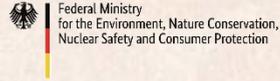




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Munnu and Chunu

and the Tale of Cook Stoves



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Munnu and his younger brother Chunu were especially looking forward to having dinner tonight. This was because their mother was cooking their favourite meal as a reward for Munnu scoring well on his exam in school. He was now going to graduate to Grade 3 in a few days.

“How much longer, mother?” asked Chunu, patting his round stomach. He and his brother were biding their time by drawing and painting together.

His mother laughed. “Not long now. I’m just going to start cooking it as soon as I can get this fire started,” she said as she stacked a few logs of wood together. After a few attempts, she managed to get a roaring fire going in the cook stove. She then balanced the huge pot of vegetables on top of it.



A few minutes later, Munnu felt the itchiness and dryness in his eyes that he usually felt everyday at this time. He also noticed that smoke had begun to settle in the whole room as it did every time his mother cooked.

He wondered why he always felt this way close to dinner time, but he had yet to find an answer. Before he could ponder on it too long at that moment, his thoughts were interrupted by their mother declaring that the wait was over and their dinner was now ready.



They all ate with great gusto and not a morsel was left on their plates.

Chunu looked at their mother with bright eyes. “You are the best cook in the whole-”, Chunu began to say, but before he could complete his sentence, he was overcome with a bout of heavy coughing.

His mother hurried over to get him a glass of water. However, his coughing continued for another hour or so and lingered on until the last of the smoke in the room had disappeared. It was only then that Munnu also felt better and his eyes stopped itching.



The next morning as Munnu was getting ready to go to school, his mind was preoccupied with thoughts of trying to get the root of the problem.

“Have fun at school, bhaiya!” Chunu called, his voice only faintly scratchy from last night’s cough.

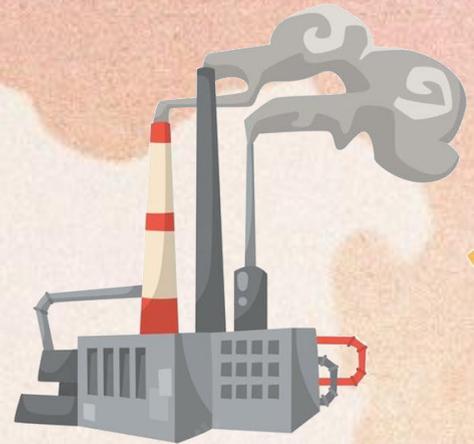
That afternoon when Munnu came back home, it looked like he was bursting with news as he hurried into the living room where his mother was reading the day's newspaper.

"What's the matter, Munnu?" his mother asked, looking up.

"Mother, I know why Chunu coughs everytime you cook and I also know why my eyes begin to itch and water!" Munnu exclaimed. "Today in school we studied about air pollution in our science class and my teacher told us that burning wood in our cook stoves is also a cause of it."

"Really? Is it because of me cooking food on my cook stove that the air is getting polluted?" his mother asked, perplexed.

"That is just one of the causes. There are other sources too such as the many cars people drive, the waste that people illegally burn and the many industries that emit harmful gases. However, the pollution caused from the cook stove is what is immediately impacting our health- your health, my health and Chunu's health," Munnu explained to her, recalling what his teacher had taught him in class.



“So, how do I cook then?” his mother asked, anxiously. She didn’t wish to be the cause of her children falling sick.

“We can use electric stoves or even LPG cylinders to cook. My teacher said these are the cleaner ways of cooking and do not emit harmful gases or smoke.”

“That’s wonderful! Little Chunu will not have to cough anymore now and no more itchy and watery eyes for my smart Munnu,” his mother beamed at him.

Munnu looked at his family affectionately. He would go with his mother to the market that evening and swap their cook stove for a cleaner and greener alternative. This way, he knew, they would all live a much healthier and happier life.

