



Diasporic Tastes capes: Intersections of Culinary Practices, Diasporic Identity and Nostalgia in Selected South Asian Narratives

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Abstract

This research article explores how and why the culinary practices bind together to recreate an identity in diaspora. To understand such practices, this study creates a comparative analysis of "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" by Jhumpa Lahiri and "Sweet Rice" by Aamer Hussein. Both the stories reflect upon the diverse culture of South Asia. The region of South Asia is a mix of cultures, religions, languages and ethnicities that is the result of its great historical empires, invasions, colonization and migration. Therefore, South Asian cuisine also varies from culture to culture, and religion to religion. In South Asian Literature there is always a mention of particular food items which reflect the characters or background of stories. The very common theme of diaspora literature is longing for homeland and identity crisis, which is reflected through the use of food in literature. In the short stories, subject to discussion, both the major characters Mr. Pirzada and Shireen, long for their own culture and identity back at home, and attempt to discover their inner happiness by cooking their traditional food or by dining in familial environment.

Key Words: culture, diaspora, identity crisis, food in literature, longing, nostalgia

Introduction

In the story 'When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine,' events unfold through the eyes of Lilia, a young girl whose parents hail from India and later relocated to the United States in the early 1970s. The narrative delves into the interactions of Lilia's family with Mr. Pirzada, a visitor from Dacca, Bangladesh. Mr. Pirzada, a recipient of a one-year scholarship in botany in the U.S,

regularly joins Lilia's family for dinner, as suggested by the title. The story is set against the backdrop of a Bengali immigrant family's life in the United States during the early 1970s, when there was a lot of restlessness between the East and West Pakistan. The short story delves into the experiences of individuals who straddle the line between their homeland and their adopted country. It is an exploration of identity, cultural displacement, and the complexities of human connection.

Similarly, "Sweet Rice" by Aamer Hussein is a story of a Pakistani family, living in England. The story is centered on Shireen, a forty-year-old housewife, who received professional education in medicine from Pakistan but after coming to England she was not allowed by her husband Jamil to practice in England. While doing daily life chores she came across the book of Muhammadi Begum, *Naimatkhana*. Inspired by her, Shireen decided to write a recipe book. This realization brings her inner self-identity to her, which she somehow lost in abroad. The story is mainly about the nostalgic experiences of diaspora, reinvention of inner self, and the impact of cuisine on immigrants.

In the realm of diaspora literature, where identities are often divided by geographical and cultural boundaries, a profound narrative about belonging and displacement emerges through the subtle yet powerful medium of food. As a literary vehicle, food transcends the boundaries of language, culture, and geography, offering a universal connection that resonates deeply with readers. The portrayal of food practices within diaspora literature provides a unique lens through which identity, belonging, and the human experience can be explored.

From the above perspective, this research explores two short stories, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" by Jhumpa Lahiri and "Sweet Rice" by Aamer Hussein. Both the narratives, set in the diaspora, artfully demonstrate how the preparation, sharing, and consumption of food becomes a vessel for cultural preservation, negotiation, and adaptation for characters straddling two worlds. The experiences of Mr. Pirzada, the young protagonist Lilia, and Shireen represent the significance of food practices in negotiating cultural identity within diaspora literature.

Research Questions

- What is the role of culinary practices in South Asian Diasporic Literature?
- How do South Asian writers explore the immigrant's experiences of identity and nostalgia through their culinary practices?

Significance of the study

"When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" by Jhumpa Lahiri and "Sweet Rice" by Aamer Hussein are two short stories about diasporic experiences of the characters. Both the stories are written about the role of cultural cuisine in immigrants' lives. These two stories are about the characters of Mr. Pirzada and Shireen, who feel lost in the host country. In diasporic life, they struggle for identity, and the feelings of nostalgia are always there inside them. To share those experiences of diaspora, the writers use food as a metaphor for their nostalgic experiences. This research uses the "Theory of Structuralism" by Roland Barthes, according to which language or text can give

deeper meaning along with its apparent meaning. This research explores those underlining meanings which, the authors of the selected short stories want to convey.

