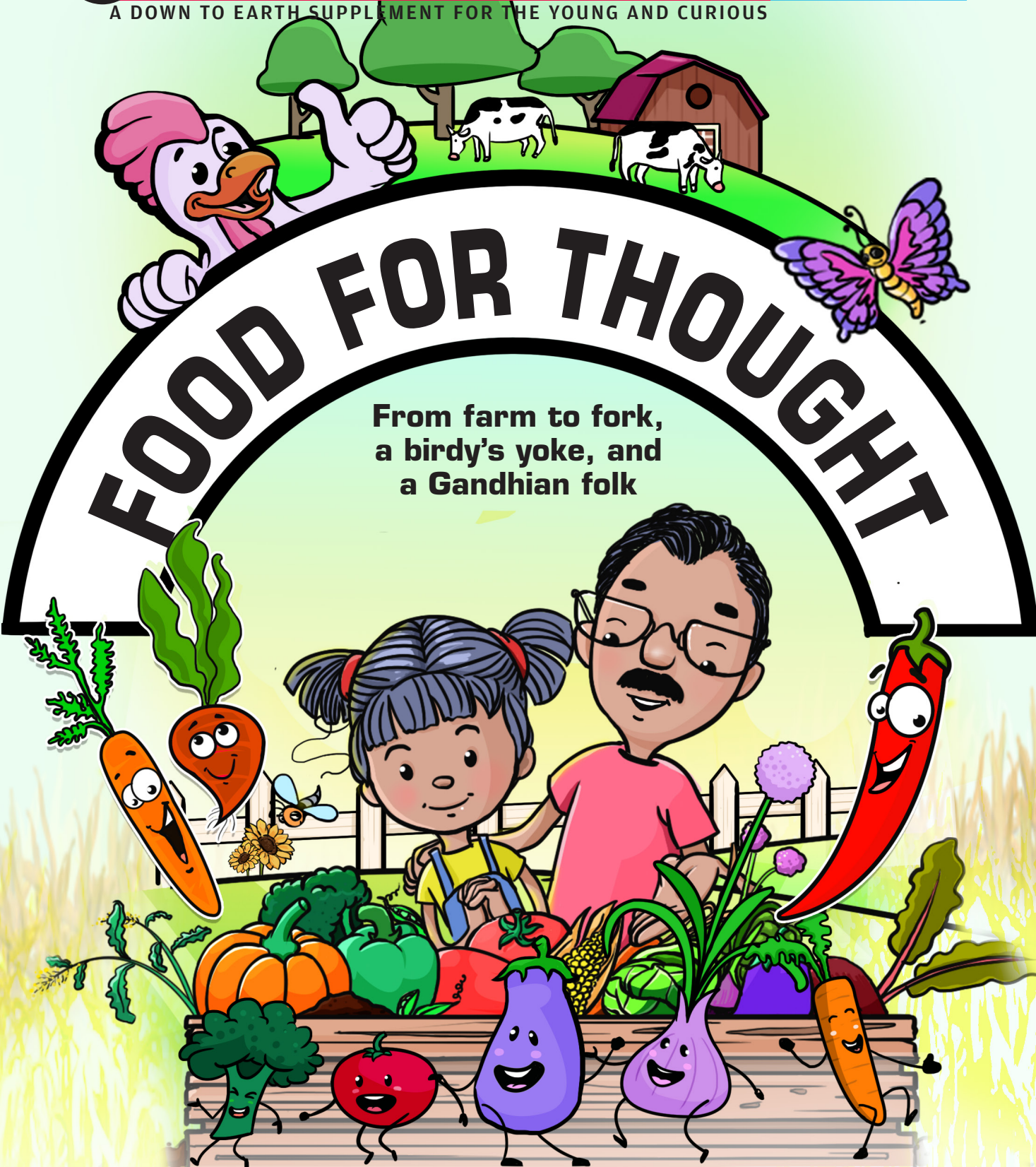


+ HISTORY | READERS-WRITERS | NEAR AND DEAR

gobar times

ISSUE NO: 234, October 1-31, 2021

A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS



Here are some NEW and exclusive toolkits from CSE's Green Schools Programme to help school students, who are re-joining their classes, understand waste and energy management in a fun way. These would be a great addition to any young environmentalist's library collection!

You can buy the toolkits by visiting www.csestore.cse.org.in



Waste Warriors: Environmental Toolkit on Waste Management

Designed with the principle of a fun-filled learning experience, the set of innovative activities aims to serve children with all kinds of learning needs. This unique Activity Set includes a board game, flashcards, and much more. Students and young learners can get started on sustainable lifestyles, beginning with being responsible Waste Managers!



Energy Managers: Environmental Toolkit on Renewable Energy

This toolkit is for all young explorers excited to learn about sources of energy, renewable energy, energy-efficient practices and beyond! It includes easy-to-use activities and Board Games, Puzzles, Quiz and more. Students and beginners can use this to take a step towards understanding and implementing energy efficiency in their everyday lives!

YOU CAN RESERVE YOUR COPY NOW !!!

Please place your order online by visiting us at <https://csestore.cse.org.in/>



scan the QR code here

or mail your order along with a Cheque for the required amount, drawn in favour of "Centre for Science and Environment", to

