

Study on a Zero Waste Dining Hall @ The Valley School, Bengaluru

Background: The Valley School is located in a lush green forest at Tathguni Post, Kanakapura Road, South Bengaluru. The school focuses heavily on nurturing students to learn from nature. This is evident from the campus- Beautiful trees and landscaping, earthy colours on campus, winding paths leading to a few low rise buildings. Volunteers from Kasa Muktha Bellandur had a great time last Saturday(1/11/14) and got to interact with the teachers as part of their Celes Exhibit study.

Everyday more than four hundred students and teachers have lunch in the school's dining hall. The Valley School's dining hall is a Zero Waste Area. Yes, that's right-It is Zero Waste. It's possible! It means saying "NO" to all disposables or single use items made of paper, plastic and styrofoam (plates, cups, glasses and spoons). I must say for them, it was easy to say "no" to disposables. Here's their "Zero Waste" story.

Dining Hall

The dining hall has a lovely entrance. Simple walls on both sides lined with cement bricks leads into a hall. The hand wash area is outside. This leads to the dining hall. It has a lovely and elegant ambience set in a rustic setting.



Tableware: Is 100% stainless steel. At the entrance to the hall students collect the grooved plate and a stainless steel glass for lunch every day.



Food: Food is kept in big stainless steel drums and vessels.



Dining area: The adults and children from KMB appreciated the simple and balanced meal. The children seemed very comfortable sitting on the mats and eating by hand.



Food waste: All food remains must be thrown in a green bin. Note that there are no plastic liners.



Clean up- Plates need to be cleaned at the sink, then dropped off in a water basin. The maids do a final rinse.



Water: There is a single Aquaguard unit serving the students. They can use the stainless steel glass provided or refill their own water bottle. Ro's tend to waste more than 75% of the water. Even this is saved in a blue barrel and used for watering plants.



Composting Unit: Food left overs, vegetables and fruits peels are composted in a tank with three slots. Compost is created in sixty days and is used in the school's extensive garden.



I am truly impressed with The Valley School's dining hall. The décor is simple and natural like the surroundings. It took me back to the '90s when we used to eat off stainless steel plates at our college canteen. Was it that long ago? When did things change? Why do so many fast food chains and hotels serve food only in disposables? Are we all so much in a hurry that we eat and throw the disposables and rush to whatever it is that we all do? It is high time people realize the harm they cause to the environment. Look around you! The disposables (paper, plastic and styrofoam tableware) are everywhere- Clogging up drains, blowing in the wind, by the road side and in landfills. Just tossing the disposables in the bin is not enough. It may be out of sight, but "garbage" doesn't just go away. It lasts forever releasing harmful, toxic pollutants. *Just imagine you use disposables for few minutes each time, but they remain in our environment forever.* STOP now!

School, College, Office Cafeteria's, hotels and even restaurants could easily make a switch to reusables. It's what we did about fifteen years ago! Make the right choice. Do you like (a) The trash dump created by leftovers from homes and hotels OR (b) The garden nurtured by their own food waste @ The Valley School? It's a no brainer...Switch to reusables, NOW! Follow The Valley School's Model.



a) Trash dump



b) Garden @ Valley School