Literature Review

This study explores the effect of food practices in the life of diasporic people by analyzing two short stories "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine" by Jhumpa Lahiri and "Sweet Rice" by Aamer Hussein. There have been many studies related to the topic under discussion, some of which are discussed here;

Shweta Garg and Rajyashree Khushu Lahiri (2012) examine the significance of food on personal as well as broader level. The multiple symbolism of food used in Lahiri's stories helps in understanding more about immigrant's personal identity crisis, self-development and their social life challenge that they face. The diasporic food manners have two contrasting sides; first that it helps in lessen the longing for homeland on the other hand it highlights the difference between homeland food and the food in host country. Migration and the food practices immigrant's do are intrinsically connected. Traditional food acts are must to maintain their identity in host country. This article suggests that migration is intrinsically linked to an individual's culinary habits. Traditional food customs are crucial for immigrants seeking to maintain their cultural identity within their new environment. (Garg 77-80)

Similarly, Ajay Bailey(2017) in the article focuses on the relationship between food, food practices and social life such as culture and norms. Due to high skilled visa grant to Indian people, many Indians migrated to Netherland for high wages. Whenever, these people bring food from hoe, they feel a sense of their own lifestyle there and it reminds them their culture. Similarly, whenever they brought food from Netherland to home, they share their experiences and time spent outsides. Along with that, similar food practices when shared it dominated a sense of home and culture. This relationship between food, food practices and people sense of home has been thoroughly discussed in the article. Social remittances both in forward and backward directions that how people network build with food and food practices based on different places. The expansion of this food chain in Netherland shows the Indian diaspora emergence. Most of the migrants when see their home food in shops and restaurants, it shows their food, culture and norms acceptability in Netherlands. It also shows how people are interconnected to their self through this food. The food practices adopted also shows a great deal of home making processes and reflects the culture material. The sound, taste and smell produced during food making process also have a great impact of hominess on private immigrants. Whenever, they pass through such food, these sensorial feelings give them a sense of home abroad. All these things generate four senses for migrants such as sense of self, home, community, and co-presence. The overall effect of food on migrants' social life also depends on what type of resources they have. Some people do not want to look back and adopt new culture. For them the food ethnicity did not matter at all. While for some people their culture and home matter a lot but they do not have such resources to keep that alive. (Bailey 54-59)

Moreover, Ahsan Hamza, Muhammad Touseef, Muhammad Sulman (2023) in the article explore the struggle of immigrants for their identity suppression of indigenous culture and a process of self-discovery. By owning cultural heritage, one can achieve his/her inner self. In "Sweet Rice," Aamer Hussein employs food as a potent symbol to depict Shireen's struggle and

her ultimate triumph. The yearning for traditional recipes serves as a representation of Shireen's longing for her homeland, while her quest for the original ingredients of sweet rice illustrates her assimilation into London's culture. Shireen draws inspiration from Mohammadi Begum, who fearlessly pursued her passion despite societal pressures. (Touseef 77-73)

In the article, Retno Wulandari(2013) studies that food is a way for observation of culture and culinary practices are the way of strengthen the cultural identity while living abroad. Food is arena of memory and it recalls the past to the present. Food strengthens the identity of people who live far from homeland. In the context of diaspora existence, food serves as a connection between the native and adopted lands, the past and the present and it function as a means of evoking nostalgia. The identity of a person is made by past and old memories and memory is strongly related to nostalgia. Hence, nostalgia shapes the present from the past experiences. In "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" throughout the story the act of Mr. Pirzada dinning with Lilia's family represent the maintenance of identity, preserving and strengthen the national identity in US. Unlike Mr. Pirzada, Pranab Kaku from "Hell-Heaven" frequently come to eat with the family of Usha. Through these characters, it is shown that food is arena of memory and interaction as well. In most of the interactions/meetings, food is the considered to be the essential part of it. Best memories are made around the table. Another point of discussion is that kitchen is regarded as the heart of the home and women are the crucial figure of kitchen, so women play a vital in maintaining and preserving traditions and cultures. Lilia mother in "When Mr.Pirzada Came to Dine" and Boudi in "Hell-Heaven" are the typical representation of South Asian mothers/ house wife. For women cooking construct a sense of identity. Thus, it is said that food has a great impact on identity of person and community as well.