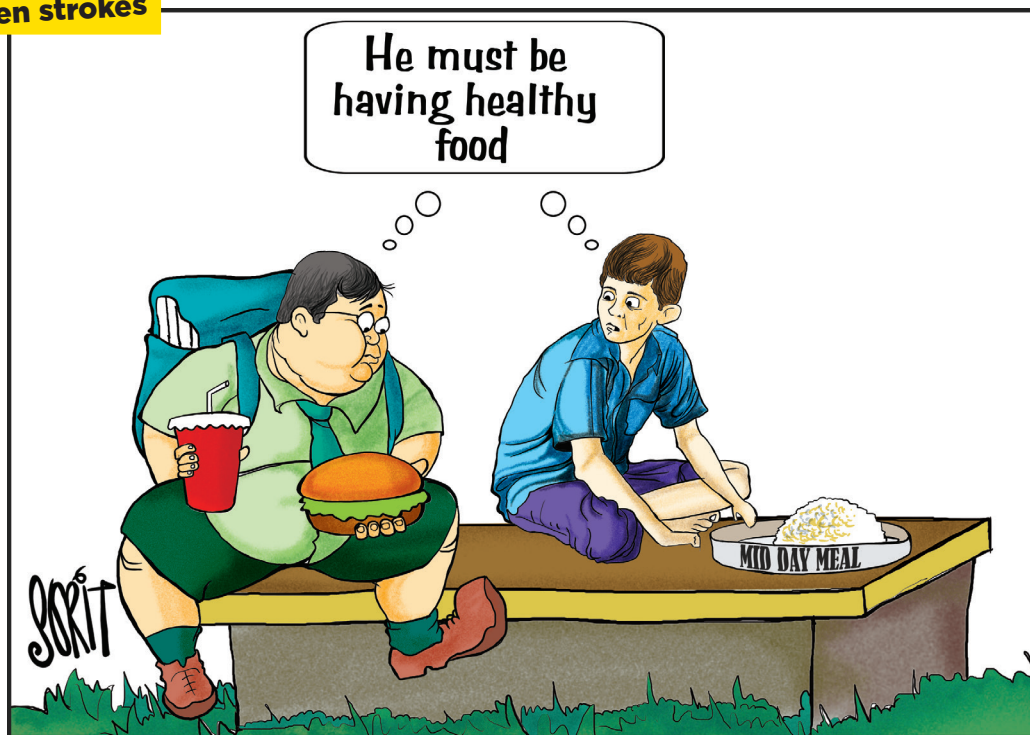


Centre for Science and Environment
41, Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi - 110062

In case of any query, write to Ramachandran at: rchandran@cseindia.org

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Green strokes



Eat Healthy, Think Wise

The German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach once said, “Man is what he eats.” But what is it that we eat? Noodles, pulao, and pizza? In reality, what we eat today is not just food but a net outcome of the experiments humans have conducted since the beginning of civilisation. For instance, bread is made from wheat, a cereal developed from a wild grass. Similarly, all the cereals we consume today have been developed from wild grasses. But most of us don’t know how many trials and errors they went through and how long it took to yield the variety we now consume.

Everything we eat has a distinct story. Simply put, one can say that what we know as food is a product of our social, political, and economic history.

On September 23, last month, many countries came together to figure out more about food, like the food on our platter and, more importantly, the food systems. These systems refer to all the stages

of growing and harvesting crops to processing, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing food and related items. It’s important to know about each of these steps because every step involves some amount of energy use, which releases a huge amount of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

But we need to eat in order to live. Now, the irony is that the GHGs we emit in order to feed ourselves are themselves putting a big question mark on our existence.

Talks are on about what kind of action can bring about the reduction of GHG emissions. At the same time, we need to provide food to roughly eight billion people on our planet. We need to change our diets and production practices, reduce the use of water, diversify foods, and must try to eat local food.

So, watch out the next time you waste any food on your plate!

Freeze Frame by Vikas Choudhary



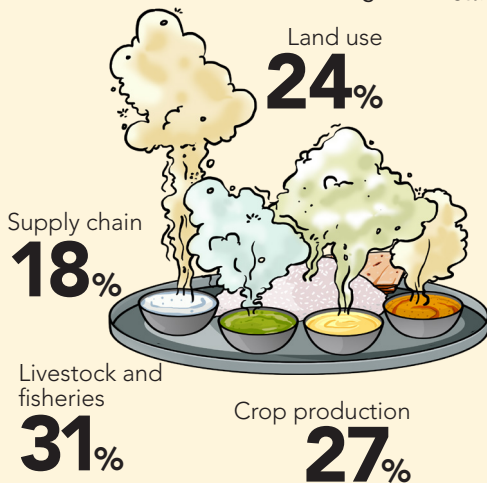
The glorious monsoon: As rains pour in different parts of the country, flora and fauna revive exuberantly just as this peacock in full bloom

This space is for young and budding wildlife photographers who wish to share their work with us!

Send us your best pics at young.downtoearth@org.in

Digits speak

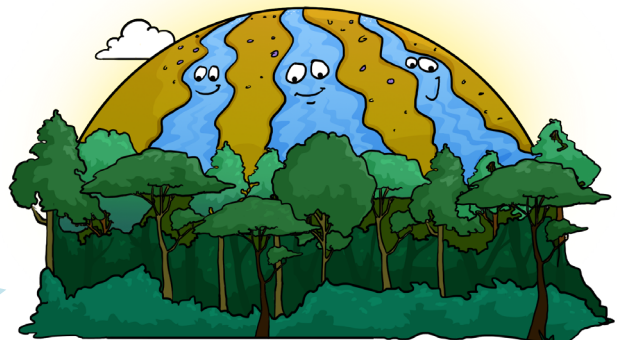
Food systems—the way we produce our food—alone account for one-quarter of the global greenhouse gas emissions, which currently stand at 52.3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalents. The major sources of these food emissions are given below.



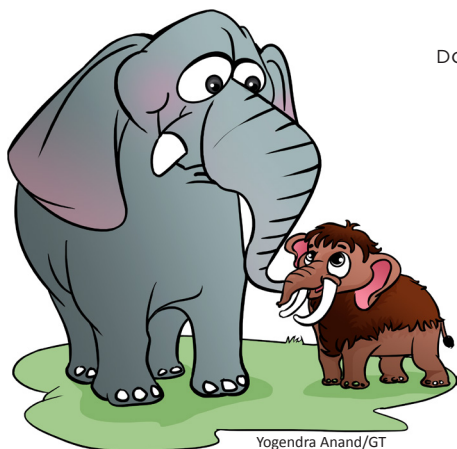
Source: *Bending the Curve: The Restorative Power of Planet-Based Diets*, a report by WWF, published in October 2020

The Amazon of Europe

The UNESCO recently designated Mura-Drava-Danube (MDD) as the world's first 'five-country biosphere reserve.' The MDD river system, popular as the 'Amazon of Europe,' is home to several endangered species, such as little terns and otters. It is also the annual resting and feeding place of several migrant birds. It covers a million hectares and stretches across Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, and Serbia. MDD is Europe's largest riverine protected area and aims to conserve 30 per cent of the European Union's land area by 2030. The project focuses on river revitalisation, sustainable business practices, and enhancing cross-border cooperation among various countries.



