

FOOD, CLASS, GENDER, DIASPORA: A STUDY OF INDIAN ENGLISH NARRATIVES

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Abstract.

Home is the nostalgic place of memories, especially when it comes to food memories. It is the place of memories which gives a sense of cultural grounding in the lives of the individuals. Moreover, food is said to shape the narratives of our lives. For instance, food shapes the emotional, psychological, social, economic, political, historical, and cultural realities of the people. Usually, families with a pride of history pass their cultural and ethnic familial meals to the younger generations. Food is the constituent element in creating an identity and shaping the culture. Thus, it has gradually been adopted as the part of culture, thereby can be considered as an expression of cultural identity. When immigrants migrate from one place to the other, they carry their lifestyles which are the sole reason for preserving the food culture. It is widely accepted that the cuisine of any community or country reflects the history, lifestyle, values and beliefs. The physical environment, past memories and other several factors will shape the food memory leaving the traces of culture.

The current study will discuss the relationship between food and gender, food and class, food and Diaspora as depicted in the Indian English Narratives. The main aim and objective of the study is to study, understand, analyze and critique the relationship between food and culture as represented in the literary works of India. For this, the study will compare the way gender, class and Diaspora shapes the food culture of a nation or country. The study also seeks to find out unique ways class determines in shaping the culture of the people. The study will compare both the immigrant and nonimmigrant writer's works to show the different ways of influencing the culture. Moreover, the current study will employ the theory of food culture, to explore the concept of multiculturalism in the selected works.

Keywords: *class, culture, Diaspora, food, gender, literature, multiculturalism*

I. INTRODUCTION

In terms of gender, while authors relate feminist concerns with conceptions of marginalization, class, literary exponents have more generally called for more focus on particular narratives of travel that empower women to voice their very own problems outside the thriving framework of gender studies. Jhumpa Lahiri's novel "The Namesake" deals with the establishment of feminine diasporic spaces through positions of weakness, repeatedly employing trouble as a unifying approach for self-definition. On the basis of the literary work of Ketu Katrak, Anita Mannur exhibits how, what she describes "culinary citizenship" considers the formation of diasporic identities through food. Employing cookery books and also narratives which centers on food, Mannur presents the way wherein expulsion and identity are expressed and discussed, with culinary as a representative figure of diasporic experience, specifically as much as it projects the evocative reminiscences of the way home is summoned up. The manifold ways, wherein gender is to be found within the discourse of the Diaspora in contemporaneous works point out the necessity to favor individual experiences and particular perspectives over comprehensive depictions of gendered Diasporas Mehta, (2015).

Many postcolonial and diasporic authors have literally expressed the relationship of food with nation, culture and Diaspora, whilst some have considered the ways to which gender, class and ethnic group gets created and expressed through culinary discussions. The food becomes a place of tussle for both country and its subjects that are to be restrained within formations of heterosexual patriarchic. Anita Desai's narrative of complex family relationship plays out in two nations, India and the United States. Desai's "Fasting Feasting" as name defines, it exhibits a contrast cultures of two different countries, the one, Indian, well-known for its

religious and very old practices referred to as 'fasting,' and the other, United States, a land of wealth and luxuriousness representing 'feasting' Chakrabarti, (n.d.).

Fasting, Feasting (2000), is Desai's work which deals with position of women in India and also women in general. Fasting, Feasting is a novel which has two narrators; one is Uma, a female protagonist in the first part and Arun, Uma's brother in the second part. Uma, a grown up an unmarried Indian is always likely to get compared with others, and she is the one who is most "fasting" in the story, largely regarding the access to education. As her alertness of her own suffering raises, she turns out to be sensitive also to the other characters' "feasting" on authority, independence, and education. It is only as Arun, the central character of the second part, becomes responsive to her pain. Arun's perception is not instinctive but is an outcome of a long process of discernment and observation concerning his childhood reminiscences (Devi, n.d.)

Foods have been included in many Indian works in English as well, including Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Food in contemporary Indian literature stresses the significance of what the specific literary work is ahead of and is often related with social issues (Marková, 1997). In *Fasting, Feasting* this is specifically evident when it relates to the initial passages of every part correspondingly, which centers on the distribution of authority and its social scale. The narrative introduces an Indian modern-day middle class urban nuclear family. These exactitudes are significant since it is essential to consider every particular framework with which one should deal in its cultural, class, religious, and historic perspective, particularly so as it relates to the "Indian" culture with its exceedingly diverse and multiple features Ravichandran, (n.d).