Chaterjee Kalyan(2016), also explores the connection of food and identity in diaspora literature. It is mentioned in the article that the act of preparing, sharing and consuming food is not merely a routine life act but it is an expression of cultural and personal identity. Through use of food as a metaphor, Lahiri means to negotiate the feelings of homelessness and dislocation that are common in diasporic experience. Food is not only metaphor for cultural identity but as suggested, that is as gendered specific act, food is also representative of identity of women in particular. Women are the vital figure of culinary practices throughout the world. The author emphasizes that food become a language through which characters express their longing for a homeland and connection with their cultural roots, while simultaneously adapting new environment. The nurturing and comforting nature of food make food to be the powerful tool to soothe the dislocation experienced by immigrants. (Chaterjee 197-203)

The above discussion shows a different perspective food imagery used by diaspora writers. It can be said that is has a huge impression on the lives, identity and feelings of immigrants. Food customs are typically gender-specific roles, wherein women hold significant sway over culinary traditions. In view of the foregoing discussion, Barthes' "Theory of Structuralism" is applied to the two selected stories.

Theoretical framework:

This study uses Roland Barthes "Theory of Structuralism" to explore the Diasporic culinary experiences demonstrated in South Asian Literature. Roland Barthes was a French literary

theorist, philosopher and semiotician who played a significant role in the development of structuralism, emerged in the mid-20th century. Structuralism aims to understand and analyze the underlying structures and systems that shape human culture, language and thoughts. The theory analyses: elements within a text and their relationships to each other to uncover deeper meanings and cultural values. It emphasizes the idea that narratives and texts can be analyzed by examining the underlying structures and systems that shape their meaning. It focuses on uncovering the deep structures that govern the surface narrative and the way in which these structures interact to produce meaning. The structuralist approach allows us to appreciate the underlying structures that shape the meaning of the text and how they interact to convey the author's message. Barthes suggests that language function as the semiotic system, where every sign holds a distinct meaning. The structuralism theory assumes that language is not only the means of communication rather it is complex system of interconnected meanings. Understanding language is like words are the pieces of picture and to understand full picture, you have to connect meaning of those words to make complete sense.

Barthes also introduced the concept of "myth" as a form of communication through which cultural ideologies are conveyed and perpetuated. Myth involves taking specific cultural symbols and imbuing them with broader, often hidden, meanings that reinforce certain ideas and beliefs within a society. In the context of food analysis, structuralism explores how food and eating practices are not just physical acts but also carry symbolic and cultural significance.

"When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" is story in which Lahiri represent the experiences of diaspora nostalgia through the characters of Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's family. Lahiri uses a lot of food imagery to show the influence of food on lives of immigrants. The title in itself is symbolic of the life of Mr. Pirzada's in United States. The title suggests the emotions and feeling of all immigrants who miss their family and homeland. By applying structuralism to "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" we see the traditional culinary practices have a great impact on everyone's life. Mr. Pirzada through these cuisines try to cope the feeling of missing his family while living away from them. The food mentioned is not only symbolic of the feelings of immigrants but also help immigrants to maintain their national and traditional identity. The food mentioned by Lahiri in the story are all have a traditional values, which is used as symbols for culture representation.

In "Sweet Rice," the story centers around the experience of the female character 'Shireen' and 'Muhammadi Begum'. Each woman is depicted with distinct personalities and struggles, allowing the reader to explore a diverse range of female experiences. Shireen's act of cooking sweet rice signifies her desire for independent life, which goes against the societal expectation of women relying on male providers. By cooking and writing about food, she defies the notion that women should be confined to domestic roles only. The act of cooking and consuming food in the story symbolizes female empowerment. For Shireen the ability to cook sweet rice and gain economic agency gives her a newfound sense of power and control over her life. Through food, she achieves a level of autonomy that challenges the dependence on male authority. In "Sweet Rice," the cultural context plays a significant role in shaping the characters' experiences. The food they cook and consume reflects their cultural heritage and becomes a means of preserving and expressing their identity. Overall, the structuralist approach of "Sweet Rice" reveals the impact of food on Shireen's reinvention of inner self and the female relationships

with culinary practices as a powerful expression of gender dynamics, empowerment, and resistance against patriarchal norms.