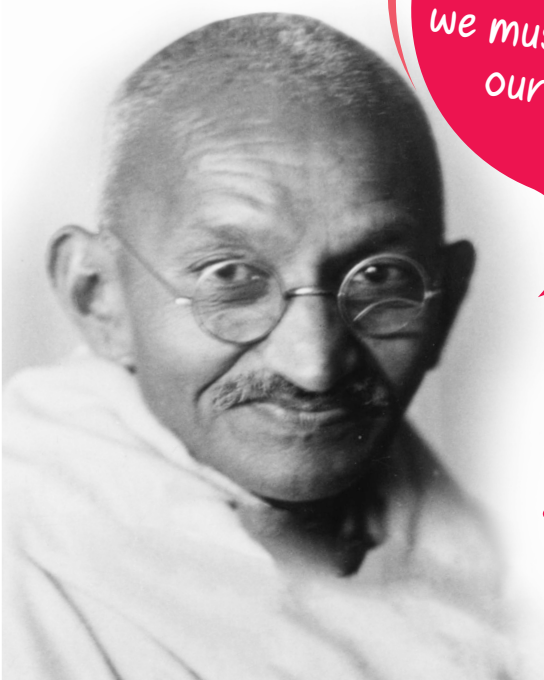
Yogendra Anand/GT



The Mammophants

Woolly mammoths are the 4,000-year-old extinct relatives of today's elephants. A US-based start-up *Colossal Biosciences* plans to bring them back to life in the Arctic. They would use the CRISPR gene-editing technology to modify Asian elephant embryos into those of woolly mammoths, and have received a funding of US \$15 million. They believe that 'mammophants' could help reduce climate change and revive the ecosystem by trampling shrubs, knocking over trees, and fertilising grasses with their faeces. While this project hopes to reduce global warming, the moot question remains: just because we can resurrect extinct species, does this mean we should?

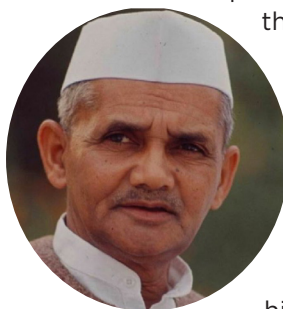
If we
are to create
peace in the world,
we must begin with
our children



• Mahatma Gandhi

Stalwart Statesman: Lal Bahadur Shastri (1904-66)

Born in UP, Lal Bahadur Shastri was inspired during his childhood by the writings of Annie Besant and Swami Vivekananda. In 1921, after attending a public meeting addressed by Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malviya, he quit his school and joined



the Non-Cooperation Movement. In 1925, he graduated from Kashi Vidyapith, where he was admired as 'Shastri (scholar)'. Thereafter, he dropped

his inherited title 'Srivastava,' in opposition to the caste system. Then, he worked for the upliftment of low castes through the *Lok Seva Mandal* run by Lala Lajpat Rai.

In 1930, Shastri participated in the Dandi March and was jailed often. In 1947, he served in the UP cabinet of Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant. But he became more popular as the Union Railway Minister when he resigned on moral grounds after a train accident. Following Jawaharlal Nehru's death, he succeeded him as our Prime Minister in 1966.

Shastri offered formidable leadership to our country during the Indo-Pak War of 1965 and raised the slogan of *Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan* (Hail soldier, hail farmer). He initiated Green Revolution to make India agriculturally surplus. He also led the White Revolution to transform India from a milk-deficient nation to the world's largest milk producer. Shastri was posthumously honoured with India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna.



Young Energy Managers

Summarising the successful completion of the 'Audit@Home: Energy Managers' held recently.

Neeraj Kumar, Team GSP

Environment is not only about trees and tigers; it incorporates a variety of other concerns and subjects such as air, water, food, proper management of waste, etc. In addition to all these, energy is another area which is of vital importance for us. With changing times, the demand for energy has been increasing. We have always been dependent on fossil fuels for energy – and we all know that fossil fuels are some of the biggest sources of pollution. Increasing use of fossil fuel-based energy, therefore, means more pollution.

Did you know that globally, for every unit of power consumed (measured in kiloWatt-hour or kWh), 800 gram to 1 kilogram of carbon dioxide (CO₂) gets released into the atmosphere? For example, if the monthly consumption of your household is 450 units of electricity, this can add up to 450 kg of CO₂ emissions – isn't that

a lot of carbon that you are throwing out into the environment?

Now imagine that your house is operating completely on solar energy: you would save over 5,000 kg of carbon emissions in a year! We all have a responsibility towards the environment, towards keeping it clean and pollution-free. In terms of energy, we can fulfil that responsibility by adopting renewable sources of energy.

There has been great progress in the field of renewable energy – energy derived from sun

I really enjoyed doing the Energy Managers activity. All the questions were very interesting and full of information, whether they were based on solar panels or about the temperature of AC. If there is no energy, there will be no life. Conservation of energy will make our future bright, so we have to conserve energy as well as the Nature.

—Mayank Sharma, Class X,
Oxford Green Public School,
Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh



(solar), wind, hydel power, etc. – in the last few decades. You may say that we have an abundance of energy, but that does not mean it can be squandered away. Proper and efficient use of energy is the need of the hour, and we cannot do so without changing our practices.

To make young environmentalists like you conscious of their energy consumption and to enlighten them about how they can make it more sustainable, the Green Schools Programme (GSP) had launched a household online audit – the GSP Audit@Home: Energy Managers – in August 2021. Students from across the country took a step towards managing their

I am thankful to the GSP team for their continuous efforts on enriching our student's knowledge and horizons by organising the GSP Audit@Home. It's our privilege to be a part of this team and we hope this continues in future as well.

—Shivani Patial, GSP Coordinator, Government High School, Dugha, Himachal Pradesh

energy requirements efficiently by participating in this audit. It gave them an opportunity to assess the energy consumption in their homes and register improvements in every area.

