

8. The Value of Food

Arjun and Varsha are brother and sister. They love to eat hot bajra bhakarīs with butter.

Mother makes a number of other dishes for them to eat with bhakarīs. They like those, too.



Can you tell ?



What could be those dishes that mother makes to go with bhakarīs? What are those dishes made from?

In Varsha and Arjun's home, they use a lot of other foodstuffs, too. From where are they obtained?

- Wheat, rice, jowar, pulses, sugarcane.
- *Karavanda*, jamun, *bor*, honey.
- Salt-water fish and salt.
- Fresh water fish, singadas (water chestnuts), makhana (lotus seed).
- Fruits and vegetables.
- Meat and eggs.



Often when serving Varsha and Arjun a meal, Mother says, 'Take only as much as you want. Food shouldn't get wasted.'

One day Arjun asked her, ‘Mother, why do you tell this to us every day?’

Mother answered, ‘Why should we waste any good thing? Besides, we must give a thought to how we get the food we eat. Let me tell you the story of a bhakari.’

The story of a bhakari

You know Dada, my father, is a farmer. And you know that schools have summer vacations. When I was small, we often went to my father’s fields riding on his tractor. That would be the time for readying the fields. Father would attach different implements to the tractor to carry out various farming tasks. First he would plough the fields and then, crush the lumps of soil. Finally, he would level the field to make it ready for sowing.



A tractor being used for farm work

The pre-monsoon showers would make the hot soil humid. That was the time father would sow bajra.

Within some days, the bajra seeds sprout and the seedlings are seen above the ground. Along with the bajra, weeds also flourish. But they have to be removed. My father would employ labourers to do that. The labourers have to be paid.

Rainwater is enough for bajra to grow vigorously.

After a while, ears of bajra appear on every stalk. The grain forms and the ears grow fuller.

As the grains grow, birds come in flocks to eat the tender grains. Then scarecrows have to be set up and slings shots used to frighten the birds away.

When the ears of corn are full, it is harvest time. That is, all the ears of bajra must be cut and gathered. Then follows threshing and winnowing. That is how we get the grain from the ears of bajra.



Seedlings growing in the field



Harvesting

Varsha said, ‘I undersood cutting and gathering. But what is threshing and winnowing ?’ So Mother said, ‘Alright, do what I tell you, and you will see. We’ll continue with the story later.’



Try this.

- Take half a basketful of dried groundnut pods. Divide them into two portions.
- Shell the groundnuts in one portion. How long did this take you ?
- Now, put the other portion in a cloth bag and tie its mouth. Pound the bag lightly with a stone or beat it with a stick.

Now take the groundnuts out in a tray and tell me, what do you see ?

Arjun : Many of the pods have burst open and the nuts have come out.

Mother : This can be called threshing of the pods. Now hold the tray in both your hands. Toss its contents quickly and lightly in the air. Tell me, what happens?

Varsha : When I toss the tray the empty shells fall off and the nuts are left behind. But why does that happen ?

Mother : The shells are light. So they get blown by the air and fall off. The nuts are heavier and are left behind. While winnowing too, the draught of air is used to separate the grain from the chaff.

Now, let’s go on with the story. Dada uses a machine for threshing and winnowing. In the machine, threshing and winnowing are done at the same time. The harvested ears are put into the machine. The grain gets separated and falls into a bag tied to the machine. The chaff and other rubbish gets blown off.

When there were no machines, bullocks were made to help with the threshing. For winnowing, a person stands a little higher up and slowly allows the threshed

grain to fall to the ground. The chaff is carried away by the draught and the grain falls down in a heap. The machine helps to finish the work quickly but labour and expense have to be put in, in any case.



Do you know ?

- If a machine is not available, bullocks do the threshing. A round space is cleared in the field and the threshing floor is prepared. A post is erected at its centre and a bullock is tied to it. The bullock walks in circles around the post. The harvested ears are spread in the round space so that they get trampled upon by the bullock. If the crop is large in quantity, a bigger place is prepared and more bullocks are used together. Threshing may go on for several days. For the bullocks too, this is heavy work.



Threshing

The grain obtained after winnowing is filled in sacks. Proper care is taken to make sure that it will not be attacked by insects or other pests such as mice and rats. After putting aside some grain for the family, the remaining sacks are sent to the market-place to be sold. When the traders there buy the grain, the farmer gets money for the crop that he has grown.

Arjun : But the bhakari is not ready yet!

Mother : No, of course not. And the story is not finished either. Listen.



The grain that the traders buy is sold all over the country. It is transported by means of trucks or goods trains. It is the turn of porters and truck-drivers to put in their labour. Transport costs a lot, too.

Now, the sacks of grain reach the provision stores.

People buy the grain from them. They sort out any stones or rubbish to clean the grain. They get it milled into flour.

Then, while cooking, the flour is kneaded into lumps. The lumps are then flattened into a bhakari and roasted. We spend on fuel too. And thus, at the end



of all this, the bhakari appears in Varsha's and Arjun's plate.

Now, would it be right to waste food that we get through the efforts of so many people?



Do you know ?

- Singadas and makhanas are some special foods that are not very common. They are obtained from freshwater plants. Much work has to be done to collect, clean, dry, store and transport them.

Other foodstuffs : We get fish from water. Fishermen work hard to catch them. There are people who gather and sell fruits like amla, jamun, *karvanda*, *bor* which grow in forests. Some people have vegetable farms while some people have orchards for growing fruit crops. Some people keep poultry. Some rear animals for milk and meat.

All these people put in a lot of hard work in their own occupations. We get a great variety of foodstuffs as a result of their efforts. The efforts and labour of many other people are also required for storing, transporting and marketing them as well as preparing the various dishes we eat. All these processes are expensive.

Therefore, it is necessary for all of us to take care that food is not wasted.



What we have learnt –

- The foodstuffs we use come from many different places such as fields, lakes, the sea and forests.
- Starting from preparing the fields till storing the grain in warehouses, many different kinds of tasks are carried out for growing crops. Harvesting, threshing and winnowing are some of these tasks.

- After that the crop is transported, sold and prepared for eating. Only then do we get food on our plates.
- As with growing grain, much hard work goes into producing other foodstuffs, too.
- We must all take care to ensure that food is not wasted.



Always remember –

We get a variety of foodstuffs through the efforts of many different people.
Let us always be grateful to them.



Exercises

(A) What's the solution ?

Your friend wants to know where big round amlas come from.

(B) Find out.

1. What is the place called where salt is obtained from seawater ?
2. Potatoes and radishes grow underground. Which other bulbs and roots do we get from plants ?
3. What is a '*kanagi*' ? For what purpose do farmers use it ?
4. For what does a farmer use an implement called a '*tiphani*' ?
5. Which ingredients are required for making a lemon sherbet ? From where are these ingredients obtained ?

(C) Fill in the blanks.

1. When the soil becomes hot and the crop is sown.
2. The grain is separated from the ears by a process called
3. The light are blown away by the wind.
4. Some people gather like *karavanda* and jamun from the forests.
5. Machines and vehicles are used for the production and transport of foodstuffs. Money is spent on to operate them.

(D) Answer in brief.

1. How is a field prepared for sowing?
2. How is grain transported to all parts of the country?
3. Why should we not waste food?
4. What are the tasks that are carried out to make a bhakari after the grain has been brought into the house?

(E) Match the following.

A Group

- (1) salt
- (2) sugarcane
- (3) bor
- (4) makhana

B Group

- (1) a freshwater lake
- (2) the sea
- (3) fields
- (4) forests