The research use Roland Barthes "Theory of Structuralism", which assumes that language or any text, do not give only one meaning but it can be understood by its underlying meaning as well. The selected short stories uses a lot of food imagery which is interpreted through this theory. Textual Analysis

Background of diaspora and diaspora literature

Migration made the universal sense on human presence across the globe; it is imperative to discern that all migratory movements qualify as diaspora. The term 'Diaspora', etymologically is associated with the dispersion of Jewish in the year 586BC with the invasion of Judea (mountain area in Israel) by the Babylonians (Iraqis). Although the word 'diaspora' emerged from the vast dispersion of Jewish but in modern age the word 'diaspora' has taken new concept which refers to any ethnic or cultural community living away from homeland for any reason not only forced exile. The reason could be anything but all diaspora have collected particular characteristics like Cultural Hybridity, Identity Crisis, nostalgia and longing for homeland etc.

With the collapse of British Colonial Empire, a vast migration takes place especially in Asian population. Also, the globalization and the 21st century beginning, human from all over the world start migrating for works, better economy, escape from war effects, political issues of country, natural disasters or impersonal reasons. As a result, the meaning of diaspora is more expended. Modern diaspora notion is more divergent than the classic one, it is not limited to a specific ethnic group but is generalized to the concept of any group as people living away from their native land. While living away from homeland diaspora communities have a specific set of minds referred to as 'diaspora consciousness', it is the state of mind of transnational communities, dominant by memoirs of homeland, maintenance of home culture along with host country traditions.

Immigrant's life is always categorized by their culture. Culture is to "regulate and structure individual and collective lives". Cultural identity is not only about the sameness of a person to its group rather ethnicity, nationality, history and religion also contribute to it. As South Asia has a vast historical, ethnical and religious culture, the immigrants of South Asia in all over the world have different conscious about their culture. South Asia culture is enriched with traditional cuisine, every cultural food has different backgrounds and history (religious, ethical). This cultural diversity also influences the way people from south Asian communities view their traditions when they move to different part of the world. One aspect of this culture is traditional cuisine, which has deep roots in both religion and ethics. Each food items have distinct background story that reflects these values. For example, some dishes may have been created for special occasions like weddings or festivals while others may be associated with specific regions and religions. Food can reveal much more about a community's values and traditions. Food influences virtually every aspect of human life. Eating food is not only a biological need but also reveals culture and history of particular community. As Sutton says "...food can hide powerful meanings and structures under the cloak of the mundane and the quotidian." Food has a great significance in diaspora life, it can be seen in many diaspora

literature. In most of the South Asian diaspora literature, the use of food imagery can be seen frequently. They use food as a literary device for character understanding, cultural representation, and some underline meanings. Food connects humans, and perhaps all living things, by a common need for it that all share. It is in many ways an ordinary thing, but it is essential to all. With the spread and exchange of foods (and ideas), each party and culture is put in contact with the other, influencing each other, no matter the distance or familiarity. In these ways, food related imagery or description in literature serves many purposes such as to establish a particular atmosphere, to give a realistic picture, to evoke certain emotions or to intensify the scene. Food choices, preferences and habits can be used to characterize an individual. Character's relation with food can reveal their inner feelings. The way food is consumed by a character can also tell us about the character's ethnicity and culture.

According to Kessler, the paramount objective of food in literature is its function as a cultural signifier. He explicates that food is laden with significance and it carries implications beyond its tangible existence. Food in fiction embodies symbolism and serves as an entryway into multiple layers of interpretation. Literary analysts employ the use of food as a means of unlocking these layers, delving deeper into character identities and cultural nuance while establishing inter-textual connections between literature and life itself.

Text Analysis:

This study analyses Lahiri's story 'When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine' and Hussein's story "Sweet Rice", from the Structuralism perspective.

In "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" Lahiri uses lot of food imagery. Different Food in literature symbols different things. In this story, every food item is representative of the feeling of the character or sometimes symbolic of his or her homeland situation. Mr. Pirzada comes to eat with Lilia's family is to experience a home like feeling, recreate family togetherness through cooking traditional food like kabab with chutney, mango pickle and rice. ".. my mother appeared from the kitchen with the plate of mincemeat kebabs..... Mr. Pirzada popped into his mouth. One can only hope" he said, reaching for another, "that Dacca's refugees are as heartily fed." (Lahiri 31). His pleasure in eating kebabs may bring him to revisit his past, the time when he was with his family. Although Lilia's family did not pass through the same situation as Mr. Pirzada but still they have emotional attachment to his grief of living far from family, because they belong to same origin South Asia.

