



PROTECT THE PLANET

Study circle



FOOD IS GOD

This guide has been designed to help Centres/Groups of the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) facilitate a study circle on the topic of Food. It has been developed to be delivered in three parts. This part has a duration of 1 hour.

Part 2 will cover: *Food is God and Food waste – what is food, practicing Ceiling on Desires (COD) in relation to food, where and why food is wasted and what we can do to reduce food wastage.*

PART 2

| OPENING AND INTRODUCTION | | | |
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| ACTIVITY | NOTE TO FACILITATOR | RESOURCES | DURATION |
| 3 OMs (or a minute's silent sitting) followed by an opening prayer | <p>Whether Omkar or silent sitting is used depends on the audience this study circle is being delivered to. Either way, the objective of this activity is to help settle the group, focus it and establish group dynamics. This is the same for whether a prayer or short reading is used.</p> <p>Example of a prayer that could be used to start the session: "Dear Swami, we, your children have gathered here today so that we can be your instruments in protecting and serving Mother Nature. You have blessed us with Mother Nature. Please guide us on your mission to serve Her. Please let our words, thoughts and actions be of your accord. Please bless us to be open minded and to learn from one another, so that we can truly embrace the inherent divinity within us, in all beings and Mother Nature."</p> | | 1 MIN |

| Introduce today's topic | <p>This study circle is part of the Serve the Planet (STP) initiative of the SSIO.</p> <p>In Part 1 we covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food as God – what food is and its importance in our lives • The importance of knowing where our food comes from • Tips on sourcing food that is both environmentally sustainable and healthy for us <p>Review any homework or actions taken from the last study circle and then introduce this week's topic.</p> <p>The purpose of this study circle is to help us have a deeper appreciation of how food is a manifestation of God, the importance of COD in the context of food and minimising waste.</p> <p>It is important to remain respectful and open at all times. Keep in mind that the Study Circle is about sharing and exploring the topic and inspiring each other rather than “finding right answers”</p> | | 5-7 MIN |
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| TODAY'S DELIVERY | | | |
| ACTIVITY | NOTE TO FACILITATOR | RESOURCES | DURATION |
| <p>Question 1: What is food?</p> | <p><i>“Your body is made of food, and you are the result of the food eaten by your parents. Food is God.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Summer Showers 1993.6: May 24, 1993)</i></p> <p><i>“Oh Lord Hari, You are the food, You are the enjoyer of the food, You are the giver of food. Therefore, I offer all that I consume at Thy Lotus Feet.” – Food prayer.</i></p> | | 2 MINS |
| <p>Question 2: How much do we need to eat?</p> | <p>Pose the following questions referring to Attachment A and the Video as a basis for your discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we produce enough food for everyone in the world, why do some people still go hungry? • Are we contributing and/or affected by this challenge? If so, how? <p>Hear responses from the group and then read Attachment B and discuss the following:</p> | <p>VIDEO – Nearly 1 billion go to bed hungry (3 mins) Attachment A</p> <p>Attachment B</p> | 15 MINS |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does Ceiling on Desires in relation to food mean to you? • In your view, does Ceiling on Desires relate only to the quantity of food we consume or the type of foods as well? • How much do we actually need to eat? Do you think you eat more than you require? Why or why not? • Sathya Sai Baba suggests we eat considerably less than what we eat now, is this possible? Why or why not? • Why do we eat the quantity that we eat? • How can we make changes to our eating habits for the better? | | |
| <p>Question 3: <i>Globally, how much food are we wasting? What is the impact of this?</i></p> | <p>Play the video and share some of the following high level facts with the group. More details about exactly where food waste occurs will follow in the next question.</p> <p>According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year – approximately 1.3 billion tonnes – gets lost or wasted. • Food losses and waste amounts to roughly US\$ 680 billion in industrialised countries and US\$ 310 billion in developing countries. • Fruits and vegetables, plus roots and tubers have the highest wastage rates of any food. • Global quantitative food losses and waste per year are roughly 30% for cereals, 40–50% for root crops, fruits and vegetables, 20% for oil seeds, meat and dairy, plus 35% for fish. • Every year, consumers in developed countries waste almost as much food (222 million tonnes) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tonnes). • Average food waste per person is between 95–115 kg a year in Europe and North America, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, south | <p>VIDEO – Food Waste (2 mins)</p> <p>VIDEO – Food wastage footprint (3 mins)</p> <p>(*Note if no video facilities are available on-site, participants can be sent ALL video links beforehand to watch at home prior to the study circle taking place)</p> | <p>15-20 MINS</p> |