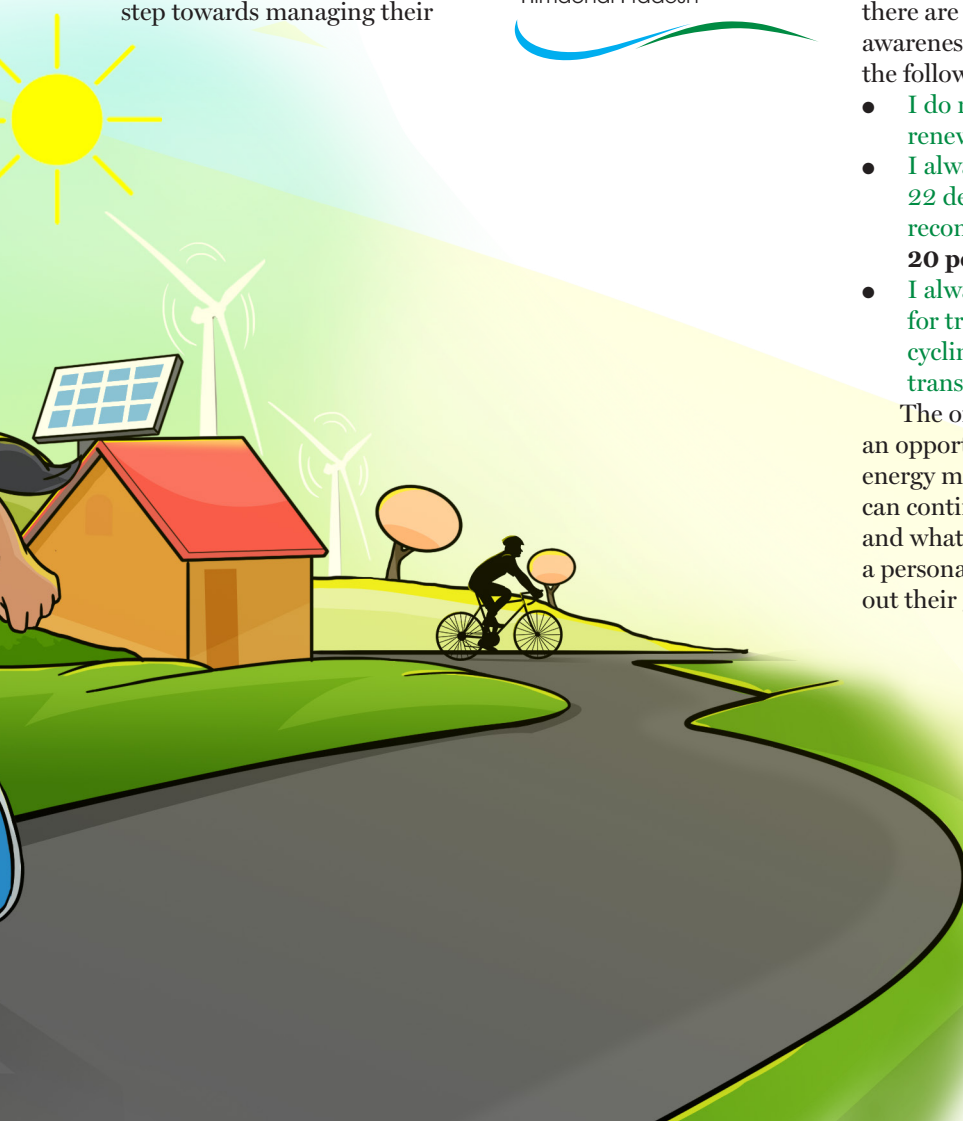
The analysis of the Audit@Home results has shown us that many of our young friends have taken giant strides towards an energy-efficient future.

- I know how to read my electricity bill – **68 per cent**
- I use energy-efficient lighting at home – **85 per cent**
- I use BEE star-rated electricity products at home – **74 per cent**
- I take care to switch off appliances when they are not in use – **92 per cent**

The results are encouraging, but there are some areas that need more awareness. The audit also showed the following.

- I do not use any form of renewable energy – **26 per cent**
- I always operate AC at 22 degrees as against the recommended 26 degrees – **20 per cent**
- I always use my motor vehicle for travelling instead of walking, cycling or taking public transport – **22 per cent**

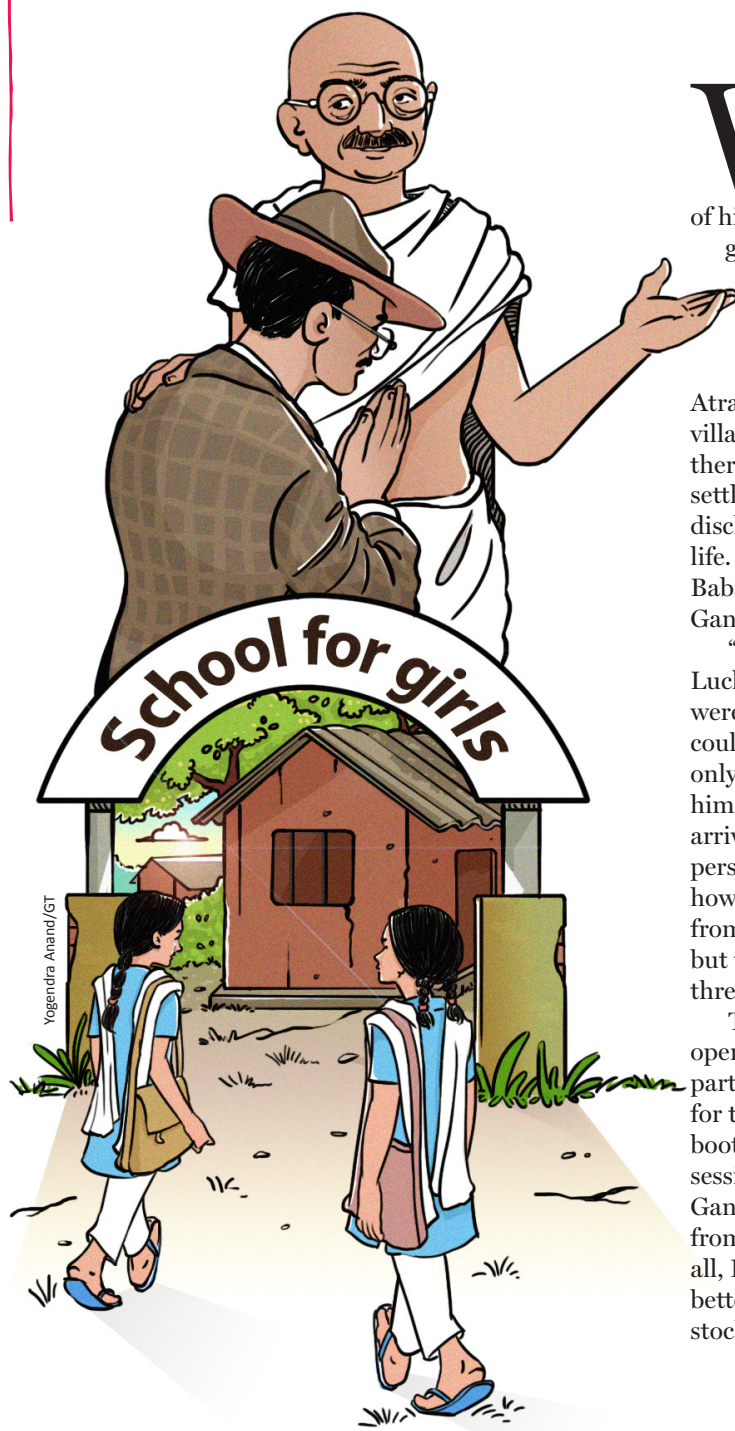
The online survey gave students an opportunity to understand which energy management practices they can continue, which ones to stop and what new ones to adopt through a personalised scorecard that chalks out their green journey for them.



