

**Is hunger gnawing at your
belly?**



Recess

Skip school during recess.
Look for beehives in the woods,
nests of pigeons.
If you come across an egg,
smear it with cow dung.
Boil it and eat it.

Always keep a catapult
and a match-box
in your school bag.
Kill pigeons and khudals
with the catapult.
Roast them.

The next day,
Guruji might beat you
for skipping school.
Suffer it meekly.



Milo Gruel

Get some cheap milo
from the ration shop.
Coarsely grind it.
Prepare a watery gruel
full of worms and insects.

Serve the family
four large spoons each.
Greedily drink
the hot
insect-ridden gruel.

Ask your brothers
for their share.
If they refuse,
lick your hands,
lick your plate.

They might
angrily
offer you their gruel.
They might mutter,
"You are a curse".

Collecting Wheat

Keep traps in your hut.
Catch all the rats.
Set them free at night
in a field
with full-grown wheat.

Let the rats gnaw,
cut off the ears of wheat
from the stalks,
store them in rat-holes.

After the harvest,
dig the rat-holes.
Bring up the hidden ears
of wheat.

The farmers watch you.
Are you doing anything
amiss?
Merely taking the rats' share.

Fill your shoulder-bag full.
It is so heavy
you can barely carry it
on your head.

Also catch the rats.
Carry flint with you.
Collect sticks in the woods.
Make a fire.
Roast the rats.
Carry the remains home
for Mother.



Roast Pig

Spot a strong pig.
Pursue it with howls.
Make a din.
Whistle it to one side.
Trap it in a narrow lane.
Enter the lane with a lasso.
Catch the pig.
Tie its four legs together.
Haul it over your shoulder.

Sweep the open spot
near your hut,
full of human excreta.
Search all the rubbish heaps
for sticks and hay.
Throw them
on the newly swept spot
for roasting.

Give a hefty blow
on the neck of the pig
with a thin iron rod.
Let the pig stretch,
jerk its legs,
die a small death.

Insert sticks
under the carcass
and over it.
Spread dry grass on top.
Proceed to roast.
Ignore the village women
shitting in front of you.

Cut the belly.

Remove the intestines.
Throw them to the dogs.
Let them pounce and battle
for a share.

Remove the liver.
Cut it into pieces.
Distribute them amongst the
children.
Ignore the extended bloodied
hands and mouths
asking for more.

Cut pieces from the pig's back.
Distribute them
and enjoy.

The Talama
and Maratha women
might continue
shitting nearby,
holding their noses
to keep away the smell
of the roast pig.

Don't feel embarrassed.

Wonder why they shit here.
Watching you eat pig
disgusts them.
But their shit nourishes
your pigs.
Hope that the women continue
shitting near your hut
everyday.

Offerings

In the month of Shravan,
on full moon days
and new moon nights,
parents of sick children
walk to the haunt
of evil spirits,
cremation yards.
There they offer
food and coconuts.

Your belly all afire,
go in search
of these offerings.

Before eating,
kick the coconut thrice.
Scrape away
the top of the food
smeared with oil
and black soot.

Leave behind
a portion of the food,
a small piece of coconut,
lest the spirits haunt you.

And when your belly is calm,
wash your feet
before entering the hut,
lest a ghost stick to you.

Padmini

Two hundred and fifty rupees.
One hundred to Kisan
as commission.
One hundred and fifty
to bring back
to a starving home.

Dada buys grain,
salt, and chillies.

In the sorrow of the sale,
Dada drinks everyday.
Weeps.
Wails.
"My Padmini,
I sold you, darling?"



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