

Mother Earth

Earth day is coming up, more and more people are beginning to be aware of the importance of taking care of our MOTHER Earth. The reason I wrote the word Mother in capitals is because I would like to introduce you to a new concept that involves mothers.

In 1997 the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action chose “Breastfeeding Nature’s Way” as the theme for World Breastfeeding Week. The aim was to celebrate women’s capacity to sustain life, to cherish the life-giving benefits of breast-milk, and to recognize breastfeeding as the most ecological food system. There are many positive reasons for a woman to breastfeed; they range from improved health benefits for the mother and child to ensuring the best physical and psychological development of the baby.

Breastfeeding benefits all parts of society: economically, ecologically, and socially. The least familiar benefit of breastfeeding is the ecological benefit, the topic of my article today. Breastfeeding is a natural and renewable resource; whereas artificial baby milk (also known as baby formula) is non-renewable and creates ecological damage at each stage of its production, distribution, and use.

Breastfeeding protects the environment by reducing the demands made on it and eliminating waste and pollution. Breastfeeding is a unique food in that its development produces no waste and it causes no pollution. It is also the most energy efficient food production system ever known because it is naturally produced to perfection. The mother’s body transforms nutrients from within into a natural, priceless, and specialized food. On the other hand artificial baby milk is produced in factories and that is where it is converted into powder by exposing the milk to high temperatures. This process uses large amounts of electricity that is mostly provided by hydro-electric or nuclear power plants worldwide, this is very expensive and definitively has a role in damaging our environment, damaging our MOTHER earth.

Industrially manufactured, artificial milk goes through many processes, additions, and alterations to convert it from cow’s liquid milk to a tin full of powder that infants can ingest. This is why it is confirmed to be vulnerable to contamination by many things, such as bacteria, radioactivity, chemicals, and toxins such as melanin. In 2005, the Ministry of Commerce recalled shipments of formula milk that had been delivered to Saudi Arabia from another country because it was contaminated with bacteria that was deadly to infants. This is one example of contamination and an example of the fact that many countries including our own import artificial milk and baby food from other parts of the world. This transportation wastes fuel and contributes to air pollution everywhere. The packaging needed for the powdered milk wastes aluminum, plastic, and paper. Feeding the baby artificial milk requires bottles, teats, and other equipment that wastes plastic, rubber, silicon, and glass.

Can you believe that the 550 million tins of artificial milk sold each year to bottle fed babies in the USA when stacked end to end can circle the earth one and a half times?! In Pakistan the number feeding bottles sold stacked end to end would reach the top of Mount Everest! Tins, bottles, and all these wastes are not biodegradable and take 200-450 years to break down and decompose. To feed a three month old baby artificial milk, the mother must prepare one liter of water per day to mix the powder, and another two liters to clean and sterilize the bottles and teats. If she is poor and needs wood to make the fire

she would need 73kg of wood for one year's worth of sterilizing. In most parts of the world water and fuel are scarce and not many women are able to keep their bottles and teats clean enough for the baby.

Breastfeeding needs no transportation, packing, preparation, or sterilization. It is always available, ready, warm, sterilized, and causes no waste or pollution.

We are at a time where movies like WALL.E seem very close to reality. Our home, our MOTHER earth's vitality is threatened by our continuous destruction and refusal to take care of her. We must start; begin with our homes, and our personal decisions. A mother alone can contribute to this environmental awareness by breastfeeding her baby. The benefits are insurmountable.