The Destined Encounter

On this Gandhi Jayanti, remembering an educator and activist—Suryaprakash Srivastava—who narrated how Gandhi inspired him to pursue the road less travelled.

Anil Ashwani Sharma and Anubhuti Sharma



We have read about Mahatma Gandhi since our childhood. Suryaprakash Srivastava (c. 1926-2009) had also heard

of him but unlike our generation, he also got a chance to see him in person. And when he actually did, it was an epic moment. People now fondly remember Suryaprakash as 'Baba'.

Barely 20 km from Malihabad, in Atrauli tehsil of Hardoi district in UP, is a village named Bharawan. Until Baba arrived there, it had remained a decrepit, rustic settlement. In 2001, over an interview, he disclosed several unspoken aspects of his life. When asked about its biggest events, Baba recalled the episode when he met Gandhi in 1942.

"That was when I was the principal of Lucknow's Higher Secondary School. There weren't many newspapers back then so we couldn't see any celebrities daily. I too had only heard of Gandhiji but had never seen him. So, when I got to know that he was arriving in my city, I decided to see him personally. After all, I always wondered how Gandhiji looked like—a personality from whom not the just whole country but the world's biggest empire was feeling threatened. Finally, that moment arrived."

The Congress party's sessions were an open affair in which all commoners could participate. "Gandhiji was due to stay here for two days. So, I reached there suited-booted on day one. I attended the whole session but couldn't identify anyone named Gandhi. Yet I didn't wish to enquire this from the poor folks assembled there; after all, I considered myself more educated and better off. I didn't want to be their laughing stock, so I remained seated throughout the

day, listened to the politicians, and returned with a long face.”

“The next day, I swore to see Gandhiji even at the cost of my reputation. As the session was closing, I asked an old man in tattered dhoti, ‘*Bhai*, who’s Gandhiji among them?’ And what I feared, happened. That guy scanned my paraphernalia and then with utmost detest mocked, ‘You may appear quite literate from your dressing but actually you are a dumbo inside your head! Don’t you know Gandhiji?!’

“I was willing to bear every insult if that cranky fellow could just tell me who Gandhiji was. Finally, when he was satiated, he pointed, ‘The one descending from the stage, supported by two others, is Gandhiji.’ That was all he had to say to leave me spellbound.”

“Shocked with my jaw fallen to the ground, I blurted, ‘*Aree bhai...* is Gandhi such an unclothed man? The person whom the entire country is running behind and the mighty British are intimidated by is in reality a half-naked guy?!’”

“I’d assumed that Gandhiji would be some 9-10 feet tall with huge moustaches, swirling a shining sword, and riding a white horse. I kept staring at him like a stone and for the first time in life I realised that physique doesn’t ensure magnanimity but strength of mind does. And when I returned to my senses, I found myself facing Gandhiji. That’s because as he proceeded, he always greeted and shared light banter with everyone he came across. The people also wanted to touch his feet. Amidst such a crowd, he still gave his due time to everyone, even if 10 secs, no matter the urgency. That’s how he reached towards me as well.”

“When I stood upright after taking his blessings, he gently placed his hand on my shoulder and asked, ‘You look suited-booted. What do you do?’ When I told him that I am

a school principal, he advised me, ‘*Kisi gaon main ja kar padhao toh accha rahega.* (It will be good if you could teach in some village).’ These were his only words for me and they turned my life completely.”

“Astonished, I stood there several minutes, as if some earthquake had occurred. I became aware of how meaningless my life had been until then. Somehow, I gathered myself and walked homewards. With my unkempt hair and attire, my family was shocked, wondering what had happened. I appeared so run down as if I’d lost everything I’d ever owned.”

“I didn’t talk to anyone and sleeplessly thought the whole night. And with the first

ray of the morning sun, I announced that I’ll leave my job and teach in the villages. Having merely said that, all hell broke loose and there was a hue-and-cry all over. Everybody tried to convince me otherwise but I stayed put. The very same evening, I reached Bharawan and learnt that all the village boys went to school but girls hardly received any education. What was then left to do? I immediately decided to set up a school for girls in their very own village.”

“I collected

donations of upto 1-2 annas from the residents and after some months established my first school. I was firm about setting up only girl’s schools because boys could always make it to other villages to study. I was also particular about hiring the entire staff from within the village instead of outside. So, I trained the locals into teaching and when they ran the school efficiently, I moved on to another village. In this way, we opened 12 village schools, which were ‘self-sufficient,’ meaning, they were run by and for their own people in every way. After all, that’s what Gandhiji wanted.”

