

LESSON No. 15



FOOD HABITS AND FOOD SCARCITY

Food habits of peoples across the globe are different from one another. This is understandable because we live under different climatic zones and topographies as well as follow different belief systems and hold on to specific cultures. Take for instance, we cannot expect Europeans to eat bamboo shoot. Although the climatic condition of Europe is cold, bamboo does not grow in this continent. Whereas peoples in many parts of Asia consume the tender shoots of bamboo, in its natural state or after fermentation, because the plant is abundantly available there.

Even if certain food items are abundantly available in a particular place, the inhabitants do not consume them on account of its religious beliefs and culture. Here we may mention about believers of religions such as Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Certain items are considered either to be “sacred” or “taboo” to be eaten. Cow is considered to be sacred by Hindus. Whereas for Christians and Muslims, beef is a food item. At the same time, pork is a taboo for the Muslims and Seven Day Adventists. Jains refrain from eating onions and garlicks.

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Prohibition of food items are also on the grounds of humanity, compassion and love. For example, recently, the United States of America passed a bill banning the slaughter, transportation, sale and possession of dogs and cats for consumption. It urged all countries in the world including China, South Korea and India to end the dog and cat meat trade. A Congresswoman of the Senate stated, “Dogs and cats are meant for companionship and recreation”.

Finally, food habits are also highly personal based on one’s aesthetic sense such as colour, taste, smell and sight. This is beyond one’s religious and cultural affiliation as well as humanism.

Therefore, it is very important to respect the sentiments of people when it comes to food habits. Never force a food item against one’s will!

Based on food habits people can be categorised into two broad groups such vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Vegetarians usually refrain from meat products. Non-vegetarians consume both vegetables and meat products. However, as we have seen above, there can be individual variation within each group.

Ö Collect pictures of food items from different places/culture. Discuss about it in your classroom.

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Ö Identify vegetarians and non-vegetarians in your classroom.

Ö Make a chart of your favourite food items and food items you dislike the most

When do people not get food?

In Mizoram, in the year 1958–59 many people went hungry on account of “Mautam”. “Mautam” in Mizo means “bamboo death”. During “Mautam”, a species of bamboo flowers at one time across a wide area. This event is followed invariably by a plague of black rats in what is called a “rat flood”. This occurs as the rats multiply in response to the temporary windfall of seeds, and leave the forests to forage on stored grain when the bamboo seeds are exhausted, which in turn causes devastating famine.



Famine can be described as a severe shortage of food resulting in violent hunger and starvation and death. As we have seen above, famines can be caused by pest menace as well as by natural disaster through crop failure.

Famine caused by nature such as less rainfall or no rainfall is called a natural disaster. But sometimes famine is caused not account of natural causes but

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due to man-made causes. This happens when people hoard foodgrains so that there is a scarcity of food in the market. The scarcity of food leads to a rise in the price of foodgrains. This results in man-made famine. Such as man-made famine took place in Manipur in August 1965 due to scarcity of rice in the market. The Bengal famine occurred in 1943 in Bengal. It was estimated that over 5 million people died from starvation, malnutrition and related illness during the famine.

Floods, which we frequently witness in Manipur, and wild-fire also destroy crops leading to food shortage.



- Find out from your grand-parents and elders about the World War II in Manipur and people went hungry.

Do you know where grains are stored?

Foodgrains are stored in granaries and godowns. However, foodgrains may also be spoiled on storage. Rats, insects and micro-organisms can destroy stored foodgrains. Foodgrains can also be spoiled due to careless, handling in transportation, leaky bags, etc.

For protecting our foodgrains, we should use proper storage cabins and godowns.

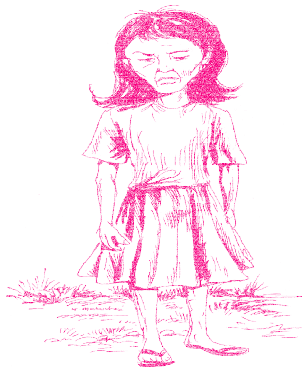
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- Where is paddy stored in your house (local name)? Describe in 4 lines.

Do you know that people gets ill because they do not have enough to eat due to poverty.

They are malnourished. Malnutrition can lead to various diseases. Dr. Tombi has two patients— Mariah and Wilson. Dr. Tombi talked to them to find out more about them. Let us read what the Doctor found.

Mariah, 5 years.



She looks about 3 years old and weak. She has very thin arms and legs and a pot-belly. She always feel tired and cannot go to school regularly. She do not like to play as she feels weak. She gets a little rice or one or two roti with a little sugar or dal in a day.

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Wilson, 7 years

He looks older than his age. He is not very active. His body is fat and flabby. He goes to school by bus and spend many hours watching T.V.

He does not like home cooked foods. Junk food such as chips, burgers, pizzas and soft drinks from the market are his favourites.



Dr. Tombi measured the height and weight of both the children. Then she told them, there is only one treatment of both of your problems-proper food!

Proper food: Every Child's Right

We have read about the two children. One is Wilson who do not like home-made food but finds tasty to junk foods. Do you think Wilson would like games and sports? The other one is Mariah who does not even get enough meal to eat a day. There are many children in our country like Mariah.

They do not get enough food to grow and develop properly. These children are weak and often ill. They are in poor health. But it is the right of every child to get proper food.

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Doctor Tombi Explains:

No food is complete in itself. In order to have all the nutrients in adequate proportion, we must include different type of foods in our diet. Such a food is called a balanced diet. A balanced diet is one which contain different types offoods in adequate quantities and right proportion so as to meet the nutritional requirements of our body.

ACTIVITY

- 1. Talk to your grandparents or elderly people and find out what they ate and what work they did when they were of your age. Now think of your daily diet and daily activities. Are these similar or different from what your grandparents ate and did?*