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| | <p>and south-eastern Asia, each throw away only 6–11 kg a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The food currently lost or wasted in Latin America could feed 300 million people. • The food currently wasted in Europe could feed 200 million people. • The food currently lost in Africa could feed 300 million people. <p>What is the environmental impact of this waste? You could use the following facts to support your discussion:⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The water wastage alone would be the equivalent of the entire annual flow of the Volga, Europe's largest river. • The energy that goes into the production, harvesting, transporting, and packaging of that wasted food, meanwhile, generates more than 3.3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide – a major contributor of climate change. • If food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind the U.S. and China. | | |
| <p>Question 4: <i>Where and when do we waste food?</i></p> | <p>Where is this food wasted? Hear the group's thoughts on where food waste occurs. You could explore this area from a larger perspective i.e. the waste that occurs as the food makes its way from farm to table, and also cover aspects of food wastage once we have purchased the food.</p> <p>Food is wasted throughout the supply chain – from growing to transport to storage to consumption. Refer to the graph on Attachment C for more details. Agricultural production, at 33 percent, is responsible for the greatest amount of total food wastage volumes.⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste before food is sold including production, post-harvest handling and storage, represents 54 percent of total wastage.⁶ • Waste after food is sold including processing, | <p>Attachment C</p> | <p>10-15 MINS</p> |

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| | <p>distribution and consumption, is 46 percent.⁶</p> <p>As individuals, where do we tend to waste food?</p> <p>Responses could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking too much food on our plate • Preparing too much food • Purchasing too much food and letting it get old in our fridges • When given large portions at restaurants | | |
| <p>Question 5: <i>Why do we waste food?</i></p> | <p>Read Attachment D and discuss why we waste food.</p> <p>Why do we waste food? Responses could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being greedy/taking too much • Poor planning including not making shopping lists • Not having systems in place to take leftovers/store leftovers • Not giving or sharing food with others/food banks/needly • Lack of control of desires and senses | Attachment D | |
| <p>Discussion: <i>Practical tips to reduce food wastage</i></p> | <p>Sathya Sai Baba has encouraged us to reduce our food consumption and eliminate our food waste. Let's look at the practical ways in which we can do this:</p> <p>Show the videos and discuss some of the following tips:⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan meals, use grocery list and avoid impulse buys. • Buy only what you need and will use. Buying in bulk only saves money if you are able to use the food before it gets spoiled. • Freeze, preserve, or can surplus fruits and vegetables – especially abundant seasonal produce. • Shop in your refrigerator first! Cook or eat what you already have at home before buying more. • If safe and healthy, use the edible parts of food that you normally do not eat. For example, stale bread can be used to make croutons, beet tops can be sautéed for a delicious side dish, and vegetable scraps can be made into | <p>VIDEO - Food waste: why it matters (4 mins)</p> <p>VIDEO - Food Wastage (2 mins)</p> <p>Video How to Compost (5 mins)</p> | 10 MINS |

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| | <p>stock.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At restaurants, order only what you can finish by asking about portion sizes and being aware of side dishes included with entrees. Take home the leftovers to consume or as ingredients to make your next meal. • Compost food scraps rather than throwing them away (see video on the environmental benefits of composting). • Nutritious, safe, and untouched food can be donated to food banks to help those in need. | | |
| SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION | | | |
| Closing summary of today's session and what to expect at the next session and homework | <p>So far, we have learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How food consumption has increased and how to apply Ceiling on Desires in relation to food • When and where we waste food • Practical tips on how to reduce food wastage <p>In Study Circle 3, we will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of different foods on the mind • The environmental and ethical impact of the food we eat • Eating to help both the environment and our spiritual progress <p><u>HOMEWORK and preparation for next session</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of all the food that is wasted daily and then review it at the end of the week. • Identify why the food is being wasted and what could have been done to prevent or reduce the wastage • Develop and implement strategies to reduce food waste and bring these to share with the rest of the group in Part 3. | | 5 MINS |
| CLOSE | Closing prayer or reading Prayer for universal peace – OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. | | 1 MIN |

Note: Ideally there should be two facilitators in groups of ten or more participants. The first facilitator is the one who is conducting the study circle. The second facilitator observes the group's dynamics and informs the first facilitator of any lethargy and confusion from participants. This second facilitator also conducts the opening activity (eg. Omkar) and the sharing of insights at the end. This helps give variety to the participants, but also allows the first facilitator space to capture

important feedback and learning points at insight sharing.