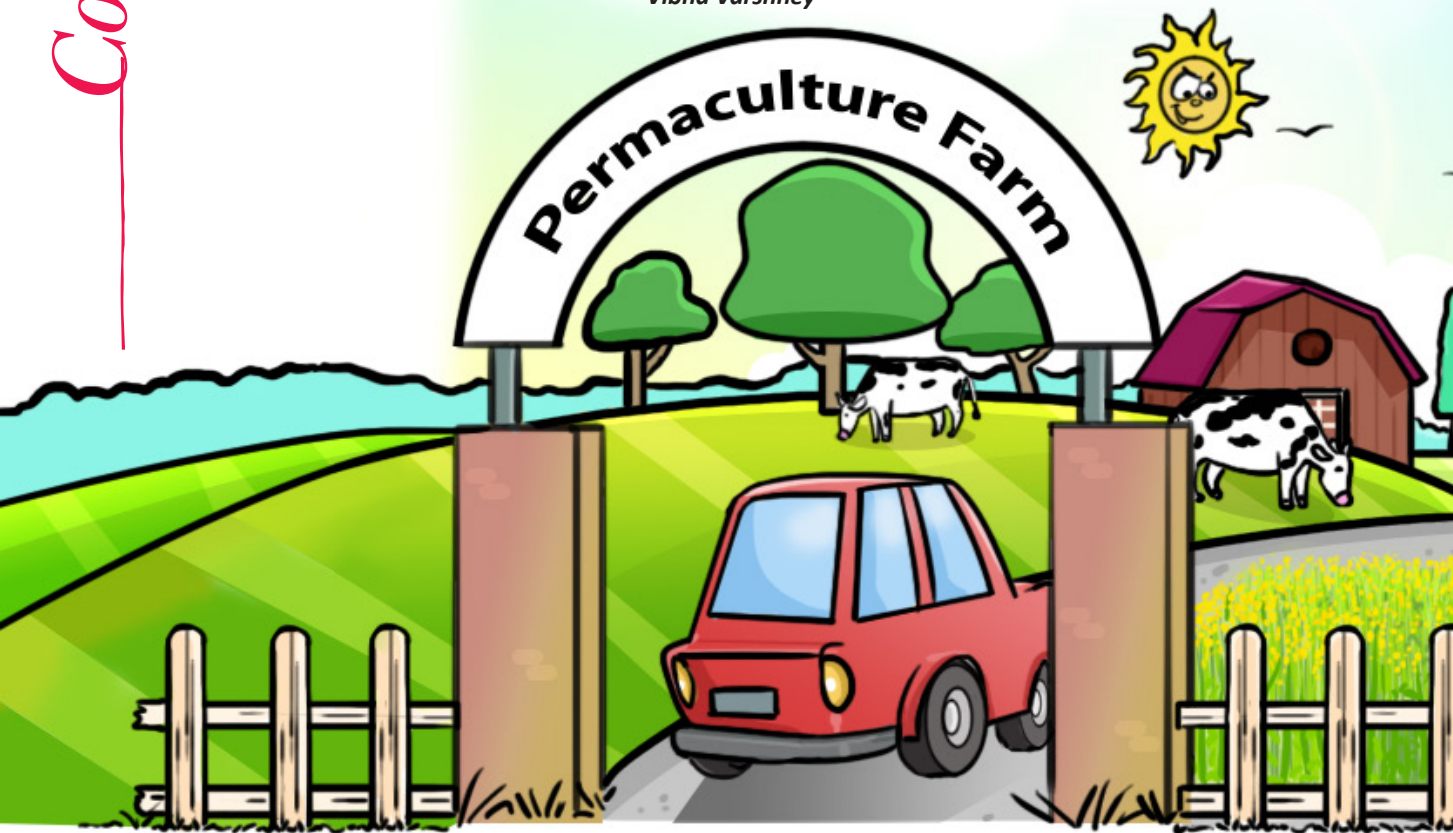


Suryaprakash Srivastava 'Babaji'—a sketch

Farming Food Nicely

Food that is good for us and for the environment, understanding what ‘food systems’ are, how they cause climate change, and what the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit is all about.

Vibha Varshney



Babbi jumped out of the car and looked around the unusual farm. There were bushes interspersed with different kinds of trees and small patches of vegetables. Nearby, was a yellow patch of mustard crops. She could hear a cow moo at a distance too.

“Is that custard apple?” she exclaimed excitedly running towards the tree. But the moment she spied a beehive there, she scampered back. However, she couldn’t be at ease for long as some chicks began pecking at her feet and she screamed aloud.

Amused, her mother calmed her down by showing her an onion flower and the

butterflies fluttering around it.

Just then, the farm-owner arrived, “Welcome to my permaculture farm. What would you like to buy today?”

Babbi frowned for a moment mumbling, “What farm?...”

“Permaculture farm. In permaculture, we make the most of the things available naturally, such as sunlight, wind, and rain. So, in my farm, we grow tall trees to protect small plants from scorching sunlight and raging winds. We have about a hundred plant varieties on our little, two-hectare land. We practice mixed cropping to enrich soil with nutrients. Like, we sow millets with lentils and chickpeas.

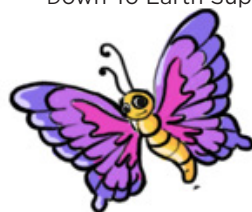


They are nitrogen-fixing plants which are good for millets. We even allow weeds to thrive and use them as mulch. Plus, we let local grass to flourish, which we use as fodder and roof thatch.”

“Wow... such multifarious uses!” Babbi was amazed.

“At the heart of permaculture, lies the idea that a plantation should offer multiple benefits—right from food and fodder to timber and fertiliser,” summarised the farmer.

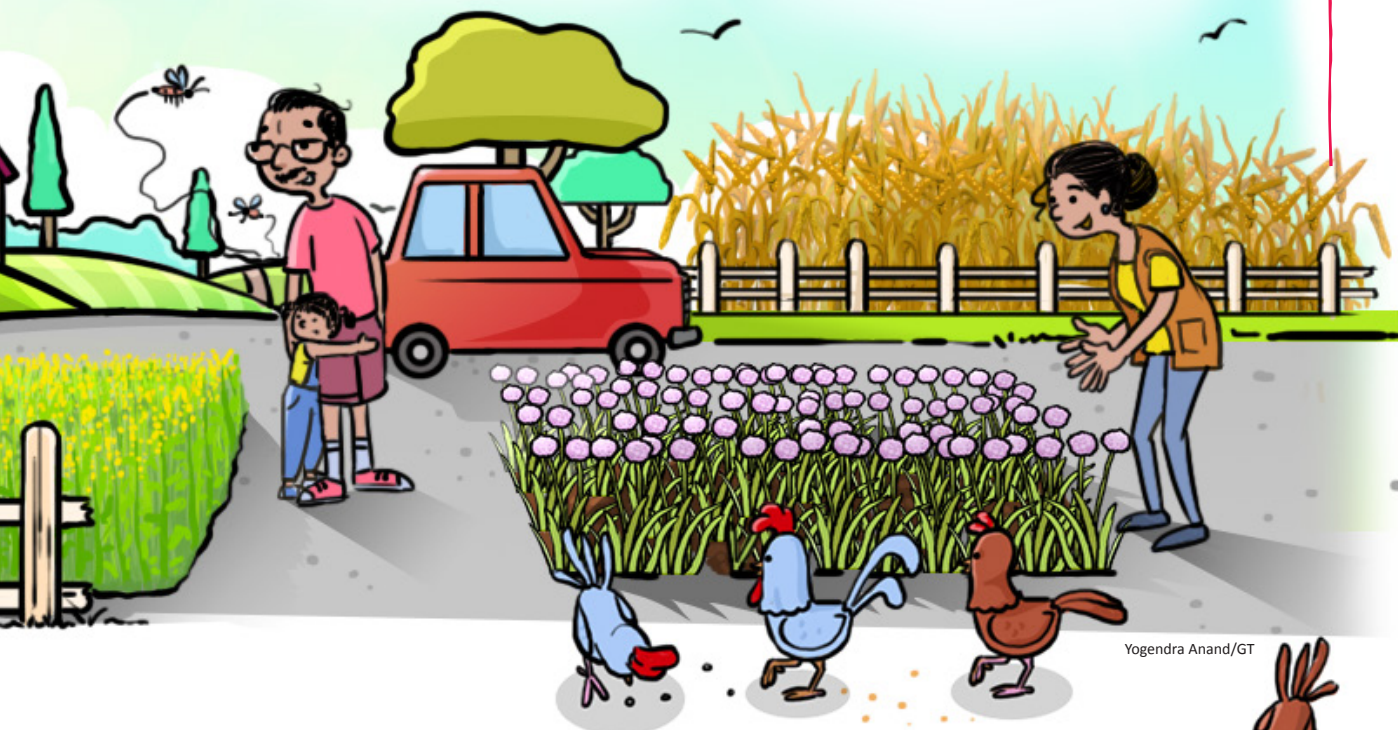
As Babbi’s dad placed ripe, fresh farm veggies inside the car, the farm-owner plucked a custard apple and generously gifted it to Babbi. Feeling in awe of a fruit presented straight off



