

GOOD EARTH

## Living without a fridge!

ASHISH KOTHARI

This may sound impossible, but surprisingly, it is not.

PHOTO: ASHISH KOTHARI



ECO FRIENDLY: The matka.

Most of us cannot imagine life without a refrigerator. No cold water! Food going bad! No chocolates being stored! How is that possible?

Well, I've tried it now for two years and am not suffering very much... or at all, in fact. Initially, it took a bit of getting used to. Vegetables and fruits had to be bought almost every day, milk had to be boiled twice to make it last for two days, and a *matka* had to be bought to have cool water in summer. And if we bought cheese or butter, it had to be consumed quickly, which only meant we bought smaller packets. Guests sometimes complain that we don't have cold water. Until they drink the *matka* water, with its unbeatable earthen taste. If we have people over for dinner, and food is left over, I just send it to someone else's house to keep. But this is not a very good solution, since someone else requires to have a fridge! So gradually, one learns how to cook more accurate quantities. What about *dahi* (curd)? I've figured that if we set it at night, it lasts not only the next day but also to the morning after. In summer, the trick is to half-submerge the *dahi* bowl in cold *matka* water. And if it starts going sour, make *lassi* or *kadhi*, or other Indian delicacies.

### Combat the heat

I live in the somewhat moderate climate of Pune, so I guess it is a bit easier than a place with extreme temperatures. But for a couple of months a year, the mercury in Pune does go to over 40°C, so perhaps a fridgeless existence could work elsewhere? At least it's worth a try. I'm told

that earthen fridges have been developed, using the millennia old ingenuity of the *matka's* cooling process.

But why go fridgeless? Many reasons. Saving energy helps reduce the need for more dams and power stations, which destroy the environment and displace people. It also means less cost(my monthly electricity bill has been cut by 30 per cent?).

Most fridges still use substances that cause ozone depletion, so one can do one's bit to save the earth's atmosphere.

Of course, one person doing all this makes little difference but imagine if all those reading this were to try it?

*In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group*