The preparation for Halloween and particularly the carving of pumpkin is metaphorically representing the destruction of Dacca and the Mr Pirzada attitude spontaneously changes, showing his inner grief for homeland and his worries about his family."The knife slipped from Mr Pirzada's hand and made a gash dipping towards the base of the pumpkin. "Please forgive me" he raised a hand to one side of his face, as if someone had slapped him there" (Lahiri 40). Through these line Lahiri is conveying not only Mr. Pirzada's grief but over all immigrants who feel the same. The pumpkin is the representative of the whole situation of Dacca, "What resulted was a disproportionately large hole the size of a lemon, so that our jack-o'-lantern wore an expression of placid astonishment, the eyebrows no longer fierce, floating in frozen surprise above a vacant, geometric gaze." (Lahiri 40). The author uses this scene to convey not only Mr.

Pirzada's grief but also that of immigrants who feel similarly displaced from their home countries. Even though they may try to move on their lives in new places, they still carry these feelings with them. Lahiri is showing us that sometimes everyday activities like preparing for Halloween can have deeper meanings behind them. In this case, it represents larger issues such as displacement and loss experienced by immigrants around the world.

Mr. Pirzada giving candy to Lilia represents his feeling for his daughters back in Dacca, he was trying to cope with that feeling. He was treating Lilia like his own daughter, "He reached into his suit pocket and gave me a small plastic egg filled with cinnamon hearts." For the lady of the house" (Lahiri 31). Candy /sweets are generally symbol of goodness, tenderness. In this story Mr. Pirzada giving candies to Lilia show the tenderness he feels while spending time with Lilia's family, he tries to recreate moments from past. This act of kindness highlights the bond between Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's family, showing that they have formed a connection based on their shared experiences and memories. The candies small gestures can hold great meaning in relationships between people.

Lilia's way of eating those candies is symbolic of new generation who just got exposed to the situation of her homeland; the sympathetic emotion has been built in them gradually. Initially taking candies from Mr. Pirzada, Lilia feels awkward but then it becomes their routine, "It had become our ritual, and for several weeks, before we grew more comfortable with one another, it was the only time he spoke to me directly" (Lahiri 32). From that point she first time thought about Mr. Pirzada's family, so she decided to eat those candies along with praying for the safety of Mr. Pirzada's family, "It was inappropriate, in my opinion, to consume the candy Mr. Pirzada gave me in a casual manner (Lahiri 32)... I put the chocolate only mouth, letting it soften until the last possible moment, and then as I chewed it slowly, I prayed that Mr Pirzada's family was safe and sound" (Lahiri 35). Through these eating imageries Lahiri represents how slowly and gradually the new generation of immigrants experience feelings for their people back in homeland. In the end When Mr. Pirzada leave for his homeland, and Lilia got the news of his safety she stop eating those sweets and throw them all, "That night there was no need to. Eventually, I threw them away" (Lahiri 47).

As mentioned above food ways and eating is not only a biological need but it the overall representation of cultural, identity and ethnicity, for immigrants eating with their community is to maintain their identities, revisit traditional culture while live in abroad. Mr. Pirzada dinning with Lilia's family is to recreate their homeland feeling. Smashing of pumpkin symbolize East-West Pakistan partition and after that, whole family eating a simple dinner is symbolic of their inner sad feeling. By the end When Lilia's family, know about Mr. Pirzada reunion with his family they celebrate with good dinner, "At the end of the letter he thanked us for our hospitality...To celebrate the good news my mother prepared a special dinner that evening" (Lahiri 46). This shows that food is always unconsciously associated with feeling/ memories or life events.

Generally, women are closely related to food and cooking. Women, mother to daughter, share traditional recipes from generation to generation. South Asian culture is enriched with different recipes, which are special of every region in Asia. In old times recipes were shared orally to others but with the passage of time it also came in written forms; recipe books. And also a new

genre emerged where narrative and recipes are mixed; 'recipe fiction' or 'culinary fiction'. By looking into the character of Lilia's mother she plays a vital role in maintaining the traditional ways, she serves every meals in a traditional way, "kebab with coriander chutney, lentils with fried onions, fish cooked with raisins in a yugard sauce...." (Lahiri 33). By these lines we can assume that role of women, in maintaining the identity in diaspora, cannot be denied. From this perspective, we can also study the short story "Sweet Rice" by Aamer Hussein.