a tree and relishing a mouth full of its sweet pulp, Babbi declared, “This is, by far, the best custard apple I’ve ever had! We should visit such farms more often.”

“Hehe, that’s a great idea,” said her mom, “But all farms are not the same,” pointing to the fields alongside the road. Those fields looked just like a lawn with only a single plant variety being cultivated. Babbi noticed a few people walking between the rows of plants with a machine on their back. They were spraying a foul liquid on the crops.

Her mother explained, “This is intensive agriculture. It is carried out by using toxic pesticides and fertilisers, which is what those



Yogendra Anand/GT

folks are spraying on the plants. This type of farming is the most common across the globe.”

“Let’s hope something good comes out of the United Nation’s Food Systems Summit and we are assured of some healthy food in future,” sighed her father, annoyed by the pesticide odour.

“What Summit???” Babbi screeched as she missed out its complicated, lengthy name. But since it seemed related to the heavenly custard apple she just had, she remained glued.

So, her mother elaborated, “Last month, all the member countries of the UN got together

in New York. They were figuring out how the food we eat can be made better not only for us but for the environment too.”

“You mean, the food we eat is bad for the environment?” Babbi was puzzled.

“Well, every year, the food systems alone release about a quarter of the Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) emitted by us, humans. ‘Food systems’ mean everything from growing and harvesting crops to processing, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing them. Their emissions cause climate change. And since we cannot live without eating food and have to feed about 7.8 billion people on this planet, we urgently need to improve these food systems.”



"Gosh! So the way in which we grow and make our food itself is polluting the planet!?" Babbi exclaimed. "Exactly," said her dad in a monotone.

"So, talks are on about what kind of action can reduce this pollution. How do we improve our food production practices? How to reduce water and land usage? How do we better manage food loss and crop wastage, change

our diets, diversify our food base, and promote local food? In fact, something called 'Planetary Health Diet' is being promoted these days. It categorises the food on the basis of the amount of GHGs it emits during production and discourages any food that adversely impacts the

environment and human health. For example, it suggests that we consume less meat and more plants."

"Okay, so... what was decided at the meeting?" Babbi asked.

"Just like you throw a tantrum every time I tell you to eat *sarson saag* instead of French fries, people around the world are not happy with these suggestions," mother looked pointedly at Babbi, who smartly avoided the look.

"The rich will need to give up the food they are used to, like meat, because that causes the maximum food emission. Countries, like Sweden, will have to reduce eating red meat by almost 90 per cent! Their food emissions per person are already twice than that of a person in a poor country, like Malawi

Our Food Emissions

Polluting gases released on producing every kilo of a food item, as measured in 'kgCO₂e'. Meaning, kilos of carbon dioxide or any other comparably polluting gas, i.e., GHG, emitted while producing a certain food item. Example, every kilo of chocolate you eat produces 19 kilos of GHGs!

Emissions in kgCO₂e

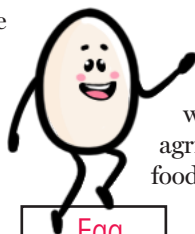
Beef (herd)

60



Cheese

21



Egg

4.5

Tomatoes

1.4

in Africa," mother encapsulated.

Dad detailed further, "Producing some foods, like meat and sugar, releases a lot of GHGs. But as these are staple foods, farmers get a lot of help from governments to

produce them. Therefore, the logical way to our reduce food emissions is to reduce this help to the sugar and meat producers, so that they shift to less-polluting foods, like millets.

But, sugar and meat industries stand to lose money because of this shift and do not support these changes."

"Oops! So, this means, we are in a fix! We have the problem of food systems' pollution. We can solve it by following eco-friendly food habits. But we can't develop them because (a) old habits die hard and (b) some people are actually benefiting from these polluting foods," concluded Babbi.

"Smart girl! So, at this UN meeting, the food corporates hijacked the agenda. They talked more about money than good food. They ensured that we keep focusing on intensive agriculture, packaged and junk food. Hence, you'll see more of those lawn-like fields and your lovely permaculture farms will keep suffering in future too."

"Oh, no!" Babbi felt nostalgic about those cute, furry chickens that had pecked at her feet.

"We need to bring these people to this farm," Dad smiled at this innocent outburst. "Negotiations are still on. Let's hope, people's voices would be heard," he pacified Babbi who was in tears. Fearing the looming disaster, she swore to give up the pizzas and burgers for a good time now.

Lamb and mutton

24



Chocolate

19



Rice

4

Milk

3

Cane sugar

3



The Rufous Treepie Who Sang to Glory

A tale of overcoming fear, forgiving bullies, and accepting everyone warmly.

