

CHAPTER 4

HUMAN INTERACTION AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Honey Fusion

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Gourmet Grasshopper

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Insects are pervasive in our lives. Sometimes we may wish them away e.g. when we are in the middle of a slumber and the buzzing of the mosquito is just so jarring plus the fear of the disease they may carry. The rising case of dengue remains one of the greatest challenges for the urbanites in Malaysia. A lovely summer in countries with four seasons can be spoiled by the hordes of insects flying into houses, and biting into our flesh. Still for all the discomfort that some insects cause, there are others who are intrinsically linked to our lifestyle and culture. Who has not savoured the deliciousness of the trickling and oozing honey? Spread on a warm-butted toast, is perfection in simplicity. Added to the untold benefits, it is truly a gift from God. Spare a thought for the laborious bee that produces not just honey, but also royal jelly, propolis, and beeswax.

The grasshopper might not be first item that comes to mind when we go to eat at a restaurant. But if one walks through some streets in Thailand, we see many skewers of different fried insects. The practice originated from the north-east of Thailand but now has spread all over the country. One can use grasshoppers, beetles or crickets. With the increasing price of production of normal protein sources such as fish, chicken, and beef, it won't be such a surprise if in 50 years' time we might be ordering a MacDonald grasshopper burger.

Pharmaceutical companies are bioprospecting for insects as their usage in medicine has been recorded in ancient medical books. New diseases, and antibiotic resistance are pushing the frontiers of drug discovery. These alternative therapies which are the convenient medical chest for many forest tribes, and remote villagers, are beacons of hope in modern Medicine.

The fable 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' written by Aesop which extols the virtue of preparing for a rainy day. The ants worked all summer long to collect enough food supply to see them through winter whilst the grasshopper kept singing without a care for the coming winter and thus starved when summer ended, and food was scarce. Similarly in the Malay culture, there are metaphors where insects are the central figures. Insects like some animals can also sense changes in the environment and can serve as a warning system so humans and other animals can take precautionary steps.

This chapter reminds us of the positive impact of insects in human lives. They pollinate our favourite fruits, are themselves a nutritious meal, cure us, entertain us, and advise us. Perhaps we could forgive the few that inconvenience us as they may yet be a solution to problems of the unforeseeable future.



acts under a series of transformations in their life that includes changes in form, in shape and physical appearance which is called metamorphosis. The journey to adulthood begins with an egg, which is fertilized by a male. The egg then hatches into a larva. The larva grows and undergoes several stages of development in what is called an instar where they shed their skins a couple of times before becoming an adult.