Attachment A

The world produces enough food to feed everyone. For the world as a whole, per capita food availability has risen from about 2,220 kcal/person/day in the early 1960s to 2,790 kcal/person/day in 2006–08, while developing countries even recorded a leap from 1,850 kcal/person/day to over 2,640 kcal/person/day. This growth in food availability in conjunction with improved access to food helped reduce the percentage of chronically undernourished people in developing countries from 34 percent in the mid 1970s to just 15 percent three decades later.¹ A principal problem is that many people in the world still do not have sufficient income to purchase (or land to grow) enough food or access to nutritious food. This is an element of “food access”.²

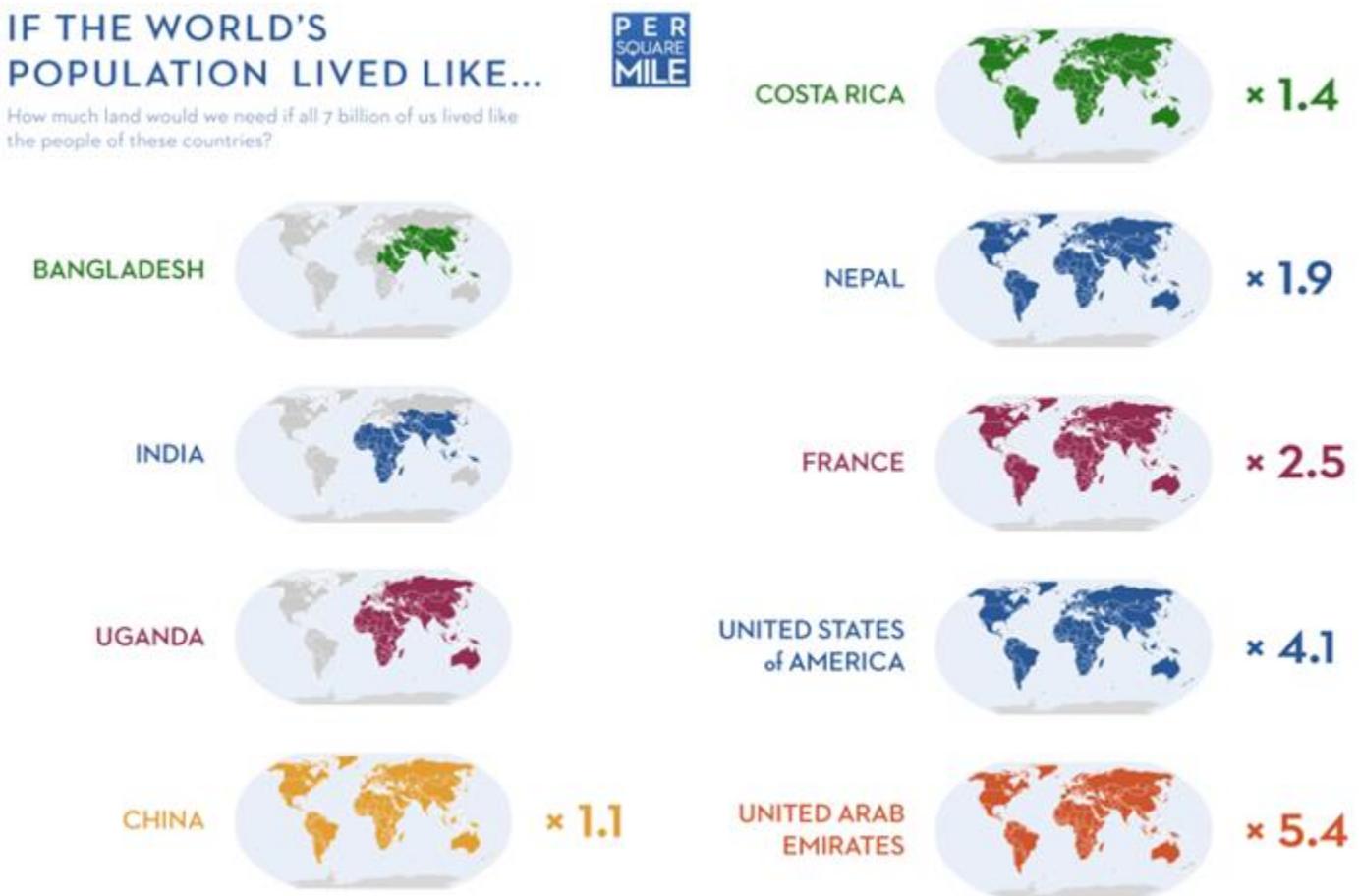


Image from Ref 3.

Attachment B

"There are four components in the term 'Ceiling on Desires'. They are, respectively; curb on excessive talk, curb on excessive desires and expenditure, control of consumption of food, and check on waste of energy. Man needs some essential commodities for his sustenance and he should not aspire for more. We can learn a lesson in this respect from Nature. Only if air is available in sufficient quantity will it be comfortable and good. If it is excessive and there is a gale you will feel uncomfortable. When you are thirsty; you can consume only a limited quantity of water. You can't consume the entire water of the Ganga! We take only as much as is needed for the sustenance of the body." - Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 16:3: January 19, 1983)