Priyadarshini Panchapakesan

Rufous was a beautiful bird, with an orange-brown body and grey tail feathers. He was the only one of his kind living in the Ancient Forest. But despite being beautiful and unique, he couldn't win the hearts of all the other birds.

The other birds teased Rufous because of his voice. According to them, he sounded like a broken saw, low, screechy, and repetitive. Amidst all the Nightingales and Cuckoos, Rufous could hardly make a name for himself.

At first, Rufous tried to pluck up his courage and confront his bullies. But every time he opened his mouth, they would make fun of him. Soon enough,

Rufous was hurt by their behaviour and felt ashamed to speak or sing songs. If the other birds only loved high-pitched tunes, what could Rufous do?

After a while, Rufous stopped speaking altogether. It felt like there was a long feather stuck in his throat. No matter how much he tried, he couldn't get rid of it. He tried gargling his mouth, hanging from a branch upside down, and even asked a caterpillar to check if anything was there inside. But none of these efforts paid off. Rufous had simply lost the ability to speak.

One day, a group of foreign birds came to the Ancient Forest. They belonged to the famous 'Chirp' choir and were on the lookout for some new and fresh voices.



"You should audition," said the Cuckoo to the Nightingale. "If there is any voice they are going to like, it's yours!"

"You should audition too," said the Nightingale. "Your voice is recognised all over the world!"

The two proud birds cleaned and pruned their feathers. They were prepared to show off their beautiful voices. After all, why wouldn't the foreign birds be impressed?

During the audition, the foreign birds had solemn and stern expressions on their faces. Even after the Nightingale and Cuckoo had finished their songs, they remained expressionless. To the surprise of the two birds, there were no words of praise or even applause!

"How was it?" the Nightingale asked in a proud voice.

"It was great," said the foreign bird who sat in the middle of the branch. "But this is not what we are looking for."

"But we have the sweetest voices in the whole of the Ancient Forest!" protested the Cuckoo.

"Maybe you do, but we are looking for something else," said the bird.

At this remark, the Nightingale and Cuckoo became very angry. "What kind of a choir are you putting together if you can't even take us in?" they shouted.

The foreign bird simply smiled at their outburst. "A forest is full of sounds. From the scuffling of a rat to the roar of a lion, everything creates a beautiful orchestra," he said.

"Our choir is not about sweet voices or melodies. We are looking for a variety of sounds that can replicate the very essence of the forest. Do you know anyone who fits this role?" he asked.

The Cuckoo and the Nightingale exchanged confused glances. "We could ask Rufous," they huffed. "But don't blame us if it goes wrong!"

The next morning, the Nightingale and the Cuckoo went to Rufous' perch. They

tugged at his feathers and woke him up.

"The Chirp choir wants you to do an audition," they said.

Rufous was ecstatic. He had heard all about the famous Chirp choir! Ignoring their rude remarks, he washed his beak and cleaned his feathers. Rufous was so excited that he completely forgot about the feather stuck in his throat!

When Rufous reached the tree where the auditions took place, he remembered his lost voice! But before he could fly away, the foreign birds began to sing a melodious song.



It had a low, deep, and rhythmic beat. It was unlike anything that Rufous had ever heard.

Before long, the feather in Rufous' throat began to melt! His fears washed away with the waves of the music. Without even realising, Rufous had started singing along with the foreign birds!

Rufous was warmly welcomed into the Chirp choir. He brought fame and recognition to the Ancient Forest with his unique voice.

By then, all the other birds understood that each voice mattered, irrespective of the sound that it produced or its sweetness!

The author is an English teacher at Good Earth School, Chennai and has published the book, 'The Postwoman and Other Stories.'



Gargi Mishra

From The World of The Orient

Multitalented creatures with fascinating features—the **Oriental Magpie-Robins**



Near and Dear

This bird is a master of vocabulary. It can mimic other birds and animals flawlessly. It is also as expressive and emotive as the late actor Irrfan Khan. It is vocal on emotions but expresses only when the need is unavoidable.

It is none other than one of our closest avian acquaintances, the Oriental Magpie-Robin. Also, known as Asian Magpie or just Magpie Robin, it was earlier a member of 'thrush' family of birds but now belongs to Old World Flycatcher's.

A resident of the Indian subcontinent, it doesn't visit any arid areas. In winters, it moves to lower elevations. May be this Magpie has a special affiliation for humans; hence, it avoids forests or grasslands and lives near human settlements, even in our balconies. It builds its nest in tree hollows, wall gaps, or even in the roofs of buildings.

A neat looking fellow, it has glossy, blue-black head, breast, and upperparts. The lady's head is bluish-grey instead. Both have white wing bars that start from their shoulder, and run to the wing tip and glossy white underside. Slightly hooked black beak and black beady eyes add on to their glamour.

A gentleman by nature, the robin often bows to all and shivers its long tail out of respect. But holds it upright while picking up the tidbits and creepy-crawlies from the ground. Primarily omnivorous, it eats anything edible from grains to earthworms, flower nectar, berries, vegetables, and occasionally, geckos, centipedes, and fish.

One can argue Magpie Robin as a fine Indian classicist. The

high octave notes of this seasoned singer—which he uses for territorial, distress, threat, begging, emergence, and roosting calls—pour honey to the ears. The tenor in his voice often impresses his lady love. But when it comes to defending his territory, one can witness his vicious hissing and harsh churr or chhekh notes.

There is also infamy attribution to Magpies. They are known as thieves of shiny objects. But an inconclusive research by Exeter University on Eurasian Magpies shows that they suffer from 'neophobia—fear of new things'. However, Dr Tony Shephard, lead researcher of the Centre for Research in Animal Behaviour told BBC News: "Some birds do use eye-catching objects in the nest after mating, like Black Kites, to ward off potential predators. But we had already looked inside a dozen magpie nests and not seen any shiny objects. So, I was not expecting magpies to use objects for this purpose."

But my daughter wonders, "Why then they take the objects near their nests and scatter them around? Why not somewhere else?" Would you like to answer?

The author is an amateur ornithologist and closely follows the avian world.



JO DEKHE. KHO JAAYE.



Ritika Bohra/GT

Front-of-pack labelling system has long been listed as one of the global best practices to nudge consumers into healthy food choices. But India does not have a clear food labelling system to warn consumers about the harmful levels of fat, salt, and sugar hiding in processed foods. These ingredients are responsible for the growing burden of obesity and non-communicable diseases.