

Dear Parent:

We are writing to share our concern about an unrecognized national medical emergency caused due to air pollution specially the high incidence of particulate matter in our cities.

We just want to point out EVIDENCE and FACTS based on national and global medical research, and the LAW - and leave it you to make up your own mind. This is only a medical advisory - we don't want to and make the issue about religion, region, caste, community or commerce.

Pollution and health: *First, The facts*

Delhi leads as the most polluted city in India due to its geographical and locational position and air quality falls further with falling temperatures. There are many causes, but among the ones we can control as parents, citizens and residents **are by not burning firecrackers, trash, leaves or any sort of biomass.** Everything that is burnt produces PM2.5, tiny particulate matter that enters our lungs and bloodstream and affects not just our lungs but ever single organ over time. Our children and our elderly are the most affected. These harmful effects are IRREVERSIBLE.

Leading Delhi doctors have come out to confirm that our children and we (as non smokers) have black tar on our lungs due to pollution, and they see the worst cases in Delhi. This is worsened during Diwali due to crackers. Why? Because other hazardous chemicals and metals contained in fireworks (to add colours and sound) like sulphur, cadmium, zinc, strontium and aluminium are released during combustion. They are packed in highly concentrated quantities and are highly carcinogenic. Besides cancers, they are also linked to Alzheimer's and other diseases. These add to the PM, making the air we breathe toxic. ***This poisonous cocktail doesn't disperse from the air for upto three months after Diwali.***

One in four women will get breast cancer due to the air we breathe. A significant percentage of us will get lung cancer or another form of cancer in our lifetimes because we live in the NCR. The statistics on asthma and other lung related illnesses and the severity of the post-Diwali week on our grandparents and our babies has been felt by all of us, and Indian doctors have confirmed this beyond any possible doubt. There are studies to back each of these facts. In fact, the head thoracic doctor at Gangaram has said that the damage done to our health post-Diwali is highly significant and irreversible

Next: The law

The Supreme Court has banned the sale of crackers with a view to use this year as a twat case. This implies a ban on bursting. If you buy crackers now it is illegal as well as morally unethical. **If you buy firecrackers, you are breaking the law.**

Drastic times call for drastic measures. A ban on firecrackers isn't the complete solution. But it's a great first step to limit irreversible damage to our lungs this year and to create awareness. We need a more wholistic solution and we all need to work on it.

Given this, please may we request you to take the time to reconsider your views on any crackers you were intending to burst? **One phooljadi is your child smoking 64 cigarettes, one anar is 35 and one snake is 464.** And it's not only your child, it's your neighbours and everyone else's in the region. (And please, also inform those who say firecrackers are a Diwali tradition that crackers were invented by the Chinese and only became linked to Diwali in the 1920s.)

Sanskriti's junior school student council have already in their letter to the school community urged us to ban firecrackers and celebrate a pollution free Diwali. Let us follow their lead. Traditionally Diwali is the festival of giving, one where good triumphs evil, light triumphs darkness.

LET US PLEDGE NO CRACKERS, CLEAN AIR AND GOOD HEALTH THIS DIWALI.

Sanskriti School PTA