The story is about Shireen, living abroad with her husband Jamil and son Taimur. Although she did medical studies in Pakistan but after her marriage Jamil and the host country did not allow her to continue her practical life, their family is considered as from "a Third World" (Hussein 51). In the story explores how diaspora family experiences the nostalgic life, through memories recreate their homeland like environment. And also how role of women is essential in recreating those situations, particularly in terms of culinary practices. Through that food imagery Hussein represent the nostalgia of diaspora life. In abroad eating together, dinner or lunch, is sweet and sad experience at same time, "the dinner, Shireen grumbled silently as she lowered herself deeper into the depths of Capricornian gloom" (Hussein 51).

The title "Sweet Rice" is also symbolic of Shireen's character in story. As food are always associated with memories and particularly the traditional one, similarly when Shireen was searching for the recipe and ingredients of sweet rice, with each ingredient she recall her old days, where she was living a happy youthful life, and these memories bring sense of independence and courage in her to attain that position again. Sometimes in our everyday lives, we may lose touch with who we truly are. When this happens, it can be helpful to look to others for inspiration or motivation. This could mean finding people have gone through struggles similar to our own and learning from their experiences, or simply being inspired by the way someone else lives their life. When we feel like we have lost ourselves, there are always ways to reconnect to our true selves- sometimes all it takes is looking outside of ourselves for guidance and support. For Shireen her past memories of living with family act as a trigger to gain courage and the books and life of Muhammadi Begum was the inspiration for Shireen to reconnect to her true self.

About recipes there is a quote that says, "a recipe had no soul. You, as the cook, must bring soul to the recipe ", every traditional food or recipe has a story, likewise for Shireen the recipe of sweet rice, is a story of her first time fasting in Ramadan and it was a reward from her grandmother. "Sweet rice. A delicacy remembered for the day she had kept all her Ramzan fasts from the first time... Grandmother had made it for her and named it after her, *Shireen pulao* "Sweet rice" (Hussein 53). Thinking of that recipe, it's ingredients, the process of serving it, it's smell, Shireen recall each and every moment of that time "don't look back and above all don't smell or sniff, it only takes you to places surrendered" (Hussein 54). Memories are always nostalgic, even the memory of good times can make a person upset. Although she misses her family, homeland and life of Pakistan, she got the courage to stand for herself, to be someone who have their own identity like Muhammadi Begum as mentioned in the story "Muhammadi Begum. Who was she then, this master cook who'd stirred the ingredients of romance and realism into platters of parables that had nurtured generations of women" (Hussein56). Women are the carrier of traditions and culture we can also say that cooking and making new food recipes is the major power a woman can achieve. In this story Hussein uses food as tool for

Shireen's reinvention of herself, her own identity "... whichever of Muhammadi Begum's writings she could find; she'd spend her remaining fallow years in this foreign country re-creating a forgotten time from her own past..." (Hussein 57). For Shireen, Muhammadi Begum was the inspiration, her writings and her way of re-creating recipes along with storytelling, her success made Shireen to do something for herself. Until now Shireen was living a typical Asian house wife life, "But now, with the frustrated and frustrating perfectionism that constantly chilled her bones, she wanted to cross the final boundary and cook one of the feasts she'd heard her grandmother describe with such chop-licking ecstasy" (Hussein 53). For new growth, new beginning all that is needed is the little courage, inspiration or motivation in life to start with, once it starts then all seems easy to go with. We can say that women can stand for their selves, even by using the inherited skills like cooking. In today's globalized world and specially the electronic media has made these opportunities easier for women like Shireen.

