

## Manoomin: An Exceptional North American Asset

Vincy Yesudian Winifred\*

[winif001@umn.edu](mailto:winif001@umn.edu)

\*Doctoral student at Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Minnesota

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### Rice-Eating

Rice-eating is a routine in Southern and Eastern India. It is also popular in Maharashtra State in India. At the same time, rice-eating is a favorite dish in North India too. More number of people eat rice in the Indian subcontinent, and it is very popular in Asian countries. Thus, perhaps there are a greater number of regular rice-eaters than eaters of wheat products in the world.

Manoomin is wild-rice, grown and *guarded* with great social fervor by the Ojibwe tribes in North America.

According to researchers, rice has thousands of varieties grown throughout the world. In India, researchers have estimated that there are presently 6000 varieties. Paddy (rice with its natural cover) comes in different colors “brown, red, purple and even black” ([Rathna Priya T. S.](#), [Ann Raeboline Lincy Eliazer Nelson](#), [Kavitha Ravichandran](#) & [Usha Antony](#)). Almost all the non-Brahmin communities use parboiled (boiled) rice every day in Tamilnadu State. They may use raw rice for cooking on religious occasions. Pulao or Briyani is cooked with raw rice. Parboiled rice retains healthy bran. “The unpolished rice with its bran has high nutrient content than milled or polished white rice” (Rathna Priya, et al.) In recent decades, the concept of balanced diet has resulted in reduction in the quantum of rice eaten every day even in rice-eating states in India. Yet rice and rice-based other dishes continue to be the dominant grain preferred for routine food.

### Manoomin

The Northern wild rice or Manoomin (Ojibwe) is uniquely native and found only in

northern Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, and adjacent parts of Canada. The Ojibwe tribes consider “Manoomin” as a gift from the Creator. The migration stories of Ojibwe say that the people were told to keep moving until they find a land where food grows in water. Their journey led them from the east coast of the United States to the areas surrounded by the five Great Lakes.

Manoomin has an antioxidant potential and can lower cholesterol and fight arterial plaque buildup. It has sufficiently higher quantity of fiber, potassium, and zinc than normal white rice. However, it is to be clarified here that this Wild rice is not a true rice but a highly nutritious native grass that grows in water.

In western science wild rice is known as *Zizania palustris*, it grows best in one to three feet of water with a mucky bottom. Water fluctuation, water chemistry, length of winter and the temperature during summer play an important role in the growth of Manoomin. It is a very sensitive species and much of it has stopped growing in parts of Michigan. The University of Minnesota works closely with its tribal partners to protect Manoomin using scientific research and traditional knowledge.

Recently there is fear among the Ojibwe Native American community that Manoomin (wild rice) may be forced to become extinct because in 2021 the State of Minnesota passed an order “allowing the Enbridge corporation to use five billion gallons of water for the construction of the oil pipeline known as “Line 3.” (<https://www.1855treatyauthority.org/news/manoominvdnr>). So, on August 5, 2021, a case has been filed against this order in the Tribal Court of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota, by Manoomin (wild rice), the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, and several tribal members”.

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### References

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 22:1 January 2022

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