product of biogas, is the best organic fertilizer. Moreover, the municipal council has to

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provide the personal compost bin, and fertilizer-making machine, at every individual home compulsorily. There should be a provision for easy sale in the market for their fertilizers.

In addition to this, a waste decomposer solution helps decompose the waste in 40 days. This process has not been in practice in Nepal. There are double benefits from this waste decomposer: one is waste management, and the other producing organic compost fertilizer. The waste decomposer solution is easily available in the market. The municipal council can start this business on a large scale. This will surely control the waste in Kathmandu, generate employment opportunities, and promote the economy of the nation.

To minimize noise pollution, musical instruments like brass band parties and drumset banging for practice in the residential area should be rehearsed in soundproof houses. Even the sound of conch blowing and jingling bells in the temples and individual houses is irritating or they should be allowed for a certain time. Everything gets settled and solved. Only the lacking is human awareness, civic sense, and a budget. Not Singapore like Kathmandu but Kathmandu like Kathmandu. And when any tourist visits Nepal for the first time s/he will say, Wow Kathmandu! Good Kathmandu! Big Civic and Cultured Kathmandu! Not Kathmandu as a big toilet.

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