The second part of the narrative is exhibited from Arun's perspective and portrays Arun's figurative pilgrimage. In a rich country like America there is feasting and also fasting, but from what perspective, and for whom does matter. Feasting is there, however it is insincere, since it is only the two men characters, the father and the son of the family belonging to America. Conversely, the women are feasting only purportedly; the mother provides the family with heaps of foods but she herself has no idea what to consume, and nobody is concerned. Melanie is diagnosed with bulimia, the metaphorical disease of young females overlooked psychologically; apparently she is feasting on candy bars and sugary, which, actually, results in starvation (fasting). Arun himself, though getting a first-class education, is ravenous since he has issues to get used to the American "diet," both factual and figurative, the food and the American way of life. With portrayal of Arun's character, Desai exposes differentiates the acuteness of male perspective of the inter-cultural variances and all its diversity on the one hand and Arun's deadliness of examining his way through the knot of interpersonal relations on the other hand Volná, (2005).

In a patriarchal culture, it is witnessed that men are unwilling to acknowledge women's quality to accomplish success. The depiction of the women characters in *Midnight Children*, are based on the pro-independence discourses, representation of super powerful deities in Hinduism and the depiction of females as Mother India, relate to establish a dream image of females in a patriarchal society. Similar to culture and gender, postmodern culture has been largely impacted by food images. In postcolonial Indian novels, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*, food holds many meanings that assist to make the plots move, describe the characters, and point toward aspects of the Indian culture as a whole. Both the authors employ food to represent cultural issues of acceptance, confrontation, and conservation of culture, and also signs of memory, feelings, narrative history, influence, and consumption (Farhana and Farah 2017).

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* demonstrated that food has that potential to kindle memories through aroma and flavor. Considering this thought further, Rushdie's narrator Saleem employs food as a means to connect with postcolonial India about home rule. Rushdie recaps the memoirs of twentieth century India, particularly the proceedings before and after-Independence, with Saleem as the centre. Working at a pickle company, Saleem blends discourse with flavor and aroma as he complements every chapter he narrates with a jar of chutney. According to Saleem's family, food is something more than that to be eaten for nutrients. When Saleem's grandmother, grandfather, and Amina (his mother) are talking about Ahmed's (Saleem's father's) dejection -induced condition, the first thing grandmother has asked is, "What food he is taking? Rushdie used food as national identity in his work. In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* even "storyline and chutney" are compared (Heise, 2012).

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* deals with the formation of womanhood in postcolonial India, relating to women's role in two important subjects, politics and religion. Food and narration are both cultural endeavors, yet the relationship between food making and narrative in *Midnight's Children* is not just restricted to metaphor, wherein one progression is enlightened through another. A culture cannot simply be adopted; it must be remade for those within it to truly claim it as their own. Taking this audience conundrum into account, it is interesting that the cooks (story-emotion tellers) are all female, or impotent males (Saleem), suggesting that these stereotypical subordinates gain power through words and food. If a woman is relegated to the kitchen, she—in Saleem's world— influences her husband's emotions through food. The critic Catherine Cundy stated that Rushdie depicts his women characters within a limited "gender code which is never exposed, never questioned and also stated "women are evoked to ascertain a point regarding social inequalities, and then efficiently degraded or deprecated by the writing itself (Horn, 2014).

Food cultures can describe a community and sometimes a culture could go through other cultures through food. Not all the culture is tolerant of the specific food choices of a various culture. The inclination for a particular kind of food can result in cultural clashes. Contemporary writer like Lavanya Sankaran is largely depicted about the class. In *The Hope Factory*, Sankaran deals with the travel of a middle-class family heading towards economic affluence who copes with the practice of New India. "The Hope Factory", food is portrayed as a tool to keep up a physical and emotional state. Food is one of the most basic inductions into the host country for an immigrant. In "The Hope Factory" one can observe that the central character Anand's family, belonging to the middle class circumstances, chooses a plain vegetarian meal. His father-in-law, conversely, is hailing from the higher class demands colorful non-vegetarian items for Diwali party. In the Hindu culture food is considered as a significant tool for cultural image (Jayashree, n.d.).