"Discipline is needed in eating too. One must eat only to the extent required. Excessive eating would lead to indigestion. Before eating, we pray, "Brahman is the offering and Brahman is also the oblation. He who offers is Brahman and the fire that receives the offering is also Brahman. He who sees Brahman in all his actions would attain Brahman". When food is offered to God, God within responds by saying, "Functioning as Vaishwanara, I digest the food. Eat only to the extent I require." If one overeats, Vaishwanara warns, "Don't send me any more food!" Indifferent to the signals, the person goes on eating pudding and other tasty dishes, until he becomes exhausted and breathless. Thus, lack of discipline in eating often leads to ill health. Indiscipline is often the main cause for sickness. Carelessness in eating is responsible for many ailments. Thus, the stomach is the starting point of many a health problem. When the stomach has problems, they often get transmitted to other parts of the body. Thus, while eating do not fill your stomach; instead eat less so that your stomach is at least one quarter empty. This is what regulated eating means." - Sathya Sai Baba (Divine Discourse: June 19, 1996)

"Catering to the cravings of the tongue and swallowing heavy foods three to four times a day can only add to the heap. Only regular and limited intakes can enable a person to discharge one's duties" - Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 15.54: Nov 11, 1982)

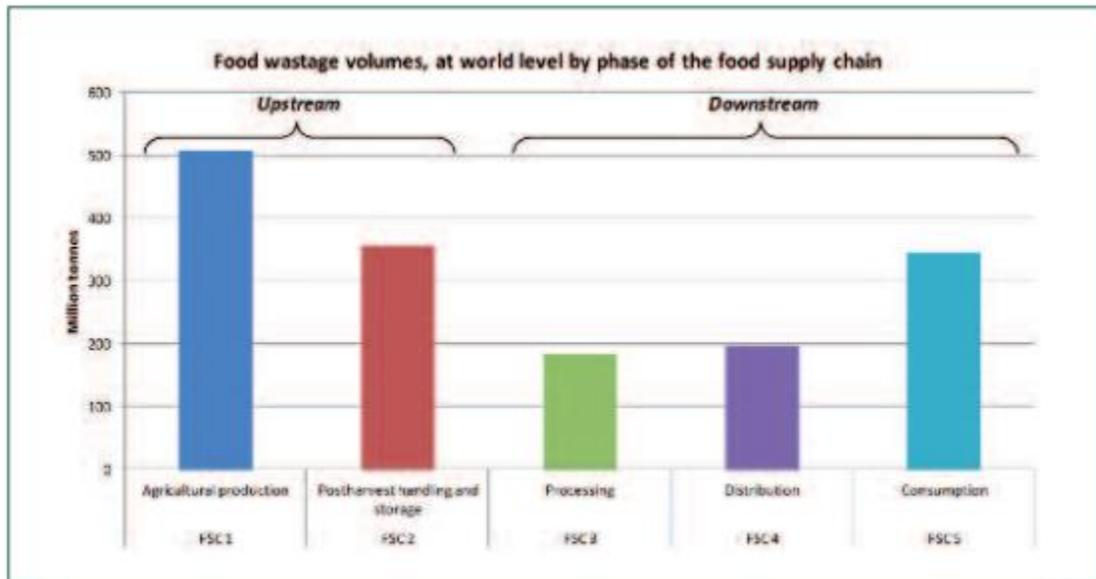
"Eat in moderation and live long" This is the advice handed down through the ages by the seers of the past. This advice is seldom heeded. People fill themselves with such large quantities of food that they find it hard to rise from the eating plate. Ruining their digestive system by consuming heavy, rich foods, the affluent are proud when they host costly banquets. Those who know that physical health is the greatest treasure take great care to eat only saathwik food." - Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 15.21: September 30, 1981)

"Develop biting hunger before sitting down for a meal...Wait until you get the call before you load the stomach again..." (Sathya Sai Baba from Satya Sai Baba Central Council of the United States of America 1996, 3-D-22, Tread Softly by Tina Schweickert)

"It will be conducive to both physical and spiritual development if each eats considerably less than what he takes as of now; then there will also be no famine anywhere. You may have a notion "because he is divine, he can work so strenuously on such a meagre diet," This is altogether wrong. In the upkeep of this physical

body, I do not apply anything para-natural. So, what I eat would be adequate for any person. You should eat food and not let food eat you.” – Sathya Sai Baba (from Sathya Sai Baba Central Council of the United States of America, 1996, 3-D-22)

Attachment C



Graph from Ref 6.

Attachment D

Sathya Sai Baba has advised us to not be greedy and to give surplus food to the needy:

“Eat only what you need to eat. Don’t be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food.” – Sathya Sai Baba (<https://www.sathyasai.org/publications/TeachingsOfBSSSB-Vol01.html>)

“Only by controlling the quality of our food and water can we attain Divinity. That is why food is said to be God. Hence to waste food is to waste God. Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is satwic. Give any surplus food to those in need.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Divine Discourse on Service and the Sai Organisation, November 21, 1988 – <https://www.sathyasai.org/studyaids/desires>)

References

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