Besides reinvention of Shireen inner self, this process of food practices in foreign country is one of the essential part for the maintenance of identity. In today's globalized multiple cultural world, this is hard to fully maintain the original cultural identity but traditional culinary practices is the most easily way of it and one can me recognize easily by what he/she eats as Jonathan Safran says " Food is not rational. Food is culture, habit, craving and identity." In diaspora the practices of a traditional cuisine is done in order to re imagine and renewed a homeland in host country. It is done to sustain a sense of homeland culture. As Mariana de Camargo Heck (2003) writes: "The need to maintain a traditional identity within a foreign country is so strong that food may develop mythical status, a ' more authentic ' flavor, than actually found in the country of origin" (Heck 208). Food and culinary practices are crucial element in maintaining a connection to one's cultural roots when living away from their homeland and serve as a means of preserving memories of their homelands. Some recipes might not be part of everyday meals but they are pivotal in bringing people together, facilitating social interactions, and marking important events in the community's shared cultural experience. Essentially, food and cooking serve as a bridge between the past and the present, helping to preserve a sense of identity and community within the diaspora.

From above discussion, it is clear food is not only a basic need of life but also it is the representative of culture and community. By using this statement as tool by diaspora writers, the study explores that food is one the essential element that helps immigrants to cope up with the feeling of alienation in foreign country. Food always creates memories, and these memories are the sources for immigrants to recreate their past, that is the homeland life. The fondest memories are made when gathered around the table. The study also shed light on the role of food practices in the life of a woman. Women can always create new recipes and dishes which in return makes a sense of empowerment in them. When people think about memories related to food, they often picture a woman cooking or serving the food. This means that women have an important role in creating and sharing food experiences, which can make them feel powerful. Women are also able to come up with new recipes and dishes, which adds to their sense of empowerment. In "Sweet Rice", the character of Shireen highlights the connection between women and food, and how it can be the source of strength for them.

Conclusion

From these short stories, we observe that in diaspora life the culinary practices play a vital role in the maintenance of identity. South Asian Diasporic Literature intricately weaves the immigrant experience through culinary practices. Writers skillfully leverage food as a narrative tool, conveying identity and nostalgia. Descriptions of traditional dishes, cooking rituals, and communal meals serve as poignant metaphors for the challenges of assimilation and the preservation of cultural roots. In exploring the culinary landscape, these authors delve into the emotional terrain of displacement, portraying the intricate dance between adapting to a new culture and clinging to the flavors of home. Through the lens of food, South Asian writers craft narratives that resonate with the universal themes of identity, belonging, and the intricate tapestry of the diasporic journey. As Food is one of the ways to represent culture and traditions, South Asian writers in their works use food imageries to explore the immigrant's feelings and the diaspora uses food as a tool to cope up with that feeling of nostalgia. Mr. Pirzada's act of coming for eating with Lilia's family show the South Asia culture as well as it is the only way for him to recreate home feeling in foreign country. On the other hand, Shireen in "Sweet Rice" reinvent her inner self and inner happiness through food practices. Food is intrinsically connected to memories and nostalgia, while living away from homeland the feeling of nostalgia feels the most, especially when there is any event or get together. It is said that happy memories are always made around the kitchen table. Living abroad and remembering those memories of past, of homeland and of family, is sweet as well as bitter at the same time. Recreating past memories strengthen the identity, preserves the cultural traditions. From Roland Barthes theory of structuralism, the symbolism of food in both the texts underlines a deep meaning that a traditional cuisine has a great impact on the identity of diaspora. Every food imagery mention in the text gives some symbolic understanding of the particular event and feeling of the character. The preparation, consumption, and sharing of familiar foods from the homeland contribute to a sense of continuity, connection, and belonging for diaspora communities. It becomes a tangible link to their roots, fostering a shared identity and preserving cultural heritage across generations, even in new and diverse environments.

Moreover, it is also summarized that the role of women in culinary practices in foreign country, in immigrants' life cannot be denied, in fact, women are the basic figure in maintenance of home away from the homeland. By looking into the characters of Lilia's mother and Shireen, it shows that women are essential for the maintenance of home in host country. The culinary continuity, orchestrated by women, serves as a poignant expression of cultural resilience and adaptation, influencing generations and maintaining a connection to their roots. The diaspora writers like Lahiri and Hussein, who actually lives a life of diaspora, vividly picturize the importance of food as well as the role of women in recreating feeling of home in host country. They wrote about the need of individual's identity while living abroad. In both the stories, the food imagery is used as a symbol for preserving cultural and individual's identity. Mr. Pirzada by dinning with Lilia's family, recreate the familiar traditional setting to cope with the nostalgic feeling of missing homeland. On the other hand, Shireen use food as tool for reinventing her inner self and her own identity while living in host states.

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