1. Literature review

McCormick, (2017) looks at how Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* gives rise to a synesthetic storyline that corresponds to a diverse nation's struggle to identify a postcolonial identity, one that holds cultural and class diversity. With Rushdie's usage of synesthesia, the study investigates the story with the different senses as the major guiding plots. (Ankhi, 2006; Andrew, 2014) consider the ways wherein Rushdie exploits smell and flavor to take the place of or accolade expressed and written narratives. Using study on aromatic emotion relationships, the study debates that food might hark back Indians of their overlooked history where words could not. As stated by (Neelakandan, 2016) in his narrative *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie employs sensory reactions to facilitate India's reminiscence, but he undertakes the retorts even further, attempting—with his raconteur Saleem Sinai—to remind India of its history, a history left out of published books. There is no query that Rushdie has a challenging relationship with women in particular and with feminism on the whole. In spite of writing many essays accusing the Islamic world's cruel treatment of women in cultural, political, and ethnic spheres the women characters that present in his writing have largely been admired and criticized by famous critics (Horn, 2014; Baston-Tudor, 2014; Ghodake, 2016).

Siukonen, (2013) and Stoican (2015) analyze the men characters, women identities and cultural differences and usage of food in *Fasting, Feasting*, written by Anita Desai. The study by (Ludmila, 2011; Ravichandran, 2005; Neb, 2009) critically explore how Uma and Arun's character differ despite hailing from the same family. And these studies exhibit how Uma's transformation is considerably obstructed by sensory cultural forces. Uma's father seems never ready to spend money for her health issues but send Arun abroad for his higher studies without waiting for his consent. Arun feels estranged in America and avoiding human contact. From writings of (Ravichandran, 2005; Angelia, 2005; Taheri, 2015), it can be observed that throughout his stay with the Pattons family, Arun finds that independence does not ensure happiness: the individuals in the American family almost not having any contact with one another. For instance, Arun is, the only person who observes that the family's teenage daughter Melanie is suffering from bulimia. In this way, Desai's thought of America varies from the conventional image of America as the country of unlimited prospects.

Shafia and Sandhya (2012) explored antinovels of Diaspora feminist authors between continents. *Fasting, Feasting* presents a wealthy tapestry of characters, thorough observation and differences (Reeta, 2015; Daya, 2011). As stated by Whitt, (2011) food holds multiple meanings reflect on aspects of the Indian culture. The characters in her narratives experience interracial inconsistencies and gender issues. Desai employs the metonymy of food to represent the most domineering heritages of patriarchal weakness of females under the course of contemporary capitalism. Clashing the binaries of India and America, Desai has exposed that lack of food and hunger create the gendered issue, whose distressed association with food is in a some way representative of her powerlessness and her exertion towards self-protection (Muthukumar, 2019; Reeta, 2015; Volna 2005). Prasad, 2015; Ousephachan, (2018) exposed how food, femininity, and masculinity in Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* relate with one another and how food gains religious and ethnic power.

Besemeres, (2017) explores various novels including Lavanya Sankaran's "The Hope Factory". From primeval ages, food bears a great importance to the Indian mind. Food is an important subject focused extensively by Indian English authors. Food holds greater significance in the Indian mind and the importance of it is apparent in the rich writings that are formed from across the nation. The formation of a food tradition is an impulsive and innovative process that entailed a nostalgic hunger for the past, which is restructured in the present-day. Recollection and use of pure cultural dishes reclaim and retrieve the memories, which can be noticed in "The Hope factory". In various fictional prices there used to be an refurbish of local or national food and its variety to give a strong confrontation to the hodgepodge culture on 'Mc Donaldization' of foods. It is this 'Mc Donalization' which has brought about a counter-discourse through number of fictional depictions in the works of Lavanya Sankaran.

2. Findings

S.No	Anita Desai's <i>Fasting, Feasting</i>	Salman Rushdie's <i>Midnight's Children</i>	Lavanya Sankaran's <i>The Hope Factory</i>
1	Gender discrimination starts from birth itself. Only sweets, nuts and other good foods are given to male children in the family and female children are completely become marginalized in every aspect (Annu, 2011).	Salman Rushdie's <i>Midnight's Children</i> emphasized that food is likely to kindle memories through aroma and flavor. Similarly Rushdie's narrator Saleem employs food as a means to connect with postcolonial India about home rule.	The first perspective is from the successful owner of a business, whereas a second approach is presented from a servant of his home, who is a widow and started her struggle for endurance as a woman alone, taking all the responsibilities slowly after her husband's demise, such as taking a small room for rent and affording sufficient food for her son to not to sleep starving every night (Vinai, 2014)
2	Mrs. Patton's obsession for buying and preparing different varieties of food items to fill the freezer, points to the consumerist culture that she belongs to where profusion becomes the problem (Ousephachan,	As the performer of the Hindu custom and Indian culture, women are the warders of the household honor such as food preparation, and this is actually just one way of influencing their lives by	In <i>The Hope Factory</i> by Lavanya Sankaran, it could be observed how Anathamurthy, a successful employee intends to consider the food habits literally striving to entail the compatibility of the later with the cultural atmosphere of the office (Besemeres, 2017)

	2018).	patriarchal society (Omprakash, n.d.)	
3	It was an irony that Papa sent his son to abroad for higher his higher education but, quite the opposite, his daughter could not think about this and she was even disallowed from completing school education in India.	Rushdie put forward how postcolonial men play cruelly towards women as a result of their patriarchal power. And also shows how women express his feeling through food, be it happy or misery (Srividhya, 2009).	Though Anand in The Hope Factory is extremely satisfied with the serving the company vegan meals for a get-together, he is not capable to muddling through the pressure of his influential father-in-law who chooses adding some foreign items to the serving to make it look more upgraded and cultured (Guttman, 2017).

3. Discussion

While gendered position within the Diaspora have turned into fundamental to the review of migration in globalised perspective, its literary demonstration, giving voice to several concerns, methods and attitudes to the depiction of this complicated experience, are evenly differed in treatment. Part one of *Midnight's Children* exhibits the several ways that India's culture, specifically presented by Arun's family, is one of fasting. Rushdie has shown gender perspective in Uma's character. Though Uma's vision is weakening, her father does not ready to spend the money for her treatment. Second part of *Fasting, Feasting* is contradict from Uma's life in India with Arun's experience in the U.S. and the intemperance, overindulgence, and phoniness he witnesses there. In the images of America, everything appears to be larger, stouter, and more disposable than what Arun has witnessed in India. Besides, the novel shows how girl children in the family are generally enforced to let go her personal feelings and aspirations and the only reason behind is he is going to get married to someone and her only responsibility is cooking, whereas Arun is instructed to accomplish more things even though he doesn't demand and wish. Desai puts many tags on American culture by means of the depiction of foods in Mrs. Patton's American home. Rushdie has beautifully portrayed how Indians are starving of food on one side and how Americans keep purchasing food while the freezer is already full on the other hand. Similarly, food metaphors in *Midnight's Children* are a representation of power. Fascinatingly, the characters authorized by food in this narrative are women, and the characters frequently subject are the men characters. The first lady who employs food as a tool for power in "The Hope Factory" is Kamala, who stayed behind her kitchen doors in order to expose her feelings. She did not look distressed regarding any sort of gender expectations within the doors of her kitchen. Food is frequently employed as a metaphor, particularly in literary works, for power and status. Similarly, other female character in the novels employed the making of foods to restrain the feelings of anyone who swallowed their food by loading the foods with their individual sorrows, grief, resentment, and vengeance. Mrs. Patton employs in "Fasting, Feasting" food as a tool to show their luxury life to tenant Arun.

4. Conclusion

After looking at each novel for its significance of food metaphors, this review paper will conclude by exhibiting the means the food images therein replicate openly on the cultural identity of India as one of social fragmentation and patriarchal subjugation. The novels taken here are different, but the genre is related to one another to certain extent. Food being of considerable value in Indian culture, means of discarding it has been sternly imposed from the time of Manu. Therefore, the drives of food are preferred and often used by Indian authors. Globally, food represents more in culture and customs and to personal identity than simply substance. In India, food plays a part as a social, political, and spiritual statement of individual belief, and also a difference between cultures. Similarly, the novels chosen for this study established in this way. Within the overlapping image equating Saleem to India itself, the author has packed the thirty chapters with multihued symbols of characters, feelings and culture, many

of which are exposed through the practice of colorful food metaphors. Fasting, Feasting and *The Midnight's Children* are subtle and emotional story regarding the tacky web of family conflict. Both its niceties and clear images echo from one tradition to another, leaving the reader disturbed but more responsive to a wealthy framework of feeling behind the mask of normal life. In general, in corporate culture marginalization or inclusion takes place as a result of his choice of intake of food. And as well many of them forced to cope with the peer pressure or non-vegetarian partners or in-laws pointed to consuming what is selected as trendy or comprehensive.

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